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I have researched the life and times of Matthew Flinders for nearly 20 years in order to raise the profile of this most important English explorer so that he might stand alongside the likes of James Cook, William Bligh, Arthur Phillip, and John Franklin. This review is written from that standpoint – with the added ingredient of including George Bass. This book, by Sydney-based teacher author and editor Josephine Bastion, is a first-class example, with some minor faults, of the history of the birth of Australia in the age of Enlightenment. It would have made a greater impact if it had been published in 2014 to coincide with the bicentenary of Flinders’ passing. Nevertheless, the account is a work of scholarship based on good research in the relevant archives. It is a pleasure to read, using prose that has been written to be read rather than to impress.

However, it should be said that attempting to combine the biographies of the two men, albeit of similar background and ambition, only exacerbated the author’s challenge. The book is almost a biography of Flinders, without the early years, interspersed with the occasional chapter on Bass.

Flinders and Bass arrived in Sydney in 1795. Flinders wanted to be an explorer ‘second only to Cook’, Bass a naturalist, another Sir Joseph Banks, and a rich Sydney trader. For eight years these two pursued their destiny. Their voyages changed the map of Australia, and Flinders gave it its name. They were ready for even greater ventures.

Then it was all over. Bass had set out on a voyage he would never finish. His life ended when he was 32 years old. At about the same time Flinders was standing bareheaded and bedraggled before the governor of Ile de France (Mauritius), who told him that his claim to be the commander of a great expedition of discovery was frankly incredible, all lies; he was thrust into prison as a spy and detained for nearly seven years. His career as an explorer ended when he was 29 years old. But a strange new adventure was just beginning.

In this work the author describes the fluctuating fortunes of this ambitious young naval hydrographer. Placed in command of HMS Investigator, a ship whose purposeful name hid its rotting timbers, he surveyed long stretches of uncharted Australian coastline during his circumnavigation of the continent in the early nineteenth century. At the same time his scientific companions gathered a mass of detail about the land, its flora and fauna, and its Aboriginal inhabitants. Sadly, Flinders’ achievements were obscured by six years of wartime detention, at the Ile de France (Mauritius), that allowed French navigators in Australian waters to claim priority. Only after his early death were Flinders’ accomplishments given belated recognition: in 1816 his chosen name, Australia, was accepted by Governor Macquarie for the continent whose outlines he had done much to reveal.

Bastian’s biography of Flinders brings to life the extraordinary destiny of the young man from Donington, Lincolnshire, whose name is forever etched in the history of Australia’s exploration and discovery. This is a well-researched account, which draws on an impressive array of archival sources and is informed by the latest scholarship. The singular ambition that drove Flinders to emulate the illustrious maritime explorers who preceded him, chief among whom was the immortal James Cook, is evident at every turn. There is also a welcome focus here on the scientific work undertaken by Flinders and the ‘scientific gentlemen’ who accompanied him on his ground-breaking circumnavigation of Australia in the Investigator.
The brilliant and charismatic Bass embodied the Age of Enlightenment. He was a man of intense intellectual curiosity, of wide ranging talents and contradictions. He was a skilled surgeon but preferred exploration to medicine, he put his career as a naval surgeon on hold to seek a fortune as a trader. He virtually abandoned his wife for the life of adventure and rewards in commerce. He lived a short but remarkable life.

This is a story of triumph and tragedy, of remarkable achievements and maddening frustrations. It is a compelling tale in its own right, and a must-read for anyone interested in maritime history or in the early European exploration of Australia.

If I have any criticism, it is that the title is too long and does not roll off the tongue easily. It could have been shorter and punchier to grab the attention of potential readers: ‘Flinders and Bass in Australia’. Secondly there are many quotations – too many to be included here – which are not marked as such in the narrative and do not have a reference in the endnotes. Finally, it is a matter of record that Flinders died on 19 July 1814 so it is somewhat disappointing that on the very last page and last line the author has implied that he died on 20 July 1814 (253).

The book includes 22 chapters in five parts and six maps from the period during which Flinders and Bass explored the coast of New South Wales and Van Diemens Land, between 1795 and 1799, and Flinders circumnavigated Terra Australis, between 1801 and 1803. A short Foreword by Paul Brunton is followed by a three page preface and acknowledgements. Following on from the final chapter there is a short list of abbreviations, extensive notes, a full bibliography section and a comprehensive index which make up a further 45 pages.

It was Flinders’ skill, humanity and courage as a navigator that delivered those who would follow him from the dangers of unknown coastlines, rumoured cannibals ashore, shipboard sickness, leaky ships and intransigent officials. He was as much a political pawn in the maritime world of two hundred years ago as a corporate executive, or naval officer, of today. He was a fascinating study of human tenacity and frailty. Both he and Bass remain relevant in the Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy today.

Have you seen Flinders’ new statue at Euston Station, London, or Flinders University or Port Lincoln in South Australia?

Peter Ashley


The Enlightenment has of late been charged with negligence on fronts ranging from its being used to entrench racism in post-colonial societies to its problematic effects on our individual sense of self. Inside Australian Culture: Legacies of Enlightenment Values focuses on the former, and looks at colonialism as both an Enlightenment legacy and as ‘an ongoing project in Australian public culture’ (2). This book is not so much timely as just overdue. We do fear the other. We fear the other within and without our borders. Despite dissent, Australia worries about asylum seekers. We continue to struggle with acceptance of refugees and migrants. And we are yet to reconcile with our colonial past and the indigenous population. And then there is our anxiety about ‘generic Asia’ (2).

Whether or not you agree that the other is to be worried about for whatever reason (and that is a separate debate to what this book, and this review, takes on), the fact is that the way we are dealing with the other is not productive. Offord et al. argue that the way we currently deal with the other depends on our (now) unconscious subscription to institutionalised, mostly British, Enlightenment traditions – traditions that safeguard historical divisions between White Europeans and everyone else. If we want to change the way we see the other, we need to look at our way of viewing the world and our place in it. This asks us to engage in what the Enlightenment legacy has so far resisted: self-reflection.

The authors of Inside Australian Culture have taken it upon themselves to do some of this cultural self-reflection, and what they have found is that Enlightenment values reinforce a colonial, White European national identity at the expense of our obviously – and, if convenient, celebrated – multicultural population. To argue this, Offord et al. have organised this book into three parts, which are bracketed by Ashis Nandy’s foreword and Vinay Lal’s afterword.

Part one looks conceptually at what it means to ‘get inside’ Australian culture. It gives context for how Enlightenment ideas became central to the nation’s colonial, settler project, and shows how these ideas set the terms for our modern nation. This section ends by discussing the difference between the public sphere and public culture, how these two relate to each other, and how they serve to reinforce Enlightenment values (or, more negatively, ‘pathologies of power’) (33).

Part two investigates three moments in Australian history that show these Enlightenment traditions in practice. A chapter each is dedicated to the 1858 inquiry into regulating Chinese immigration, the Cubillo v. the Commonwealth case of 2000 that sought justice for two members of the Stolen Generation, and the 2005 Cronulla Riot. These case studies investigate the ethical limits of Enlightenment thinking. One example, presented in relation to Cubillo v. the Commonwealth case, is how a legal system designed on British law and Enlightenment principles lacks the flexibility to admit evidence and testimony that draws on memory and communal experience. Overreliance on documented evidence and an empiricist approach to ‘historical fact’ shifts the burden of proof onto individuals like Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner, ‘whose only records accorded legal recognition in relation to their childhood [were] the records maintained by [the] government’ that legislated their removal (75).

1 See, for example, Matthew Crawford, The World Beyond Your Head: How to Flourish in an Age of Distraction (London: Viking, 2015)

Part three offers concluding remarks on the preceding two sections, and draws on the works of Ashis Nandy, an Indian political psychologist, social theorist, and critic, as a springboard for the authors’ discussion of how we might work with the ‘necessary other.’ The authors allow that Nandy’s ideas are not the only way to view the Enlightenment legacy in Australia, but it is true that, as they write, his insights have ‘a special clarity’ (11) and he engages with Australian culture in a ‘nuanced and reflective manner’ (10). And the way this book is framed through Nandy’s commentary (excerpts from interviews with Nandy across 2007 are used as epigraphs to each chapter) is one of its strengths. The same rhetorical strength can be found in Vinay Lal’s closing remarks.

The careful writing of Nandy and Lal throws into relief the parts of Inside Australian Culture that read less accessibly. As with any collaborative effort (and as with any effort to distil complex ideas into clear and cohesive writing) there is always the danger of losing sight of the bigger picture. And though the authors self-consciously pre-empt this criticism, and though they go to pains to show how the various moving parts of this book connect with each other, the sections do at times feel stitched together. And though the argument is consistent and often has the clarity it needs – as in much of the presentation of the three case studies – it also often gets obscured by being wordier than necessary. This is why using Nandy as the connective tissue for the book overall is wise. Nandy lends clarity and concision to the authors’ argument where sometimes they have prioritised terminology over accessibility.

For scholars whose research makes the terrain of this book familiar territory this will not be a problem. But because the whole point of the book seems to be to ask Australian citizens to look hard at their sense of belonging and their sense of having a national identity, it is important to consider how to make these ideas accessible to the public. It’s one thing to speak to fellow scholars about our national sense of belonging, and another to speak to participants in the Cronulla Riot. I understand that addressing Australia writ large is an unfair task to give the authors of this book, but I think it would be profitable if the authors consider how their ideas can be engaged with more broadly.

The Enlightenment doesn’t need to be dismissed as entirely bad and its traditions do not need to be entirely rejected, but the value system that informs and directs Australian culture does need to be looked at closely. As Nandy says, ‘even those who disagree with the main thesis of this book will also gain much from the effort’ made to consider the argument (ix). If we can’t see, if we can’t remain aware of, how our cultural inheritance is effectively preventing our understanding of and ability to work with the other, then we will stay stuck in the past.

This book is overtly of the humanist tradition, which is, I think, good and necessary. Nandy writes in his foreword: ‘human beings, given enough time, opportunity and a culture of impunity, can turn any theory of salvation – secular or nonsecular – into its opposite’ (vii). The Enlightenment project prioritised a system of values based on reason. The project for the authors of Inside Australian Culture is to suggest a way to balance this value system with compassion and empathy (xi). This project is important, not only in this day and age but also, yes, certainly, in this day and age.

Grace Chipperfield
Flinders University
Travelling Home, ‘Walkabout Magazine’ and Mid-Twentieth Century Australia by Mitchell Rolls and Anna Johnston (Anthem Press 2017)

In 1934, the Australian National Travel Authority launched a quality illustrated geographic and tourism magazine, titled Walkabout: Australia and the South Seas. The 64-page magazine featured an eclectic array of ‘accessible, easy-to-read, informative’ (3) articles featuring regions across Australia, and supported by superb photography, a crisp modern design and high production values.

The magazine was a great success, quickly outselling its initial 20,000 print run. By 1946, it was linked with the newly formed Australian Geographical Society officially became Australia’s geographic magazine. Its popularity rose over the decades with a loyal and dedicated subscriber base of over 50,000 in the 1960s. Ironically, by that time increasing production costs meant declining profits and the inevitable demise of the magazine in 1978.

Mitchell Rolls and Anna Johnston’s Travelling Home brings a much-needed critical eye to a genre of writing often overlooked in literary and cultural analysis. As the authors point out, such magazines are regarded as middle-brow literature – which falls between the ‘high-brow’ canonical literature that receives the bulk of traditional scholarly interest, and the more sensational low-brow literature that has recently attracted a little more attention. Middle-brow literature remains the most neglected area of writing, despite comprising the vast majority, and arguably the most influential, reading matter for the general public.

The middle years of the twentieth century might well be stereotypically characterised by ‘conservatism, dull conformity and lack of intellectual vigour’ (2) as exemplified by the Literature Censorship Board’s heavy handed approach to its task. And indeed, as Rolls and Johnston point out, some scholars have found that selected articles from Walkabout support just such a narrow or racist view of Australian society at the time. Significantly, Travelling Home analyses the entire publication history of the magazine, its oeuvre as it were. From this perspective, the magazine as a whole tells a different and more nuanced story and includes a diverse and often contradictory range of views which could be seen to give readers agency in reaching their own conclusions.

A magazine founded on the notion that the ‘real’ Australia is to be found outside the cities, and which encouraged its largely (although not exclusively) urban readership to travel into regional Australia and Oceania might reasonably be expected to suffer from the ‘bucolic pastiche or nostalgia’ (3) characteristic of radio shows like ‘Australia All Over’. But the authors argue that ‘Walkabout did not provide simply a naïve or purposeful conformity iterating nationalist myths; rather, it regularly included material reflecting a genuine desire to be educative’ (3). With its careful mix of education and entertainment, ‘Walkabout encouraged readers to come to a better understanding of the national self by exploring the physical, topographical and environmental constituents of the continent’ (3).

The magazine fostered a particular way of looking at ourselves and others, which the authors argue can be seen as both world-making and self-fashioning. In a time when Australia was rapidly moving away from a dependence on Europe, Walkabout placed Australia in a local south
Pacific context. And as increasing private travel became a regular feature of many Australian’s lives, the magazine provided instructions for how to be a tourist, promoting active, affective experiential engagement with the places visited. *Walkabout* took Australians out of the city and into the broader regions, offering distinctive, individual descriptions of different regions of the country, rather than the clichéd, homogenised version of Australia we often see sold into the tourism market today. At this time, the magazine was selling Australia to a local market, not an international one, despite the fact that it was also distributed overseas.

The book traverses the publication history of the magazine, assessing its contributors – literary, travel, anthropological and natural history writers – and how their rhetorical style contributed to a development of an overtly accessible middle-brow culture. The diversity of writers contributed to the magazine’s ability to balance a wide range of opinion and approach, as exemplified by regular articles from the progressive and radical Katherine Susannah Pritchard as well as the more establishment and conservative Henrietta Drake-Brockman.

The inaugural issue of the magazine featured a striking image of an ‘Australian Aboriginal’ in traditional dress. This image sets the tone for subsequent issues which consistently included articles or photographs on Indigenous affairs. While many of these reflect attitudes or language that might be deemed derogatory today, Rolls and Johnston argue that they nonetheless present a complex and detailed account of Aboriginal life and affairs in Australia which is more nuanced than individual articles suggest when examined in isolation.

Similarly, the magazine displays a diversity of often conflicting articles around development and conservation. *Walkabout* was clearly a progressive and ‘modern’ magazine, supporting rural industries, particularly agriculture and tourism. As such regional Australia was often depicted as an untapped resource waiting to be unlocked by technological developments such as irrigation. Simultaneously tourism relied strongly on the preservation of wildlife and scenic landscapes whilst also potentially threatening its survival. With this dual focus, *Walkabout* provides an early reflection of an ongoing conflict in landscape management.

*Travelling Home* concludes by placing Australia within the context of the Pacific, examining how *Walkabout* depicted our neighbours and what it can tell us about ourselves and Australia’s often neo-colonial interests in the region.

One of the great strengths of the book is its wealth of detailed information and data. The style, unlike the magazine under consideration, sways more towards the academic than the popular. I did find myself at times longing for a few succinct well-designed tables which might alleviate the text of the rich burden of its data, whilst also making that information much more accessible and readable.

Given the detailed analysis the book contains it seems unfair to ask for more. The authors spend a little time contrasting *Walkabout* with the highly gendered contemporaneous magazines like *Australian Women’s Weekly* and *Man*, which made me wonder what a broader comparison across the wider range of Australian magazines at the time – literary, cultural, political, natural history and geographic – might reveal. Did *Walkabout* replace other earlier journals covering similar material (like *Lone Hand*, for example) and to what extent has its role been filled by
other magazines like the high quality Nature Australia or the more popular Australian Geographic?

As a magazine that could be found in many Australian lounge rooms, waiting rooms, libraries and tourist offices, Walkabout is recalled with affection by many. It developed strong connections with its readership through letters and surveys. Rolls and Johnston make a convincing case that popular accessible magazine literature like this makes a major contribution to Australia’s cultural heritage. It has helped shape a ‘distinctly modern national imagining’ (6) of the Australian identity and is worthy of much greater scholarly attention than it currently receives. Travelling Home goes a long way towards beginning that redress.

Danielle Clode
The Child Savage, 1890-2010: From Comics to Games edited by Elizabeth Wesseling (Ashgate, 2016)

The Child Savage, 1890-2010 – Ashgate’s most recent addition to their ‘Studies in Childhood, 1700 to the Present’ series – proceeds from a lack in existing intermedial scholarship regarding the child-savage trope in twentieth-century forms of narrative fiction.

Editor Elizabeth Wesseling succinctly lays out the volume’s conceptual framework in her introductory chapter, proceeding from the claim that the child-savage is a root metaphor, and thus ‘a foundational conceptual schema from which other metaphors derive’ (5). Additionally, it is made explicit that this volume is not a study in media history, but rather cultural history. Although she acknowledges the trope’s longevity, Wesseling directs attention to four discursive contexts in which the child savage proved integral: to the Enlightenment project, as a being outside the control of language and thus an object of philosophical study; to concepts of modern governance, in which the child savage represented a state of nature against which political and ethical bearings could be postulated; to the Romantics, particularly in their aesthetic considerations; and to nineteenth-century evolutionary science, during which the recapitulationist theories were formed and propagated. This final context is perhaps the concept most often referred to across the volume’s essays, and is integral to a better understanding of the paternalistic treatment of colonised subjects by colonialists. That said, it is the constant return to the contradictory construction of the child that is perhaps the collection’s most engaging line of thought.

The contributors’ 13 essays are divided into three sections: The Child-Savage in (Neo-) Colonial Discourse, Domestic Savages, and Postcolonial Playgrounds. This form of organisation not only allows for an examination across media forms of the twentieth century, but also reveals how, in Wesseling’s words, the child-savage trope ‘is central to the contradictory meanings that inhabit the construction of “the child” in general’ (15). Summarising all 13 essays so as to fit the size of a review would not do them justice, so I will proceed with a discussion of four essays spread throughout the volume, believing them to reveal the wide range of media discussed by Wesseling and her contributors.

Ruth Murphy’s chapter, featuring a discussion of Rudyard Kipling Just So Stories, pays close attention to the aforementioned theory of the ‘recapitulated’ child, which posited that the individual development of a child reflected the progress of the human race from savage animal to modern man. Focussing on three stories that feature the character Taffy, Murphy brilliantly argues that Kipling’s formation of the child underlines the progressive ideology foundational to colonial expansion, and further proceeds to lay bare the complex interplay between children’s literature and the evolutionary theory that informs it, as well as drawing attention to the presence of Romantic conceptions of the child-savage.

Joshua Garrison’s essay concerning the (ab)use of the child-savage trope in American exploitation cinema is equally fascinating: tracing the diminishing acceptance of G. Hall Stanley’s text Adolescence in the 1920s, and the adoption of his writings by the American film industry of the 1930s. Drawing on films such as Reefer Madness, Marihuana, and Sex Madness,
Garrison reveals manipulative structuring of youth as the social group that is simultaneously savage and at risk of said savagery. Although Garrison’s contribution focuses almost exclusively on American cinema and its repercussions for the United States, he nonetheless emphasises a cinematic trope that has persisted into the twenty-first century.

Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer sheds light on the impact of the negritude movement on avant-garde children’s literature, focussing on the work of Blaise Cendrars, Franz Hellens, Arna Botemps and Langston Hughes. Outlining the origin of the movement and its artistic and political dimensions, Kümmerling-Meibauer advances the argument that Cendrars, Hellens, and Botemps and Hughes employ various methods – such as the deployment of multilingual characters, and the juxtaposition of Romantic and Surrealist ideals – to subvert the Western gaze’s infantilising of African art.

Jonathan Bignell critically examines the Action Man children’s toy and its relation to concepts of masculinity, specifically those produced from the 1960s to the 1990s. Central to Bignell’s argument is the claim that children’s toys are bound to ‘scripts’ of how they must be played with, and ultimately the narrative construction that informs what being a child constitutes. In conjunction, the chapter features a discussion of the rational, enjoyable design of war games, and the placement of the male child within this construction. Bignell eschews a discussion of ‘kinds of play’ in favour of exploring the discursive struggle surrounding Action Man toys, and engages particularly well with the gendered body of the figurine. In his concluding section, Bignell claims that the cultural formation of war toys ‘is not crudely to inculcate national and cultural stereotypes, but to naturalize the concept of war as both natural and eternal’ (200).

Proceeding from a literary background, I found the related chapters to be enlightening. That should not deter readers from other disciplines, however, as the text’s study also draws upon comic strips, film, school discourse, and radio dramas, among other forms of media. Wesseling and her collaborators succeed, not only in presenting an insightful exploration of the child-savage trope in media, but in contributing to the field of cultural history with an informative and enthralling collection.

Keenan Collett
Friedrich Gerstäcker, *Australia: A German Traveller in the Age of Gold* edited by Peter Monteath (Wakefield Press, 2016)

Sometimes it is only possible to see something clearly by choosing to view it through a different perspective. Travel writing offers an insight into foreign places through the perspective of a foreigner. There are ethical considerations to keep in mind when providing a commentary on a place a person has only perused for a few hours or days, yet for travellers who take the time to immerse themselves long-term in a particular region, there can be much to learn from their insight.

German travel writer Friedrich Gerstäcker, born in Hamburg in 1816, dedicated much of his life to travelling and writing about his adventures. In 1851, he arrived in Australia, landing first in Sydney, before navigating part of the way to Adelaide along the Murray River in a canoe and then continuing to the city on foot. The Australian leg of Gerstäcker’s travels was published by Stuttgart publishing house J. G. Cotta (who also funded Gerstäcker’s journey) in a volume titled *Australien* in 1854. *Australia: A German Traveller in the Age of Gold*, edited by Peter Monteath, is a translation of the original 1854 volume *Australien*. Versions of *Australien* have previously appeared in English, yet in much-abridged editions. Monteath and a team of dedicated translators have translated Gerstäcker’s original work, where his unique perspectives on the harsh Australian landscape and Australian people offer an insight into the Australia of the 1850s, on the brink of the Gold Rush.

Gerstäcker recounts his Australian adventures with humour and suspense. After arriving in Sydney and spending some time there, Gerstäcker decides to travel to Albury by mail coach (the only available option) before canoeing down the Hume River and onto the Murray River in order to get to Adelaide. Gerstäcker writes that ‘a passenger who embarks on a journey on the “Royal Mail”… may just as well commit his soul into God’s hands and concentrate totally on his body, for surely his mistreatment will take up all his time and attention’ (31). He then launches into a detailed account of the haphazard journey itself, and does not even try to hide his distaste:

As he whipped the horses on, the coach – if I may stoop to such crude flattery in calling such a vehicle a coach – shot ahead. With a sudden jolt, or should I say a series of jolts, we were shaken about so mercilessly that some of the passengers sat down, and not in a civilised and socially approved manner. (35)

It is apparent early on that Gerstäcker is an experienced traveller. Logistical difficulties appear not to perturb him, even when faced with the difficulty of sourcing a canoe for his journey down the Murray River, and the challenges of the journey itself. He displays an eternal optimism that does not leave him, even in the trickiest of situations. During the difficult journey down the Murray, the canoe floods with water and Gerstäcker loses many of his possessions, to the point that all he has left to steer the canoe with is a frying pan: ‘My good spirits did not desert me for even a moment – I was now once again in a particularly bad “scrape” as the Americans call it, and for now I had nothing more to do than to find a way out of it’ (57). He is very pragmatic: out in the middle of nowhere, his only option is to keep going, despite the difficulties, in order to survive.

Gerstäcker writes beautiful descriptions of the Australian landscape, which give a real feel for just how wild, unkempt and isolated the country regions were at the time: ‘The coarse sandhills covered with mallee, the wonderful bushes and beautifully formed little spruces growing out of...
them, surrounded me like a surging tide’ (91). Gerstäcker constantly compares the Australian landscape to that of America, as he travelled in America for many months before arriving in Australia. It is his point of reference as both lands were colonised by the British. In describing the Murray River’s unsuitability for growing crops, Gerstäcker observes that ‘the valley is not broad and fertile enough to permit levees or dams of the kind, for example, that hold back the waters on the banks of the Mississipi’ (54). Even if the reader is unfamiliar with both the USA and Australia, these comparisons illustrate how unique the Australian landscape really is.

One of the most revealing aspects about Australia in this book is Gerstäcker’s descriptions of the Barossa Valley. The Barossa was very much a German community at the time, and Gerstäcker writes that ‘It was a very strange feeling for me to find myself suddenly – in a foreign land and continent and even in an English colony – surrounded by nothing but Germans, and in fact a purely German way of life and doing things’ (153). Gerstäcker’s descriptions reveal the extent of the German language and culture in the Barossa Valley at the time, illustrating the strength and vibrancy of the German community in the region. It also provides a contrast to the modern-day Barossa Valley, where remnants of its German heritage can be found if a person chooses to look for them, but it is no longer the vibrant German community it once was.

Peter Monteath and his team of translators have captured the spirit of Gerstäcker’s travels in *Australia: A German Traveller in the Age of Gold*. Gerstäcker’s travels preserve 1850s Australia, and capture the early beginnings of colonised Australia and the hardships faced in the country during that time. The book not only offers the reader a different perspective on this era in Australia’s history, but also highlights just how different the Australia of less than 200 years ago is to the Australia of today.

Raelke Grimmer
Allison Craven, *Finding Queensland in Australian Cinema: Poetics and Screen Geographies* (Anthem Press, 2016)

Queensland’s role as a location for film productions, a setting for film narratives, and a locus for local, national, and cinematic identities is the theme of Allison Craven’s *Finding Queensland in Australian Cinema: Poetics and Screen Geographies*. Craven’s work ‘pose[s] the idea of region as a source of cinematic identity, and … examine[s] how location affects a film’s meaning’ (1). Using films made and/or set in Queensland as her primary texts, Craven advocates for progressing from a generalised vision of Australia on film towards a vision that foregrounds regional space and identity. In doing so, she considers how these Queensland-based productions contribute to national identity in these transnational times, as well as how Queensland figures into representations of Australia within the broader context of film as a dominant commercial art form and global storytelling practice.

Craven’s book is divided into four themed sections with two chapters apiece. The first section concentrates on films produced during periods of rigid, ‘monolithic’ national identity, exploring films that reinvent a uniform vision of Australia. Objects of analysis here are Charles Chauvel’s 1955 race drama *Jedda* and Donald Crombie’s 1978 film *The Irishman*, a product of the Australian New Wave reflecting the aesthetic (period setting, glacial pacing, literary and picturesque inclinations, and seemingly uncritical nostalgia for a white Australia of yore) typical of the heritage dramas constituting this film cycle. Craven reveals links between *The Irishman* and *Jedda* (set in the Northern Territory but shot in Queensland) in their dubbing of Indigenous actresses on their soundtracks, registering their uncertainty about presenting Indigenous voices on film and a marked colonial impulse. The second section focuses on onscreen representations of Queensland as paradise, as well as films that undercut this. One such film is Rachel Perkins’ tremendous *Radiance*, set in North Queensland but shot in Central Queensland. Unlike *Jedda*, Perkins’ 1998 film, based on a stage play by Lois Nowra, foregrounds Indigenous women’s voices in a post-Mabo era, dramatising the relationship between home and identity through three women and revealing the dystopia and dark history underpinning the utopia. The next chapter, meanwhile, turns its attention to more utopian cinematic representations of Queensland such as family adventure film *Nim’s Island* and Michael Powell’s *Age of Consent*. The latter film, a 1969 production starring imports James Mason and Helen Mirren and based on a somewhat autobiographical novel by artist Norman Lindsay, not only preceded the Australian film revival of the 1970s, but with its Elysian island setting showcased a different side of Australia from the rural, inland settings predominantly featured on film to that point.

The third section of Craven’s book concentrates on films made on the Gold Coast but set in disparate locations. One chapter examines young adult *bildungsroman* narratives *The Coolangatta Gold* and *Peter Pan*. Craven illustrates how the former film, the biggest-budgeted Australian film of its era, was conceived as a showcase for the Gold Coast and built around the novel concept of staging a real-life quadrathlon, which would go on to become a recurring event. In contrast to this local and locally-set production, *Peter Pan* was helmed by a local filmmaker (P.J. Hogan of *Muriel’s Wedding* fame) and utilised local facilities, but was an international film production set in London and faraway Neverland. Another text discussed in this section is Alister Grierson’s thriller *Sanctum*, which recreated the less fantastical but nonetheless exotic...
cave systems of Papua New Guinea on its Gold Coast studio sets. In the fourth and final section, Craven turns to the remote settings utilised in the television series *The Straits* and *R.A.N. Royal Area Nurse* and to the town of Winton, which has become a locus for film production thanks to John Hillcoat’s *The Proposition* and Ivan Sen’s *Mystery Road*, two vital Australian films of the twenty-first century. Craven examines how Hillcoat’s 2005 period Western and Sen’s 2013 small-town thriller ruminate on the colonial domestication of the outback, its aftermath, and its ongoing repercussions, signalling a contemporary revisionist ethos far from the reactionary productions discussed in the book’s first section.

The list of films shot in part or whole in Queensland is long and varied, and while one could arguably create a whole other book comprised of alternative film choices and, by extension, locations – as far as international productions go, I would be especially partial to discussion of the Cairns-shot monstrosity *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, featuring one of Marlon Brando’s final, least-dignified performances – the titles selected here are apt, and the insights gleaned from them valuable. Craven is thoughtful and thorough in her analysis, elucidating the relationships between production circumstances, historical and geographical context, and themes of place and identity in her chosen artefacts. Prior familiarity with the texts being analysed is advantageous but not a prerequisite: I was not acquainted with *The Irishman*, *The Coolangatta Gold*, or the television series discussed, but had little difficulty following Craven’s analysis. Readers interested in discussion of the films’ commercial or critical receptions, aesthetic value, or matters of auteursm may find the volume a little dry, but this does not detract from the book’s substance, and such information is readily available elsewhere.

The extra-textual, popular-cultural relationship between films and their settings and/or locales of production is increasingly a subject of commentary: note the widespread discussions of the relationship between Peter Jackson’s *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* films and New Zealand tourism, or the publication of Intellect’s popular *World Film Locations* series. Two Australian cities have been subject to books in this series: Melbourne and Sydney. In lieu of any volume on Brisbane or elsewhere in Australia’s sunshine state, Craven’s book marks a valuable addition to scholarship about Queensland on film. It also marks a worthwhile contribution to discourse on how Australia’s maligned but still resilient film industry perpetuates identity, place, and identity-through-place, as well as Queensland’s particular role in diversifying onscreen representations of Australia and, by extension, Australian cinematic and real-world identities.

Ben Kooyman
The Routledge Companion to Native American Literature, edited by Deborah L. Madsen (Routledge, 2016)

This collection of essays offers an expansive and accessible guide to engaging with the rich and complex landscape of Native American Literature. Orientating the reader towards the contemporary debates and concerns of Native American Literary studies, the companion also clarifies and condenses the historical contexts of cultural, military and legal oppression needed to apprehend the various artistic works, events and methods presented in the book. By demythologising and contextualising Native American histories and cultures, the Companion prepares readers to approach Native American Literature which opens up more inclusive avenues to appreciate the complex relations amongst modes of Native American being and representation. The Companion positions Native American literature as a site of engagement and resistance, serving as both testimonies to ‘vanished’ trauma and as an assertion of Native American continuity and sovereignty.

In the first section, ‘Identities’, the various contributors outline and engage with the ways in which Native American literature operates to counter stereotypical representations and to produce narratives reiterating the worth and significance of Native American subjectivity in the contemporary moment. These aesthetics and narratives are shown to destabilise repressive settler logics through the representation and recovery of Native American cosmologies. Earl E. Fitz’s essay challenges the settler-centric, colonial production of history through tracing – linguistically and geographically – how Native American culture can be read as the foundation of collective American identity. In her contribution, Susan Kollin provides an overview of the current trajectory of Alaskan Native literature and scholarship, emphasising the efforts of Alaskan Native scholars and experts who are leading a process of cultural recovery in the effort to restore and reaffirm sovereignty. Chris LaLonde’s work examines the position of being ‘mixed-blood’ or ‘crossblood’ and argues that ‘crossblood’ individuals mobilise their subject position as an articulations of personhood as well as a celebration of community in order to counter the discourses that render Native Americans absent or ‘vanished’. Through an analysis of contemporary fiction written by Native storytellers, Carol Miller outlines how the Native experience in, and representation of, urban settings acts to collapse the binaries between nature and the city. Miller emphasises the broader implications of this application of Native cosmology for both Native and non-Native individuals in terms of the current environmental crisis.

The second section, ‘Key Moments’, takes a pragmatic and wide reaching approach to the impact of legislatures of oppression including treaty-relations, the Marshall trilogy, the Indian Removal Act, Termination policies and jurisdictional attempts at colonial redress. David J. Carlson posits the existence of a ‘treaty literature’ derived from the impact that treaties and treaty-making have had on American Indian cultural history and literary production. Carlson’s work frames the historical context, scholarly overviews and cultural productions informed by the history of US-Indian Treaty-Relations in terms of their impact, not only on Native American independence and sovereignty, but also on emerging forms of transnational indigenous studies.


In focusing on policies of displacement and forced incorporation, Mark Rifkin outlines how the Removal Acts (and subsequent displacement policies) resulted in Native peoples altering their forms of self-representation. His chapter surveys the shift in self-articulation and points to the range of strategies adopted by Native writers in their attempts to assert and defend their personhood, communities and histories. Eric Cheyfitz’s chapter systematically addresses, outlines and problematises the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. He focuses on how its attempts to ratify indigenous peoples’ claims to equality, dignity and the right to land paradoxically reproduces and validates colonial authority. In examining these insufficiencies alongside various Native American texts, he illustrates the limits and promise of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as suggests ways in which these texts demonstrate the meaning of ‘rights’ and ‘self determination’ in a world of Indigenous being.

The third section is titled ‘Sovereignty’ – a recurring theme throughout the Companion – and grapples with the issues of recognition, acknowledgement and freedom that plague the relation between tribal nations and the United States. As Tammy Wahpeconiah acknowledges, sovereignty is a particularly fraught term for Native Americans because it is tied into ideas of cultural integrity and identity which are vital to the sustained existence of both the individual and the nation. Brian K. Hudson’s chapter explores the implications of Native American stories involving animals on the political representation of non-human animals. Hudson argues that many of these narratives are not merely anthropomorphic depictions of human cultural stories but can actually be understood as reformulating human-centred definitions of sovereignty to include other animals. This essay calls for a practical reconceptualisation of how current understandings of sovereignty can be revised to include the interests of animals. In Kirby Brown’s work, the history of Native American literary studies is surveyed alongside the current debates and perspectives in the field. Brown focuses on theoretical and intellectual conversations which articulate and problematise the conceptions of community and nationhood across the Native American experience, whilst stressing the very real material and embodied implications of intellectual and activist work.

The essays drawn together under the heading of ‘Traditions’ present a diverse set of perspectives relating to issues of form, representation, language and literacy. By picking through the incomplete and uncertain origins of writing in the Americas, Birgit Brander Rasmussen charts the revival of pictographic expression and gestures towards the exciting implications of early Native American symbolic representations for linguistic and ethnographic studies. Susan Berry Brill de Ramírez unpacks and delineates the unique position of Native American oral tradition in relation to literature. She works to destabilise a chronological understanding of the relationship between the oral and written traditions by pointing to the flourishing state of oral storytelling in Native American cultures today. David Stirrup demonstrates how petroglyphs, pictographs, geoglyphs and visual-verbal art forms present a challenge to ethnographic and literary studies through their transgression of the boundary between visual and literary representation. This essay points to how Native American visual culture and literary aesthetics necessitate a reconceptualisation of form and symbolic relationships simultaneously illustrating the productive potential of indigenous hermeneutics.
In the final section, titled ‘Literary Forms,’ the authors engage with new directions in narrative form and representation through a variety of Native American cultural productions. For example, Stephanie A. Seller’s essay delineates the movement from ‘As-Told-To’ style stories to a new genre of writing she terms ‘Indigenous Communal Narratives’. Sellers outlines the potential of these new stories to redress cultural and historic misrepresentations as well as the inclusive possibilities of these multi-voiced, Native-centered forms. A. Robert Lee’s contribution illustrates and investigates the centrality of storytelling to Native American culture by unpacking the legacy and contemporary position of the Native American short story. Susan Bernardin’s chapter grapples with the expanding field of comics, graphic novels and digital media in contemporary Native arts and literatures. Bernardin argues that the flexibility, informality and relative novelty of these forms allows for the refusal of rigid boundaries thereby creating space for a reframing of the fraught legacy of Native American representation.

Emma Laubscher
Carol Lefevre, *Quiet City: Walking in West Terrace Cemetery* (Wakefield Press, 2016)

Have you ever stood by the graveside of a man who was killed by a tiger? Or speculated why a married woman would be so unhappy that she could bring herself to drink belladonna? Or perhaps considered why a girl might be buried under a false name? These are a handful of the extraordinary stories of otherwise ordinary lives that I encountered in the pages of Carol Lefevre’s *Quiet City: Walking in West Terrace Cemetery*.

The cemetery is located in my home town, the city of Adelaide, in the south-western corner of the parklands ‘on the flank of the living city’ (314). The site is ‘woven into the social, political and religious history of South Australia’ (x), the burial place of early settlers and colonists, law-makers and politicians, artists and musicians. There are Quaker, Jewish and Catholic sections, and names as familiar as Charles Campbell and as foreign as Carl Linger. As Lefevre takes her reflective walks here, she observes that ‘there is much to be gleaned about memory and identity, about public and private emotion, and about the way which we have arrived at where we are now’ (xiii). She shares these insights in the 25 beautifully-written sections of her book, beginning with walks taken ‘Under summer skies’ and ending with a ‘Remembrance walk’ and ‘a last ramble in the quiet city’.

As Lefevre explains in her introduction, the book is comprised of ‘a personal sampler of the lives that have interested me’ (xii) – a collection of stories based on history and facts, but not solely limited to them. ‘I am not a historian but a writer with a love of stories’ (xii). She has done thorough research in the cemetery archives and state records, and then enlivened and enriched this information with a true story-teller’s gifts – an eye for vivid detail and a lyrical turn of phrase.

The stories begin in the nineteenth century, with the early colonists, men and women arriving on the ships from Britain. Lefevre writes about our famous ancestors, men like Colonel Light and Robert Gouger, but also of ‘more obscure’ and ordinary people whose stories would otherwise go unrecorded. Hence we read about the circus performer who was killed by a tiger, and young Mrs Duff, the wife of one of the first ship’s captains (‘her baby is like her husband, therefore not very beautiful’). Later, in the twentieth century, there is the married woman who drank belladonna and died in Carrington Street, and a girl called Winifred Goater who was buried as ‘Mary Elliot’ because she fell pregnant to the wrong man.

Lefevre’s research into these lives reveals a different side of South Australian history, informed by but separate from the official records of the government that we celebrate on Proclamation Day. This rich social history mirrors the lives of ordinary people, the day-to-day conditions in which they lived, thrived, suffered and died. I learnt, to my amazement, that it was once ‘commonplace’ for unwanted children as young as three-year-old Charles Godfrey to be handed over to circuses to work as apprentices. ‘All the touring circuses took them’ (84). There were no formal procedures for adoption in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; these children might spend the rest of their lives with their circus ‘families’.

I was less surprised to learn of the conditions which led to Winifred Goater’s death in 1906. Unmarried and ashamed of her pregnancy to ‘a man known to her as Will Cameron’, she sought the help of a Doctor Sheridan, who practised medicine in Unley. When the young woman died of a ‘haemorrhage following a miscarriage ... induced by unnatural means’ (103), the two men conspired to have her buried in the cemetery under the name of Mary Elliot. (They were helped by a local undertaker whose name was Frederick Elliott).
Lefevre pieces Winifred’s story together from court records and newspaper accounts (Francis Sheridan was tried for his many crimes; he was sentenced to ten years’ hard labour in Yatala Prison for the manslaughter of another of his ‘patients’, Adelaide Ray). Other women’s stories cannot be told in such revealing detail; they slip between the gaps of lived experience and written records. This is the case with Annie Hooper, the young wife who came home from a dance and poisoned herself with belladonna in 1941:

There is so much to wonder at in this story. Were Annie and her husband together at the dance? And if they went as a couple what happened to make her decide to leave alone, come home, and take her own life? We can only suppose that Keith Hooper destroyed the [suicide] note because his wife’s explanation reflected badly on him. But what of the second letter? Who was it addressed to? And what became of ... Annie’s child? (94)

There are mysteries and secrets like these throughout the quiet city, unknowable truths as well as verifiable facts. Carol Lefevre also writes eloquently about the physical surroundings of the cemetery: the stony soil and mottled headstones; in springtime, the lush grass and scented jonquils between marble crosses and low iron fences. In ‘Nature Walk No. 2’ she names some of the cemetery trees: ‘tall thin palms’, olive trees, tamarisk trees, quandongs and eucalypts. I know from Lefevre’s other writing and photography that she is a passionate and creative gardener, and sympathise entirely when she writes

The common names of our native shrubs and grasses are so beautiful, it is surprising that they are not more widely grown if only for the opportunity to say the names out loud on a regular basis: nodding chocolate lily and windmill grass, bottle-washer, silky blue-grass, pale rush, sea rush... (63)

Evocative passages like this are accompanied by Lefevre’s own photographs of the cemetery, black-and-white pictures that illuminate the text and enrich the reader’s experience of the quiet city.

Carol Lefevre is a gifted South Australian writer; we are lucky to have her here, to tell some of the many and varied stories that contribute to the history of our city and our state. At home, I have a selection of books that I gladly lend to friends who want to learn more about Adelaide. I have added Quiet City to this shelf, where it sits with Kerryn Goldsworthy’s Adelaide (2011) and Barbara Hanrahan’s Scent of Eucalyptus (1973). I can’t wait to lend someone my copy.

Jennifer Osborn

Mapping Gendered Routes and Spaces in the Early Modern World is a figurative and literal journey through gendered spatial domains that are configured in the early modern world. Divided into four sections, this collection of essays takes the reader on a historical journey situated in the female body as it traverses the globe from the early modern world to seventeenth century England to analyse linguistic, literary and artistic representations of history. Contending in the Introduction that spaces are gendered, the essays attempt to discover the trajectory that such gendering follows as new routes are discovered and new socio-politico-economic ties are forged in the new world.

The first section of the book, titled ‘Frameworks’, traces how structures that define epistemologies are gendered. Terming spatialisation an ‘epistemological strategy’, the first essay determines the direction of the study by examining how feminist theories have defined the limits of meta-critical awareness about space. The intersection of geopolitical territory and the gendered allegories that located history in visual culture are studied by Valerie Traub as evidence of the blurring of dichotomous binaries. The emergence of ‘intersectionality’ that Traub points to in her essay is corroborated by Wiesner-Hanks who terms the early modern period the first ‘global’ era, and concludes that border-crossings in the colonial world were conceptualised by intermarriages and the third gender.

Part II, titled ‘Embodied Environments’, begins with the concept of the body having a language of its own. While Scholz Williams talks of how the clothed body is interpreted by the world, and how gendered boundaries result from the dialogue between body and space, Tara Pedersen analyses Shakespeare’s plays to trace how women’s reputations are ‘mapped’ by the body. In treating landscape and domestic space as an expression of the self, Sara L. French examines gender roles in Elizabethan England as reflected in the gardens of Bess of Hardwick. In the same vein, Buis, Spain-Savage and Wright analyse the visual representation of fishwives to establish the resolute relationship between the subject and her stock, the body and commerce.

The third section of the book, titled ‘Communities and Networks’, focuses on the position of women as members of a patriarchal network, whether religious, industrial or domestic. In her essay on women’s networks and the early modern Roman convent, Montford concludes that nuns used music to form networks and exercise control in circumstances that were often marked by conflict over roles. The porous nature of the convent walls allowed for networks to be formed with the community outside, but these were often marked by issues concerning power. On the other hand, Deane, Eckerle, Dowd and Matchinske study how intellectual and spiritual kinships that were strengthened through writing gave birth to a ‘spatial and discursive’ community that was based on a shared set of interests, countering traditional structures of power by providing for a parallel domain of women’s spaces marked by female power. The representation of female collaboration in Shakespeare’s plays is analysed by Garrison, Pivetti and Rapatz, who conclude that the paranoiac atmosphere pervading sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England gave rise to a new form of political action that became effective through exclusion, functioning outside the traditional political sphere in private spaces, and giving women voice and vigour without portraying them as direct, active agents of change.

Part IV, titled ‘Exchanges’, explores marriage and the effect of commerce on the relationship between husbands and wives as both tried to cope with the enforced absence from home of the...
travelling husband. The essay by Christensen explores the vast body of literature that acted as guides to travel which nevertheless failed to clarify marital duties when they conflicted with the call to duty, thus ignoring the social costs of enforced separation. Bernadette Andrea traces the misogyny that is inherent in texts that mark the presence of women, from fifteenth century translations of the Arabic treatise, *Mukhtar al-hikam* to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century British literary productions. Sheila T. Cavanagh’s intriguing exploration of the life and death of Lady Amy Robsart, the wife of Robert Dudley, and the mythical exorcising of her ghost from Cumnor Palace, brings to the fore the undercurrents of power that marked relationships at the Elizabethan court. Robert Dudley’s alleged affair with Elizabeth and his wife’s subsequent death are explored as events that pointed to the dichotomy between public imagination and private selves, and the various versions of the story are explored as pointers to the credibility of historical narratives. Here, public imagination is shown to paint the personas that inhabit these spaces.

*Mapping Gendered Routes and Spaces in the Early Modern World* takes the reader on a journey through the constructed spatiality of the early modern world, with the aim of showing how the routes that were discovered were conceptual as well as geopolitical, engendering epistemological scholarship as well as spatial connections. In tracing how walls, borders and spaces resulted in the gendering of social realms that in turn effected the creation of new imagined and real spaces with their resultant equations of power, the book contributes substantially to both historical and feminist discourse. Beginning with an exploring of the ‘global turn’ in history that has fostered hybridity and the transcending of established borders, the collection itself transcends epistemological borders as it moves from the inner world of the body to the far reaches of the globe, concluding with an exploration of narratives that have shaped the personae of women in history, and the relative prominence and obscurity that history has accorded them. The collection is a cartographic blending of real and imagined spaces that women have occupied through the centuries, and the volume does justice to its claim of tracing spatiatisation as a ‘cognitive process and epistemological strategy’, wherein the gendering of routes and landscapes reflect the questions that were evoked in the attempt to delineate the role of gender in understanding the early modern world and its figurations in history.

Lekha Roy
Economy, Emotion and Ethics in Chinese Cinema: Globalization on Speed by David Leiwei Li (Routledge, 2016)

David Li brings some heavily Marxist assumptions to the cinema, most centrally that the economic organisation of society provides the background against which artworks can most profitably be read. This has particular salience for China and the Greater China region, given the massive changes in the organisation of economic system over the past four decades. As the means of production have been so dramatically restructured, it seems only reasonable to Li that artists should be registering the mental accompaniments to these changes and giving expression to altered forms of subjectivity appropriate to them.

Li’s historical analysis is painted in very broad brushstrokes, or what he calls ‘capacious categorical umbrellas’ (9). He argues that at the time of the Opium Wars, capitalism was exercising an irresistible power to ‘remake the planet and its people after its own image’ (2). Following the parenthetical moment of Maoism, Deng Xiaoping’s embrace of the market economy signals the Second Coming of Capital – thereafter termed the Reagan-Thatcher-Deng Xiaoping Revolution. This is history at its most epochal. This Second Coming of capitalism is sufficient for Li’s purposes, and all films referenced here are interpreted for the way they speak of this single moment. The philosophical basis of this Second Coming is neo-liberalism, and there are no important distinctions or fluctuations beyond that in the history of the region. While Li is trenchantly critically of the effects of neo-liberal thought, this social criticism is not anchored in the advocacy of any alternative system or politics.

What counts as evidence for Li’s historical claims? Certainly there is nothing along the lines of empirical research here. The major form of argument and evidence is the appeal to the authority of other analysts. The book is a densely written weave of quotation and theoretical elaboration drawing profusely on a vast range of cultural theorists. In a single, typical paragraph Li can invoke the ideas of Marshall Berman, Saskia Sassen, Etienne Balibar and Mayfair Yang Mei-hui (45). We get a good indication of the author’s methods when he labels the book as a dialogue between ‘the film medium’ and ‘social and political theory on the persistent imaginary of capitalist modernity’ (10).

So where is film – ontologically as a medium, or critically as a study of individual films – in all this? The large-scale film theory harks back to the Lacanian-Althusserian basis of much 1970s theory in its insistence on film as ‘a vital medium of the imaginary’ (9). At one point there is a reference to shot-reverse shot constructions as ‘suturing a normative individual subjectivity’ (98), demonstrating the author’s continuing immersion in a line of film theory that would rarely be found in any film department these days. The very totalising view of the cinema (as well as Li’s style of argumentation) can be seen in the following passage:

As Jonathan Beller’s elaboration of Marx, Debord and Deleuze convinces us, cinema in specific and by extension virtual-visual media in general constitute the capital of the...
twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As such, virtual media ‘work to organize previous forms of discipline and control’. (51)

But this is perhaps to overstate the case. Li writes appreciatively about individual films. As a critic he is primarily interested in film as a microscope ‘lens’ (his favourite metaphor) for elucidating macroscopic forces of capitalism (10). Film scholars will note a return to a very old style of film studies here, with cinema as an instrument one looks through in order to see the real subject of interest.

There are six chapters of film analysis, each chapter dealing with one or two of the better-known international art cinema directors (Zhang Yimou, Zhang Yuan, Ang Lee, Hou Hsiao-hsien, Edward Yang, Jia Zhangke and Fruit Chan) from the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Li follows other writers such as Chris Berry in invoking a Greater Chinese cinema. The primary reason for this is not so much any industrial interactions between them, but rather the view that they are essentially similar in registering the generalised effects of the Second Coming.

Drawing heavily on the methods of Fredric Jameson, Li’s initial orientation towards this relatively select group of films is to see them as allegories of economically and ideologically driven social processes. The use of allegory as an analytical tool bears mention here. Li is selective not only in his choice of films but also in the way he analyses those films. For example, his work on Red Sorghum covers six pages and centres on two scenes from the film, the mini-series River Elegy is analysed in a little over a page with no specific scenes being put forward, but then Zhou Xiaowen’s Ermo takes up 22 pages of quite detailed analysis. Li’s sustained explication of this film is certainly a rich one, though it is a film that is pretty easy for him to fit within his allegorical framework. The circularity of allegorical methodology is evident here. It foregrounds those texts and those textual elements that validate its conclusions.

Those interested in the way films might be seen as figuring the tremendous changes in the Chinese economy and consequently in Chinese society will find a lot to interest them here. If we are to see the book however, as a dialogue between film and theorists, you will probably note the theorists have the loudest voices in the dialogue. Filmmakers, at best, help to elucidate the work of panoply of such theorists. Over four pages in his analysis of Ermo, we are told that the filmmaker has grasped ‘ever so intuitively’ the ideas of Amartya Sen (47), ‘partakes in film language’ the ideas of C.B. McPherson and Virginia Held (49) and perhaps had Guy Debord in mind (51) when making the film. To return to my initial point, there is a strong sense here of film as an element of the superstructure reflecting an economic base. Consequently, this is a book that will appeal to those immersed in the debates of cultural studies more than film scholars who might be more attuned to the idea that films reflect the economic base in the last, rather than the first instance.

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