Notes on verisimilitude and the socialization of marginality.

1. The human desire for entertainment (genetically determined? Perhaps).
2. Leads to an eternal and insatiable quest for verisimilitude.
3. Leads to the invention of cinema/television (and mass visual entertainment).
4. Requires expensive technology (production, and distribution).
5. Requires large financial outlays—especially because films are a gamble.
6. Requires marketing to as large an audience as possible to recoup the financial investment.
7. Requires themes and depictions that are in consonance with the outlook of the majority of the audience—Euro-Americans, males, etc.
8. In the areas of race/ gender/ class relations these themes and depictions will play to pre-existing racist/ sexist/ class stereotypes, as well as act to reinforce them. In other words: There is a ***dialectical*** relationship between, say, racism and sexism in film, and racism and sexism in society at large.
9. Also leads to "textual erasure" of blacks, women, etc. from scenes and storylines altogether—as if they don't exist in society at all.
10. Final outcome: leads to socialization of "marginality" of blacks, women, the working class, etc. (because films have become a powerful medium of socialization in general).

Note further:

Independent cinema is under less pressure to subscribe to the above scenario, than "Hollywood" cinema.

"Textual erasure" refers to the non-inclusion of a group of people for discriminatory reasons. This is most clearly visible at the time of film casting where ordinary roles, which in real life could be performed by anyone (including blacks, women, etc.), are assigned exclusively to whites or males. Textual erasure results from stereotypes or outright racism/sexism on the part of filmmakers. For example, the stereotype that blacks occupy only lower class positions in society [which of course is not entirely true]—therefore film roles featuring middle or upper class positions should not be assigned to black actors. A group who are almost always targets of textual erasure in films (for racist reasons) are Asians—even though many of them in this country are middle class and professionals.

"Stereotypes" refers to the generalization of a quality in an individual to an entire group of people that the individual belongs to. (Note, therefore, that stereotypes by definition dehumanize those who are stereotyped.) Stereotypes are created by artists (writers, actors, filmmakers, painters, musicians, comedians, journalists, etc.) in order to justify discrimination and prejudice. The newest stereotype popularized in the West in recent years—especially following 9/11—is that Arab and Asian Muslims are all terrorists. Some stereotypes can go out of fashion because of changed circumstances (e.g. the stereotype that all Russians are communists is no longer in vogue today.)

"Marginality" refers to pushing people to the margins of society by means of prejudice and discrimination.

"Socialization" refers to the process of passing values, norms, mores, etc. from one group of people to another—e.g. from the older generation (parents) to the younger generation (children), or from a peer-group to a new member of the group.

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