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Inner Space Mirror Test

Inner Space Mirror Test (2019): <https://vimeo.com/317439202>

In this essay, I will discuss the performative cinematic experience undertaken for the assignment, which involves me watching my own experimental video, Inner Space Mirror Test (2019). The video is a collection of digital media, including approximately 100 MRI scans of my brain that I collected through the course of receiving numerous various brain scans, which I used as keyframes which I put together as an animation in Adobe PRemiere to create a 3D model of my brain. The film also includes images from the space telescope and sound recordings made during the MRI scan.

I was intrigued by the concept of the mirror test, a measure of self-awareness often used in childhood development. It was first developed by psychologist Gordon Gallup in 1970, and it involves placing a mark on a child's face and then observing their reaction when they see their reflection in a mirror. If the child touches or tries to remove the mark on their own face, it is taken as evidence that they recognize the reflection as their own and have a sense of self-awareness [1].

I found that creating this video allowed me to "see" inwardly in a new way and gain a new awareness of myself. Through this process I discovered that my brain scans revealed neurological differences that are typical of childhood trauma survivors, which I had never considered before. Despite knowing my history, something shifted in seeing these "brain scars". The experience of physical therapy had a significant impact on my life and my brain, and

creating this video allowed them to see my neurological challenges in a new light. I named the film "Inner Self Mirror Test" because it allowed me to see more deeply into myself and gain a new level of self-awareness. I thought it would be interesting to use the film for this class assignment/experiment and see if watching themselves at this point in time raises any new awareness. As I watched my own experimental video, Inner Space Mirror Test (2019), I was curious about how my own subjectivity was shaping my experience. Reflecting on the work of Casetti (2009) and Bazin (2005), I realized that the filmic experience is not just about cognitive understanding of the film, but also involves affective and embodied responses.

Casetti emphasizes the role of the viewer's subjectivity in shaping their experience of a film, since each viewer brings their own cultural background, personal history, and emotional response to the cinematic experience. This subjectivity is not a hindrance to understanding or appreciating a film but rather an essential part of the filmic experience, as it allows viewers to engage with the film on a personal and emotional level. Casetti states that "the filmic text acquires its meaning only through its interaction with the spectator, who provides a context for its interpretation" (Casetti 2). He explores how various sensory and perceptual processes, such as sound, image, and movement, shape the filmic experience. Casetti argues that cinema engages our senses and emotions, creating a sensory envelope that envelops us in the filmic world. He asserts that the filmic experience is not just about cognitive understanding of the film, but also involves affective and embodied responses, stating "the filmic experience is not only cognitive but also sensorial, affective, and emotional" (Casetti 8). Casetti asserts that the filmic experience is not passive but active and dynamic, as viewers continuously negotiate their position in relation to the filmic text. He argues that viewers are not just observers but active participants who make sense of the film by constructing their own meanings and interpretations. Casetti's work

emphasizes the subjectivity of the filmic experience and argues that viewers actively construct meaning and engage with cinema through various sensory and perceptual processes. The filmic experience is not just about cognitive understanding but also involves affective and embodied responses (Casetti 22).

In *The Myth of Total Cinema* (2005), Andre Bazin challenges the idea of cinema as a completely immersive and objective medium, arguing instead for the importance of subjectivity in the viewer's experience. Bazin argues that the invention of sound and color in cinema did not lead to a total cinema, as some had predicted, but rather reinforced the subjective nature of the medium (24). He asserts that cinema has the ability to depict reality objectively, but the viewer's subjective perception of that reality is what gives it meaning (26). Bazin further contends that the viewer's subjectivity is also influenced by their cultural background and personal experiences (27). He suggests that a film's impact on the viewer depends on their ability to identify with the characters and the events depicted on screen, which is influenced by their own experiences and cultural background (29). Bazin notes that the viewer's subjectivity is not a hindrance to the appreciation of cinema but rather a necessary element for the creation of meaning and interpretation (31).

In my own experience watching *Inner Space Mirror Test* (2019), I found that my own subjectivity played a significant role in shaping my understanding of the film. My personal history and emotional response to the content of the film influenced how I interpreted and made sense of it. Overall, my performative cinematic experience provided me with a unique perspective on self-awareness and the role of digital media in shaping our understanding of ourselves, and I gained a deeper appreciation for the subjectivity inherent in the filmic experience.

Works Cited

1. Barwick, Leanna. "Inner Space Mirror Test" 2019, <https://vimeo.com/317439202>.
2. Gallup, G. G., Jr. (1970). Chimpanzees: Self-recognition. *Science*, 167(3914), 86-87.
3. Casetti, Francesco. "Filmic Experience." *Screen* 50, no. 1 (2009): 56-66.
4. Bazin, Andre. "The Myth of Total Cinema." In *What is Cinema: Volume 1.*, 17-21. Los Angeles: California University Press, 2005