

# Spectatorship

## Why is Spectatorship important?

Why do we respond the way we do to a scene? Why do we cry or laugh? The director has constructed the film to encourage us to emote with or maybe even distance us from characters and situations. We can go along with the director's 'instruction' or we can oppose it.

### How the spectator has been conceived both as 'passive' and 'active' in the act of film viewing:

Spectators often **switch** between the two viewing perspectives; it might be the director's intention for the audience to do this or it could be down to the **cultural capital** of the audience.

### Some theories assume the spectator is Active:

- The **Uses and Gratifications** theory suggests that we choose our level of engagement for one of the following reasons/pleasures **Entertainment, Information, Identification & Interaction**.
- **Multiple Spectating Selves** - Different parts of our 'self' get different pleasures from watching a film Social Cultural, Private Desiring.

### Some Theories assume the spectator is Passive:

- We **suspend our disbelief and immerse ourselves in the spectacle of cinema**.
- The camera places/**stitches** us into the scene.
- **Hypodermic needle theory**.
- **Copycat theory**.

### Oppositional Reading (Hall):

What would an oppositional reading of the film be? Who might think and feel this way?

### Preferred Reading (Hall):

How has the director encoded the film to encourage a way of thinking/feeling/emoting?

### How the spectator is in dynamic interaction with film narrative and film features designed to generate response:

Cinematography - the camera is our eye, what are you being made to look at and why?

The Edit - how long are you forced to gaze upon a character and why?

Sound anchors meaning, and gives us an opportunity to emote, how does sound guide our emotional response? Self-Recognition (Metz):

We see a version of ourselves

### Identification (Smith):

**Recognition** - how do we identify the protagonist? Is there an alteration in the style of cinematography or editing when we 'notice' this character?

**Alignment** - we are given spatio-temporal proximity (we gaze at them closer and for longer) to our protagonist in order to create an emotional bond.

**Allegiance** - the spectator is ultimately required to make a choice; do we agree with the choices of the protagonist - or not? How the camera moves around the character at this point of our decision is important.

### Chandler & the Camera's Gaze:

How does the camera look/gaze at the subject?

- **Spectator's Gaze** - The camera is your eyes. How does the camera offer voyeuristic pleasure? Does it linger or gaze on the subject?
- **Intra-Diegetic** - How do characters look at each other? Is the audience positioned within this look? When is the shot reverse shot used and why?
- **Extra-diegetic** - Do characters break the 4th wall and look at the spectator? How do we react to it? Is it threatening? Is it to involve us in a joke? Is it combined with a voice over?
- **Camera's Gaze** - Do we see the process of filmmaking? Do you see the crew? Or is the spectator invited into the edit suite?
- **'Text-within-a text'** - are the characters in the film making a film? Or do they watch a film? Are we watching them watching? Or watching them creating?

### Reasons for the uniformity (The response of the homogenous mass) or diversity of response by different spectators:

#### Gendered Responses:

**Mulvey & the Male Gaze:** Are the female characters there 'to be looked at' does the camera objectify the female characters?

Is there evidence of the **'Female Gaze' (Soloway)**? - What is foregrounded in 'the look'? The body or the emotion? Do characters 'return the gaze'?

#### Age:

The age of the spectator will alter their response to the actions of the character, would your grandparent emote with a character in the same way you would?

#### Race:

Is there a limited perspective in this film? What does this reveal about the director and the society which it is reflecting? Spectators can be positioned to align with characters of different races. What is a spectator's response when they are represented on screen?

#### Multiple Spectating Selves:

Multiple Spectating Selves - Different parts of our 'self' get different pleasures from watching a film Social Cultural, Private Desiring.

#### Political allegiance:

What political messages are evident in the film? Are they to the left or right of your own? Are they 'other' to the politics of the era? Are they controversial or threatening? What is the spectator's response when asked to question their politics?