PARDIS DABASHI

***The Lure of the Image: Epistemic Fantasies of the Moving Camera* by Daniel Morgan**

When the camera moves, the spectator moves with it. The camera-eye is an extension of the spectator's vision, allowing them to see and move through the world of the film, isn't it?

Not quite, Daniel Morgan insists. The aim of Morgan's excellent new book, *The Lure of the Image: Epistemic Fantasies of the Moving Camera*, is to interrogate "one of the most persistent and intuitive ways of thinking about the moving camera: that spectators identify with the position and movement of the camera within the world of the film, that it serves as a surrogate for the spectator" (4). In directing sustained attention to camera movement, Morgan shows how this oft-noticed but under-theorized facet of film style accomplishes far more in terms of mood, characterization, storytelling, and ethics than has thus far been acknowledged. *The Lure of the Image* has profound consequences, therefore, for how scholars think and talk about the viewer's relation to the images on-screen and, by extension, the political and ethical stakes of style.

Central to Morgan's argument is the idea that while camera movement facilitates a relation of vicariousness between the spectator and the camera, that relation remains spectral. "To put it bluntly, we are not in the world of the film, seeing it from the perspective of the camera; that is an illusion" (5). Morgan's observations rest on the premise that this illusion is an "*epistemic fantasy*, one of being granted access to the film world in a way that is in fact impossible to achieve" (5). Indeed, the camera's identificatory burden is predicated not on the position it actually grants, but on the viewer's desire for such epistemic access—sometimes against their better judgment.

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Following this introductory theoretical provocation, Morgan examines the debate in 1960s French film theory about the tracking shot in *Kapo* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1960) that reframes the corpse of a concentration-camp inmate, Teresa, after she throws herself against an electrified fence. Jacques Rivette's moral condemnation of this shot and Serge Daney's support of Rivette's take exemplify *Cahiers du Cinéma*'s concern with the political failures of the moving camera. Underpinning Rivette's and Daney's critiques is an understanding of aesthetic flourish—in this case, the forward-moving camera—as ethically dubious because it suggests a sensationalist curiosity incompatible with the gravity of the subject matter. But through readings of camera movements in *Kapo*, *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1956), and Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), Morgan demonstrates that this tendency to conflate tracking shots with ethical irresponsibility overgeneralizes about what style can do politically and assumes a relation of surrogacy between the viewer and the image that, while it may be a danger the moving camera poses, is nevertheless simply untrue. Morgan insists, pace Roland Barthes, that the image is a "lure"—nothing less, but nothing more. Access to the images via the moving camera is a function of aesthetic expression, not an ontological—or epistemic—reality (41).

The third chapter reads key camera movements in *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980) and *Amator* (Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1978), among others, as exemplary of the epistemic fantasy on which camera movements often rely. The Steadicam tracking shots that follow Danny through the halls of the Overlook, for instance, generate "uncertainty" because they are "never quite in sync" with the little boy's movements. Morgan argues that this "absence of perfect following," which persists despite the film's fictional status, "suggests the presence of some kind of agency" that "implicitly promis[es] malevolent actions" (58, 57). Similarly, the scene in *Amator* in which Kieślowski's camera tracks forward and over a desk to show the interior of the hospital (the object of the gaze of the camera that a doctor has taken from Filip) banks on a perspectival impossibility. In both cases, the viewer is made to know that what they are seeing is not the actual perspective suggested in the diegetic world. Theories of point of view are inadequate in accounting for such "perceptual games," Morgan argues, where camera movements "work by expressing a perspective on the film world" while keeping the viewer at a remove (59). Theories of surrogacy struggle to account for camera movements' constitutive expressiveness.

The following chapter deepens this observation by studying shots driven by “the character who is the object of the gaze” rather than the one who is “aligned with the camera” (99). Morgan finds “object-defined” (103) camera movements in the work of Fritz Lang and Guru Dutt that generate a tension between the perspectives afforded by the position of the shot and those expressed by the way the shot “unfolds” (95). In such instances of camera movement, as Morgan argues, the camera abandons its characterological proxy and evokes intensities associated with what the proxy sees. (Morgan’s reading of Von Wenck’s encounter with Dr. Mabuse is especially illustrative of this effect.)

Morgan elaborates on this tension between subjective and objective perception in the next chapter when he discusses Max Ophüls’s signature tracking shots as instances of “dual attunement” to the perspective of key characters as well as a moral perspective on those characters and the world they inhabit (137). Ophüls’s camera gestures toward alternative possibilities and affective resources to those currently available in the characters’ world. In *The Earrings of Madame de …* (1953), Morgan shows, the virtuosic, creative, and responsive movements of Ophüls’s camera acknowledge the demand that Louise and the Baron’s “claim to happiness” (149) places on a world hostile to its flourishing, while also forging a perspective—floating out- and alongside the lovers—from which to grasp the stakes of that failure.

Continuing to move away from the notion of camera movement as subjective access, Morgan shows how Terrence Mallick presses camera movement in service of an “antiperspectival” approach to filmmaking in *The Thin Red Line* (1998), *The New World* (2005), and *The Tree of Life* (2011). Mallick’s camera never rests with any one perspective for too long, instead wandering among positions including but not limited to those of persons. But this feature of Mallick’s filmmaking, Morgan argues, does not express an empty fetishization of new technologies, as is often assumed. Rather, in decentering human orders of space and time, Mallick contributes to the “long-standing philosophical (and literary)” examination of irony as the “dispersal of authority within a text” (178). He thus creates a “cinema without a final position,” in which the viewer is “never allowed to settle, even into disorientation” (218).

In his final chapter, Morgan examines digital film’s contributions to camera movement, particularly when multiple cameras are involved. He examines *Adieu au langage* (Jean-Luc Godard, 2014), whose manipulation of standard protocols for producing 3D images generates a distinctive “perceptual unsettling” (234) aimed at exposing the ocular operations of three-dimensional visualization. Whether bringing the two cameras needed to produce a 3D image “too close together” or pushing them too close to objects in the profilmic space, Godard and cinematographer Fabrice Aragno “transform our perception of the world” by “mak[ing] us newly aware of it” (234).

The most destabilizing technique that Godard and Aragno deploy—and the most consequential, for Morgan’s argument—is the “radical separation of the two cameras” (235). In such moments, “the ‘right eye camera’ separates from the ‘left eye camera.’ … [O]ur vision, literally comes apart for a period of time—only to return … at which point the two images coalesce again into a single one” (235). In a stunning argumentative turn, Morgan claims that such ostensibly static moments function as camera movement. The “entire camera array” may not be moving, he writes, “but *a* camera is,” opening up “new aspects of space” and suggesting that sight itself is a “*montage between the eyes*.” Indeed, Morgan concludes that movement is at play in the very act of seeing: “each eye always takes in a different view, however slight, of the world” (238). Deeply informative, vast in scope, and beautifully written, *The Lure of the Image* is essential for those interested in the very concept of movement in and on film.

BOOK DATA Daniel Morgan, *The Lure of the Image: Epistemic Fantasies of the Moving Camera*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021. $85.00 cloth, $29.95 paper. 306 pages.

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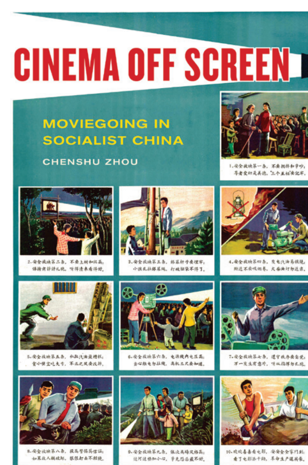
AMIR KHAN

Cinema Off Screen: Moviegoing in Socialist China **by Chenshu Zhou**



Chenshu Zhou has written an extremely reader-friendly account of moviegoing in socialist China. Though she attempts to anchor her discussion in empirical data (taken from the testimony and film remembrances of sixty participants), this is an attempt to put forward a type of film history that

engages with where and how a film is shown and consumed. Because her approach ignores "intent" of any kind, whether by a director, a producer, or an actor, it is a type of film criticism without films.

Zhou's study of moviegoing in socialist China from 1949 through the end of the Cold War in 1992 has two fundamental takeaways: (1) that moviegoing in China under Mao created new possibilities for human liberation; and (2) that the conditions of collective (socialist) movie watching are superior to the current "multiplex" model based on theaters and theater screens as sites of a meaningful movie culture. Zhou, with graceful exegesis rather than aggressive polemic, is pushing back against the common assumption that any art produced in China under Mao was simply a belligerent and crude means of indoctrination. By focusing on the cinematic contingencies surrounding how a movie is shown rather than on what is shown, Zhou resituates cinema's ontological significance "off screen."

Zhou offers up a type of materialist, rather than idealist, critique whereby ideal film screening conditions are not readily equated with scenes of urban modernity. People in the countryside participated in meaningful cinematic experiences divorced from any particular film's content. Through her discussion of ramshackle outdoor open-air screenings in rural settings, Zhou explores a host of new ontological possibilities for film, including "space," "labor," "multimedia," "atmosphere," "discomfort," and "screen" (each of which makes up a chapter).

Zhou's first two chapters, for instance, are not interested in space and labor as depicted in the movies but rather in the spaces in which viewings took place and the type of labor that went into the act of screening itself. She notes that prior to 1949, between "596 and 678" movie theaters existed in China, with the majority in large urban cities (39). The socialist cinema project was intended to get films out to workers and peasants. Workers and their families, for instance, were guaranteed access to films on an almost "daily basis," and workers' clubs were mandated to have "facilities for entertainment and exercise" on-site (45–46). In addition, via "mobile projection teams" (essentially film equipment strapped to a donkey), the CCP sought to "bring culture to its people, including ethnic minorities and those in remote rural areas" (49).

Despite the significant hardships of terrain and weather, the socialist push to acculturate the population with film was so successful that, by 1960, "rural audiences made up 60.5% of all audiences" (47).

> As a principle of cultural production, "serving workers, peasants, and soldiers" complicated the widespread belief that Chinese socialist cinema was a propaganda tool, which at best tells half the story. From movie theatres to film clubs and mobile film exhibition teams, these exhibition outlets, while striving to create propaganda spaces, were also public interfaces that mediated socialist ideals of mass access and mass culture that were supposed to be balanced between education, recreation, politics, and entertainment. (50–51)

One sees very clearly a conception of cinema in which the bias tips toward access and opportunity rather than box-office ticket sales—a reminder that perhaps a reliance on box-office statistics overdetermines histories of the cinema experience. *Cinema Off Screen* highlights how taking movies *to the people* (rather than asking customers to find their own way to the cinema) fundamentally alters what cinema is.

A cinematic viewing experience, moreover, might include other "multimedia" technologies like the slide show, since films shown during the socialist period were often prefaced by local news and educational topics coalescing around *huandeng*—slides that depicted "content closely related to the daily life and agricultural productions of the local communities" and "admirable deeds by real people" (92). While audience reactions were mixed, slide shows infused both exhibition spaces and classrooms with a type of cinematic content that sought to fuse education and entertainment. Moreover, projectionists themselves often took the role of lecturer and were, for many, the sole mediator between film and audience. In terms of labor, the projectionist (who remains invisible in Western accounts of cinema) was thus seen as an equally significant participant in the important work of cultural production that was otherwise centered on "screenwriters, directors, actors, [and] distributors, [rather than] projectionists" (73).

In her fourth chapter, titled "Atmosphere," Zhou more forcefully attends to the means of projection and, subsequently, the way that virtually all films today are consumed—that is, as commodities. The "now standard multiplex that sells films like goods in a store" (110) vitiates the collective possibilities once fostered by cinema projected outside of "luxurious downtown cinema palace[s]" (110). Zhou further problematizes a bias in cinema studies that continues to validate what Julian Hanich, whom she cites, terms "an uninterrupted projection of a film in a dark space" as *the* transhistorical viewing ideal, all other spaces existing as "deviations" (108–9). Even positing such a space, Zhou notes, reflects an Occidental bias because those spaces were first consolidated as mainstream venues in the United

States and Western Europe. The function of a Western-style multiplex, of course, is not to enhance a medium-specific aesthetic but rather to accumulate box-office revenue more efficiently via cinematic franchising.

In her fifth chapter, Zhou seeks to include physical discomfort within her specific off-screen film ontology. Not only did "barefoot" projectionists suffer hardships; viewing audiences in open-air rural galleries had to suffer potential "cold, heat, wind, rain, snow, and mosquitoes" (139) as well as "precarious physical position[s]" (140). Zhou equates such hardships with a "happiness of struggle" (143) related to the "path-clearing" sharpening of mind associated with "torture" (151). Rather than reduce the pain of discomfort to a Lacanian sense of "*jouissance*," Zhou posits that cinema culture in Maoist China emancipated "profound emotions" that were meaningful precisely because "active struggle, including the struggle of the body to overcome pain and discomfort, were seen as revolutionary, transcendent, and desirable" (144–46). While some may dismiss China's entire cultural project in this period as totalitarian, Zhou posits in her final chapter that such "[e]mbodied spectatorship" (155) actually breaks the hold of cinematic propaganda concomitant with Western spectatorship.

Zhou has written an impressive and impassioned tribute to moviegoing in socialist China. Nonetheless, it is clear that Zhou's rhetorical strategy is to come to the defense of a political project discredited in the academic mainstream without admitting that the project's most exhilarating achievements had anything to do with politics. This is a common strategy today in Western historiography that seeks to speak positively about Mao's China. As scholarly consensus generally forbids direct reappraisal of Mao's politics, it has become customary to suggest how the hard revolutionary goals of the Communist Party were achieved surreptitiously via the soft and inadvertent accidents of culture. Zhou seeks to analyze how lived experience is marked by the "*dispositif* of cinema—that is, where and how films were shown, [rather] than by political rhetoric and campaigns" (54). At best, her analysis succeeds in rehabilitating the noblest aspirations of socialist China; at worst, it remains a careful elision of revolutionary politics.

BOOK DATA Chenshu Zhou, *Cinema Off Screen: Moviegoing in Socialist China*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021. $85.00 cloth, $34.95 paper, $34.95 e-book. 282 pages.

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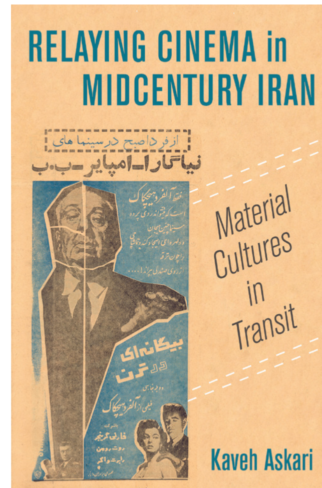
BABAK TABARRAEE

Relaying Cinema in Midcentury Iran: Material Cultures in Transit **by Kaveh Askari**



Until about a decade ago, Iranian film histories limited themselves to a double dichotomy. First, they represented Iranian cinema prior to the 1979 revolution as a constant battlefield between the highbrow art cinema—namely, the New Wave of the late sixties—and the lowbrow popular films collectively known as *Filmfārsi*. Second, they focused on the postrevolutionary Islamization of the cinema, which led to the emergence of an oppositional cinema in the form of both politically poignant films and a new mode of poetic realism in the works of several festival-favorite auteurs.

This dominant historiographic approach underwent a considerable change in the 2010s, led by Hamid Naficy's four-volume *Social History of Iranian Cinema*, along with a few other valuable monographs and edited collections: Pedram Partovi's *Popular Iranian Cinema before the Revolution*, Golbarg Rekabtalaie's *Iranian Cosmopolitanism: A Cinematic History*, Blake Atwood's *Underground: The Secret Life of Videocassettes in Iran*, and Matthias Wittmann and Ute Holl's edited collection *Counter-Memories in Iranian Cinema*. This new generation of scholars has begun a move toward more sociocultural histories where concepts such as the popular, the forbidden, the technological, and the national are redefined and explored anew. Continuing this trajectory, Kaveh Askari's new book opens the young field of Iranian film studies to alternative histories of film distribution and reception.

"It is a book on circulation written during a peripatetic twelve-year period," writes Askari in his acknowledgment (xi). But rather than Iranian films, or cinema, the subject of the book is the national *and* transnational circulation of objects such as film prints, scores, and publicity materials in Iran during a time when the country's policies were manifestly pro-Western. As a child of "circulation studies and media archeology" (8), Askari provides a fascinating history of nonfilmic objects, much in the same way as Eric Smoodin and others do as they document the trend of New Cinema

Histories. This historical approach requires extremely time-consuming dives into archival sources whose volume of data can be frustrating.

The case of Iran is especially challenging because media archives outside Iran rarely contain paracinematic materials tied to Iran, while the Persian sources are also mostly inaccessible. Askari, however, has dealt with these problems by gathering and analyzing an extensive list of midcentury Persian periodicals, the trade press, and pop magazines as well as visiting many archival institutions in the United States and Iran. As a result, while characterized by the utmost academic rigor, *Relaying Cinema in Midcentury Iran* reads like an engaging but sophisticated detective novel that aims to solve one big puzzle: how did Iranians experience cinema from the silent era through the 1960s, and what can the material and aesthetic forms of their experience reveal about the nature of transnational media movements?

To answer these big-picture questions, Askari uses the metaphor of "relay"—a concept that refers both to the amplifying moment of a signal in mediated communication and the moment of exchange or turn-taking in team sports. Askari uses this metaphor to expand on how cinema is conceptualized, (re)authorized, advertised, and consumed, reminding the reader that, far from a monolithic entity, cinema is a malleable construct that can mean different things to different people at different times and places. Film, then, is redefined in this book as constantly remediated sets of objects and concepts, with each chapter of the book narrating the story/history of one such set.

The first chapter focuses on the ways that silent films, especially serials, reached Iranian cinemas—mostly in Tehran—long after they were originally released. Disowned by their distributors, the overused, amortized, and decade(s)-old "junk prints" acquired traffic networks across relay points as varied as Moscow, Cairo, Istanbul, and Baghdad. By analyzing the Persian advertisements of serials such as *The Tiger's Trail* (1919) or stand-alone re-edits of a D.W. Griffith film, Askari emphasizes that studying the afterlife of a film in its international reception is as crucial to understanding regional film cultures as the national policies governing various modes of film production and exhibition.

This filmic afterlife is further analyzed in the second chapter, where more attention is given to tracing how secondhand prints were reauthorized after World War II. Askari is meticulous in outlining how American distributors' struggles to enforce profitable copyright regulations were met by Iranian technological innovations and creative forces, most saliently visible in the work of Tehran's dubbing studios and voice actors. Building on what Askari has proposed here, one can hope for other histories of the long-neglected Persian dub industry and its transnational travels.

Introducing relay as both recycling and reformatting helps Askari revisit the bourgeoning Iranian film industry of the 1950s and 1960s from the viewpoint of appropriated media objects and concepts. In chapter 3, he delineates how Iranian sound studios incorporated and manipulated foreign film scores for the soundtrack of their domestic products. In a way, this chapter is the most representative aspect of Askari's argument about relayed cinema. Using several examples, Askari demonstrates how the creative use of collaged sounds re-formed the soundscape of the Iranian film industry and gave new meanings to the original scores. A comparable phenomenon is detectable in the audiovisual strategies of many Turkish *Yeşilçam* products of a decade later, albeit with less-subtle craftsmanship. Nevertheless, these bold acts of intertextuality deserve to be studied in terms of both their material technology (and aesthetics) and local audiences' engagement with them.

In the last two chapters, Askari shifts his focus to the ways Iranian cinema tried to appropriate foreign genres, worldviews, and images. In particular, he addresses the reconfiguration of film noir in the films of Iranian pop auteur Samuel Khachikian, and some forgotten and failed attempts at international collaborations and Western imitations. In chapter 4, Khachikian—the "Iranian Hitchcock" according to the Persian periodicals of the time—is reevaluated as an underappreciated filmmaker whose crime thrillers provide a visual trope for the cinematic exchange, translation, and creative agency in a "relayed" genre.

It should also be emphasized that Khachikian's oeuvre serves as an excellent example for understanding the anxiety of urban transformation in midcentury Iran. Resulting mostly from the nation's ambivalence toward the West, these anxieties reached their boiling point with the onset of the Islamic revolution. The dilemma of the West for the new urban population can also partly explain the cinematic failure of the case studies in the fifth chapter, including Jean Negulesco's *The Invincible Six* (or *The Heroes*, as its Iranian production studio advertised) and the Western homages made by another Iranian pop auteur, Masud Kimiai.

Applying the sportive connotation of relay allows Askari to explore both the achievements and failures of media transfer in order to examine not only the agency of players but also the boundaries of the game. Whatever the consequences of transnational transformations may be, a cultural history of relayed media can amplify some of the much-overlooked aspects of regional engagements with

cinema—a goal that inherently undergirds Askari's innovative investigation of cinema in Iran until the turbulent 1970s.

BOOK DATA Kaveh Askari, *Relaying Cinema in Midcentury Iran: Material Cultures in Transit.* Oakland: University of California Press, 2022. $85.00 cloth, $34.95 paper. 260 pages.

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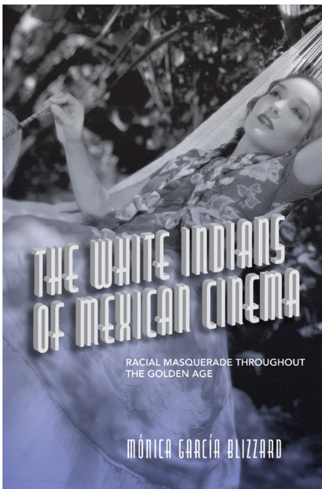
ANA ALMEYDA-COHEN

The White Indians of Mexican Cinema: Racial Masquerade throughout the Golden Age by Mónica García Blizzard



Mónica García Blizzard's first book is a rich and revelatory project that contends with a question that US and European spectators often ask when first encountering mainstream Mexican films and telenovelas: "Why is everyone so White?" (1). Offering an in-depth analysis that examines a "pervasive racialized visual logic in Mexico" (38) that privileges whiteness, *The White Indians of Mexican Cinema* answers this spectatorial question by unraveling how Mexico's audiovisual landscape operates under the legacy of colonialism.

García Blizzard postulates that the coloniality of power, as suggested by Aníbal Quijano, pervades the films of the early, mid, and late periods of Mexico's golden age of cinema, which glorify whiteness by casting white Mexicans as Indigenous leads, thus valorizing "whiteness-as-indigeneity" (5). With a decolonial perspective grounded in the theoretical tools of critical race theory, this study sheds light on Mexican cinema's gendered and racialized implications of whiteness-as-indigeneity. García Blizzard's book is a welcome addition to the existing scholarship on the racial politics of Mexican cinema during its golden age (the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s) by scholars such as Joanne Hershfield, Charles Ramírez-Berg, Andrea Noble, and Dolores Tierney. Here, García Blizzard intervenes in ongoing debates on Latin American and Mexican film and visual culture, particularly regarding the function of race, gender, melodrama, and star texts in the postrevolutionary project of *indigenismo-mestizaje* of the twentieth century.

Organized by chapter into thematic analyses, the book first provides overviews of the terms "Whiteness" and "Indigeneity" within the Mexican racial formation. García Blizzard defines whiteness "contextual[ly]" (21–22), following Omi and Winant, as a racial formation governed by "Western discourses of modernity" and as a "historically and socially situated project" (21). Whiteness here is both *blanquitud,* a sense of socioeconomic ascension as defined by the philosopher Bolívar Echeverría, and *blancura,* the embodied white Mexican phenotype. Both Spanish terms date back to the Spanish conquest and continue to exist in residual forms.

García Blizzard succinctly summarizes how Indigeneity was opposed to whiteness as an "undesirable categorization" during the postrevolutionary twentieth-century nationalist project (13). Thus, to make Indigeneity desirable and "elevate" its place in the national narrative for Mexican spectators in the years following the Mexican Revolution, audiovisual production used whiteness to represent Indigenous people as "compassion-worthy" by privileging the white female body. As such, the trope of whiteness-as-indigeneity—working in the opposite direction of its "hemispheric cousin" blackface— "infus[es] the racialized subject with the dignity and desirability that coloniality confers upon Whiteness" (6).

García Blizzard's argument about the trope of whiteness-as-indigeneity convinces in large part through the sheer force of accumulated evidence. The collected corpus of films under discussion— an interesting amalgamation of silent-era (*Zítari*), preindustrial (*Janitzio*), heavily studied (*María Candelaria*), *indigenista* (*La india bonita*, *El indio*, *Maclovia*, *La Zandunga*, *Tierra de pasiones*, *Tizoc*), revisionist *indigenista* (*La noche de los mayas*, *Deseada*), late golden age (*Tizoc*, the *Maria Isabel* duology, *El violetero*), and relatively understudied (*Chilam Balam* [1957]) films—impress with their racist engagement with indigeneity through a pervasive use of gendered and schematically white bodies on-screen.

The first chapter examines how films idealize pre-Columbian womanhood in this way. Analyzing *Zítari* (1931) and *Chilam Balam*, the author argues that the whiteness of their female protagonists functions as a "racialized semiotic device for underscoring the pathos and desirability of the characters," and that the films portray the white (but passing for Indigenous) women as "glorious contributors of

Mexicanness" (68). The films employ a melodramatic mode that centers these women as both melodramatic victim and desirable female.

García Blizzard returns to the cultural and racial politics of the classical Mexican melodrama throughout the book. Chapter 3 discusses how the narrative conventions of studio films such as *India bonita* (1938), *El indio* (1939), *María Candelaria* (1944), and *Maclovia* (1948) index "the racialized political inequality" that defined much of the *indigenismo* rhetoric, undoing their decolonial projects. Meanwhile, *Janitzio* (1935) and *Raíces* (1954) are offered as counterexamples that do not follow the whiteness-as-indigeneity model because they do not function as melodramas and thereby avoid conforming to studio aesthetics.

In a similar vein, the fifth chapter looks at the persistence of the melodramatic mode in the period immediately following the golden age. García Blizzard studies the *María Isabel* duology—*María Isabel* (1968) and *El amor de María Isabel* (1970)—to argue that the melodramatic vehicle of whiteness-as-indigeneity continues to be used to portray dignified and wholesome indigeneity by recycling tropes from the golden age. Through Silvia Pinal's star text and her on-screen "desirable diegetic Indigeneity," the films also instrumentalize Pinal's body to demonstrate the unruly physicality of Indigenous people. Especially interesting is García Blizzard's proposal that these María Isabel films foretell the India María films (224). In a fascinating analysis, she profiles where *María Isabel* stops short and how the India María films go further in social commentary and the reproduction of the racist trope of Indigenous female ignorance.

The author's original approach avoids studying these (and all other) Indigenous-themed films through the "officialist rhetoric of the specific *sexenio*"; instead, she takes as her point of departure the "residual and emergent attitudes about race [that] coexist in complex ways throughout the twentieth century" (36). For example, the second chapter analyzes two Tehuana-themed films—*La Zandunga* (1938) and *Tierra de pasiones* (1943)—that refashion this regional type into a nonthreatening national symbol. In *La Zandunga,* Lupe Vélez's white star text diegetically defines her white identity (*blancura*) and cultural capital in the film industry (*blanquitud*), pushing the trope of whiteness-as-indigeneity to construct a palatable national symbol of the Tehuana for the viewing public. García Blizzard skillfully contextualizes the public reception of the stars' white and nonwhite bodies in this period alongside a sophisticated formal analysis that supports her twenty-first-century reading of the films.

In later chapters, García Blizzard delves deeper into how Indigenous-themed films have engaged with the race-based project of *indigenismo-mestizaje*. In the fourth chapter, she discusses how *La noche de los mayas* (1939) and *Deseada* (1951) uphold the *indigenismo-mestizaje* project of the twentieth century that situates "Indigeneity as a locus of cultural value," foregrounding and legitimating the "Indigenous cosmovision" (188) through Indigenous religious and spiritual beliefs while condemning white intrusion (186).

In the final chapter of the book, the author shifts her attention to the limited portrayals of Indigenous male leads in four films of the long golden age—*Tribu* (1935), *Lola Casanova* (1949), *Tizoc* (1957), and *El violetero* (1960)—in order to argue that the film industry has also applied the whiteness-as-indigeneity vehicle in the reverse, as white Mexican men pass as Indigenous to figure the limits of *mestizaje*. García Blizzard contrasts the impossible romantic coupling of the white-as-Indigenous man and white Mexican woman with the privileged pairing of the Spanish man and Indigenous woman, reading both as allegories of the nation, as described by Doris Sommer. In her conclusion, García Blizzard considers how several post–golden age films continue the earlier legacy and depict the impossibility of mutual desirability between the white woman and the Indigenous man. A recent exception to this sustained trend is *Güeros* (2014), which she describes as subtly beginning "to heal" the "colonial wound" that is bound up in desire (273).

This text is useful for Latin American and Anglophone scholars who work at the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, and film studies, as the book offers a significant sociohistorical contextualization of the racialized and gendered patterns of colonial power in Mexican cinema. It is especially timely in light of the racist reactions in Mexico to Yalitza Aparicio's performance in *Roma* (2018). García Blizzard's analysis productively highlights how such a reaction, which surfaces when "the White norm is not adhered to," is a symptom of the long-standing expectation of "artificial White ubiquity and racial masquerade in Mexican visual mediums" (286) that seek to insist on the centrality of whiteness at the expense of ethnoracial diversity and equality.

BOOK DATA Mónica García Blizzard, *The White Indians of Mexican Cinema: Racial Masquerade throughout the Golden Age*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2022. $95.00 cloth. 326 pages.

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RICHARD MWAKASEGE-MINAYA

***Latino TV: A History* by Mary Beltrán**

Credited as the first English-language television program with an entirely Latina/o/x production, *The Brothers García* (2000–2004) and its pilot surprisingly pay homage to a predominantly white show: *The Wonder Years* (1988–93). Its twelve-year-old Kevin Arnold (Fred Savage) and his adult-self narrator (Daniel Stern) were reimagined as an eleven-year-old Latino boy, Larry García (Alvin Alvarez), narrated by his future self (John Leguizamo). Placing García at the center of a white-centric show set in the 1960s–1970s (and produced and made famous in the 1980s–1990s) is an invitation to reimagine Latinas/os/xs at the center of a largely exclusionary television industry and its history.

Mary Beltrán's *Latino TV: A History* brings this reimagining into realization. The modest-sized book excavates the history of the Latinas/os/x relationship with US television by focusing on English-language media and Latina/o/x representation and authorship. Many others have contributed to this history, leaving fragments that Beltrán patches together with new research to offer a fuller picture, particularly with shows that haven't garnered much attention, like *Fiesta* (1969–70), while building on those that have, like *Chico and the Man* (1974–78). Going forward, *Latino TV* will be essential reading for scholars of Latina /o /x media in training.

Beltrán not only examined source materials such as promotional materials and works by critics but also conducted interviews with Latina/o/x media professionals. She also offers close analyses of programs and episodes of interest, many of which have limited access. With these methods, she offers the reader a sense of how these television shows operated and what they looked like.

The book is organized by a temporal and thematic division of chapters. It begins boldly with a focus on 1950s TV Westerns for children. Those attuned to the field of Latina/o/x media studies know that this era is not given much attention; the same can be said of television Westerns, with a few exceptions. Likely to expand any reader's conceptualizations of Latina/o/x media, this chapter centers on four programs: two Disney productions, *The Nine Lives of Elfego Baca* (1958–61) and *Zorro* (1957–59), as well as *The Cisco Kid* (1950–56) and *The Quick Draw McGraw Show* (1959–62). Beltrán makes clear that these were not "Latina/o productions" by any stretch but sees them nonetheless as vital representations of Latinas/os/xs of the time. Fraught with denigrating images of Latinas/os/xs, this era ushered in "Chicana/o and Nuyorican Activist Television," as asserted by the title of the next chapter (44).

In this second chapter, Beltrán offers an industrial analysis of the first public television programs created by and for Chicanas/os/xs and *Nuyoricans* (Puerto Rican New Yorkers) as part of their regionally specific movements. These programs were the fruits of Latina/o/x activism that targeted local public television stations and commercial affiliates. Some of these activists went on to work as producers of community-focused public-affairs programs. Thus, chapter 2 centers on *¡Ahora!* (1969–70), *Realidades* (1971–77), and *Fiesta*, along with one drama series: *Canción de la Raza* (1968–69), which was included because of its community service and didactic imperatives.

Moving away from public television, the next chapter examines *Chico and the Man* and *Viva Valdez* (1976), along with other rare moments in which Latinas/os/xs appeared on commercial television shows in the 1970s. Building on her previous work on Freddie Prinze, Beltrán covers commercial programming at a time when there were few avenues for Latina/o/x creatives and actors. Thus, "Latino TV" was relegated to "Always the *Chico* (and Never the Writer)," as the chapter's title aptly captures (76). The media activism of organizations like the National Mexican American Anti-Defamation Committee made inroads with public-affairs programs but not with commercial television. Beltrán includes the oft-overlooked fact that activists were hired as consultants to television shows to placate activists and audiences, but there is more to be explored there. Failed and lesser-known Latina/o/x-oriented shows like *The Man and the City* (ABC, 1971–72) and *On the Rocks* (ABC, 1975–76) and *Popi* (CBS, 1976) are also covered, along with a discussion of why some shows were deemed a success and others were not. These ostensible failures become the focus of the next chapter.

The 1980s and 1990s saw several short-lived Latina/o/x-centric television programs. The industry sought to maximize the popularity of a small number of well-known Latina/o/x comedians and actors while refusing to relinquish creative control to them, a factor for Beltran in why these programs were bound for failure. Her primary

objects of analysis, ABC's *a.k.a. Pablo* (1984) and the WB's *First Time Out* (1995), did not even last long enough to complete their first seasons. By discounting Latina/o creatives and consultants and hiring only non-Latina/o/x writers and producers, Beltrán argues, these shows missed the opportunity to capture the loyalties of Latina/o/x audiences and hold the attention of non-Latina/o viewers.

In the fifth chapter, Latino-led television fully enters the scene with shows like *Resurrection Blvd.* (2000–2002), *George Lopez* (2002–7), and the very popular *Ugly Betty* (2006–10). By allowing Latino creatives to draw heavily from their personal experiences, Beltrán suggests, these series gained popularity and longevity. However, producers Dennis Leoni (*Resurrection Blvd.*), George Lopez (*George Lopez*), and Silvio Horta (*Ugly Betty*) were forced to navigate industrial pressures to accommodate white audiences in order to garner the attention of the ever-elusive "mainstream."

The final chapter of *Latino TV* enters an era regarded by the industry and critics as "Peak TV" and focuses on culturally specific, Latina-led shows. Beltrán looks at Gloria Calderón Kellett's *One Day at a Time* (2017–20), Cristela Alonzo's *Cristela* (2014), and Tanya Saracho's *Vida* (2018–20). Although not framed as such, these programs center intersectionally marginalized Latinas/os/xs. Not only are they there as expressions of Latina subjectivity, but they give visibility to the perspectives of working-class, queer, undocumented, and Black Latinas/os/xs. Beltrán argues that Latina creatives are leading the way with culturally specific (rather than universalizing) programming and "empowered characters" (18). This stands in the face of years of panethnic universalizing by English-language and Spanish-language media, US institutions, and Latina/o/x activism.

Beltrán concludes her study by reflecting on the precariousness of Latinas/os/xs in the television industry. As others have shown, despite years of their struggling for inclusion, the media industry perpetually ignores Latina/o/x creatives while harboring an infatuation for a *commodified Latinidad*. In fact, Latina/o/x creatives, critics, and scholars have criticized that commodification; Yessika (Julissa Calderon), a character in *Gentefied* (2020–21), launches the critique with a pointed remark: "They may love all our shit, but they don't love us."

Beltrán highlights her frustrations with the past and present but expresses optimism for the future, finding hope in the recent arrival of Latina "creatives" that nonetheless points to a drawback of such a study: prioritizing contemporary concerns of Latina/o/x visibility over historicity. Certainly, denigrating images and control of production were and continue to be an issue for Latina/o/x communities and activists, but what was deemed "negative" and "positive" has changed over time. Such critical assessments were often contingent on the specificity of the Latina/o/x subgroup and the US region, among other factors, as well as the co-constitutive legacies of English- and Spanish-language media as discursively fueled by the misconception that Latinas/os/xs are foreigners who only consume media in Spanish and that Latin America is the sole arbiter of *Latinidad*. Beltrán's *Latino TV* is an essential contribution to the expanding scholarship on Latina/o/x media and is particularly important for the training of its future scholars.

BOOK DATA Mary Beltrán, *Latino TV: A History*. New York: New York University Press, 2021. $89.00 cloth, $30.00 paper. 251 pages.

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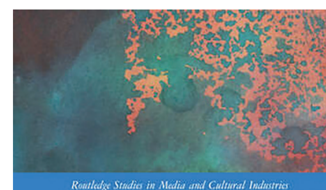
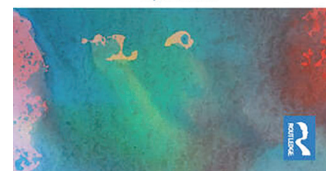
DANA ALSTON

Television's Spatial Capital: Location, Relocation, Dislocation **by Myles McNutt**





AMC's *Breaking Bad* (2008–13), one of the most critically lauded TV shows of the last decade, built much of its neo-Western aesthetic and political relevance upon its Albuquerque setting. The orange blood-soaked deserts and the proximity to cartel wars gave its viewers a heightened sense of the American Southwest. But behind the scenes, the show came close to looking, sounding, and feeling different: the original plan was for the series to take place in Riverside, California, before it moved to Albuquerque for tax purposes. To consider the choice *Breaking Bad*'s producers made (and its result) is to consider the economic and political pressures within a changing American media-production landscape in which modes of production, distribution, and consumption are in constant flux. The adage "location, location, location"

matters more than ever to the people who make, watch, and talk about television.

Myles McNutt's *Television's Spatial Capital* uses Pierre Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital to examine the practical and representational implications of the rapidly shifting "geography of television." McNutt argues that television's former traditions of "place-making" have been fundamentally disrupted in the modern era, and the resulting new strategies constantly locate, relocate, and dislocate audiences' sense of space. Gone are the days when Los Angeles and New York were the production hubs for American networks and studios. The subsequent dispersal across the country has had widespread effects that maintain hierarchies of taste, class, and culture.

The phenomena facilitating this shift and the "industry stakeholders" overseeing them have collectively created "spatial capital," a term McNutt uses to encapsulate the value associated with spaces where television is staged and consumed. In digging into the expansion of television production and defining it in these terms, McNutt's study adds to the growing scholarly attention paid to space and media production, which crosses both television and film. His focus on spatial capital intersects with more-granular case studies about audiences and labor across five chapters.

From a bird's-eye view, this approach sits at the crossroads of industry studies, television studies, and cultural geography, and McNutt's approachable style (honed by his time as a critic at sites like *The A.V. Club* and his ongoing blog *Cultural Learnings*) helps meld these into a comprehensive endeavor. *Television's Spatial Capital* establishes a useful tapestry of established scholarly threads at the intersection of production, distribution, and reception, as well as illustrative examples of their possible applications to the contemporary media environment. Each of its five chapters zeroes in on a particular level of the industry and its capacity to create, control, and regulate the flow of spatial capital.

The introduction exemplifies the many threads at work here, with McNutt demonstrating the television medium's "incredible capacity for place-making" with a pair of "television maps" of the continental United States (2). These cartoon maps, published online in 2014, superimpose television titles over the states where the shows are set and call attention to the lack of spatial capital the unlabeled states have. These forgotten Middle American states are ignored because of a lack of cultural capital; the industry does not believe that audiences have any interest in these places, and they are therefore excluded from the creation of spatial capital. Confronting the background of such assumptions and decisions and identifying the stakeholders behind them is the backbone of McNutt's study.

The first chapter takes a labor-focused approach to spatial capital, and more clearly delineates the stakeholders. McNutt begins at the top of the hierarchy, with politicians who incentivize production in specific locations via tax credits, then ends with below-the-line laborers. He also outlines a contemporary culture of "mobile production" in which production is inherently unmoored from any one place, resulting in a location marketplace for practically all modern television productions. The central case study in this chapter concerns location scouts and managers, who play an integral role in this marketplace. McNutt highlights the dilemma of authenticity facing these workers. Their ability to find spaces that look authentic for a show's setting within a shooting location that is inauthentic (Atlanta becoming LA, for instance) makes them the "key managers" of spatial capital. McNutt's granular research, taken primarily from trade articles and press interviews, offers concrete examples of the big ideas established in the introduction.

"City-for-city doubling" is just one of the strategies for creating spatial capital that make up the focus of McNutt's second chapter. This chapter moves away from his exclusively labor-centric focus on preproduction in chapter 1 into the shooting and editing of a series. At this stage, stakeholders usually either obscure that the series was produced in an inauthentic location, amplify that it was filmed in the actual location, or generate an entirely fictional location from scratch. McNutt examines opening title sequences, and his original contributions in this regard stem from his interest in labor. His examination of second-unit film crews and editors and the generation of "new tools to meet the existing burdens of spatial capital" (87) are the highlights of this chapter.

From here, the book moves away from TV production toward its distribution and consumption. Chapter 3 looks at the negotiation of spatial capital in localized programs, such as region-specific versions of house-hunting shows, and identifies the strategies of dislocation employed to ensure a broad appeal. To that end, McNutt studies Netflix and its approach to global content distribution. Netflix limits and restricts the importance of space and place in its programming to make texts legible for broadly international audiences. *Orphan Black* (2013–17), for example, was shot in Canada but conspicuously omits any landmarks that might confirm this. McNutt moves from this example to note the marked tendency in modern TV toward universality over

specificity, which requires shrewd navigation and manipulation of spatial capital rather than its creation via location-conscious textuality.

For the final two chapters, McNutt switches almost entirely to discourse analysis as another site where spatial capital accumulates. In chapter 4, critics and their legitimizing effect on spatial capital take center stage. To McNutt, the praise that critics tend to heap on prestige programs for authenticity in location work and making a location "feel like a character in the show" (120) creates and maintains hierarchies of taste and perceptions of quality. This critique builds on established legitimation media scholarship, particularly by Elana Levine and Michael Newman.

The fifth chapter, analyzing localized reception on social-media platforms, is essentially an online ethnography of Twitter responses. It emphasizes the visibility that social media lends to local audiences, arguing that through their labor these audiences "either serve as spatial amplifiers in praise of a series' sense of place or critique the series in question as spatial arbiters" (152). If Canadian viewers of *Orphan Black* decry the show's mismanaged depiction of Ontario online, that exchange leaves the show's spatial capital far more open to disruption, affecting whether audiences will accept or reject the show and whether it will be continued.

The conclusion, which adds urgency by directly addressing COVID-19's effect on spatial capital, exemplifies McNutt's lucidity as a writer while opening the door to more-concrete studies on the subject in the future. McNutt's takeaway—that "the answer to the question of 'where television takes place' is a shifting target"—is a helpful final note. The book's emphasis on labor, especially McNutt's granular examination of below-the-line workers who are too often uncelebrated, is worth expansion. His methodology in the later chapters is timely, since social media will no doubt play an increasingly larger role in place-making going forward. The most inventive findings in *Television's Spatial Capital* emerge when McNutt wields his interest in the representation of space to dig more deeply into ever-growing expectations of authenticity. What emerges is an enlightening view of an industry straining to meet those demands under the weight of tradition.

BOOK DATA Myles McNutt, *Television's Spatial Capital: Location, Relocation, Dislocation*. New York: Routledge, 2021. $160.00 cloth. 200 pages.

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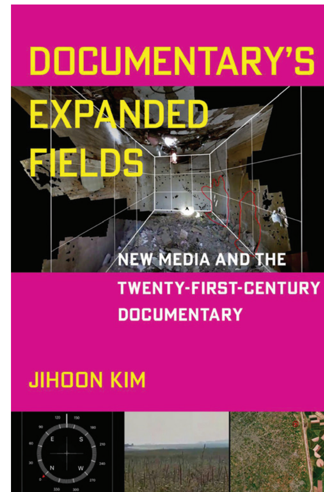
NORA STONE

Documentary's Expanded Fields: New Media and the Twenty-First-Century Documentary **by Jihoon Kim**



What is a documentary? Film theorists have mulled this question for decades, but Jihoon Kim takes a capacious view in an effort to draw together the various kinds of media labeled "documentary." In his new book, *Documentary's Expanded Fields: New Media and the Twenty-First-Century Documentary*, Kim decenters traditional documentary film, focusing instead on gallery installations, activist videos, interactive projects, virtual-reality environments, and experimental cinema. All combine the aims of documentary film with novel uses of digital technology and the affordances of networked communication. While his jumps from i-doc to multiscreen art installation to protest witness video can be dizzying—and lead to questions about milieu and intended audience—*Documentary's Expanded Fields* is an ambitious and worthwhile attempt to map the wide array of documentary projects in the twenty-first century.

In the introduction, Kim explains the idea of "documentary's expanded fields" by invoking theorists of avant-garde motion pictures and contemporary art. His touchstone is Gene Youngblood's 1970 study, *Expanded Cinema*, which derides traditional narrative film and its supposed "passive" viewing, and celebrates artists using then-new technologies like video cameras, synthesizers, and computers. Other thinkers have carried this ethos forward, including Lev Manovich, with his argument for a postmedia aesthetics that adopts the operations of a computer era, and Alexandra Juhasz and Alisa Lebow, with their demand that documentary film decouple from traditional narrative in favor of interactive forms. His other touchstone is Rosalind Krauss's idea of the expanded field in contemporary art, her explanation for postmodern art practices that transcend a given medium. For example, postmodernism embraces sculpture as not only a three-dimensional object in a gallery but also as architecture, landscape, photographic documentation, and performance. A similar collapse of boundaries explains how such a diverse range of projects came to be

called “documentary,” as Erika Balsom and other scholars have argued.

Kim is keen to situate his work in a particular theoretical context and acknowledges that these disparate fields—new media, experimental cinema, political communication, art—each had their own intellectual histories, which he carefully surveys with extensive literature reviews before asserting his own claims. This practice means that Kim’s own argument can be muffled at times by all the other voices; whenever encountered, though, his interventions are valuable.

In his first chapter, “Expanded Vision,” Kim explores digital graphics and the digital manipulation of images in documentary media. He offers a clear-eyed corrective to the worry that digital tools necessarily create a break with indexicality. In fact, he points out, the use of these tools is so normalized that they have done little to weaken the truth-value of a photograph. Rather, digital tools offer knowledge other than what the camera alone can offer.

Kim points to the power of this type of imagery for documentary: “Artistic visualizations are capable of representing the world beyond the scope of the camera and giving expression to its ‘magnitude’” (40). He offers both Jer Thorp’s *Just Landed* (2009) and the work of the investigative journalist group Forensic Architecture as examples in this chapter. Thorp scraped Twitter for tweets with the phrase “just landed in” and gathered location data for those users. Expressing this data on a map, *Just Landed* makes visible the domestic and transatlantic flows of people, alongside their individual communication about travel—an idea of such magnitude that it cannot be captured or expressed cinematographically, except through metaphor.

In chapter 2, “Expanded Vision,” Kim concentrates on new recording technologies (drones and GoPros) and new viewing technologies (virtual reality). Like data visualization’s ability to express magnitude, drone cameras can capture a distant view beyond the human scale, while GoPro cameras can go places that camera operators cannot, offering a nonintentional vision. Here, Kim analyzes the use of these cameras in more-traditional documentaries, like Sonia Kennebeck’s *National Bird* (2016), Ai Weiwei’s *Human Flow* (2017), and Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel’s *Leviathan* (2012).

He also pushes back against the common belief that virtual reality (VR) is necessarily immersive. Kim wonders: even if a viewer is immersed in VR, does this immersion necessarily increase engagement with the documentary’s subject, like a humanitarian crisis? Kim adds nuance to the claims around new technology’s potential, drawing out the lazy conflation of immersion and engagement. Through his analysis of VR documentaries like *Notes on Blindness: Into Darkness* (Arnaud Colinart and Amaury La Burthe, 2016) and *Carne y Arena* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2017), Kim demonstrates that the design of the VR experience affects the viewer’s engagement more directly than the mere fact of using VR.

In the following chapters, Kim deals with new spaces of engagement with documentary: in the gallery and online. In chapter 3, “Expanded *Dispositif,*” Kim looks at the so-called documentary turn in contemporary art, helpfully mapping these multiscreen installations onto familiar documentary modes, like the city symphony and the interview. He argues that, by relocating the documentary to a new place and redistributing the audiovisual material onto multiple screens in multiple spaces, the work transforms the spectator into the visitor. In one installation—*Küba*, by Kutlog Ataman—interviews with residents of the Istanbul neighborhood of Küba play on dozens of old TVs. Visitors can linger on worn sofas, watching the interviews in whatever order they choose. In arranging the sociological documentary adjacently rather than sequentially, Ataman creates an open-ended experience, compelling visitors to watch at their own pace and create their own narratives from the material.

In chapter 4, “Expanded Archives,” Kim explores interactive documentaries (i-docs). These documentaries have been eagerly covered by documentary scholars because of how they prod spectators to take an active role in experiencing and creating them. Kim takes a nuanced approach to i-docs by considering the technological components as cocreators along with the user. He tracks the software protocols and database structure behind i-docs, showing how much and what kind of interaction they allow users.

One interesting project he spotlights is *Man with a Movie Camera: Global Remake*. The website for this collaborative i-doc allows an unlimited number of participants to upload their own videos that mimic or parallel shots from Dziga Vertov’s eponymous 1929 film. Kim writes, “The website then produces a split-screen film with Vertov’s images on the left side of the frame and their parallel, uploaded images on its right side. A new split-screen film is produced every day as participants upload new images drawn from disparate geographical and authorial sources on the site” (170–71).

The collaboration afforded by internet connectivity is also central to the works in his final chapter, “Expanded Activists.” In this compelling chapter, Kim tackles the work that will be most familiar to readers: amateur activist videos. Using Tina Askanius’s typology of radical videos, Kim details witness videos, documentation videos, mobilization videos, and political mash-ups from across the globe. He points to commonalities in the form of videos from such political

protests as Occupy Wall Street, the Umbrella Movement, the Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, and Hong Kong's Anti-Extradition Law Amendment Bill Movement. While some authors are eager to draw links between these and guerrilla video practices of the past, Kim points out the salient differences: new audience behavior and networked circulation.

In the twenty-first century, it is not only guerrilla video makers who create radical content or alternative cable television networks that show them. More people than ever before can create and circulate activist videos. In addition to amateurs creating vernacular videos, they also organize and contextualize the videos, by collecting them on YouTube channels and Facebook pages. Activists curate the deluge of videos to create awareness, amplify messages, and provoke communal action. These practices have also, from the bottom up, worked their way into traditional documentary films and mainstream journalism.

By decentering documentary film, Kim makes room for a nuanced study of cinema-adjacent works and new-media projects. It is admirable work to bring these documentaries into contact with documentary film studies, while also drawing on other fields of scholarship. Kim's book yields greater value and knowledge than those who would police the boundaries with tired arguments about what is and isn't a documentary.

BOOK DATA Jihoon Kim, *Documentary's Expanded Fields: New Media and the Twenty-First-Century Documentary*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. $125.00 cloth, $39.95 paper. 320 pages.

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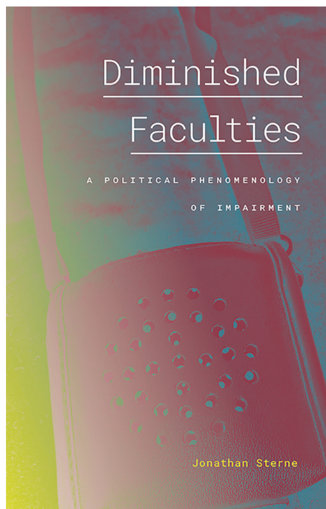
SLAVA GREENBERG

Diminished Faculties: A Political Phenomenology of Impairment by Jonathan Sterne



Jonathan Sterne's *Diminished Faculties: A Political Phenomenology of Impairment* offers a new theoretically and methodologically accessible impairment theory as a political phenomenology of bodies and technologies. The book provides a rigorous study of technology, hearing, and voice with respect to impairment. In addition, Sterne engages with his own lived experiences of diminished faculties in speech, voice, hearing, and the feeling of wellness.

Sterne is a prolific author who has written extensively about sound, technologies, the politics of culture, and disability studies. This book makes an insightful contribution in its content (a word Sterne dislikes), especially as it delves into timely phenomena: Zoom fatigue and "regular" fatigue, as well as their aesthetic and political organization. However, the book is not only insightful, but also funny and quite quirky. Even the serious and respectful trigger warnings that precede each chapter include jokes. In tandem with the book's arguments, this review will follow my impaired reading of it—and in particular two significant guidelines offered by the book to those interested in self-doubtful accounts of lived experience.

Sterne begins with a phenomenological account of his own paralyzed vocal cord. What may have otherwise been referred to as "speech impairment," caused by the paralysis, is rather defined as "some things about my speech" (195). This point of entry into the text asks the reader to rethink terms such as *impairment*, *disability*, *feature*, and *bug* (and many others). Addressing his embodied experiences in reference to communication technologies, Sterne defines impairment through its proximity to disability. He relies on Husserl's phenomenology, specifically focusing on the malfunctioning of intentionality:

> An impairment … can involve a short-circuiting of intention: a transmission impairment happens when a telecommunications network doesn't behave as it is supposed to. A physical limit is experienced as an impairment when a person has a point of comparison beyond that limit…. It exists in relation to something: an external norm of ability or action, a remembered embodiment or affect, an unrealized or altered intention. (194)

While related to disability, "[p]olitically, impairment should be understood as one possible margin of disability—it can certainly exist outside the category of disability technically, juridically, or experientially" (194). Sterne stresses that not all impairments are disabling, just as what's classified as a disability isn't always an impairment. This argument is honed throughout chapter 4, "Audile Scarification: On Normal Impairments," referring to impairments that are expected. This is not a cyborg phenomenology, but rather a new way of thinking through limits, features, and bugs in human and technological bodies.

My impaired reading begins at the end, which is certainly no way to read a book (but perhaps the only way for

me). My short attention span drew me to the practical guide of the theory featured at the end of the book (illustrated by Darsha Hewitt). My reading is therefore impaired, since the book assumes that I would start using a theory without reading its manual, even when provided—if I "ever read it at all" (15). The guide speaks directly to readers, presenting key terms, distinctions, and advice on how "to do" impairment theory, all using accessible language. Similarly to major parts of the book, the guide keeps to guideline 16: "Please: if you are going to work on impairment, be accommodating! … Sometimes the work is a matter of life and death, but if we can't do it with love, how can we expect to build a world worth living in?" (202). The reader's guide provides sixteen additional practical pieces of advice under the heading "How to Use Impairment Theory."

This manual for using political impairment phenomenology continues Sterne's earlier work with Mara Mills in providing scholars with three proposals and six tactics for dismediating disability. In their collaborative afterword to *Disability Media Studies*, Mills and Sterne offered nine ways of thinking about "disability as a constituting dimension of media, and media as a constituting dimension of disability." They argue that dismediation does not default to a celebration of glitch, error, noise, jamming, or hacking that casts "disablement" as the ultimate Other. Impairment theory, like dismediation theory, asks significant questions about bodies, technologies, subjectivity, power, and experience, while at the same time carefully refraining from self-exoticizing and essentialism.

The first chapter puts two guidelines to the test: guideline 2, "Try being an unreliable narrator for a while"; and guideline 3, "If you have acquired or use an impairment, then distance yourself from it …. Then try an impairment phenomenology, taking into account the contingency of the impaired experience you are describing, and always, always, supplementing the phenomenology with other methods, so that experience never pretends to transparency or sufficiency" (198). When describing various aspects of impairment—through rigorous theoretical debates or amusing illustrations—Sterne adds a self-doubting tone to his first-person accounts. He explains how this experience is not fully available to him. In other words, Sterne attempts to dismediate his experience, distance himself from it, and critique it as he would any other scholarly text.

This exercise in political impairment phenomenology presented in the first chapter raises some challenges for disability-studies scholars. Phenomenological accounts of lived experiences and embodied anecdotes are often used as springboards to question inter- and intrapersonal shifts between the self and the world (as, for example, in Vivian Sobchack's work). However, in Sterne's accounts, they serve to undermine his own authority. Recognizing that "[e]ven writing in disability studies often relies on the power of testimony as a mode of access to reality," Sterne takes up the challenge of including "the testimony of disability while subjecting the very category of testimony to a critique" (40).

Sterne proposes a challenge for the articulations of self-doubtful testimonies, which undermine the sense of a full and coherent self-knowledge, while he still validates testimonies of impairment and disability that have been historically disavowed by sharing his own narrative. However, even as he does so, he provides considerably more tools and guidelines for the former than the latter. And here intrudes my impaired reading of the book: I worry that "we"—that is, feminist, queer, trans and nonbinary, intersex, BIPOC, crip, and impaired folks—are not quite there yet. This is partly, though not solely, due to the eugenic pseudoscience that is still dominant in today's medicine. Sterne speaks to a posttestimony atmosphere, where testimonies are regarded as reliable access points to reality. However, in disability studies, like trans studies, such demedicalization of testimonies is already politicized and loaded with disbelief.

And yet, my concern impairs my reading and writing. I worry that impairment and disability will be used by media scholars as metaphors to speak about malfunctioning technology. I am concerned about the movement toward discrediting and invalidating our experiences and making them unreliable (a movement that is always present, but all the more so during times of crisis). At the same time, I dread coherency and didactic descriptions intended for an imagined "general audience" whom I need to educate as they force me to discard my self-doubt, regrets, errors, and glitches. *Diminished Faculties*, when read from the end (or its new beginning, as Sterne proposes), provides useful tools to work through these concerns.

BOOK DATA Jonathan Sterne, *Diminished Faculties: A Political Phenomenology of Impairment*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021. $99.95 cloth; $26.95 paper. 304 pages.

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