Burch’s *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema* (1979). Burch’s strictly semiotic study primarily concerns particular patterns of signification, but often fails to discuss how the signifier can be related to the meaning of the film. Davis’s study offers an insightful exploration of the process of signification—the unification of stylistic and thematic elements in the individual film.

Though the work is long overdue, and therefore valuable, there are still some unresolved problems. The first has to do with the scope of the author’s research. Primary Japanese resources here are scarce. The author admits to having limited reading skill in Japanese, but could still have sought help in gaining access to certain major sources available in Japanese, such as Junichiro Tanaka’s *Nihon Eiga Hattatsushi (The History of the Development of Japanese Cinema)* and Kikuo Yamamoto’s exhaustive study, *Nihon Eiga ni Okeru Gaikoku Eiga no Eikyo (The Influence of Foreign Films on Japanese Cinema)*. Another problem is organizational. Part of the second chapter labors over a historical discourse on nationalism worldwide and its relationship with national cinema. The reader is apt to feel burdened with too much world history, and correspondingly impatient to get the matter at hand.

Chapter 7, which concerns *The Abe Clan*, is the best in this book. But the trouble is that chapter 8 then comes as a kind of anticlimax. The author’s critical momentum slackens noticeably in his treatment of *The Gate of Hell*, for example. Here Davis needs to show how the prewar concept of monumentalism has undergone modification in *The Gate of Hell* in a clearer and more substantial manner. He is quite right in observing that in this Kinugasa film “militarism is neatly dropped and pictorialism is intensified.” However, since *The Gate of Hell* is the first period film in Eastman color, more detailed discussion of the director’s use of color as it relates to the enhancement of pictorial effects would have enriched the context of the analysis.

There is also some difficulty arising out of Davis’s application of a Western critical method, specifically the theory on myth explored in Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism*. In chapter 4, Davis talks about the high and low mimetic modes—a focal point of Frye’s pioneer work in Western modern literary criticism—as they relate to the representative works of monumental style. However, this theoretical thrust is not really tested in the chapters that are devoted to close analyses of individual films.

Finally, the manuscript contains a number of minor errors and questionable observations about Japanese language and culture in general. For example, the author claims that the 1960s are the “golden age” of national cinemas. This generalization does not apply to Japanese cinema, whose golden age is traditionally seen as the 1950s. Elsewhere, the author points out that the characters’ non-movement in the climactic sequence of Inagaki’s *Musashi* is reminiscent of the *mie* posture in Kabuki. The better analogy is to another Kabuki posture, *merihari*, the actor’s sudden halt in movement, which signals action leading to decisive outcome. However, despite some problems, *Picturing Japaneseness* is a thought-provoking study designed for a broad audience ranging from film scholars to historians of Japanese culture.

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**Post-Theory**

**Reconstructing Film Studies**


David Bordwell and Noël Carroll’s provocative and accomplished anthology has a dual purpose: to offer a critique of film studies’ heavy reliance on, as they label it, “Grand Theory,” that is, Lacanian psychoanalysis, structuralist semiotics, post-structuralist literary theory, and Althusserian Marxism, and to present an agenda of “mid-level” research uncommitted to Grand Theory. This latter program grows from Bordwell and Carroll’s expressed desire to see the field move in the direction of work unencumbered by Grand Theory; as they point out, “What is coming after Theory is not another Theory, but theories and the activity of theorizing” (xiv). Theorizing, from their perspective, builds from employing “the most stringent philosophical reasoning, historical arguments, and social, economic, and critical analyses we can find, in film studies, or elsewhere (even in science)” (xiv). Several of the essays gravitate toward the applicability of cognitivism as a method, or as the editors state, more precisely, as a stance to account for film reception.

With a collection of works organized loosely around cognitivism, Bordwell and Carroll continue their considerable and lengthy scholarship in this area. Bordwell, for example, advanced a model for narrative comprehension of film heavily indebted to...
cognitive psychology in *Narration in the Fiction Film* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1985). The current anthology appears, most immediately, as a means to contextualize the cognitive approach and to place it within a wider framework to include historical and institutional research.

*Post-Theory* is divided into four parts: “State of the Art,” “Film Theory and Aesthetics,” “Psychology of Film,” and “History and Analysis.” No doubt the first part will create the greatest discussion among film scholars. Essentially a full-frontal assault on “Theory” (with a capital T), particularly psychoanalysis, “State of the Art” consists of two essays (both from the editors), Bordwell’s “Contemporary Film Studies and the Vicissitudes of Grand Theory” and Carroll’s “Prospects for Film Theory: A Personal Assessment.” After a useful historicization of film theory from 1975 through 1995, Bordwell locates “culturalism,” comprised of Frankfurt School cultural criticism, postmodernism, and Cultural Studies, as the end result of 1990s Theory. As he states, “The word ‘culture’ has become to 1990s academe what Toyotas have become for the automobile market, but the term is unavoidable” (9). Locating several key continuities between psychoanalysis (specifically subject-position theory) and culturalism, Bordwell concludes by claiming that “middle-level research,” such as empirical studies of film-makers, genres, and national cinemas, represents the future for the discipline: “To get specific: Middle-level research programs have shown that an argument can be at once conceptually powerful and based in evidence without appeal to theoretical bricolage or association of ideas” (29).

Carroll’s chapter paints a more jaundiced picture of the field. With the theoretical excursions of the 1970s labelled as “dilettantish” and the application of the Theory as monolithic much of the time, Carroll claims that the Theory has been maintained, in part, through political correctness: “Anyone who opposes the Theory, for whatever reason, is politically suspect—probably a ruling class, neoconservative, homophobic misogynist” (45). The solution to this malaise is offered by Carroll, who amusingly tags himself as a “self-appointed reformer”: theorizing and theory building as a model, dialectical thinking responding to data, and an appeal to cognitivism as a stance for film analysis. Somewhat defensively, Carroll expects that his proposal, “moderate” in scope, will be met with derision by those academics heavily invested in the Theory. He hopes that his “rational argumentation” will be of use to the uncommitted: “those in film studies and those (historians, sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, and so on) in related disciplines that study film who are interested in evolving frameworks for comprehending cinema but who are doctrinally unaligned” (68).

The bulk of the anthology illustrates “middle-level research” in practice. “Film Theory and Aesthetics” contains articles critiquing Grand Theory and its application, as well as close analyses of films and specific techniques. “Psychoanalysis” offers background on cognitivism, highlighting how prior work in cognitive psychology has a bearing on the cinema and spectatorship. “History and Analysis” includes economic, institutional, and historical work considering both domestic and international cinemas. The best of the pieces in each section functions as Bordwell’s and Carroll’s evaluations of the field—posing fundamental questions often left unspoken in the discipline, refusing to iron out the complexity of issues, and provoking a whole set of research questions and agendas on their own terms. Among the articles critiquing the Theory, Stephen Prince’s “Psychoanalytic Film Theory and the Problem of the Missing Spectator” argues that psychoanalytic film theory has produced a model of spectatorship at odds with research in psychology and communication. Illustrating his argument clearly and forcefully with an analysis of the ways in which Freud’s “A Child Is Being Beaten” has been coopted by film studies, Prince concludes that “problems of sampling, of fabrication of data, and of the introduction of a response set in his subjects” (76) have been glossed over by film theorists applying Freud’s work to the issue of spectatorship. The result is a chapter which, in a compelling and well-reasoned manner, calls into question film studies’ appropriation of psychoanalysis.

In terms of historical and institutional work, both Tino Balio’s “Columbia Pictures: The Making of a Motion Picture Major, 1930–1943” and Donald Crafton’s “The Jazz Singer’s Reception in the Media and at the Box Office” stand out among the other contributors: both demonstrate the exploratory nature of writing film history, and both attempt to answer a specific historical and industrial question employing secondary data. While, as Balio states, primary studio records would allow for “a definitive account of Columbia’s escape from Poverty Row,” his astute readings of trade journals and business magazines from the era permit him to build a convincing case for the industrial development of the studio. In an account of the commercial reception of *The Jazz Singer* that reads like a suspenseful detective story, Crafton examines weekly box-office statistics by theater to help uncover that, contrary to popular belief, the film was not a Broadway smash in its initial engagements. Crafton admits that he does not want merely to sup-
ply an alternative explanation, for “legends are also historical documents” (476). Rather, he is interested by the ways through which “history” becomes narrativized—and therefore how the Jazz Singer legend became constructed as it did.

Although a section is devoted specifically to issues in perceptual and cognitive psychology that might have an impact on film theory, the most persuasive argument is offered by editor Bordwell in his own chapter, “Convention, Construction, and Cinematic Vision.” Bordwell considers the role played by perception in forming and understanding convention in filmic representations. He centers his paper around the shot/reverse-shot image and the reasons behind this particular cinematic convention. In an illuminating example of how cognitive matters have affected cinema, Bordwell draws upon this literature as a partial explanation for the propensity for shot/reverse-shots to be 3/4 views: “There is some experimental evidence that for human faces in pictures, the 3/4 view may be more easily recognized than other orientations” (98). Through addressing this specific example, Bordwell, in a concrete manner, shows how cognitive matters foster the development of norms within cinema.

Certainly there is an impressive range to the chapters, from film music (Jeff Smith, Jerrold Levinson) and feminist responses to horror (Cynthia A. Freeland) to Danish cinema (Mette Hjort) and a critique of Fredric Jameson’s writings on film history (Michael Walsh). While the level of scholarship is high and ideas are worked through in a rigorous manner, the range does tend to undermine the overall coherency of the project at hand. Although Bordwell and Carroll stress that the anthology does not espouse the party line of cognition and that their desire is “to afford a space where disagreement can flourish” (346), much of the anthology is nevertheless devoted to the contributions of cognitive psychology to film studies. A clearer articulation of the relationship between articles and, more specifically, of the cognitively oriented articles to the historically oriented ones would have made an even more persuasive argument. On the other hand, the disjunctures also save the anthology from being an alternative explanation for the propensity for shot/reverse-shots to be 3/4 views: “There is some experimental evidence that for human faces in pictures, the 3/4 view may be more easily recognized than other orientations” (98). Through addressing this specific example, Bordwell, in a concrete manner, shows how cognitive matters foster the development of norms within cinema.

In the best sense argumentative, Post-Theory offers a reasoned assessment of contemporary theory with some valid routes for productive scholarship. If my own reaction to the anthology is muted or tempered enthusiasm, I am concerned that Bordwell and particularly Carroll’s denunciations be taken, as they suggest, in the spirit of dialectical thinking. Those pieces (such as Donald Crafton’s) which openly acknowledge the contributions of past film theorists while still identifying certain problems in method and analysis, at least accommodate a great deal of significant scholarship. Finally, despite Carroll’s concerns about political correctness, the notion of a marginalized perspective—whether racial, sexual, or political—has been one of the most vital areas of the field, with much work falling outside the domain of Grand Theory. To their credit, though, Bordwell and Carroll do not constrain others to their position. For instance, Cynthia Freeland’s essay “Feminist Frameworks for Horror Films” seeks to place her analysis in the context of recent work in queer and performance theory. While perhaps not a “reconstruction” of film studies as promised in the title (particularly given the editors’ previous works on the values of cognitivism), Post-Theory still presents a fine variety of critical and historical essays which illuminate, challenge, and at times agitate their reader.

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Replications
A Robotic History of the Science Fiction Film


Recently, the various types of artificial beings within the genre of science fiction have been the subject of particular critical interest. In part the result of Donna Haraway’s influential Simians, Cyborgs, and Women, published in 1991, there have been Per Schelde’s Androids, Humanoids, and Other Science Fiction Monsters (1993), Scott Bukatman’s Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction (1993), and Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frentz’s Projecting the Shadow: The Cyborg Hero in American Film (1995). Joining this list is the new book by prolific genre critic J. P. Telotte. Approaching the subject from a different