



World Spectators (Cultural Memory in the Present)

Kaja Silverman

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Combining phenomenology and psychoanalysis in highly innovative ways, this book seeks to undo the binary opposition between appearance and Being that has been in place since Plato's parable of the cave. It is, essentially, an essay on what could be called "world love," the possibility and necessity for psychic survival of a profound and vital erotic investment by a human being in the cosmic surround. Here, the author takes her cue from Freud's assertion that the "loss of reality" associated with psychosis is a function of a disturbance not in the capacity to reason or perceive, but rather in the capacity for world love, the libidinal and semiotic circuitry by means of which such love actualizes itself.

In an implicit challenge to poststructuralist thought, the author claims that this love is always in response to a call issued by the world—that the world has, as it were, a vocation: its beauty ought to be seen. We must think of our own being-in-the world as a response to a primordial calling out to respond to this beauty. We are, the author suggests, at the very core of our being, summoned to what she terms world spectatorship.

Drawing on Heidegger's phenomenological elaboration of care as the being distinctive of human being and the primarily Lacanian conceptualization of the language of desire specific to each human subject, this metapsychology of love attempts to integrate issues in the fields of psychoanalysis, philosophy, visual culture, art history, and literary and film studies.

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