



Moral Spectatorship: Technologies of Voice and Affect in Postwar Representations of the Child

Lisa Cartwright

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Why were theories of affect, intersubjectivity, and object relations bypassed in favor of a Lacanian linguistically oriented psychoanalysis in feminist film theory in the 1980s and 1990s? In *Moral Spectatorship*, Lisa Cartwright rethinks the politics of spectatorship in film studies. Returning to impasses reached in late-twentieth-century psychoanalytic film theory, she focuses attention on theories of affect and object relations seldom addressed during that period. Cartwright offers a new theory of spectatorship and the human subject that takes into account intersubjective and affective relationships and technologies facilitating human agency. Seeking to expand concepts of representation beyond the visual, she develops her theory through interpretations of two contexts in which adult caregivers help bring children to voice. She considers several social-problem melodramas about deaf and nonverbal girls and young women, including *Johnny Belinda*, *The Miracle Worker*, and *Children of a Lesser God*. Cartwright also analyzes the controversies surrounding facilitated communication, a technological practice in which caregivers help children with communication disorders achieve “voice” through writing facilitated by computers. This practice has inspired contempt among professionals and lay people who charge that the facilitator can manipulate the child’s speech.

For more than two decades, film theory has been dominated by a model of identification tacitly based on the idea of feeling what the other feels or of imagining oneself to be the other. Building on the theories of affect and identification developed by André Green, Melanie Klein, Donald W. Winnicott, and Silvan Tomkins, Cartwright develops a model of spectatorship that takes into account and provides a way of critically analyzing the dynamics of a different kind of identification, one that is empathetic and highly intersubjective.

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