



*But why and how does it work so well?*

To her enormous credit, Antonia Quirke figured it out for me (even though I panicked when I read that the book was ‘an impressionistic response’ to the film. Alarm bells rang. Was this going to be—*gasp*—arty?).

Relax. In this reassuringly slim, beautifully presented ‘Big Salad’ (the photos—well-used to illustrate Quirke’s points—are excellent reproductions of key moments in the film; quite stunning in both colour and black and white), Quirke takes us through a film she is quite clearly in love with. Indeed, Quirke’s goal appears to be nothing less than to show you why she thinks that this just might be the greatest film Spielberg has ever made and a classic of modern cinema. Moment by moment and point by point Quirke simply points out (without simplifying) key elements of *Jaws* that help to make it as good as it is.

Quirke’s writing is crisp and fun and highly readable, as she carries us through the film in a neat narrative, cruising off every now and then to offer insights before seamlessly dropping back into the story. Reading Quirke’s *Jaws* is rather like listening to a DVD commentary. It feels like you’re watching the film with her and her thoughtful observations are unobtrusive and welcome.

The observations themselves range from the ‘why-didn’t-I-ever-notice-that?’ to the terrifically incisive. There are even handy histories of shark attacks on bathers throughout the century and corrections of theories put forward by ‘shark expert’ Matt Hooper (Richard Dreyfus) in the film. Inevitably, there are some pretty big stretches here and there, but, to Quirke’s credit, not that many (some of

these types of books, as I’m sure you’ve encountered, have you screaming through the text at the author ‘*did you see some cut of the movie no-one else ever has???* *The turnip signifies the protagonist’s latent homoerotic desires???* *What freakin’ turnip???*’).

From the jump, Quirke makes it clear that her *Jaws* is not going to ‘detail the nightmarish production’ that was the making of the film (although there are snippets that do just that and they’re quite welcome). She handily refers us, however, to excellent sources that do a more than adequate job of covering that troubled area (I would add to this the relevant chapters of *The Unauthorized Biography of Steven Spielberg* [John Baxter, HarperCollins, London, 1996], because I can). Quirke also makes no moves to detail the impact the phenomenal success of *Jaws* had on the business of making movies; the advent of the ‘summer blockbuster’, as it were. Examinations of that phenomenon and its consequences, Quirke points out, can also be found elsewhere.

Quirke’s *Jaws* simply takes a sharp and clear eyed look at what (luckily for us) ended up on the screen. And how sharp this eye (and ear) is. Quirke is with the film from the appearance of the Universal logo (‘there’s a sound ... and we have to listen ... the sound of marine life’) right through to the dregs of the end credits (for the story is still playing out its last under there: as the end credits roll we can see Brody [Roy Scheider] and Hooper in the far distance, paddling towards the shore. They only find their feet on sand—and safety—behind the absolutely last credit title and emerge from the water just as the picture fades to dark).

Quirke is as obsessed by the idea of showing us in words how well *Jaws* works as a phenomenon of film as Quint (Robert Shaw) is with catching his tricky phenomenon of the sea. And, like Quint, Quirke pulls us effortlessly into her horribly difficult task.

And makes it easy for us.

There are so many clever points made in so few pages that I can only tease you here. There’s Spielberg’s population of the film with bit-parts, walk-ons and even extras that are somehow automatically fully-fleshed characters. There’s Spielberg’s obvious and unusual (for the time and for his age at the time) indifference to the politics of the 1970s. There’s the astonishing John Williams score (guess what? There’s a whole lot more to it than ‘da-da’ ... da-da ...’). There’s Spielberg’s sense of humor splashed all over the place (pretty unusual for the group that made up his peers). There’s the gorgeous framing (when Brody isn’t being pressed to the edge of the screen by the pressure of the mayor and his gang he’s being pushed into a corner by the goddamn shark itself). Oh, and what about this! Quirke points out that not only is the mayor of Amity constantly sucking on a plastic fag until the pressure gets him and he goes back to the real thing, but Brody is constantly lighting gaspers and then having to throw them away after a couple of quick, desperate puffs as yet another dire situation arises: Quirke’s theory going something along the lines of Spielberg making his audience constantly desperate for a smoke ... just to keep them just that little but more on edge! Now, that’s movie making ...

And for all you McKee fans there’s more image systems, colour themes and subtextual

references than you can poke a shark’s tooth at.

I could go on ... but Antonia Quirke does it a hell of a lot better than me. One of the most fascinating points Quirke raises for us to ponder is this: *Jaws* was the last film Spielberg made that wasn’t entirely under his control. And yet it may be his best.

Quirke’s *Jaws* won’t kill your love of Spielberg’s *Jaws* and if that love has faded (or perhaps you were only ever just friends) then it’s time to rekindle.

It’s a loving book about a film not so lovingly made.

Read it. Then watch it.

*Jamie Forbes’s most recent piece for Metro wasn’t at all recent. It detailed his experiences writing for the television series, Li’l Horrors, which can currently be seen on cable, DVD or in Latin America; unlike Mr Forbes, who can currently be seen in Kew.*

DAN HARRIES, (ED.),

**THE NEW MEDIA BOOK, LONDON**

BFI Publishing, 2002.

REVIEWED BY TAMA LEAVER

Dan Harries’ edited collection *The New Media Book*, starts with the very sensible question of what exactly constitutes the newness of new media: ‘Is it the new ways in which we interact with media? Is it the new convergences (and bundling) of media technologies? Or is it the increasing interdependence (and overlap) of various media products?’ (p.ix) Harries argues that all of these factors make new media new, and his volume clearly explores

these elements in five separate but linked sections which seek to explicate some of the ways in which new media operates in and on culture. The five themed sections are Technologies, Production, Texts, Consumption and finally Contexts, with each containing four articles.

The section on Technologies seeks to 'investigate both the promises and failures of recent technological developments and situates them within the larger historical and cultural contexts of media technology' (p.1). The section opens with Michele Hilmes' reading of different types of televisual media, and she makes a strong argument for the importance of cultural dominance rather than (geographical) national boundaries in the era of digital transmission and storage. Next comes Sean Cubitt's 'Digital Filming and Special Effects' which is undoubtedly the most dense, complex and provocative article in the volume. Cubitt manages to turn the much celebrated shift from temporal to spatial logic in cinema production on its head, concluding that not all that much has really changed in terms of communicating ideas and that new media has yet to produce a dialectical system of representation. Anne Friedberg then provides a 'communications palaeontology' (p.33) of recent storage media, from VCRs to the seemingly infinite variation of optical disc media to the emerging streaming audio and video markers. The section concludes with Jeremy G. Butler's historical overview of networked computing, all the way from ARPANet to online gaming and virtual reality.

The second section, Production, looks at the ways new media are influencing existing media production and distribution techniques, and how new

possibilities are emerging (and which older methods are no longer viable). Jane Caldwell's 'The Business of New Media' looks at the mediascape in the wake of the dot com crash and argues that while the buzz word of 'interactivity' might not point to anything new for media producers, the real challenge in the twenty-first century is flexibility and cross-media responsiveness. P. David Marshall then argues that new media has allowed for an intertextual market which is not restricted by medium, but rather driven by the potential of 'play' across media; play, for Marshall, is the central tool of new media marketing. Douglas Thomas' 'Innovation, Piracy and the Ethos of New Media' explores the problematic relationship between copies, copyright and the challenge of infinite digital reproducibility and maps what he terms a 'Napster ethos' (p.86), which sees the older hacker ethic as the main challenge for continued corporate profitability in a new media era. And while Thomas' piece is ultimately concerned with making sure media producers receive their profits, Tom O'Regan and Ben Goldsmith's 'Emerging Global Ecologies of Production' takes a broader approach, highlighting the potential of digital cinema and the Internet to allow small-scale producers to create media at a comparable industry-level. They also argue that the globalization of media simultaneously produces corporate giants which may eradicate medium-level production companies altogether.

In Harries' introduction to the third section, Texts, he reminds readers that while so many new media analyses are 'displaced ... under the repeated mantra that "the medium is the message"' (p.107), textual analysis is still intrinsically important in understanding how texts



operate, and can operate differently *but still as texts*, as new media. However, Michael Allen's article 'The Impact of Digital Technologies on Film Aesthetics', which opens this section, is oddly empirical and makes rather grandiose claims about CGI shot-length and historical change in cinema form. Thankfully, Allen's article is then balanced by three far more nuanced and substantial readings. Marsha Kinder provides an extremely powerful interpretation of the links between film and gameplay, and also games and narrative form *per se*. More importantly, Kinder also launches a long-overdue critique of what she dubs the increasingly dominant 'cyber-structuralism' evident in the work of leading new media theorists such as Lev Manovich. Manovich's ideas are balanced against the complexity of reading positions and a continuum of different representational options marked out by cinema at one end, and gameplay at the other. Next is Scott Bukatman's less ambitious but equally provocative reading of online comics and their relationship to comic book form and to cinema more generally. And the Texts section is neatly tied up by Peter Lunenfeld's look at the failure (to date) of interactive cinema. His pessimism is balanced by a look at the potential of cross-media narrative and marketing, such as *The Blair Witch Project*

franchise, and leaves plenty of interesting questions up in the air.

The Consumption section opens with fan theorist Henry Jenkins reworking his established and widely published ideas on active consumption in the digital age. He utilizes Pierre Levy's concept of collective intelligence emerging between networked consumers to reframe fandom and to illustrate links between media fandom and activities such as culture jamming and blogging. Although Jenkins is not really extending his established ideas very far, this short piece is very accessible and links together concepts of consumption and audience across a wide media spectrum. The following piece is Dan Harries' own contribution to this collection, 'Watching the Internet' which explores the relationship between audiences of different media. Harries tries to escape the binary of viewers—associated with passively consuming media—versus users—which usually implies very active engagement with media—and deploys the concept of 'viewing', which integrates the modes of viewing and using (p.172). Deploying a number of examples, Harries argues that media convergence also entails more nuanced media and complex consumers, or viewers, who may swing between more passive and active consumption while engaging with new media productions. Tara McPherson's article 'Self, Other and Electronic Media' provides an important perspective regarding ideas of race in the new media matrix, and argues for the importance of 'relationality'. McPherson critiques the widely-held assertion that the ability to morph identity online actually entails empathy or any lasting form of relationship with 'otherness'. The section is finished off with Janet Wasko's



far more technical article, 'The Future of Film Distribution and Exhibition' which looks at the possibilities, potential and problems of new media distribution, with a particular focus on digital cinema.

The final section, Contexts, broadly explores the historical and technical contexts in which 'old' media—specifically television and cinema—interact with or mutate into new media. Of the four articles, the first two explore cinema and television in terms of 'Old Media as New Media' and then the second two articles reciprocate, analysing the same two media but now 'New Media as Old Media'. Unsurprisingly, the section's first article is by celebrated new media theorist Lev Manovich. He uses the history of realism in cinema, and now digital cinema and new media, to show many continuities in the desired outcomes of moving image media. However he concludes, using *Timecode* (Mike Figgis, 2000) and other experimental digital films, with the assertion that realism is too limiting and the digital opens many more interesting doorways, but doorways rarely, as yet, utilized. William Uricchio then looks past the cultural normalcy of television post-Second World War and uses television's early history, how it was imagined, and how television and radio related as competing large-scale media, to show the fluidity of any medium and how new media will inevitably already be partially shaped by the way it has been conceived of and imagined. Jan Simmons then turns on the emerging metaphors of new media—specifically the digital/analogue divide, interactivity, multimedia and new media itself—and interrogates these ideas, casting light on their shifting nature and ambiguous deployment. The Simmons piece is an excellent corrective to the unproblematic deployment of

fashionable terms in new media analysis. *The New Media Book* concludes with William Boddy's rather pessimistically toned article which charts the not-quite-rise of digital video recorders in the US domestic market and likens their spectacularly slow uptake with the dot com crash and the fact that the new media hype still outstrips customer demand considerably.

As my overview of Dan Harries' edited collection illuminates, *The New Media Book* covers a huge range of ideas and issues arising in the face of new media. While two or three articles may be a little pedestrian, most are well-written and cram huge amounts of rich analysis and provocative questions into their relatively short format (no article is longer than twenty pages). The fashionability of new media research and criticism means that Harries' collection is by no means alone in the bookstores and there are larger and more detailed volumes emerging. However, for a generalist or undergraduate reader, or indeed an undergraduate new media course textbook, *The New Media Book* is an accessible, well-written and tightly focused volume which addresses many of the relevant issues arising from the new mediascape.

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PETER WOLLEN

## PARIS HOLLYWOOD: WRITINGS ON FILM

London, Verso, 2002.

REVIEWED BY RICHARD ARMSTRONG

Peter Wollen sees rereading the history of aesthetics as 'the mainspring of my work,'<sup>1</sup> and this is borne out in such writings as *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (1969, revised 1998), and films like *Riddles of the Sphinx* (Laura Mulvey & Peter Wollen, 1977) and *Friendship's Death* (Wollen, 1987). This collection of essays from the 1990s looks back over the cinema's first hundred years and brings fresh perspectives to well-worn accounts. As the title suggests, you have only to juxtapose things and they take on another truth.

Although Wollen sticks within cinema's traditional Europe-America axis, he still ranges far and wide. Wollen has always drawn upon the widest intellectual landscape, and aesthetics and ideas flow from country to country and from culture to culture. Whether we are entering the era of new media or the Lumière workers are leaving the factory, the cinema's experimental vocation haunts this book. As Wollen says in the playful 'An Alphabet of Cinema', 'A is for Avant-Garde.'<sup>2</sup>

We often read that Britain's contribution to film art in the postwar period was the New Wave of the 1960s, the films of Reisz, Anderson, Richardson. In 'The Last New Wave', Wollen makes a case for the generation of the 1980s, represented especially by Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman. Authoritarian and divisive in its policies, suburban and *petit bourgeois* in its temper, in the 1980s Thatcherism united disparate protests from Greenaway to Frears, Jarman to Leigh. Art school graduates Greenaway



and Jarman looked not to 'kitchen sink' literature as the New Wave had, but to the continental modernist project. Institutionally, realism, from Cecil Hepworth to Mike Leigh, has been the preferred British aesthetic. Meanwhile, the experimental impulse never became as intrinsic to the official patrimony as it had in Europe and America. Intriguingly, Wollen traces modernist stirrings in nooks and crannies, from a young Hitchcock's attendance at the London Film Society to the prewar Close Up writers, including H.D., Gertrude Stein and Eisenstein. By the 1960s Pop Art drew upon Surrealism while music and film came into close concision in the work of Roeg, Boorman and Ken Russell. Greenaway and Jarman emerged from a potpourri owing much to visionary currents in British culture. This piece challenges the literary pedigree in British film history, while it is good to see the rather dull and masculinist work of the original New Wave put into perspective.

In 'Riff-Raff Realism', Wollen adds to a body of research<sup>3</sup> on one of the most interesting generic alleyways in postwar British filmmaking. Whilst set amid the dusty bomb sites and dank mews of austerity London, the 'spiv cycle' of crime thrillers evince a fascination with excess and fantasy that augments anti-realist currents in British cinema. It is significant, if unfortunate, that the most outstanding films

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