

# Althusser's Structural Thinking and Gender Awareness Criticism in Film

**Chen xiaoxiao**

*Fuzhou Foreign Trade College, Fuzhou 350202, China*

**ABSTRACT.** *Louis Pierre Althusser is a famous French Marxist philosopher and an orthodox advocate against the threat of bourgeois ideology. His writings are quite abundant and extremely critical. Among them, the most influential and controversial is the ideological view elucidated on the basis of structuralist thinking. The elaboration of this article is based on this theory, with the help of "movie" This capitalist society's ideological media machine introduces Freud's psychoanalysis and Lacan's "mirror phase" theory to explore the mechanism by which white male-centric patriarchal movie creation conceals and unconsciously suppresses female images. The call to the potential male audience subject creates a type of imaginative (female) visual representation that fits the male center. The theoretical characteristics of this article are more reflected in the development of Jung's "collective unconsciousness" in the third part, facing the new connotation of capitalist social gender ideology in the new period.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Ideology, Imaginative relationship, Movie machine, Subject interpellation, Cultural unconsciousness*

## 1. Introduction

Traditional Marxism believes that as long as women eliminate economic inequalities, the oppressed reality is naturally lifted. This kind of assertion stems from a mechanical materialistic understanding-the view that "the economic foundation necessarily determines the superstructure", however Actually, it has been shown that the status of women has not been substantially improved because of her promotion at the political, economic and class levels. The essence of capital society reproduction reminds us: "The reproduction of labor is not only a reproduction of labor skills, but also requires a kind of reproduction that attaches to the rules of the existing order, that is, people reproduce psychologically under the rule of ideology" (Chen Yue 325). The patriarchal society represses women's ideology through reproduction, consolidating the control of women from the cultural level. In general, the status quo of women's survival is not as cruel and realistic as the theoretical description, and it cannot even be said to be unsatisfactory and unhappy. In the final analysis, the ideological machine built by the patriarchal society is not always in a compulsive manner. Appeared, and even always hoped that women could find

rationality and satisfaction in their relationship with the reality of patriarchal society, according to Althusser: "Ideology expresses the imaginary relationship between individuals and living conditions" (Chen Yue 353), this imaginary relationship is associated with people's unconsciousness, there is a hidden nature. As a result, the female subject of the male society was constructed by the "collective unconscious" defined by structuralism. It is "nothing thing...just a pure dream...a non-historical structure..." (Chen Yue 350). When women, as an individual with self-spirit and consciousness, are summoned by the ideological machine controlled by men, and unconsciously identify with a subordinate status and other status, we can appreciate the concealment of capitalist ideology. Women create hallucinations with oppressive nature, and the camera is a perfect device that can create such hallucinations. It looks like the product of capitalist social science and technology, but it is actually a full ideological machine in which it is copied and regenerated. An obscured gender relationship was finally written into the movie text in the form of an "inscription". This article uses Marx's reproduction theory, Freud's psychoanalysis, Jung's prototype theory and other methods as tools, and aims to expose how male movie creation mechanisms (such as Hollywood) implement a kind of female subjective level (although unconsciously) Manipulation, and how to distort women's true connection through reappearance, realize control and influence in the spiritual, psychological realm and material reality.

## **2. Women's Visual Structure and Psychoanalysis**

The obvious fact is that in the male film creation mechanism, women are often displayed as a sexual spectacle and coded into the narrative, and they simultaneously become the dual visual and lust objects of male characters and male audiences. They are usually voluptuous, sexy and charming, admired and admired by men; but there is no shortage of heart-wrenching, mysterious "scorpion girls" who suffer from exclusion and punishment, regardless of what kind of situation is a priori imagination Types actually show the results of unconscious operation, because the film unconsciously constructs a symbolic symbol system of desire.

"In terms of psychoanalysis, the female figure poses a deeper question. She implies watching something that revolves around and denies: she has no penis, which means the threat of castration, and therefore brings unhappiness." (Mulvey 840). As the existence of male castration anxiety in the subconscious mind of women, on the one hand, the anxiety substitutes (legs, long hair, etc.) can be used to eliminate anxiety. Such roles are usually watched and cared for, and the other is denounced because of the absence of the penis. Potentially wiped out. Women are often regulated by certain male signs in movies, which is why they are often presented in a certain image. Freud's theory of psychoanalysis provides a more complete explanation for the above. On this basis, the British feminist filmmaker Laura Mulvey summarized the male viewing behavior in two categories: "First, voyeurism, its source The pleasure gained by using others as the object of sexual stimulation through vision; second, it is developed through narcissistic complex and self-construction, which comes from the recognition of the images it sees" (Mulvey

836). The former is derived from human sexual instincts, while the latter is “self-powered function” (836), that is, when men cross the “mirror stage” (Lagang), they begin to internalize the explicit language (image) Order, unifying heterogeneous self, and suppressing anxiety [Lacan's “mirror stage” theory holds that when the baby enters the symbolic order, the “law of the father” is internalized and accompanied by the suppression of the mother's lack, which is used instead. Language refers to this absence, in the text this refers to the male image language. ], and the regulated female images are expected to release potential anxiety, so the “female type” that often appears in Hollywood male creative mechanisms is actually a structure that precedes experience [“a priori structure” is a structuralist term , Which refers to the structure that precedes experience, is an idealistic idea, and Althusser, Jung, etc. have related expressions. While there exists, it summons the audience's suppressed desires and eventually reaches a certain identity. As Althusser said, “Ideology summons the individual as the subject.” The secret of Hollywood's male movie narrative oppression of women lies here: The audience is constructed as the subject through the type imagination, and the deep structure of this type of image already exists a priori.

There are still doubts in the above discussion that have not been clarified: the arousal and recognition of the a priori structure of the patriarchal society depends on the prerequisite of inducing visual pleasure, and to what extent can the behavior of watching the movie call the audience as the subject? Laura Mulvey did not discuss it. She only mentioned “gaze” and “peep”. This just led to new arguments, and still did not explain the film's identity mechanism. Althusser in his article “Ideology and the State Machine of Ideology” puts forward the idea that ideology is a “pure dream” (although there must be understandable substitutes), but “dreams are subconscious work, movies Is the creation of consciousness” (Dai Jinhua 117). This dream about the imaginative relationship of gender is constructed by the falseness and lies in the movie. The key to the question is to what extent can watching behavior be equivalent to dreaming? Professor Dai Jinhua believes that “movies and dreams have very similar characteristics and functions. The reason why we call mainstream movies DreamWorks is precisely because the stories we watch in theaters, the satisfaction and pleasure we get come from exactly what we live in. “Lack of regret and lack” (117), furthermore, the environment of the cinema provides the audience with the possibility of dreaming.

### **3. Constructing the Transcendental Viewer's Subject-the “Masculine” Effect of the Film Machine**

Obviously, the dreaming mechanism and the movie viewing mechanism cannot be simply equated. The dream is disordered and chaotic, and the movie is logical and specified, but in the end, they can all get an imaginative satisfaction. Professor Dai Jinhua defines the behavior of watching the movie In order to “daydream”, she believes that “in Freud's exposition, dreams and daydreams have no essential difference, it can be said that dreams, daydreams, and hallucinations constitute the same type of desire realization” (Dai Jinhua 117) In this sense, the construction and

realization of the imaginative relationship in the movie image is based on the subject's "daydream" identity mechanism: the dark and silent environment of the cinema relaxes the human "superego"[ Freud divides people's psychological structure into three parts: self-self, self, and super-ego. "Super-ego" is internalized by the social moral values. ], the audience was able to avoid the symbolic order and enter the imaginary world, "voyeur" and "gaze" were induced, Lacan's so-called "mirror stage" began to restart, the oppressive nature of the gender relationship between men and women was extremely hidden on this basis The Dasein is hidden by desire, and the material of the camera is really involved in the collusion.

Inspired by Althusser's "Ideology and the Ideological State Machine", Jean-Louis Baudry published "The Ideological Effects of Basic Film Machines" which challenged the objective reality of the camera "(optical instrument)'s technical nature Have they masked their use in manufacturing ideological products? They have also masked the ideological effects they may cause. Their scientific basis guarantees their neutrality..." (20). Although the photographic installation was invented in the name of scientific and technological rationality, the production of this knowledge has already entered the category of ideological reproduction. "Renaissance optical perspective" has potentially set each viewer as the subject, "The resulting ideology is linked to the ideology attached to the perspective method" (21) confirms Althusser's point of view: "There is no ideology that does not rely on the subject and exists for these subjects... the subject is Summoned" (Chen Yue 361). There is a possibility of collusion between the seemingly objective but non-neutral visual installation described by Baldri and the "gaze" behavior discussed by Laura Mulvey. However, an obvious fact is that such a visual center can only be a male visual center, and Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, is also a typical patriarch. Under this premise, as a female perspective Only by keeping the vision consistent with the male can the identity be generated.

In Hollywood movies, the main male characters are naturally considered to be the controllers of the entire situation, depending on the camera's potential to construct them as the viewing subject (the camera is presented in an objective or subjective point of view), while the male audience watches the male characters watch , The audience subconsciously through the imagination of the relationship, and the "self" refers to "other" [Lacan's "mirror stage" theory, that the baby in the process of 6 to 18 months, the child in front of the mirror experienced The first stage of the process is to refer to the child in the mirror as another child, which is a process of misrecognizing "self" as "other". ]'S instinct, from the visual level to the spiritual level, equates itself with the male hero role. This male dual viewing mechanism is most intuitively reflected in a "peeping" theme. Director Hitchcock never concealed his preference for "voyeurism". In the movie "Back Window", the male protagonist passively observes the anomalous events in the opposite apartment through a peeping way because of his temporary loss of mobility. At this moment, the audience experiences a double visual identity, both with the male protagonist trapped in a wheelchair. The visual center identity generated by using the telescope device also recognized the desire of the self; the heroine connected to the other end of the line of sight not only became the object of voyeurism in the film, but was also

witnessed for being punished for breaking into the apartment. The whole process, assuming the function of a potential sex-satisfier, finally accepted the hero's rescue without any surprise. In such a field of images, women are reduced to an imaginary signifier, and become the absurd representation of lust.

#### **4. The Change of Imaginary Relationship: from Collective Unconsciousness to Cultural Unconsciousness**

Althusser's exposition on ideology has benefited to a great extent from Marx's exposition in "German Ideology". Although he mentioned the idealistic concept of "transcendental structure", we can't deny his materialism at all. He interpreted ideology as an "imaginary work", that is, a state machine of material form, which is essentially consistent with the orthodox Marxist concept that ideology can reflect material production relations, but the effect of the former is determined by the state. The machine is "summoned", and the latter is more like the "casting" of material practice. Therefore, if viewed from the perspective of ideological criticism, Althusser's theory is more critical, exposing the more subtle oppressive nature of the capital society. It was on this basis that Louis Baudry questioned and challenged the objectivity of the film machine.

According to the above discussion, it is not difficult to see that the film machine itself as an ideological product must continually and implicitly reproduce the relationship that implies material reality. As mentioned above, the relationship between seeing and being seen in men and women in Hollywood movies, women become the object of being watched, but the content and form of such encoded images are not always the same (although they are quite concealed). Dai Jinhua believes that ideology can "provide an overall imaginative picture, which means that everyone can find their legal or fatal position in it, and accept the legal narrative about their current position" (187), which comes from a further description of Althusser's "imaginary sexual relationship", but the "legal position" mentioned in it not only intuitively reduces the imaginative satisfaction of men and women at the individual or instinct level, but also includes a imaginative satisfaction at a cultural or political level. Obviously, the image of women on the Hollywood screen today is very different from the classic period. It is no longer just stared at by naked male eyes. This does not mean that women's oppressive status is gradually eliminated, but should be attributed to the traditional relationship between men and women. The improvement of the concept of the imaginary relationship caused by the improvement of the concept, that is, the change of the concept and cultural system (such as the gradual rise of the feminist consciousness) caused a new internalization of the unconscious level, resulting in a change.

#### **5. Conclusion**

American feminist Kate Millett put forward the viewpoint of "personal and political" in her doctoral thesis "Sex Politics", in which she criticized a large number of male literary texts, all of which made the actual life of women personal and men's

Political oppression is related, although it is biased, it has to some extent warned of the gender political lies that exist in the male-dominated world where female groups live. What is worrying is that this gender ideology is never mandatory, but concealed and natural. It is also the functional characteristics of the national ideological machine mentioned by Althusser. The neutral identity of his technological rational product and the ontological characteristics of the reality of life have become the best image illusion device to eliminate differences and unify order. Therefore, for feminist film creators, it is necessary to see the pseudo-essential nature of the ideology in the film mechanism, and to use their spears and attack their shields, not only to treat artistic creation as a weapon for political rights, but also Only by cleverly walking in the male language order and opening up a place for female language can the subject itself be awakened in order to achieve true freedom and liberation from the spiritual to the practical level.

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