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H-France Review Vol. 19 (June 2019), No. 107

Alastair Phillips and Ginette Vincendeau, eds., *Paris in the Cinema: Beyond the Flâneur*. London, BFI Palgrave, 2018. viii + 286pp. £24.99 (pb). ISBN 978-1-84457-817-7.

Review by Julia Dobson, University of Sheffield.

This volume presents a welcome and diverse collection of essays which both celebrate and challenge the projected view of Paris as City of Light, eternal city, site of modernity, landscape of universal Romance and space of mobility and freedom. Indeed the subtitle of the collection—“beyond the flâneur”—provides a clear signpost for a different mapping that exceeds the privileged pleasures of mobility and modes of consumption of the *flâneur* to reveal the social, cultural and economic capital in play across an impressive range of encounters with Paris as filmic and physical site. The range of spaces and places open to the reader is also extended beyond the usual urban suspects to include the representation of Paris on television and in home movies, the internal spaces of Parisian buildings, building sites, and the institutional spaces of film archives in Paris. It is refreshing to see a recognition (in several chapters) of the role of the Forum des Images, an open access film archive on the representation of Paris located under the controversial site of Les Halles, whose collection cuts across genres and status of filmmakers to provide an invaluable resource for all.

The volume’s twenty-three essays are organized in four parts: the first three focus in turn on “Location,” “Characters,” and “History,” and a fourth section consists entirely of an interview with director Jean-Pierre Jeunet. They are preceded by a dense introduction, which sets out existing critical work on the screen lives of Paris and an overview of the historical connections between the city and the cinema. The introduction is particularly effective in its foregrounding of the important dynamic through which cinema provides representations of city spaces whilst also constructing them anew through their narrative roles, associations with filmic genres and (re)mappings through the spatio-temporal capacities and agility of film language.

Part one, “Locations,” begins with Nicoleta Bazgan’s detailed and playful study of the hypervisible landmark of the Eiffel tower as enigmatic and complex film star. This piece greatly expands our understanding of its role from iconic landmark to site of panoramic views of the city, measure of inclusion and exclusion via proximity, enabler of shots of virtuoso verticality and bearer of affective impact.

Catherine E. Clark’s impressive chapter on Les Halles reads the charged debate on the controversial redevelopment of the “belly of Paris” through a remarkable film made in its ruins, the star-studded comedy *Touche pas à la femme blanche* (Ferreri, 1974). Clark’s engaging analysis

of the way in which frequent anachronisms and visual dissonances in the film construct a commentary on the destruction of the site (in parallel with a narrative of Custer's oppression of ancient populations) sets out the Les Halles' dual role as iconic space associated with both the destruction of cultural history and the production of culture.

More general types of spaces are addressed in several chapters. Spaces of spectacle are the focus for Sébastien Layerle's consideration of the *caves* and jazz clubs of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in 1950s French cinema. The analysis explores three films in which the Parisian profile of these venues as exotic spaces on tourist maps are both supported and parodied and examines the frequent studio reconstruction of these venues which contrasts with the New Wave's aesthetic investment (and technological capacity) in filming in the streets of the capital.

The similarly intermedial spaces of the hotel are explored in the context of urban mobility and viewpoint in New Wave cinema, where they feature rarely as spaces of tourism, but rather of long-term inhabitation or prostitution. Roland-François Lack successfully combines overarching arguments and detailed examples to reveal the weaving of intertextual connections through the filmic revisiting of specific hotels (and rooms). Hilary Radner and Alistair Fox move analysis beyond identification of the apartment with "Frenchness" and Paris to establish an impressive set of readings that present Truffaut's apartments as carefully selected spaces in which the realms of the private, the public, and the socio-historical meet with tense and complex consequences. The chapter's conclusions expand this mapping onto the gendered powerbases of modern apartment and urban streetscape.

Further chapters in this section focus on specific overlooked films. Indeed a double erasure is addressed in Thomas Pillard's analysis of Carné's neglected *Portes de la nuit* as he provides dense textual mappings of realist visualizations of the city from novels, painting, and film which remain fascinating in their pursuit of last glimpses of uncannily uninhabited working class neighbourhoods. Pillard's analysis of this post-poetic realism as traces of national collective memory is compelling. Michel Marie revives interest in Rohmer's debut feature film *Le signe du Lion* (1959-62) and its representation of 1959 Paris. Marie reads the film carefully as a response, in terms of both representation and filmmaking practice, to Bazin's model of realist aesthetics centred on tropes of authenticity. Marie's detailed study of the film reveals Rohmer's investment in presenting a topographically accurate landscape in which to site the central character's desperate urban walks that map his psychological decline.

Lastly in this section, Ginette Vincendeau addresses one of the dominant Parisian spaces of French cinema since 1990—that of the physically peripheral *banlieue*. She charts its evolution clearly from the largely boring 'burbs of pre-1960s film to the emergence of the *banlieue* as a shorthand for social exclusion and highly masculinized violence that became a genre with clear visual codes and narrative conventions. Vincendeau identifies two main shifts in recent representations—firstly, the critical and commercial success of films that reveal the *banlieue* as mapped and experienced by central female protagonists, and secondly the marked onscreen presence of the quietly "ordinary" middle-class *banlieue*, its renewed visibility fuelled by the rise of the romcom and the pull of municipal funding initiatives.

The second part, "Characters," includes specific characters and character types. Charlotte Brunson's investigation of a "British Paris" as seen on television via the association between Maigret and modernity carefully distinguishes the television city and its spectators from its

cinematic counterparts. Her archival research into producers' notes reveals the negotiated signaling and packaging of Paris for a world audience through the use of studio sets, and iconic French brands and names. Whilst the focus on modernity is not extended there is compelling analysis of the constructions of the continent as "risqué," and of a sexy Paris that embeds constructions of cultural difference.

Two chapters focus on film institutions. Leila Wimmer combines impressive historical detail with a new take on the often generalized figure of the *cinéphile* through her study of the Mac-Mahon cinema as site of a highly masculinised "cinophilic sociability" that focused on Hollywood and on an anti-Cahiers, ultra-formalist politics of style and counter-canon. Wimmer's identification of the markers of cinophilic "capital" and lucid conclusions on the continuing role of the refurbished Mac-Mahon as a space of cultural remembrance are welcome assertions of individual cinemas as important sites. Roger Odin next addresses the role of the Forum des Images and contextualizes the documentary importance of its archives of home movies to reveal them as having more extensive functions than the documenting of everyday life in the capital.

The female subject in the city is not overlooked. In her chapter on Varda's extraordinary *Cléo de 5 à 7*, Jennifer Wallace provides a welcome addition to analysis of the figure of the *flâneuse* in her assertion of the overlooked complexity of Cléo's movements around Paris by car, taxi, and bus. The chapter's impressive close reading asserts Cléo's emerging subjectivity as constructed and reflected not through solitary consumption of the city but through shared experience of city spaces. Raphaëlle Moine builds on Elizabeth Main's work on the figure of the concierge in French cinema, exploring the satirical, nostalgic and kitsch functions that drive its continuing presence in film despite its disappearance in the contemporary city.

Paris as Romantic space par excellence is explored in Mary Harrod's thorough and engaging chapter on the contemporary romcom. Her comparative analysis of trends in the use of the city in Hollywood and French productions explores the ways in which self-reflexive and liminal representations of the city provide new trajectories for the narrative trope of the romantic encounter. Stephen Gundle explores the legacy and construction of the uniquely seductive figure of the *Parisienne* through a coherent and engaging discussion of the links between this figure and the association of Paris with high fashion and female entertainers. This chapter's set of case studies explores the evolution of this figure through the roles and star personas of Carol, Bardot, and Deneuve. A further extension of the analysis addressing the ways in which Deneuve's more recent work plays with these links would be welcome.

In part three, "History," Colin Jones uses the different national receptions of Dickens's representation of Paris in *A Tale of Two Cities* to frame analysis of two film adaptations of the book from 1935 and 1958. Whilst Jones contests the dominant view of Dickens as a Francophobe, the adaptations exploit the stereotypical opposition between the capitals to fuel their narratives. Nuanced discussion of the contexts of production is very revealing, including a suggested link between representations of the French Revolution and analogies of the Cold War.

Jean-Loup Bourget's chapter on Ulmer's *Bluebeard* reveals the links between 1940s B movies and Baudelairean iconography as well as the intertextual connections across high and popular culture. This extends across narrative and image through analysis of the theme of drowning in

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the Seine and the stylised production design which foregrounds sets inspired by nineteenth-century etchings and the cityscapes of Baudelaire and Hugo.

In an important contribution to this volume and beyond, Sandy Flitterman-Lewis addresses the cinematic markers of the infamous site of the Vel' d'Hiv (the velodrome in which over 13,000 Jews were imprisoned by French police before being sent to camps in France and thence to Germany). The chapter traces the institutionalised amnesia and repression of memory that marked this site for decades and its parallel absence from cultural representation through three examples; *Les Guichets du Louvre* (1974), *Monsieur Klein* (1976) and *La Rafle* (2010). All of these films are seen to counter dominant historical accounts in asserting the role of French police and the frequent indifference of the wider population through the structure of a moral fable (*Monsieur Klein*) and a focus on the voice and viewpoint of murdered innocents (*La Rafle*).

In contrast, the urban everyday, as represented in popular cinema, is examined in Alistair Phillips's chapter on Becker's films of the late 1940s. The chapter includes an engaging and valuable discussion of the historical and theoretical contexts of capturing the everyday via approaches to realism, place, and modalities of time. Phillips reveals how Becker's films foreshadowed the New Wave and the reflexive representation of Left Bank youth culture.

Helen Jannièrè's fascinating study of television documentaries of the 1950s to 1970s and the official discourse and social criticism of the "renewal" of Paris through urban planning. The chapter reveals television's role in both showing and manipulating public opinion on matters such as congestion, pollution, and the impact of radical planning interventions on existing communities. Jannièrè identifies the central role of the representation of demolition in the 1960s, and the following critical counterpoint in the 1970s of the social impact of displacement and nostalgia around the enforced gentrification of central *quartiers*.

The locus of change, the Parisian building site itself in *Les Trente Glorieuses* (1945-75), is the focus of Marie Gaimard and Marguerite Vappereau's chapter, which provides a compelling analysis of their film and architectural history. Their dense and illuminating examination of building sites as markers of modernity, loss, and social struggle is informed by the use of the excellent collection of fiction films at the Forum des Images. The sites are seen to symbolize risk, crisis, unwelcome change and an often monstrous modernity (Tati, Buñuel) yet are populated by a disempowered and displaced workforce.

The "Parisian collection" at the Forum des Images, which dates back to 1906 and serves as the city's audiovisual memory, is explored in more detail by Jean-Yves de Lépinay. The chapter explores the cinema as provider of urban "afterlife" and insists on the importance of the Forum's institutional remit, rich database, and openness to all, which persists in the recent reorganization of collections and diversification of programming to respond to an eternal city in constant flux.

Whilst the inclusion of an interview with only one director seems surprising at first, Jeunet is a good choice in relation to the high-profile representation of Paris in his films, although the legacy of the most commercially successful filmic representation of Paris in recent years, *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (2001) is markedly absent from the preceding chapters. Isabelle Vanderschelden's interview seeks to open up new insights into Jeunet's Paris and seems to confirm him as a classic *flâneur* as he outlines his auteurist exploitation of Paris as location and

reveals a network of visual intertexts of locations and specific shots that inform his work. The discussion is wide-ranging—from his unusually personal involvement in location scouting, through set design to the impact of digital post-production on representations of the city. His suggestion that he has exhausted Paris as cinephilic site reflects perhaps the emphatically international funding landscape, markets, and sites of consumption in which he operates.

Whilst a brief glimpse at the volume's title and cover image may suggest a well-trodden critical path, this initial impression is countered by the strength and diversity of the engaging chapters which provide rewarding readings of the city. The collection provides new places, spaces, and territories of analysis, asserting neglected physical and textual spaces of the city to provide a fuller picture of Paris onscreen.

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ISSN 1553-9172