

Questions for seminar: New Media and Gender

Everywhere poll questions.

Extract from Barker, C. and Jane, E. A. (2016) *Cultural Studies, Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.

p.275 'Ideas that challenge the notion of an essential human self or identity have been dubbed posthumanism – a concept that covers a variety of themes including the philosophy of the subject, bio-power, genetic engineering...technoscience and the status of animals. Broadly speaking the philosophy of posthumanism displaces the idea of the whole person as being the most significant level of analysis and understanding...

p.276 'The ideas associated with posthumanism are increasingly being expressed in concrete form, which is why they are of particular interest to cultural studies. For example, Donna Haraway argues in her *Manifesto for Cyborgs* (1985) that technologies that enhance the human body...are blurring the boundaries between human bodies and machines...genetic engineering raises questions about what it is to be human and whether we can maintain a human identity if we intervene in the construction of the body.

Question:

1. How might gender relate to the concept of posthuman?

Extract from Barker, C. and Jane, E. A. (2016) *Cultural Studies, Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.

Question:

1. p.395: How is a cyborg defined? How does the concept of a cyborg relate to gender? Can you think of any examples e.g. from film or television?

Extract from Barker, C. and Jane, E. A. (2016) *Cultural Studies, Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.

p.395 'The invisibility of the body that cyberspace allows [and] enables a fluidity of identity which is useful, she argues, when one's identity – as a woman – is a liability. Further she suggests that the network thinking style of cyberspace has made the masculine single-mindedness of patriarchy obsolete. Instead, she suggests that a shifting contextual existence, which has always been necessary for women, becomes the norm in cyberculture.

p.397 'the idea that cyberspace would free people from gender because they were invisible and able to construct identities at will has been strongly critiqued...the desire to push gender boundaries on the internet has been hindered by the platform itself and the wider power of patriarchal systems. For example, avatars are constrained by western ideals of beauty... and behaviour coded as masculine or feminine in culture is carried over into cyber gaming. Even many non-human avatars come in recognisably male or female options.'

Questions

1. Does the internet/cyberspace free us from gender or not? How do you engage online in relation to you gender? Do you reinforce your gendered identity, or do you feel invisible and able to construct genderless identities – what about on platforms like Instagram or Facebook?

Extract from Barker, C. and Jane, E. A. (2016) *Cultural Studies, Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.

p.397 regarding the World of Warcraft ‘...gender representations in the game are diverse, multiple and plural. Although the game contains mostly male heroes, there are important female characters. Women are also included in traditionally masculine positions and there are alternative feminised roles for men. While the marketing and packaging of the game still heavily sexualise female characters, individual players can choose how revealing to make them...’ Gender is present in World of Warcraft in many ways, but it is not necessarily insistent or obvious, and sometimes it is not even meaningful – or at least, it is not given meaning through the game design itself.’ (Corneliuseen, 2008:81 cited in Barker and Jane, 2016:397).

Question:

1. How might role playing games challenge and or reinforce gender norms? Discuss.

Extract from Barker, C. and Jane, E. A. (2016) *Cultural Studies, Theory and Practice*. London: Sage.

p.397 ‘The idea that the internet is predominantly liberating for women has been undermined by stark increases in the volume of gendered hate speech online. In recent years, cyberhate in the form of rape threats and sexualised vitriol has become part of the everyday experience for many female internet users. ..This is especially true in gamer communities where some commentators have argued that the ‘misogynist backlash’ is so virulent it constitutes a form of terrorism.’

Question:

1. Why do you think there is so much gendered hate speech online? What are the implications of this?