

November 11th Notes (Theme: Gender)

Gender

- Socially constructed
- Not a fixed, natural essence
- Gender attributes (what marks male/female or masculine/feminine) change over time and across cultures
- In patriarchal societies, women is Other (i.e. not man)
 - ~ Ex. language - 'natural gender'
 - ~ 'He' of 'il'/'ils' - male is a dominant norm
- Women are treated as an object, where when they marry, the women has to take the male last name, she doesn't really have any right in the family
- Women have less property than male
- Inclusive language: Mr., Mrs., Miss
- Mankind, she (women) has some kind of otherness within that sphere

Gender as representation

- Functions through codes and signs
- Codes - systems of meaning
 - ~ Ex. Codes of dress
- Signs - vehicles of meaning
 - ~ Ex. Clothes one wears
- Childhood towards adulthood - rites of passage, ritual
- The moment someone is born society is constructed all around you
- What do we encounter in everyday life that indicates or signifies gender?
 - ~ Funding/teams
 - ~ Body movement
 - ~ Interactions with children
 - ~ Language

- ~ Clothing
- ~ Objects
- ~ Advertising
- ~ Language movement
- ~ Job/occupation
- ~ Values
- ~ Education
- ~ Space décor and decoration
- ~ Color, form, use of objects
- ~ Dress, cosmetics
- ~ Hair
- ~ Voice, body movement, body positioning and many more

- We instantly and unconsciously read/determine gender based on these signs and their codes

Goffman's performance

- Consider Goffman's performance of self: (the front doesn't change during a performance)
 1. Establishing the front (hair, clothes)
 2. Committing to performance before audience
 3. Maintaining that performance - consistency

Changing the performance?

- Mixing or combining signs that conflict within codes of gender
- Deploying signs against "fixed" sense of sex (XX or XY man/woman)
- Gender bending
- Can be read as subversion, aggression, violation, "unnatural"
- Perceived threat to social order (male, masculine, hetero dominance)
- Used as justification for violence and discrimination against LGBT people

Throwing like a girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body comportment, motility and Spatiality

- Iris Marion Young
- She comes from a philosophical frame work

- Work with two philosopher: Simone de Beauvoir & Maurice Merleau-Ponty
- Being body, sense movement spaces
- Being as a mental process
- “I think therefor I am”

Considers gender in terms of

- Body awareness
- Bodily movement
- Physical action and tasks (working towards a goal oriented)
- Body space (we think of the way body exist within space)

Basics modes (modalities) of:

- Feminine bodily compartment
- Feminine manner of movement
- Feminine relations to space
- What is read as (or expected to be) feminine in bodily presentations and behaviour?

“Feminine existence”

1. Structures and condition delimiting typical situation of women in a society
2. Way in which these (#1) are lived by women themselves
 - So no fixed, original “feminine essence”.
 - “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” Simone de Beauvoir

Sense and use of the body becomes naturalized along gender lines

- Body orientation
- Sitting, standing, walking

- ~ Male - open, looser
- ~ Female - closed, restricted
- Sitting with legs open (man spreading), together, or crossed, standing with legs apart or together
 - ~ Arms out or against body

Bodily movement - as in sports

Commitment to action

- Tentative, timid, self-conscious
- Fear of getting hurt (woman as fragile)
- Underusing full capacity - don't fully reach, stretch, bend
- Consciously holding back makes one more aware of body as an object. No "transcendence" (getting beyond), just "immanence" (potential)

Body and space

Space as confining and restrictive

- For types of action (what one can do) and how they're executed (how one can do it)

Body as object in space

- Female body as objects to be looked at (by men)
- "The objectifying regard which 'keeps her in her place' can also account for ...why women frequently tend not to move openly."(154)

Wadjda

- Haifaa al-Mansour, Saudi Arabia, 2012
- First feature film made by a Saudi woman
- First feature shot entirely in Saudi Arabia
- 11 year old lives in Riyadh capital of Saudi Arabia
- She goes to school
- What sort of drives this film is that she wants a bicycle

Notes on the film

- You see how patriarchy works in this film
- The restriction that are placed for women in this city
- Girls/women are not meant to ride bikes (not forbidden, but it is looked down upon)
- The girls had to go back inside because men who were working were outside
 - ~ Respectable girls stay inside, where man cant seen them
- Women are not included in the family tree
- Getting married at a young age
- Older girls at school are punished for possessing magazines or makeup
 - ~ They were doing things together in the courtyard (not necessarily described what is it they did) so in a sense shaming them
- The singing that happens at home in the kitchen, Wadjda tells her mother that she should be a singer but the mother is shock
- The idea that a women voice is sacred type thing, (because there are men around) a man is not suppose to hear your voice
 - ~ A women's voice is her nakedness
- The division between child and adult
 - ~ She is a child now so in some sort of way allowed to interact with people the way she's doing
 - ~ The moment she becomes a adult, she wont be able to interact with people like that especially males
- Interaction between family members who are males is different with interaction between outsider who are males
- The idea that a bike = injury (fragility, of danger)
 - ~ Not because your body is not as strong as boys
- But as in you can loose your virginity, makes you ineligible as a wife
 - ~ Riding a bike can break your hymen
 - ~ Mom is scared that her daughter lost her virginity
- Women are not meant to drive, so that lack of mobility