FILM THEORY

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Abstract

Six exemplary works of film theory, published in 2018-19, receive consideration in this chapter: Johannes Riis and Aaron Taylor's anthology *Screening Characters: Theories of Character in Film, Television, and Interactive Media* (Routledge); Murray Pomerance's *Virtuoso: Film Performance and the Actor's Magic* (Bloomsbury Academic); Jonathan Kirshner and Jon Lewis's edited collection *When the Movies Mattered: The New Hollywood Revisited* (Cornell University Press); Jeff Menne's *Post-Fordist Cinema: Hollywood Auteurs and the Corporate Counterculture* (Columbia University Press); Wieland Schwanebeck and Douglas McFarland's edited volume *Patricia Highsmith on Screen* (Springer Berlin Heidelberg); and Clara Bradbury-Rance's *Lesbian Cinema after Queer Theory* (Edinburgh University Press). The chapter is organized into three sections: 1. Character Engagement and Performance; 2. Revisiting the New Hollywood; 3. A Highsmith Hinge.

1. Character Engagement and Performance

Edited by Johannes Riis and Aaron Taylor, *Screening Characters* investigates 'what it means to engage with moving image characters' (p. 13). Accordingly, the book explores character engagement in a variety of screen media, from television to video games, while devoting prime attention to cinematic case studies. Murray Smith – whose *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* (Oxford University Press, 1995) remains the definitive study of character engagement and film – supplies the book's stimulating curtain raiser, his Foreword probing the interrelation between characters and stars (an issue taken up by other authors in this volume). Smith's appetizer, along with the editors' terrain-mapping Introduction, establishes *Screening Characters*' affinity with cognitivism, the virtues of which are amply demonstrated throughout the collection. All the same, *Screening Characters* plays host to a wide range of methodological approaches, each of them illuminating the subject of character engagement in richly invigorating and sometimes provocative ways.

Apropos of star performance, Ted Nannicelli's chapter grapples with a long-standing paradox broached in Smith's Foreword. In order to become absorbed in a screen fiction, viewers must 'bracket' their cognizance of the fiction's artifice. Inimical to this process, it would seem, is the presence of highly recognizable screen stars. Yet some artworks actively exploit the star's familiar persona – the better, apparently, to generate spectatorial absorption and textual appreciation. Nannicelli capsulizes the star paradox in the following example: What makes Chesley Sullenberger, the protagonist of *Sully* (2016), such a credible everyman? In part, the characterization of Sullenberger gains cogency through the casting of Tom Hanks, piggybacking on the cluster of likeable figures – from Jim Lovell (*Apollo 13*, 1995) to James B. Donovan (*Bridge of Spies*, 2015) – with which we associate Hanks' screen image (p. 25). But if *Sully* cues us to recall Hanks' past roles, how can we properly construe Hanks as Sullenberger? Such is the paradox of star acting.

Nannicelli conceptualizes our engagement with star performance in terms of 'seeing-as.' We see Tom Hanks *as* Sullenberger, Cary Grant *as* Roger Thornhill (*North by Northwest*, 1959), Michael J. Fox *as* Marty McFly (*Back to the Future*, 1985). At the same time as we optically perceive Hanks on screen, we imagine him to be Sullenberger. Screen fictions tap our bimodal capacities, so it follows that this imaginative process engages our auditory system as well. Just as we *see* Jack Nicholson as Colonel Jessep in *A Few Good Men* (1992), so we hear Nicholson's familiar, gravelly drawl and imagine it to be shared by Jessep (p. 30). Thus our experience of screen acting entails not only seeing-as but hearing-as. The antinomy of star acting, Nannicelli maintains, is 'often dissolved by our ability to imagine the star *as* the character…The character looks and sounds like what the star [looks and] sounds like' (p. 34).

Not that seeing-as can't be stymied. So gargantuan is Nicholson's star persona that it eclipses his character, Dr Buddy Rydell, in *Anger Management* (2003) (p. 25). In such cases, seeing-as is blocked: we don't see Nicholson as Dr Rydell, we just see Nicholson (or rather, Nicholson's star persona). Most injuriously, such cases can contravene the artwork's intended effects (p. 26). Nannicelli cites as an instance Al Pacino as Colonel Frank Slade in *Scent of a Woman* (1992). A climactic scene intended to be affecting founders because Pacino's persona discombobulates seeing-as; thus, Pacino renders the film artistically defective. Add to this that Pacino's role in *Scent of a Woman* recalls '[his] similar performance in *…And Justice for*

All (1979),' partly thanks to echoic dialogue ('Out of order? I'll *show* you out of order!') (p. 26). In all, Pacino's pre-established and outsize persona hobbles not only our imaginative construction of character, but the film's expressive aims as well.

This example reminds us that filmmakers, when working with veteran stars, must calibrate the kind of on-the-nose intertextuality that Nannicelli finds in *Scent of a Woman*. I'm reminded of a deleted scene from *About Schmidt* (2002), in which Jack Nicholson's timorous retiree unsuccessfully requests menu 'substitutions' from an obdurate waitress – a flagrant send-up of Nicholson's celebrated diner tantrum in *Five Easy Pieces* (1970). Director Alexander Payne excised the scene fearing precisely the sort of distancing effect that Nannicelli theorizes.

Nannicelli mounts a fascinating thesis, but, for this reader at least, Nicholson and Pacino offer dubious illustration. To be sure, *Anger Management* cleaves tightly to Nicholson's extrafilmic persona. In one scene, Dr Rydell – a self-professed guru of mood control – vents his rage by smashing a golf club through a car window, a sly reference to a real-world 'road rage' incident involving Nicholson, a Mercedes-Benz, and a 2-iron. Certainly such moments are *conceived* as extratextual gags. At the same time, however, Nicholson doesn't wink at the camera; the fictional *character* remains intact – continuous, discrete, unified – even as the *situation* signals beyond the narrative to biographical events. *Anger Management*, I'd argue, attenuates the distinction between Dr Rydell and Nicholson without occluding seeing-as. Contra Nannicelli, I *do* see Nicholson as Dr Rydell and Pacino as Colonel Slade – this despite my pretty exhaustive familiarity with their respective oeuvres. One could quibble, too, with the claim that Pacino's performances in *…And Justice for All* and *Scent of a Woman* are all that alike. I'd aver that Pacino's persona, for all its iconicity, admits of quite striking variation among roles, even as 'Pacino' remains 'Pacino' (in the sense common to all stars) across his corpus of films. Such demurrals aside, Nannicelli offers a captivating solution to the paradox of star acting. By foregrounding the concepts of seeing-as and hearing-as, he fruitfully locates the viewer's imaginative activity at the heart of absorbed character engagement.

Inasmuch as Nannicelli's chapter attends equally to textual cues and spectatorial activity (a twin concern for cognitive media theorists), it typifies other chapters in the volume. Tico Romao considers how mainstream movies cue us to grasp characters not only as individuated agents but also as embodiments of social types. Viewers subsume characters to social categories on the basis of textual cues. This set of cues encompasses an array of visual signifiers, from bodily appearance (skin tone, facial features) and attire to a character's connotative social environment. Hence the racial identity of John Prentice (Sidney Poitier) is signalled by his physiognomy and skin colour in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967); Stella (Barbara Stanwyck) wears bedizened outfits that betray her low-class status in *Stella Dallas* (1937); and the Hispanic gang members of *Falling Down* (1993) trigger undesirable ethnic associations partly because they hail from a notoriously volatile Los Angeles neighbourhood (pp. 96-97). Auditory cues can aid social categorization too. Characters' vocal traits (speech, accent, dialect) foreground class difference in *My Fair Lady* (1964) and *Citizen Kane* (1941), while musical idioms can efficiently denote a character's social niche (as when a nondiegetic gong introduces a Chinese student in *Sixteen Candles* (1984)) (p. 98). More abstract are 'relational cues': here films indicate social types by depicting 'intergroup dynamics,' such as the group disparity between masters and serfs in *12 Years a Slave* (2013) (p. 98).

Aided by this 'taxonomy of textual cues,' the spectator can apply cognitive schemas to categorize characters as social types. Romao argues that viewers employ 'social category attribution' (e.g. mapping stereotypes onto fictive agents); they apply folk models (construing character psychology as being, to some degree, moulded by social background); and they embrace 'metonymic ascent' (interpreting a character as personifying a social group *in toto*). At times, Romao points out, the process of social categorization can become knotty, as when a character straddles multiple social categories. The delinquent youths of *Touch of Evil* (1958) are Mexican *and* young *and* members of a subversive counterculture. In such instances, Romao suggests, 'those [social categories] that are more strongly activated inhibit…those that are less activated' (p. 101). Romao concludes by espousing a 'poetics of social identity in film,' a mode of inquiry sensitive to both filmic form and sociohistorical contexts (p. 106).

That *Screening Characters* displays admirable pluralism in its themes and methodologies is further evident in Kathrina Glitre's study of *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944). Glitre charts the vicissitudes of this particular 'star vehicle' from casting and script development to performance, demonstrating by means of comparative analysis 'how screen characters are shaped through a process of "nonsimultaneous collaboration"' (p. 38). At the centre of this collaboration was Cary Grant, to whose screen image the film was tailored. Adapting Joseph Kesselring's stage play into a 'Cary Grant vehicle' required certain bespoke adjustments: the protagonist's romantic entanglements would be amplified, and his behaviour retrofitted to Grant's screwball acting style. An additional pressure, Glitre reveals, stemmed from the demands of classical Hollywood dramaturgy: Kesselring's story would need to place stress on psychological realism and goal-orientation. Shooting brought still further revisions, manifested in the finished film. By analysing Grant's integration of outré performative schtick (pratfalls, double takes) into an ongoing story, Glitre shows how a star persona – basically stable yet strikingly supple – can service both story and spectacle, even as it bends these parameters to its own unique specifications.

The book's final section considers characters as functions of genre. What distinguishes the dramatic heroes of, say, the quasi-realistic action movie from those of other genres? Birger Langkjær and Charlotte Sun Jensen, by way of ecological and embodied cognition theories, take up this particular example to profitable effect. According to the authors, the action hero is set apart by an extraordinary ability: when facing immediate peril, he perceives within the milieu improbable 'affordances' – 'future-oriented possibilities for actions' (p. 268) – by which to facilitate escape and/or survival. Unlike counterparts in other genres, the action hero is stunningly resourceful. From James Bond to Jason Bourne, this genre archetype finds unlikely utility in objects, tools, and other features of his immediate locale, extemporizing on and repurposing such items in surprising ways. In *The Bourne Identity* (2002), Matt Damon's unarmed but quick-witted amnesiac weaponizes a plastic pen, the shrewdest way to parry a knife-wielding assassin (p. 269). Often, too, the action hero displays mastery of machines. In *Mission: Impossible II* (2000) Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) can, with exceptional proficiency, bend a motorbike to his iron will. The machine provides a mechanical extension of his own physical abilities. It also expands Hunt's range of affordances, as when he deploys the motorcycle not only to outflank assailants in a chase, but also to repel a hail of assassin's bullets (p. 272).

Invariably, the hero's unique capacity to 'perceive and execute affordances' puts him a step ahead of his nemesis (p. 281). It often puts him ahead of the viewer too. As Langkjær and Jensen point out, *Die Hard* (1988) exploits elliptical narration so as to obscure the affordances perceived by John McClane (Bruce Willis). Consequently, when McClane executes an affordance, we marvel at his facile ingenuity. Especially audacious affordances elicit not only the audience's surprise but also their laughter (and, I would add, their admiration) (p. 280). In all, the authors deftly elucidate the archetype of the action hero. Indeed, it is largely this figure's actions, anchored in acute perceptiveness, that make him heroic. The authors conclude with suggestions for future research. One enticing avenue of inquiry, I'd suggest, is the procedural film, a category that traverses many genres and encompasses titles as varied as *A Man Escaped* (1956), *Soylent Green* (1973), *Heat* (1995), *Zodiac* (2007), and *Lincoln* (2012). Such films, by foregrounding agents who 'think smart in action' (p. 281), are ripe for the project of 'understanding…character actions and how they make sense on a moment-to-moment level' (p. 281).

I have synopsized but a few of *Screening Characters*' chapters, but I hope to have conveyed something of the breadth, ambitiousness, and insightfulness of the book as a whole. An accomplished cadre of contributors has endowed the volume with a set of highly original, robustly argued theses. The result is a substantive contribution to the theorization of character, spectatorship, and screen media.

Murray Pomerance's *Virtuoso* occupies similar theoretical terrain as *Screening Characters* – the paradox of star performance, for instance, is for Pomerance an abiding concern – but it springs from a research tradition other than cognitivism. *Virtuoso* exemplifies a mode of film criticism grounded in the *appreciation* of cinematic moments in (primarily) Hollywood movies. Precursors include Andrew Klevan's *Film Performance: From Achievement to Appreciation* (Wallflower Press, 2005) and James Naremore's *Acting in the Cinema* (University of California Press, 1988). Jeanine Basinger's *The Star Machine* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), insofar as it spotlights star performance in classical Hollywood, also anticipates Pomerance's monograph, though the latter devotes equal attention to postclassical cinema as well. Like these forbears, *Virtuoso* italicizes *moments* of cinematic achievement –

shots, scenes, gestures, utterances. Or perhaps Pomerance would say that the films themselves italicize these privileged events, by virtue of foregrounding them as virtuosities.

Virtuoso delivers a dazzling mosaic of performative moments, alighting on actors from Meryl Streep, Leonardo DiCaprio, Dustin Hoffman, Jessica Lange, and Jessica Chastain to Sal Mineo, Barbara Stanwyck, Jerry Lewis, Marilyn Monroe, and Brandon de Wilde. What makes these actors virtuosi? For Pomerance, virtuosity can be found in a panoply of performance styles. Virtuosity can spring as much from expressive minimalism (think of Helen Mirren's signature 'deadpanning') as from putative showboating or performative 'excess' (p. 14). A performance can seem virtuosic by dint of being *sui generis*, as per Marlon Brando's radical Method turn in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951). Virtuosity can be conjured by an ensemble cast, such as that assembled in *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), collectively achieving 'harmonic balance' (p. 194); or by a synergistic interplay between scene partners, as epitomized by Jodie Foster and Anthony Hopkins in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) (p. 281). Most typically it is to be found in the single and singular performer from whom the virtuosic display seems to emanate 'naturally,' spontaneously, out of nowhere (p. 82). Such performers may possess a virtuosic 'aura' (p. 56); in any event, virtuosity is often inscribed in their 'star look,' the iconic face a prime locus of virtuosity even when it seems to be in repose, 'doing absolutely nothing' (p. 14). Alternatively, filmic devices may 'superimpose' virtuosity upon a performer. An instance is the famous crop-duster chase in *North by Northwest*, which confers physical virtuosity upon Cary Grant largely by means of skilful editing and special effects (p. 73).

Virtuosity, Pomerance contends, 'stands out' as spectacle, as a finite event; but it only comes forth as virtuosic against a background of neutrality. Just as the virtuosic moment consists of elevation and ascent, whereby the actor rises 'above' co-workers who prepare the way for this display, so it relies on a subsequent retreat to the quotidian and the normal (p. 64). There is no elevation without 'grounding': the virtuosic moment is facilitated and set in relief by its 'neutralizing background frame,' to which it will ultimately repair (p. 66). Pomerance offers as illustration the knife fight in *The Bourne Identity* (discussed in *Screening Characters*). Matt Damon's eponymous hero engages in propulsive, virtuosic combat, but the Paris apartment that supplies the setting for this skirmish 'becomes a hermetic envelope that

contains the vital energy of the virtuosity' (p. 67). Thanks to the scene's bland Parisian locale, Damon's staggering physical prowess stands out in bold relief.

Perhaps surprisingly, virtuosic moments often go unheralded. Pomerance intriguingly limns a post-Rousseauan culture governed by 'anti-theatrical' sensibilities; a culture apt to disparage performative excess as inauthentic (p. 13). By the same token, delicately virtuosic performances of the sort furnished by Timothée Chalamet in *Call Me by Your Name* (2017) tend not to be acknowledged as such, though they may be lauded for other qualities (p. 258). Still other unsung performances come athwart of audiences unwilling to embrace a *variety* of virtuosities across an actor's body of work. Pomerance cites Christopher Reeve as an exemplar. Acclaimed for his dual role in *Superman* (1978), Reeve thereafter plumbed different veins of virtuosity in romance tragedy *Somewhere in Time* (1980), comic thriller *Deathtrap* (1982), and heritage drama *The Remains of the Day* (1993) – all to relatively indifferent critical response (p. 281). One virtue of *Virtuoso*, then, is that it rehabilitates neglected moments of performative originality and ingenuity.

Other virtues mount up. Not least of the book's accomplishments is its incisive sensitivity to the actor's craft. Pomerance co-opts the term *lazzo*, a fixture of the Commedia dell'arte, to characterize a kind of performative crutch propping up, or padding out, the actor's performance. An actorial 'subroutine,' the *lazzo* amounts to little more than expressive byplay, but it performs a valuable twin function, biding time for the actor and adding 'flair' to the performance (p. 123). Pomerance astutely identifies actors' trademark *lazzi*, ported over from film to film. Jesse Eisenberg favours pensive pauses, eyebrows aloft; James Stewart defaults to faltering speech patterns; Barbara Stanwyck relies on 'a style of asserting yet seeming interrogative (when she isn't)' (p. 122). A behavioural tic can harden into performative schtick, but at their best *lazzi* 'work to spice and enliven a performance' (p. 122).

This kind of granular, insightful scrutiny of performance typifies the book as a whole. Dissecting a sequence from *Holiday* (1938), Pomerance brilliantly illuminates Katharine Hepburn's proclivity for line readings that breathlessly, vivaciously, steamroll punctuation (p.

131). Or consider Anthony Hopkins, who in *Howards End* (1992) as elsewhere, treats the camera to a mercurial, not to say virtuosic, interplay of body placement and gaze direction (p. 21). Such instances spring forth as privileged moments within movies, but Pomerance takes care to situate the brief performative flight within its wider narrative and formal context. Thus, he doesn't merely point out Anthony Perkins' affected stammer in *Psycho* (1960); he also posits it as a symptom of Norman Bates' abject psychosis, tacit evidence that 'at least sometimes [Norman] is not in full control of his body' (p. 177) – a microscopic clue 'to a very great puzzle' the complexity of which will crystallize across the film's global narrative. If Pomerance privileges the moment, he doesn't neglect the macrostructure.

One could fault Pomerance's insistence on the exceptionalism of the movie star. Describing the studio-era star system, he contends that 'for each star, a sense was manufactured and maintained that *this being is like no other person now, or ever*' (p. 22, italics in original). Neglected here, I think, is an important facet of star construction predicated on resemblance and repetition. Studio executives, in the classical era and beyond, have actively sought reminiscent physical types, modelled on extant, tried-and-proven personae. For every Jack Nicholson there is a Christian Slater. Sidney Poitier finds a progeny in Denzel Washington, Barbara Stanwyck in Debra Winger, Charlton Heston in Arnold Schwarzenegger, Johnny Depp in Skeet Ulrich, Al Pacino in Andy Garcia, Jerry Lewis in Jim Carrey, and Robert Redford in Brad Pitt. Casting agents consciously embark on quests for 'a Tom Hanks type' and 'the next Julia Roberts.' Think, too, of Hollywood's fondness for acting dynasties – the Fondas, the Hustons, the Barrymores – capitalizing quite literally on family resemblances. In short, Pomerance downplays the cookie-cutter dimension of the star system, the effort to derive future economic prosperity from the profitable archetypes of yesteryear.

Virtuoso vibrates with Pomerance's zest for film actors and acting. (The book is rare in its careful melding of theoretical inquiry, textual analysis, and empirical attention to the actor's craft routines.) Spiritedly enthusiastic, Pomerance doesn't shrink from hyperbole. Cary Grant in *North by Northwest* is 'persistently astounding and glorious' (p. 69), John Hurt in *The Elephant Man* (1980) 'brilliant' (p. 66), and Kristen Stewart in *Personal Shopper* (2016) 'astonishing' (p. 215). This would be so much puffery but for the fact that Pomerance thoroughly justifies his superlatives, disclosing the meanings and motives beneath the

performances he admires. Counterpointing his infectious delight in actors, however, is his sobering diagnosis of contemporary Hollywood. Technological innovations, he suggests, have yielded detrimental effect. Motion capture rendering, utilized in such a way as to embroider or efface the actor's corporeality, has given rise to 'the triumph of *technology as acting*' (p. 307, italics in original). In the special-effects extravaganza, the actor's virtuosic face is usurped by computer-generated mise-en-scène: 'the setting becomes the new face' (p. 32), while 'the effects master is the virtuoso' (p. 308). A putative cost is that virtuosic acting, overshadowed by technological marvels, is no longer 'enough to stir emotion' in the audience (p. 259). Worse, this kind of computer-driven filmmaking can vanquish the actor's virtuosity altogether (p. 272).

Against this context, *Virtuoso* is a timely reminder of the film actor's art. At a period when popular movies are overrun with computer-generated agents, when the corporeal in the onscreen corpus can be hard to discern, Pomerance recalls us to the music and magic – indeed, the virtuosity – of screen performances untrammelled by digital upholstery. Such is Pomerance's own virtuosic achievement.

2. Revisiting the New Hollywood

Even more lamentingly than Pomerance, the editors of *When the Movies Mattered* cast a jaundiced eye over contemporary Hollywood, pining for the 'better, smarter film culture' of the New Hollywood years (p. 7). Their anthology, together with Jeff Menne's *Post-Fordist Cinema*, arrives on the heels of Nicholas Godfrey's *The Limits of Auteurism* and Yannis Tzioumakis and Peter Krämer's (eds) *The Hollywood Renaissance* (both reviewed in *YWCCT* 27:1) to theorize the artistically fecund, if inevitably short-lived, phase of American filmmaking from the 1960s and 1970s. Like their predecessors, editors Jonathan Kirshner and Jon Lewis grapple with periodization: the New Hollywood era, they contend, spans the years 1967 to 1976, albeit with 'slippages at both ends' (forerunners including *Mickey One* [1965] preceded the trend, while stragglers such as *Raging Bull* [1980] emerged after it had fizzled) (p. 7). The editors are frankly nostalgic for this bygone era, but not naively so. For one thing, *When the Movies Mattered* pungently critiques the New Hollywood's conservatism. Not only did this roiling milieu curb key production roles for women, homosexuals, and African-Americans; it also depicted such figures on screen in superficial and stereotypical ways.

Particular attention is devoted to the oft unsung achievements of women. Kirshner and Lewis underline the imperishable contributions of producer Julia Phillips; directors Ida Lupino and Elaine May; writers Carole Eastman and Joan Didion; production designers Polly Platt and Toby Carr; and actresses Jane Fonda and Ellen Burstyn – each of whom penetrated the New Hollywood 'boys' club' and asserted a palpable authorial agency (p. 9). On camera, women endured a mixed fate. A few New Hollywood films portrayed womanhood authentically – Heather Hendershot isolates *The Panic in Needle Park* (1971) as such a case (p. 88). *Chinatown* (1974), as Robert Pippin notes, flips the voyeuristic male gaze on its head (albeit less to signal female empowerment than to diminish the male protagonist) (p. 119). Yet, even well-intentioned endeavours could falter as progressive texts. As David Sterritt maintains, Robert Altman inadvertently defaults to gender bias, if not actual misogyny, while affording prominent roles to women in *Nashville* (1975) and *3 Women* (1977) (p. 79).

Not all of New Hollywood's feminist efforts were maladroit. Molly Haskell distinguishes a cycle of largely enlightened texts. While the 'movie brats' (e.g. Steven Spielberg; George Lucas) mostly shunned gynocentric subjects, other directors discretely contributed to the 'neo-woman's film,' typified by entries such as John Cassavetes' *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974) and Alan J. Pakula's *Klute* (1971). Such films renovated the classic 'woman's picture' of studio-era Hollywood. Exploiting the 'new freedom of the screen' (the films are peppered with profanity and nudity), they furnish heroines dissatisfied with patriarchal gender roles and bent on emancipation. They exhibit, too, a turn toward deglamorization, the erotic star close-up coarsened by irreverent lighting. (The virtuosity of the star's visage, as theorized by Pomerance, acquires an altogether different aspect here – the virtuosity of the star's face au naturel.) Above all, the new heroines cast off passivity and ward off wedlock; in *Klute*, even prostitution trumps domestic servitude (p. 23). Haskell correctly observes that 'the notion of individual freedom…[was] the reigning ideology of the era' (p. 24), so it follows that the female-oriented 'road movie' would be forged in this period (*The Rain People* [1969]; *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* [1974]). Liberated from domesticity, the road-movie heroine seeks autonomy in mobility, furrowing terrain typically reserved for the era's male antiheroes (e.g. *Easy Rider* [1969], *Five Easy Pieces*, *Two-Lane Blacktop* [1971]).

Though *Klute* and *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* contrive indelible feminist figures, Haskell regards both movies as fundamentally conservative, wedded to the Hollywood 'happy end' (p. 25). Both films backslide into fantasy; and both ultimately restore the heroine to the confines of heterosexual romance. More transgressive, Haskell contends, is Barbara Loden's feminist drama *Wanda* (1970). Flouting the 'fashionable victim' tropes of *Klute* and *A Woman Under the Influence*, *Wanda* is impervious to political correctness, romanticism, and optimistic narrative closure (pp. 26-27). Haskell does not belabour the point that *Wanda* (unlike the aforementioned neo-woman's pictures) was signed by a woman, nor that its male-directed kin have perhaps unjustly superseded it in the canon. But her chapter offers an opportune reflection on the Hollywood women that, in their attempts to reconcile traditional romance with 'the emerging spirit of independence,' sought suffrage from the feminine mystique (p. 31).

Other contributors expand their purview beyond female representation. David Sterritt zeroes in on the 1970s work of Robert Altman – specifically, *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (1971), *Nashville*, and *3 Women* – and submits that, since these films function as 'thought experiments,' they invite and reward theoretical investigation (p. 70). Such is the ineffable quality of Altman's films, however, that no single theory adequately illuminates them (p. 69). Consequently, Sterritt yokes premises by Mikhail Bakhtin (dialogic theory, carnival theory) and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (schizoanalytic theory) – all the better to explicate Altman's peculiarly enigmatic brand of storytelling.

Germane to Altman's narrative architecture is Deleuze and Guattari's concept of rhizomatic style. A proliferating, variegated, and entwined network of plotlines reifies the rhizome, the exfoliating tendrils of Altman's plotting 'extend[ing]…beyond their own borders, into one another and into Altman's filmography as a whole' (p. 75). Bakhtin's dialogic theory surfaces in *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*'s juxtaposition of narrative realism and stylistic artifice. And the carnivalesque is evoked by milieus both freewheeling (*Nashville*) and oneiric (*3 Women*). Hovering over these aesthetic topoi is Altman's holistic quest for the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the synthesis of the distinct arts into a harmonious whole. Of Altman's 1970s films, *Nashville* surely represents the apotheosis of this pluralist impulse. Richly polyphonic, the film stands

as his 'most striking fusion of musical expression, political context, and sociocultural commentary' (p. 80). In the final analysis, Altman emerges as both maverick and crowd-pleaser, at once idiosyncratic and traditional: '*New* in his techniques and sensibilities yet *Hollywood* in his aspiration to popular appeal' (p. 84).

Sterritt's chapter displays the merits of auteur-centred criticism, but *When the Movies Mattered* – like *The Limits of Auteurism* and *The Hollywood Renaissance* – embraces alternative theoretical concerns as well. Heather Hendershot fastens on three Al Pacino vehicles (*The Panic in Needle Park*, *Dog Day Afternoon* [1975], and *Cruising* [1980]), less to anoint Pacino as a de facto auteur than to pinpoint New York City as a 'driving narrative force, a character in and of itself, in the films of the New Hollywood years' (p. 87). Elsewhere, Jonathan Kirshner charts the rise and fall of production outfit BBS. Kirshner lucidly reveals how the firm's independent business ethos, despite yielding touchstones such as *Five Easy Pieces* and *The Last Picture Show* (1971), proved both unsustainable and inimitable. Pledging 'to make personal, ambitious, commercially viable films influenced by the European art house cinema,' BBS swiftly capsized as Hollywood's major studios fortified, blockbuster productions shifted into high gear, and the ill-fated Hollywood renaissance tapered off (p. 51).

Critics have often noted New Hollywood's proclivity for European-style miserabilism, but few have explicitly meditated on this cinema's affective tone and mood. Robert Pippin's observant chapter on *Chinatown* amends this lacuna. *Chinatown*, Pippin maintains, erects an 'unfathomable, inexplicable' diegesis (p. 117). Opaque, nihilistic, and almost mythically evil, this titular milieu tarnishes romantic love as a 'dangerous entanglement' (p. 121). (Here we find an echo of Haskell's neo-woman tropes.) It also functions synecdochally to signify a wider degradation blighting Los Angeles. Of what significance, then, is the film's narrational tone? For Pippin, the ominous atmosphere that honeycombs *Chinatown* betokens a story world bereft of moral rectitude. The 'right life' (a phrase derived from Adorno) is not a live option for this city's residents. To do 'as little as possible' seems the surest, if in no proper sense the morally 'right,' course of action (pp. 122-123). This barren worldview finds sustained expression through *Chinatown*'s dysphoric tonality, a miasmic mood that Pippin's prose eloquently, palpably evokes.

Pippin errs just once, in my judgment, by resorting to auteurist retrospection. He castigates as nihilistic a particular line of dialogue – 'You see, Mr. Gittes, most people never have to face the fact that at the right time in the right place, they're capable of *anything*' – before advancing an extrafilmic non sequitur: 'Although we are three years from the sexual-assault-on-a-minor charge that eventually led to [director Roman] Polanski's exile, the assertion sounds creepily like the director's own all-purpose excuse for his behavior' (p. 126). To attribute *Chinatown*'s dialogue to Polanski (rather than to writer Robert Towne) is tenuous; to cherry-pick aspects of the film for cod-psychological ends is regrettably trite. But this slip does not mangle a strong entry in what is a superb anthology, a volume whose nostalgia for the New Hollywood is refreshingly clear-eyed rather than rose-tinted, and no less infectious for it.

Be it by commission or omission, the auteur theory looms large in *When the Movies Mattered*. It assumes prime importance, too, in Jeff Menne's *Post-Fordist Cinema*. Menne proffers a compelling thesis. The auteur theory, inculcated into American film culture by critic Andrew Sarris, permeated New Hollywood's corporate infrastructure in manifestly transformative ways. Put into practice, auteurism metastasized beyond its theoretical target. Artistic emancipation now applied not only to the movie director, but also to the screenwriter, cinematographer, sound designer, and other creative agents, all of whom keenly embraced the mantle of artist. Far from an arcane conceit confined to the literati, the auteur theory profoundly shaped the self-image, not to mention the tottering industrial landscape, of the New Hollywood era.

That era acquires fresh historical parameters in Menne's account. For Menne, the crucial period runs from 1962 to 1975, during which time the New Hollywood gradually consolidated. Contrary to standard accounts, 1975 marked not so much the demise of New Hollywood as the year of its entrenchment – the moment, that is, when this apparently countercultural cinema 'became the establishment' (p. 207). As for its inception, Menne reaches back as far as the 1950s. As the Fordist studio system disintegrated, independent production houses sprung up, often launched by well-known stars or directors. No wonder, then, that these nascent firms ascribed the artist a privileged position within the corporate

hierarchy. Liberating employees from the assembly-line routines of studio-era Hollywood, the new companies fostered a post-Fordist regime, granting greater agency to creative personnel. The New Hollywood auteurs fancied themselves mavericks, renegades against the corporate overlords, but Menne shows that they functioned rather 'as agents of industrial reconfiguration' (p. 86). Equally, the small, artist-driven production unit – from Jack Lemmon's Jalem Productions to Warren Beatty's Tatira-Hiller Productions – was but a placeholder and buttress for a shifting corporate structure.

What of the New Hollywood films themselves? What preoccupations unified the work of the self-proclaimed auteurs? Menne isolates a set of films he terms 'the defection genre,' comprised of titles such as *Five Easy Pieces*, *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), and *The Graduate* (1967). Movies about defectors held a vicarious appeal for the young auteurs, many of whom fantasized about fleeing corporate culture even as they relied on this culture for professional sustenance. Invariably downbeat, the defection film launches a critique of American institutional life. A prime target, Menne reveals, is the endangered ritual of marriage. (We are in Haskell's neo-woman territory again.) Several defection films – *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *Easy Rider*, *The Last Detail* (1973) – substitute male 'buddies' for the heterosexual couple. Other entries in the genre contrive to neuter the heterosexual couple's capacity for procreation, thereby intimating an American milieu bereft of future possibilities – Menne's instances include *Harold and Maude* (1971), *Bonnie and Clyde*, and *The Panic in Needle Park*. From Sam Peckinpah (*Straw Dogs* [1971]) to Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver* [1976]), New Hollywood auteurs deployed the defection genre 'to resist imaginatively the structure they were folded into materially, namely the corporation' (p. 77).

Correspondingly, Menne adopts a reading strategy predicated on corporate allegory. Embedded in the New Hollywood film, he suggests, is a reflexive commentary on its own production conditions. Self-consciously, New Hollywood auteurs tended to 'sensitize [their] material to [their] industrial situation' (p. 29). Hence the critic is justified in scouring the films for traces of production circumstances. For instance, the siblings at the heart of *The King of Marvin Gardens* (1972) can be seen to 'mirror' the backstage partnership between the film's director and producer (p. 171; p. 184). The post-war liberal westerns of John Ford and George Stevens came to 'mirror the political economy between Hollywood and the global

order enfolding it' (p. 37). This kind of reflectionist heuristic can prove judicious: Menne interprets Brian De Palma's *The Fury* (1978) as an allegory of De Palma's struggle for professional independence, a reading that gains credence in regard to casting (the film pits *l'enfant terrible* John Cassavetes against Hollywood insider Kirk Douglas). But this same hermeneutic method can equally seem flaccid. At the climax of *The Fury*, the Cassavetes figure literally explodes – a gesture through which De Palma is claimed to 'foreclose…the possibility of a career for himself outside the industry' (p. 29).

In such declarations one senses an *a priori* interpretive schema being imposed, top-down, upon a resistant text. Early in *Post-Fordist Cinema*, Menne picks out 'an essential image' in *The Conversation* (1974). Harry Caul (Gene Hackman) wields several keys for the various locks on his apartment door – this despite the lack of valuable items inside. Perturbed to discover that his landlady has entered the apartment in his absence, Caul insists on possessing 'the only copy of [the keys].' Menne construes Caul's reaction as a desire for power, a symptom of a general urge to 'define the value' of his own work (pp. 4-5). (More broadly, Menne interprets *The Conversation* as being 'about the self-definition of creative labor' (p. 5).) Yet I would contend that Caul – ironically, given his job in surveillance – is concerned more with privacy than with power. Introverted and reclusive, Caul considers his private domain sacrosanct. The battened down and desolate apartment serves as a simulacrum of Caul himself; hence, when he decimates the apartment at the film's climax, he commits nothing less than an act of self-destruction, and we recognize the terrifying extent of Caul's psychological unravelling.

At its most strained, Menne's top-down hermeneutic leads to overreach. Plucked out of context, a character's turn of phrase can be freighted with metatextual connotations. Hence, when Menne cites a stretch of dialogue from *Five Easy Pieces* – 'My life, most of it doesn't add up to much that I could relay as a way of life that you'd approve of' – he latches onto the words 'add up' as a 'quantitative' phrase that 'evokes the corporate ethos that BBS Productions – the maker of this movie and *Easy Rider* before it – was trying to replace' (p. 82). In Menne's reading, a scene of domestic intimacy is exposed, improbably, as a coded capitalist critique. This favoured reading strategy bulldozes more plausible interpretations, as when Menne magnifies a bit of minutia in *The King of Marvin Gardens*. 'A buried detail is

that in the early Philadelphia subway scenes, the name H. D. Stanton is scrawled on a column' (p. 184). Noting that actor Harry Dean Stanton had been close friends with BBS personnel (Jack Nicholson, Bob Rafelson, Bert Schneider, and others), Menne again grasps a textual detail as a veiled allusion to labour, value, capital, and the corporation. He fails to note that Stanton's name is also etched onto the brick wall of Nicholson's prison cell in *Easy Rider*. Is this a case of corporate allegory too? That these scenes register an in-joke among close-knit contemporaries strikes me as a more credible, if admittedly more banal, explanation for their oblique nods to Stanton.

None of this is to detract from the quality of *Post-Fordist Cinema*. Impeccably researched, Menne's monograph brings fresh clarity to New Hollywood's industrial machinations. A string of enlightening case studies – e.g. Kirk Douglas' Bryna Productions and *Lonely Are the Brave* (1962); Robert Altman's Lion's Gate and *Brewster McCloud* (1970); the Zanuck-Brown Company and *Jaws* (1975); BBS and *Head* (1968) – charts the industry's infrastructural metamorphosis, adeptly laying bare the continuities (rather than simply the ruptures) among New Hollywood's distinct historical phases, modes of production, and filmmakers. Unlike *When the Movies Mattered*, *Post-Fordist Cinema* checks nostalgia at the door. But both books invaluably enrich New Hollywood historiography, while Menne's study in particular refreshes the domain of auteur theory in ways both insightful and original.

3. A Highsmith Hinge

Questions of authorship inevitably loom large over literary adaptations, nowhere better illustrated than in the fertile fiction of Patricia Highsmith. As editors Wieland Schwanebeck and Douglas McFarland contend in *Patricia Highsmith on Screen*, the cinematic medium both established and eclipsed Highsmith's popular reputation. Her first novel attracted no less an adapter than Alfred Hitchcock (*Strangers on a Train*, 1950), but the director's famous imprimatur overshadowed Highsmith's authorship. Thereafter 'the Hitchcock brand absorb[ed] Highsmith' (p. 8). Her authorial signature would be further obscured or 'obliterated' by adapters less interested in fidelity to Highsmith than in riffing on Hitchcockian themes (p. 2). In thrall to their Hollywood idol, European directors plumbed Highsmith's catalogue for suspenseful subject matter. Machiavellian protagonist Tom Ripley proved ripe for Hitchcockian elaboration in films by Rene Clair (*Plein Soleil / Purple Noon*,

1960), Claude Chabrol (*Les Biches / The Does*, 1968), and Wim Wenders (*Der Amerikanische Freund / The American Friend*, 1977). In short order, Highsmith's cultural status became deeply imbricated with Hitchcock. *Patricia Highsmith on Screen* endeavours – successfully, in my view – to extricate its subject from Hitchcock's formidable shadow.

The book affords due attention to Tom Ripley, 'Highsmith's most adaptable and enduring creation' (p. 14). *The American Friend* yokes two Ripley novels (*Ripley Under Ground* (1970) and *Ripley's Game* (1974)). Echoing Menne's approach to the New Hollywood, Christopher Breu reads the film for Fordist allegory. For Breu, *The American Friend* thematizes nothing less than the stultifying influence of Americanized modernization. This it does by reworking Highsmith's source material. Whereas Highsmith subverts the fatalism of classic noir, chiefly by allowing Tom Ripley to outstrip death and retribution, director Wenders reinstates the pessimistic worldview of traditional noir fiction (while still sparing Ripley from the gallows) – a tactic that foregrounds the corrosive effects of Fordist collectivization. Urban alienation, a by-product of modernization, is seared into the film's mise-en-scène. The doomed de facto protagonist, Jonathan Zimmermann (Bruno Ganz), is engulfed by excess, inhabiting a European 'late Fordist space' plagued by overaccumulation and overproduction. Only the American con-man Ripley (Dennis Hopper), here reimagined as a throwback to the mythical individualistic cowboy, can navigate this stagnant milieu without impediment. Further, Breu discerns in *The American Friend* a trenchant meta-filmic allegory. The film, he suggests, obliquely inveighs against U.S. cinema's global dominance, the mid-1970s Hollywood blockbuster coming to displace the art films of Europe's various new waves. With noirish inexorability, *The American Friend* dramatizes its own demise: 'Wenders makes an art film haunted by the incipient death of the art film,' Breu writes. 'How noir can you get?' (p. 208).

Other contributors explicate Ripley through the prism of queer theory. David Greven defends Anthony Minghella's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999) against its detractors, most prominent among whom is Slavoj Žižek. In Žižek's view, Minghella perverts Highsmith's material. Most egregiously, the film misinterprets its protagonist's (Matt Damon) sexuality: Dickie (Jude Law) becomes an object of Ripley's lust rather than, as in Highsmith, the figure of Ripley's vicarious identification. Greven grants that Minghella 'adds a level of explicitness to

Highsmith' (p. 128), essentially 'queering' the source text (p. 135). Aside from reifying Ripley's homosexuality, Minghella embroiders the film with gay cultural reference points (e.g. the music of latter-day gay icon Chet Baker). Contra Žižek, however, Greven maintains that Ripley's desire both to 'be like' Dickie and to possess him sexually is extant within Highsmith's source novel. Highsmith, on not a few occasions, floats the possibility that Ripley may harbour homosexual desires (p. 127); more generally, she 'explores cultures of homophobia' (p. 122), furnishing a gay subtext disavowed by Žižek. Far from travestying Highsmith's novel, Minghella makes palpable its latent gay tropes, and thereby dramatizes à la Highsmith 'the pernicious effects of the closet' (p. 135).

Matt Damon's Ripley becomes the butt of homophobic taunts, not least at the hands of Dickie's needling crony, Freddie Miles (Philip Seymour Hoffman). Greven brilliantly unpicks Hoffman's coded behaviour in these taut, titillating scenes. Odiously effete, sneeringly foppish, and frankly contemptuous of Ripley's carpetbagging, Hoffman's Freddie is nothing if not virtuosic. (Murray Pomerance would find much to admire here.) Elsewhere, Greven identifies in *The Talented Mr. Ripley* something akin to a gay male gaze – 'the masochistic gaze,' as he terms it, a voyeuristic impulse held in check – as when Ripley effortfully refrains from gazing at Dickie, whose naked body is displayed for the *viewer* to behold (the better to italicize the pathos of Ripley's 'repressed homosexual voyeurism' (p. 131).) In sum, Greven not only exposes the fallacy of Žižek's critique, but wholly justifies his assessment of Minghella's film as 'one of the masterpieces of commercial cinema in the 1990s' (p. 121).

Published under a pseudonym in 1952, Highsmith's openly lesbian roman à clef *The Price of Salt* yielded an acclaimed if belated film adaptation in 2015: *Carol*, written by Phyllis Nagy and directed by Todd Haynes. Both texts narrate a transgressive romance between neophyte sales clerk Therese Belivet and wealthy sophisticate Carol Aird. In an instructive chapter, Alison L. McKee probes the film's adaptative strategies. Highsmith, McKee argues, plunges the reader into Therese's interiority, privileging character subjectivity over externally-driven plot action. As corollary, the condition of desire – specifically, an outlawed form of desire steeped in anxiety – comprises the novel's thematic core. By contrast, *Carol* harnesses lesbian desire more firmly to discriminable events, a transmutation that McKee attributes to

the ontology of cinema: 'representational narrative film generally externalizes character, space, and action because of its necessarily visual nature' (p. 150).

Highsmith wallows in Therese's internal state, but Haynes and Nagy focalize events around both Therese (Rooney Mara) and Carol (Cate Blanchett), while an omniscient narration – 'fulfilling a cinematic audience's epistemic desire to see and to know' (p. 151) – grants the viewer information beyond either character's ken. McKee sheds light on *Carol*'s point-of-view strategies, tracing a circuit of desire among characters, text, and viewer. Like Greven (and other contributors to *Patricia Highsmith on Screen*), McKee alerts us to the affinities, as well as the disparities, between adaptation and progenitor. Albeit by means of contrasting narrational schemes, both *Carol* and *The Price of Salt* emerge as resolutely queer artworks, 'refus[ing] a heteronormative perspective' (p. 156), and carving open 'spaces for queer identification for readers and viewers' (p. 155).

Carol, Highsmith, and queer theory form a lynchpin between *Patricia Highsmith on Screen* and Clara Bradbury-Rance's splendid monograph *Lesbian Cinema after Queer Theory*. Bradbury-Rance affords *Carol* especial attention, her object of inquiry dovetailing (at least in broad compass) with McKee's. Both authors dissect *Carol*'s patterned distribution of desire. In both accounts, *Carol*'s point-of-view structures implicate the spectator in the protagonists' pregnant, illicit, affectively-charged gazes. (Bradbury-Rance, in particular, seeks to rehabilitate cinematic gaze theory, wedded as she is to 1970s psychoanalysis.) The two authors diverge on particulars, however. If McKee shows that *Carol*, at certain privileged moments, tethers narrative action to Carol Aird's interior state (and thereby transfigures Highsmith), Bradbury-Rance nevertheless reads the film as being '*all about* Therese' (p. 129, emphasis in original). Bradbury-Rance further departs from McKee in perceiving *The Price of Salt* to be a 'plot-driven' novel (p. 137). Still, both theorists seem agreed upon *Carol*'s erotic diffusion of desire. For McKee, the film's desire hovers in a 'dilatory' space; for Bradbury-Rance, in a 'drifting' one. (Both authors derive these terms of art from Roland Barthes.)

Contemporary lesbian films such as *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* (2013) flaunt a new level of (homo-)sexual frankness, but *Carol* bleeds sexual desire into a stylistic discourse brimming with affective force. Windows coated in mist, cityscapes dappled with light and rain, musical leitmotifs suffused with feeling, images perforated by textural grain – *Carol* shrewdly displaces and diffuses desire in ways apposite to the social mores of its 1950s milieu (p. xiii). In resurrecting 1950s repressiveness, however, Haynes and Nagy reanimate that era's prevailing treatment of lesbian subjects, theorized by Bradbury-Rance as 'invisibility' – this in contrast to the 'hypervisibility' of lesbian sexual displays in the more overtly progressive *Blue Is the Warmest Colour*. Does *Carol* therefore mark a representational regression within lesbian-themed cinema? Might it betoken a regrettable return to the closet?

Perhaps surprisingly, Bradbury-Rance maintains not. Throughout the book, she counters a fallacy that equates increased screen visibility with cultural and political progress. If the twenty-first century is 'the era of the visible' and of 'lesbian legibility' not only on screen but within academia, still this new visibility harbours disadvantages. Salutary in many respects, lesbian visibility nonetheless 'fixes just as it names,' causing cultural definitions of sexual identity to coagulate (p. 3). Visibility, moreover, normalizes lesbianism, diminishing difference. Progressive yet problematic; a boon and a hindrance: this is the paradox of 'the visibility imperative' (p. xiii). Most deleterious, perhaps, is the teleological assumption that progressive visibility – nowadays manifest both on movie screens and on academic research agendas – signals the acme of lesbian representation. For Bradbury-Rance, lesbianism has been exhausted neither dramatically (in cinema) nor theoretically (in academia). 'To understand lesbian representation in the contemporary context,' she asserts, 'is to trouble her easily narrativised legibility while observing it in other forms' (p. 143). One such form is *Carol*'s 'queer affect' which, forsaking 'hypervisible' displays of sexual activity, melts eroticism into a dreamy exchange of furtive looks and fugitive touches. *Carol*, while recalling the lesbian's historical invisibility, is in no sense regressive. Though the film refuses 'our immediate satisfaction in the legibility of new lesbian cinema,' it grants us 'the intractable pleasures of queer's diffusion of desire across the screen' (p. 124).

The visibility problematic forms the crux of Bradbury-Rance's general polemic. In movies, lesbians have historically been rendered illegible by means of cultural stereotyping (not

infrequently portrayed as pathologically disturbed, a diabolical threat to heteronormativity) and blatant non-representation. In academia, queer theory has obscured, marginalized, even assimilated, the lesbian as a theoretical concept or category, imposing upon lesbianism 'a new kind of invisibility' (p. 7). Bradbury-Rance insists upon the need both to extricate 'lesbian' from 'queer' and to reinstate 'lesbian' as a productive theoretical term. The rubrics of 'queer' and 'lesbian' are neither synonymous nor antithetical (p. 15). Yet both terms are indissolubly related, 'queer' capturing 'what is not only before speech but also before (sexual) touch' (p. 13). Bradbury-Rance espouses a theory of lesbian cinema that construes both concepts (queer, lesbian) as 'mutual' yet discriminable, queer theory enabling the delineation of affects (such as those conjured in *Carol*) that go beyond overt sexual displays and coming-out tropes (p. 143).

While affording legibility to lesbian subjects, the book's chief case studies – *Mulholland Drive* (2001), *Circumstance* (2011), *Water Lilies* (2007), *She Monkeys* (2011), and the other contemporary titles I cite here – exemplify the paradox of visibility. *Mulholland Drive*, no matter its foregrounding of lesbian romance, 'troubles' visibility in Bradbury-Rance's psychoanalytic reading. The film dramatizes both the distressing over-visibility, the over-presence, of the lesbian figure(s), and the heterosexual compulsion to 'vanquish the double threat of the lesbian couple' (p. 25). A doubling motif finds saliency, too, in Anne Fontaine's French drama *Nathalie…* (2003) and its American remake, *Chloe* (2009). Both films present doppelgänger protagonists. Two women conduct a series of private meetings during which one of them recounts, in explicit fashion, her sexual liaison with the other woman's spouse. Ostensible heterosexual desire is thus configured between two women. *Nathalie…* generates an erotic frisson from the women's vicarious fantasies and prolonged mutual gazes, but Slavoj Žižek construes the film's drama squarely as a heterosexual affair. (Recall his repudiation of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*'s gay subtext.) Bradbury-Rance takes issue with Žižek's reading, suggesting that *Nathalie…* affords lesbianism a subtle visibility through the two women's 'homoerotic intimacy' (p. 38). In *Nathalie…*, desire kept at the level of suggestion yields a 'queer register,' perceptible through homoerotic looks and 'a queer spatialisation of desire' (p. 55). Here again 'queer' describes a relational state that exceeds or precedes sexual contact.

Atom Egoyan's remake heightens the lesbian legibility of its antecedent. Now the female protagonists consummate the mutual desire that in *Nathalie…* remains unsated. More so than Fontaine, Egoyan embraces thriller-genre conventions, trading the earlier film's subtlety for suspense (p. 48). His Chloe (Amanda Seyfried) resembles nothing so much as a pathological femme fatale, while (as codified within the thriller genre) the women's sexual union inevitably cues the violent death of Chloe, the figure most clearly marked as lesbian (p. 47-49). (Even hypervisibility, then, is no bulwark against all-too-familiar homophobic tropes.) Having expunged the lesbian, Bradbury-Rance argues, *Chloe* reaffirms heterosexuality and the inviolable sanctity of the family. Yet I would aver that the film's climax, depicting Catherine (Julianne Moore), husband David (Liam Neeson), and son Michael (Max Thieriot) 'sharing affectionate looks *across a crowded room*' (p. 50, my emphasis) adopts a spatial dynamic that ambiguates the family's purported stability. By contrast, the ending of *Nathalie…* seems to me more reassuringly heteronormative, the heterosexual couple strolling hand in hand, immortalized by a crane shot – the classical marker of narrative closure and restored social equilibrium.

Still, Bradbury-Rance's reading strikes me as substantially cogent. *Chloe* wholly embraces lesbian visibility (in part by frankly displaying lesbian sex), but *Nathalie…* is not, by virtue of the relative *in*visibility of its lesbian representation, the lesser – or as Žižek might have it, the more heterosexual – work. In Bradbury-Rance's estimation, *Chloe* satiates 'the ubiquitous hunger for visibility' (p. 60), but this visibility does not perforce equate to political progress. Like *Carol* and the book's other major case studies, *Nathalie…* 'rebel[s] against…the visibility imperative' (p. 10) without compromising its queer credentials.

Bradbury-Rance mounts her psychoanalytic-feminist readings with admirable clarity. I confess to harbouring deep misgivings about psychoanalytic film theory (both concerning its stock premises and its top-down application as Grand Theory), but the merits of Bradbury-Rance's probing and provocative study are not to be denied. *Lesbian Cinema after Queer Theory*, together with the other books reviewed in this chapter, testify to the enduring variety and virtuosity of contemporary film theory.

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Menne, Jeff, *Post-Fordist Cinema: Hollywood Auteurs and the Corporate Counterculture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019). ISBN 9 7802 3118 3710.

Pomerance, Murray, *Virtuoso: Film Performance and the Actor's Magic* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019). ISBN 9 7815 0135 0672.

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