

ang070 S/Ü "Key Concepts in Cultural Studies"

Assignment 2: Identity, Discourse, Media – Gender and Representation

This assignment is a mandatory part of your portfolio and needs to be handed in on time. It is ungraded but a sample solution will be published on the Institutswiki. Additionally, you can receive feedback in the office hours of your respective instructors.

Please make sure to submit your assignment online (name the pdf-file according to our specifications and upload it to a homework folder on Stud.IP). Every assignment must include a cover sheet and the statement on plagiarism. Present your results in complete sentences. You may write up to three pages of text, according to the formatting specifications of our style sheet. Any text beyond the first three pages will be ignored.

1. Formal and media-specific analysis

1.1. Describe the photographic portrait by addressing the visual design (set decoration; lighting; dominant colours; costume; make-up and hairdo; acting) and the cinematographic design as suggested in the photograph (e.g., arrangement in front of the camera; camera distance, camera angle; focus).

visual design

- set decoration: a male figure (Arnold Schwarzenegger) seated on horseback; placed in front of a fence and against the backdrop of a landscape of fields, hills, and woods; title of the photograph reveals that the location is Malibu, California
- lighting: high-key lighting; illuminates the male figure on horseback; esp. muscular left arm
- colour scheme/ dominant colours: black and white photograph; contrast directs viewer's attention towards the white horse and the white trousers at the centre of the photograph
- costume: topless; white and very tight riding trousers with a black belt and black riding boots with buckles; cigar between lips; horse: holster; no saddle
- makeup and hairdo: makeup suggests a natural look; oiled body; short but not military-style, combed back hair; horse: well-groomed; holster and bit
- acting: Schwarzenegger posing on a white horse without a saddle while smoking a cigar; in profile; looking forward, away from the camera, but leans back; gesture suggests superiority, enjoyment, satisfaction but also clearly pronounces his muscular body; contrast: while Schwarzenegger holds his head up high, looking at the horizon, the horse is bending its head in a docile manner (still, attentive, obedient).

cinematographic design

- arrangement in front of the camera: Schwarzenegger's posing figure and the upper part of the horse fill the entire space; Arnold in the centre of the frame
- camera distance: medium shot
- camera angle: low(er)-angle, putting Schwarzenegger in a superior, powerful position
- focus: shallow focus, highlighting Schwarzenegger in the foreground
- [point of view: zero ocularization]

1.2. Identify the major discourses in the photograph. Provide evidence for the discourses from the photograph. Consider visuals (rather than "terms / vocabulary"), subject positions and settings.

main discourses:

- gender ((hyper-)masculinity: topless; muscular body; cigar as phallic symbol; not needing a saddle; short hair)
- sex (sexual dominance: riding the horse; holding on to holster; on top; pleased facial expression; crotch at the centre of the photograph; cigar as phallic symbol; horse in submissive position; leather belt; holster and boots; no saddle)
- race (whiteness: white and very tight riding trousers; white horse; high-key lighting; whiteness at the centre of the photograph; black and white photograph; contrast)
- body/ body culture: muscular arms and upper body; oiled body; hair short but not military-style; arrangement in the frame underlines the monumentality and shape of the bodies of the male figure (Schwarzenegger) and the horse; low(er)-angle
- class/ privilege: status symbols of the horse and the cigar; expensive/elegant riding trousers and boots; well-groomed appearance of the white horse
- nationality: Schwarzenegger construed as self-made American man/ bodybuilder/ actor; importance of whiteness; low(er)-angle; lighting, medium shot, etc.

discursive interactions:

- The photograph heavily draws on normative cultural positions, here dominantly racial, sexual and gendered positions, but also intentionally exaggerates, exposes and parodies these
- The photograph makes intentional use of heterosexual male drag: hyperwhiteness and hypermasculinity are represented with clearly ironic and even camp undertones in order to comment on/expose the discourses of whiteness, masculinity, etc. as allegedly dominant/naturalized social constructs

2. Functional analysis: Toward a problem-oriented sample analysis

Based on the findings from your formal and media-specific analysis, provide a coherently written analysis of this photographic portrait, i.e. one that identifies and states a clear research problem and moreover, addresses the following points:

2.1. the discursive construction of identity through representation in the media;

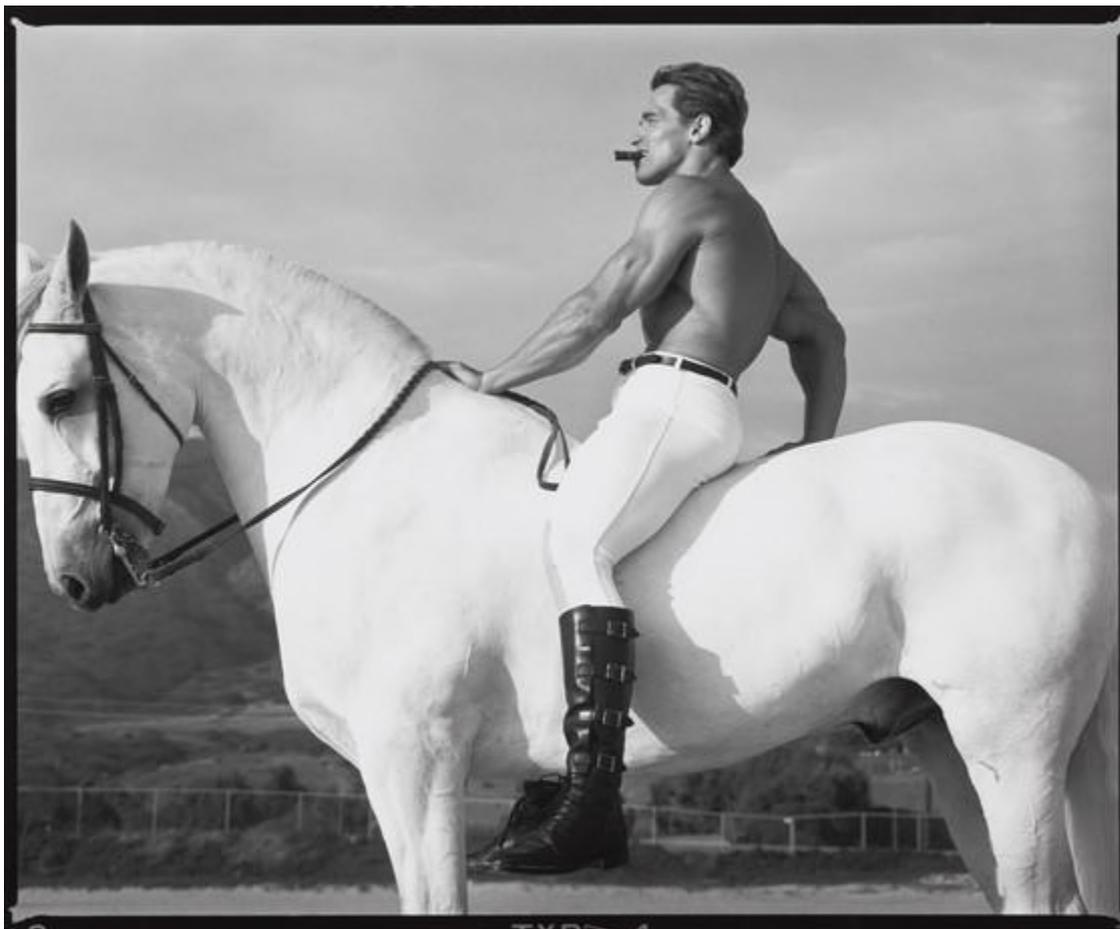
- examining discourse and power, e.g. the staging of white masculine dominance, heteronormativity as related to American imperialism
- exploring the performance of heterosexual male drag and its parodic effects
- analyzing the parody of white male American hypersexuality
- analysing the (ironic and/or parodic) identity construction (and/or (self-)fashioning) of Schwarzenegger as an American actor, bodybuilder, self-made man, "big shot", maybe even leader in waiting
- exploring the cultural construction of "Californication" with regard to the national, spatial and bodily contexts
- examining the connection between discourse and power with a specific focus on nation, masculinity, whiteness, class, ...

2.2 . Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity.

- Gender performativity refers to the idea that any gender is socially and culturally produced through the imitation and repetition of idealized concepts of masculinity / femininity, etc.; however, any individual gender performance may affirm, comment on, deconstruct or intentionally fail to reproduce these idealized concepts in order to irritate and disempower them
- Schwarzenegger's performance of (hyper-)masculinity is produced through the repetition and imitation of allegedly normative masculine ideals
- However: this photograph shows an intentionally marked gender performance that highlights the constructedness of masculinity through exaggeration by producing an ironic/parodic staging of Schwarzenegger's athletic, white, and monumental body
- Heterosexual drag marks a deliberately "flawed" imitation of the allegedly normative masculinity in order to irritate the norm and to deconstruct normative stereotypes

3. Lecture

In a concluding paragraph, relate your analysis to knowledge and skills from the lecture.



Leibovitz, Annie. "Arnold Schwarzenegger, Malibu, California, 1988." *At Work*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2008. 81.