

ally superhuman physique. In the 1990s, with the advent of facilitating technologies, the body of the warrior hero became less important than explosions and other special effects. Lichtenfeld describes this shift as a decline from the more complex character portraits and moral inquiries of earlier films. This is one place where greater theoretical sophistication from Lichtenfeld would have been helpful. Do spectacular effects necessarily detract from the human element of a film or do they instead offer a different set of pleasures to the audience? Is it possible that audiences raised on rapid-cut television advertising and music videos are better able to find the human dimension amid the special-effects wizardry? Is technology the only reason that the warrior hero has a different corporeality, or are there cultural reasons that audiences of the 1990s can accept a more feminized or homoeroticized champion?

A similar point could be made about one of Lichtenfeld's most intriguing insights about the generic lineage of the action film. Near the beginning of the book, when discussing the generic precursors to the action film, Lichtenfeld makes the obvious connection to the Western. He also makes the more unusual claim that the action film carries forward the male anxiety inherent in film noir. Appealing to both the formal and narrative elements of many of the films from the 1970s and 80s, Lichtenfeld makes a persuasive case for this connection. By the time he gets to the 1990s, however, he seems to have forgotten this insight or at least feels no compulsion to explain why the films of the 90s are not anxious or are not representing anxiety according to the same codes.

The most notable omission in the book is any discussion of female action stars. Although Lichtenfeld notes that he chose not to focus on issues of gender and race, because these are the questions that have been given fullest treatment in existing discussions of the action genre, the virtual elimination of films featuring female characters—especially *The Terminator* (1984), *Terminator 2* (1991), and *Aliens* (1986)—borders on indefensible. Conversely, Lichtenfeld's most evocative discussion comes in the chapter where he compares the POW/MIA subgenre with the apocalyptic subgenre. According to Lichtenfeld's reading, both of these subgenres have to do with re-remembering the past, with the latter using a reremembered version of a fictional past to critique the historic present and provide a utopic vision of the future. Lichtenfeld's discussion of *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome* (1985) to make this point is surely one of the richest considerations of that film.

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The Dark Creative Passage: A Derridean Journey from The Literary Text to Film

By Roberta Imboden Trier: WVT, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier: 2005 \$19.00 paper 166 pages.

The Dark Creative Passage aims to illuminate the "creative process," which Imboden likens to travelling a "dark passage," that occurs when transforming a literary text into film. The passage is dark because it involves a blindness or an invisibility. The notion that the creative process involves invisibility is adapted from Derrida's discussion of this idea—in relation to blindness, memory, and (re)presentation—in his book *Memoirs of the Blind* (1993), which Imboden briefly outlines in chapter 1, "A Derridean Guide for the Road Map." Of the many philosophers, poets, and drawings through which Derrida discusses (in)visibility, memory and (re)presentation, Imboden chooses four to guide not only her own interpretations of books and films, but also her descriptions of creativity and adaptation.

The first of these guides is the story (and picture) of Buttades, a young woman who turns away from her lover in order to draw the outline of his shadow on the wall. The second is the self-portrait of Henri Fantin-Latour, who is invisible to himself in the moment his hand and eye fall on paper. The third is St. Paul, blinded by the light of God on the road to Damascus. Finally, there is a love letter written in pitch dark by Diderot. In Derrida's discussion of these four figures (among many others), what is emphasized is that they all involve a turning-away from (thus making invisible) the object they aim to represent. For example, Fantin-Latour turns away from his reflection in the mirror and Derrida argues that he has to commit his own image to memory in order to draw himself. What is (re)presented, however, is not a perfect copy (mimesis), but something that is simultaneously the same and different. For Derrida, the invisible moment that occurs when turning away from an original in order to represent it in drawing or writing always inhabits the visible. Invisibility inhabits the visible. Thus, in Derrida's account, what is visible depends on an invisible moment (what we do not see), when we attempt to represent something.

Imboden argues that Derrida's notion of (in)visibility applies when a filmmaker turns away from a literary text in order to represent it through the medium of film. In so doing, she opens up other "creative passages" through subtle comparisons between the works she discusses. These include: Sei Shonagon's and Peter Greenaway's *The Pillow Book* (1996), St. Mark's Gospel and Denys Arcand's *Jesus of Montreal* (1989), Dashiell Hammett's and John Huston's *Maltese Falcon* (1941) and Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), Michael Ondaatje's and Anthony Minghella's *The English Patient* (1996), Marguerite Duras's and Jean-Jacques Annaud's *The Lover* (1992), William Blake's *The Songs of Innocence and Experience* and Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995). A chapter is

devoted to each adaptation, with Imboden discussing first the source text then the film.

Imboden states in her introduction that her book is not a psychological approach to the phenomenon of creative process, but neither is it film theory, traditional literary theory, or philosophical analysis. Derrida's ideas are not therefore situated in relation to the history of aesthetic philosophy; his work is used "not to create a theory, but simply to explore the process that occurs between the two texts" (9). What ensues instead is an interpretation that explores the relevance of the notion of (in)visibility in relation to literary or filmic narrative. Imboden's discussion is beautifully and quasi-poetically written and also interesting and insightful. However, her interpretation of the texts and the creative passage between a book and film led me to think that her application of the notion of (in)visibility would have benefited from some more attention to film theory and analysis. Reading *The Dark Creative Passage*, I often thought that one way of understanding how the (invisible) creative process is *manifested* in film, might be to start by analyzing the cinematic form, the relationship of cinematic devices (close-ups, long shots, objective and subjective POV, color, *mise-en-scène*) to plot, narrative, and themes, as well as to the descriptions of characters and various tropes and metaphors in a literary text, so opening up questions of interpretation and (re)presentation. I would have liked to see Imboden delve more into the ways in which the literary medium itself becomes invisible as it is shaped into the significantly different medium of film. Such an exploration might have demonstrated not only how the filmmaker relies on memory and imagination (and therefore invisibility) in order to represent the literary text as film, but also how the different mediums convey (in)visibility in differing ways.

To demonstrate the ways in which the various cinematic devices are employed differently in every film, would convey more powerfully (and in keeping with Derrida) how (in)visibility, and thus creativity, is not an homogenous process. Invisibility is never singular. There are always and already layers of invisibility that haunt visibility and vice versa. There are always different cultural, social, political, ethical, ethnic, gendered, classed ways of seeing and, given this, there are always different visibilities. It must be said, however, that Imboden states clearly that theoretical analysis is not the purpose of the book. Rather, Imboden seeks through her "use of a poetic manner of writing that attempts to blur the boundary between artistic text and critical text" (4) to actually perform the creative process itself. Her poetic discussions of literary and film texts creates a new text, which is itself creative and, ultimately, a performative application of Derrida's notion of (in)visibility.

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Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film

Edited by Ian Aitken. New York: Routledge, 2006 \$625.00 cloth 3 volumes, 1968 pages

The enthusiastic reception accorded *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *March of the Penguins* (2005), *My Architect* (2003), and *Spellbound* (2002), to name but four recent documentary films that have enjoyed both critical recognition and financial success, has done much to vanquish the long prevalent myth that general audiences are not interested in nonfiction film. Within academic film studies, the proliferation of scholarship on documentary cinema, once a quasi-taboo subject when film semiotics were dismantling realism during the 1970s and 80s, is equally striking. Add in the current popularity of reality television, the "mocumentary," and Internet webcam sites and the assertion that documentary modes (or at least their appearance) lie at the heart of much contemporary media culture seems indisputable, if hardly better understood, for all of their alleged ubiquity.

Covering a geographically vast tradition in film practice and theory as old as the cinematic medium itself, the *Encyclopedia of Documentary Film*, edited by Ian Aitken with contributions by 242 scholars and film practitioners, is destined to be a major resource for scholars, students, and filmmakers. Writing of its mission in the introduction, Aitken asserts: "This encyclopedia provides a much-needed infrastructural support for the field of documentary film studies, and the material that it contains should provide the basis for many future research projects. The encyclopedia also enables the field to be considered, and even eventually theorized, as a totality. It is now, and for the first time, possible to make comparative studies of different national and regional documentary film traditions, and to create an overall 'map' of the field. This will prove an invaluable aid to future research" (xxxviii). On the whole, the book lives up to these strong claims and manifests a commendable ambition and spirit of inclusivity. Its entries are generally well-written, factually accurate, and often models of intellectual concision.

Comprising essays on individual films, filmmakers, film theorists, organizations, geographic regions, concepts, styles, and themes, the *Encyclopedia* is unique among film reference books for its international focus and conceptual generosity. From the earliest films of the Lumière brothers and silent newsreels, to contemporary efforts by directors such as Patricio Guzman and Ross McElwee, the historical range of this book is admirable. Alphabetical and thematic lists of entries and a meticulous index precede and conclude all three volumes and make them easy to navigate. Readers seeking information on canonical figures such as Robert Flaherty, John Grierson, Jean Rouch, and Dziga Vertov will find it in abundance. Moving between biographical, film, organizational, and national entries allows a topic to emerge in different contexts, a process facilitated by useful cross-references at the conclusion of many entries. This is especially evident in the treatment of 1930s British documentary, not surprisingly one of the book's strengths given Aitken's own research interests,