

Surveillance and Panopticon

Lecturer: Ma Ran

Gaze & the Other

What is the gaze? The gaze is the act of looking at someone or something.

The gaze is a power relation. It is a way of seeing that is not neutral. It is a way of seeing that is loaded with meaning.

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Discipline

The Orient is not an "inherent fact of nature," but is rather a "discursive construction" of "Western" imperialist discourses of "Orientalism" and "Orientalism."

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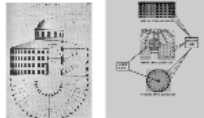
By reconstructing the Orient as culturally static, centrally uniform and incapable of self-critique, the Occident as its established opposite, is infused with a tacit sense of its own cultural and intellectual superiority.

the Last Emperor, Dir. Bernardo Bertolucci, 1987



The Last Emperor is a film that explores the life of the young emperor Puyi in the final days of the Qing dynasty. It is a masterpiece of visual storytelling.

panopticism and surveillance



panopticon by Jeremy Bentham
a watchtower prison where prisoners were arranged around a central watchtower from which the supervisor could watch inmates, yet the inmates could never be certain when they were being watched. Therefore, over time, they began to police their own behavior.



The Panopticon is not a dream building, but a diagram of power reduced to its ideal form. It perfects the operations of power by increasing the number of people who can be controlled, and decreasing the number needed to operate it. It gives power over people's minds through architecture. (video "Big Brother")

The Panopticon has become the metaphor for the processes whereby disciplinary 'technologies', together with the emergence of a normative social science, 'police' both the mind and body of the modern individual.

(see Dreyfus and Rabinow, 'Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics' 1982, p.143-67).



surveillance camera, CCTV as 'significant part of our everyday life'.

Brazil, Dir. Terry Gilliam, 1985



Dystopia society (Orwellian 1984-ish society)/ surveillance/terrorism

How would you interpret the ending of the film?

Ministry of Information/bureaucracies

Bureaucracies, like disciplines, contribute to the process of disindividuation since they promote the facelessness of the bureaucrat ("I'm just doing my job"; "I'm just a cog in the machine") and tend to continue functioning even after major revolutions.



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Foucault: power/knowledge

discourse

discourse

dictionary definition:

- 1) the use of words to exchange thoughts and ideas
- 2) a long talk or piece of writing about a subject

for Foucault, by discourse he meant a group of statements which provide a means for talking about (and a way of representing knowledge about) a particular historical moment. Discourse is a body of knowledge that both defines and limits what can be said about something.

Therefore we could talk about the discourses of law, medicine, criminality, sexuality, technology, etc.---undoubtedly professionally specific, while subject to changes throughout particular historical periods.

It is through discourse (knowledge) that we are created (both the formation of identities and practices are related to, or are a function of, historically specific discourses).

Henceforth, discourse produce certain kinds of subjects and knowledge, and that we occupy to varying degrees the subject positions defined within a broad array of discourses.

---S & C

Discourse as

ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern (Weedon, 1987, p. 108).

Weedon, C. *Feminist Practice and Post-structuralist Theory*,
Oxford: Basil Blackwell.1987

modern society & power

‘Power is everywhere’ and ‘comes from everywhere’ so in this sense is neither an agency nor a structure (Foucault 1998: 63). Instead it is a kind of ‘metapower’ or ‘regime of truth’ that pervades society, and which is in constant flux and negotiation.

Foucault uses the term ‘**power/knowledge**’ to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and ‘truth’.

Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true’ (Foucault, in Rabinow 1991).

Power therefore is "a dynamic of control and lack of control between discourses and the subjects, constituted by discourses, who are their agents. Power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects" (p. 113).

Weedon, C. *Feminist Practice and Post-structuralist Theory*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.1987

Foucault's cultural analysis of a major shift in Western cultural practice, from 'sovereign power' to 'disciplinary power':

modern societies function not through coercion but through cooperation; therefore power relations are structured to produce citizens who will actively participate in self-regulating behavior, in expected ways.

Power relations establish the criteria for what gets to count as knowledge in a given society, and knowledge systems in turn produce power relations.

Gaze & the Other

bell hooks: the Oppositional Gaze
--black female spectators

role-playing of gaze in the politics of slavery, of radicalized power relations, and most directly in black spectatorship. "critical black female spectatorship emerges as a site of resistance only when individual black women actively resist the imposition of dominant ways of knowing and looking".

"That all attempts to repress our/black peoples' right to gaze had produced in us an overwhelming longing to look, a rebellious desire, **an oppositional gaze**...Spaces of agency exist for black people, wherein we can both interrogate the gaze of the Other but also look back, and at on another, naming what we see". p 116

Most of the black women never went to movies expecting to see 'compelling representations of black femaleness'. They were all very aware of the absence of black womanhood in mass media.

Even when representations of black women were present in film, their bodies and being were there to serve – to enhance and maintain white womanhood as object of the phallogentric gaze. This continued the cycle of white supremacy.

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Orientalism

the **Orient** is not “an inert fact of nature”, but is rather “a phenomenon constructed by generations of intellectuals, artists, commentators, writers, politicians, and, more importantly, constructed by the naturalizing of a wide range of Orientalist assumptions and stereotypes”

(Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin. Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts. London and New York: Routledge, 2000)

Said further defines Orientalism in terms of its functioning as a Western “corporate institution” responsible for dealing with the Orient “by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it” (Said: 3).

Orientalist discourse is a sign of the power and authority exerted by the West over the Orient, describing this relationship between the “Occident” and “Orient” as being one “of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (Said: 5)

By constructing the 'Orient' as culturally static, eternally uniform and incapable of self-definition, the 'Occident' as its established opposite, is infused with a secure sense of its own cultural and intellectual superiority.

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biopower

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Many of the relationships of power in the modern political state are exercised indirectly upon the body, and this is what Foucault termed **biopower**.

"the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs."

two forms of bio-power:

First, **the discipline of the body**, where the human body is treated like a machine: productive, economically useful, etc. This form of bio-power appears in the military, in education, in the workplace, and seeks to create a more disciplined, effective population.

Second, **the regulation of population**, which focuses on the reproductive capacity of the human body. This form of bio-power appears in demography, wealth analysis, and ideology, and seeks to control the population on a statistical level.

photographic images have been instrumental in the production of what Foucault called the docile bodies of the modern state--citizens who participate in the ideologies of the society through cooperation and a desire to fit in and conform.----S & C
(think again of the Tokyo Olympics 2020 candidate video)

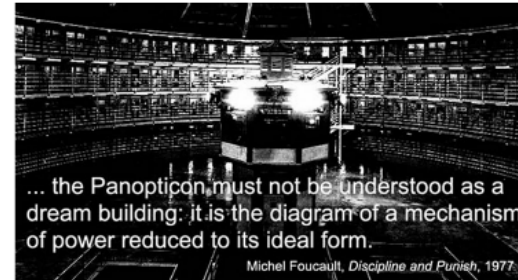
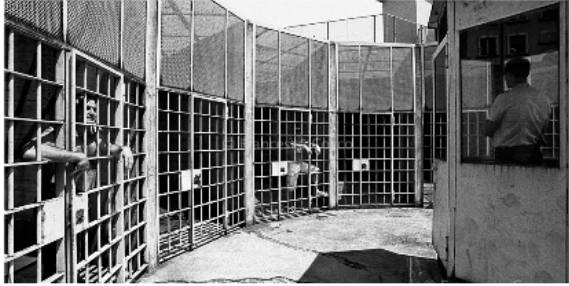
panopticism and surveillance

panopticon by Jeremy Bentham

a nineteenth century prison system in which prison cells were arranged around a central watchtower from which the supervisor could watch inmates, yet the inmates could never be certain when they were being watched, therefore, over time, they began to police their own behaviour.



<http://www.thetunistimes.com/2013/09/thirty-prisoners-still-run-gabes-tunisia-63526/>



<http://libertecture.wordpress.com/2013/12/27/third-post-on-architecture-technology-and-liberty>

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<http://www.thepohtimes.com/n2/world/uk-to-monitor-e-mail-web-use-213653.html>

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