of *Malcolm X* that did not materialize (166). The younger Zanuck pushed for *Patton* (Franklin J. Schaffner, 1970), based on a deliberately ambiguous screenplay from Francis Ford Coppola that made the general look like a war hero to World War II vets and a warmonger to Vietnam War protesters. Coppola thought that for a film to succeed, it had to unite a fractured audience.

Despite its successes, Fox was losing money. In 1970, the elder Zanuck forced his son's resignation. Four months later, the elder Zanuck was out. In 1973 Alan Ladd Jr., son of the actor, became the vice president of creative affairs. It would be a crucial hire, as Ladd prevailed over the board when it nixed a sci-fi fantasy called *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), which cost $11 million and made $307 million in domestic box office alone. Fox was the first of the majors to allow its movies to be made available on video and, with its *Star Wars* profits, bought the video company Andre Blay.

Ladd was eased out in 1979, and studio president Dennis Stanfill sought to take the company private, making it vulnerable to a hostile takeover. Rupert Murdoch acquired Fox in 1984 while Barry Diller was chairman and in the midst of launching Fox Television. Diller remained with Fox until 1992. It was the first in a tsunami of studio takeovers by media companies. Soon Warners would be bought by Time, Paramount by Viacom, and Columbia by the television and VCR manufacturer Sony.

"In the Murdoch-era, Twentieth Century Fox was no longer a film company. At this time, its major impact on world civilization was as part of a media conglomerate" (209). Wasser spends 80 percent of his book on Fox's eventful first sixty years and 20 percent on its last forty-five, which are equally eventful, but more complex to write about, because TV is not the same animal as film. Reading the last chapters is like watching a PowerPoint presentation at hyperspace speed.

The complexity of Fox's diversifying and expanding media network is evinced in the ways in which Fox Television differentiated itself from the legacy networks. Wasser notes that, whether Fox programs were reactionary or progressive, they fostered a "background of a nihilistic cynicism" as its "cable news division had become, in effect, the propaganda arm of the American Republican Party" (216). While Diller created the fourth TV network, theatrical film became an afterthought. Nonetheless, in 1994 the studio got into the indie-cinema business, founding Fox Searchlight. More recently, "[t]he Marvel Comics phenomenon of the first decade of the new millennium was actually innovated by Twentieth Century Fox" (243) with *X-Men* (Bryan Singer, 2000) and its sequels.

Wasser does not pursue an obvious through line here: that of America's inconsistent rulings on monopolies, which were permitted for a period during Edison's and Murdoch's day(s), but prosecuted under the leadership of Fox and Zanuck.

In 2017, Murdoch sold the film side of the company to Walt Disney, which was eager to hold copyright to movie franchises and the Fox film library. For Wasser, the sale marks an "end of history where one can ask: Is the final corporate vision of filmmaking as just another profit center a betrayal of its origin?" (250).

To that I would answer "Yes, but" and invoke the adage that he who pays the piper calls the tune. And would add that, in a global economy, moviemakers with the democratic sociopolitical concerns of Zanuck have become rare.

CARRIE RICKEY is film critic emerita of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and writes on film for Truthdig.com and other periodicals. She is currently writing a biography of filmmaker Agnes Varda.

TOM KLEIN

Mary Ellen Bute: Pioneer Animator by Kit Smyth Basquin

The advent of sound on film was a moment in animation history dominated by *Steamboat Willie* (Ub Iwerks, 1928*)*. This landmark Disney cartoon still evokes the end of silent cinema, but it also occludes other visionary approaches that emerged just after this paradigm shift. One such vision was that of Mary Ellen Bute. Although the iconography of Mickey Mouse stamped its mark across both commerce and pop culture, Bute's vision was the more daring mainstream entertainment. In Bute's hands, the short-form spectacle of a moving image did not just synchronize to music, it vitalized it. She was inspired by modernist painters, not filmmakers. As a teenager growing up on a Texas ranch, she saw Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912) reproduced in a magazine and was transfixed. Its successive poses showed the liminal spaces that filmic art could occupy. The story of how this young woman then moved east and established herself as a leading figure of abstract animation is as transfixing as it is revealing.

Kit Smyth Basquin's biography, *Mary Ellen Bute: Pioneer Animator,* provides the first book-length study of M.E. Bute's life and work. Its early chapters allow the reader to travel the winding path that led to her first film. Bute had pursued other studies, but in time she realized she was

neither a painter, musician, stage designer, nor theoretician. However, dabbling on the fringes, grasping what she could fulfill only through interdisciplinary work, Bute charted a course that was groundbreaking. She was on the crossroads of technical innovations, and she seized the opportunity it afforded. Her decision to become an animator was the logical end to her paths of inquiry. Smyth Basquin does a service to the legacy of Bute by carefully setting up the context of Bute's "eureka" moment. It allows the subject of the book, who has remained enigmatic and little known, to be more clearly understood.

In 1931, Bute made the acquaintance of Leon Theremin, who had recently patented his namesake instrument, the ghostly theremin. The results of their collaboration, in which they adapted an oscilloscope to respond to his electronic music, were both futuristic and beguiling. For Bute, the direction of her creative life suddenly crystallized. She applied for a Guggenheim grant and used the award to begin her first film, *Synchromy* (1932). This clears up a claim once made by Oskar Fischinger that Bute was inspired by his films to pursue her experiments: in fact, she had neither seen his German films nor been aware of his work. She found her own independent path and became the trailblazing musical animator of New York City all on her own, with her films appearing by special arrangement at Radio City Music Hall.

In partnership with Ted Nemeth, who subsequently became her husband, she directed abstract shorts—also called "absolute films" or "motion paintings"—for the next two decades. This was the most active period of her creative life, and, having begun her work during the Great Depression, she learned to be resourceful. Smyth Basquin describes it tersely: "Always pinched for money, Bute and Nemeth fabricated equipment that they could not afford to buy and created effects from whatever they had at hand, such as mirrors, a colander, heavy cream floating in coffee, a turntable, and also sculptures and drawings" (40). Through her efforts, *Rhythm in Light* (1935) got booked to screen with the first full-Technicolor feature, *Becky Sharp* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1935). Bute was making a name for herself. Her short novelties were playing with popular films in New York, allowing her to expand to screenings outside the city.

Because of her enterprising approach and the necessity of being a businesswoman (there was no patron who funded her work), she was never accepted by the fine-arts community in New York, even though, ironically, she was its most visible promoter of nonfigurative visual music. Yet her work was never commercial enough to interest Hollywood, either. Bute found her market within a narrow band of uptown theaters in a few major cities; it was general entertainment, in a manner of speaking, for genteel moviegoers.

As Bute continued to eke out her living making films, she quietly had an influence on the next decade of animated cinema. There are two events recounted in the book that are fascinating to ponder. The first is her influence on Norman McLaren, whom she hired to animate *Spook Sport* (1939). Both of these events can easily be seen today as turning points, setting larger things into action, with McLaren instrumental in establishing the animation division of the National Film Board of Canada. The other is the private screening she arranged for conductor Leopold Stokowski, upon his request. As early as 1935, Bute had traveled to Philadelphia to show him *Rhythm in Light.*

Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940) had its world premiere at the Broadway Theatre—just blocks from where Bute's *Tarantella* had been playing that year. Leopold Stokowski appeared on-screen as the musical conductor. He had already made inroads into Hollywood, appearing as himself in *100 Men and a Girl* (Henry Koster, 1937), and his work with the Philadelphia Orchestra had made him America's maestro. If any proof was needed that a general audience could enjoy a musical film such as *Fantasia,* it was already evident by the reception Bute's films were getting at theaters like Radio City Music Hall and Trans-Lux.

The fifteen short films that Bute made between 1932 and 1953 constituted her work as an animation director and helped to stir a public curiosity with midcentury art. Her films were not venerated on the walls of galleries but instead were offered on movie screens (although, in a twist, revivals today are largely curated by cultural institutions). *Mary Ellen Bute: Pioneer Animator* also provides information on her work as a live-action director, most notably of the feature-length *Passages from James Joyce's Finnegans Wake* (1965). The same adventurism that led her into animation eventually led her away from it. She chose to do other things, and the book dedicates individual chapters to explaining those endeavors, including the years when she worked on a filmed adaptation (never completed) of Thornton Wilder's *Skin of Our Teeth.* Smyth Basquin includes a chronology, a detailed filmography, and many illustrations.

In writing this biography, Smyth Basquin has made a facet of film history glimmer in a new light. Bute led a fascinating life, and her films, until recently, had been widely overlooked. Kit Smyth Basquin not only has been thorough with her research but also has donated her collected materials to the Beinecke Library at Yale University (167). The book is an essential addition to the field of animation studies, vastly increasing the available information about Bute.

It serves as both an acknowledgement of her contributions to cinema and a testament to the rewards of finding one's own way amid hardships.

TOM KLEIN is a professor at Loyola Marymount University, within the School of Film and Television. He has been profiled by the *New York Times* for his work on the films of Shamus Culhane. His articles have appeared in such journals as *Griffithiana, Animation Journal, Hyperion Historical Alliance Annual,* and *Animation Studies.*

CARLOS KONG

Making Worlds: Affect and Collectivity in Contemporary European Cinema by Claudia Breger

How does contemporary cinema apprehend and reimagine the sense of catastrophe that overwhelms the present? *Making Worlds* derives its critical urgency from the rhetoric of crisis and pervasive negativity in politics and the public realm. Claudia Breger's timely study frames cinema's intervention in "collective closures"—a term she employs to signal the closure of geopolitical borders accompanied by the foreclosure of global solidarity through mobilizations of negative affects like hate and fear.

Making Worlds assembles works of European art cinema from the last two decades alongside modernist film precedents, continental philosophy, and affect theory (especially that of Massumi and Berlant). Since affects circulate beyond the level of the individual, Breger turns to affect as a way of experiencing a world collectivity. In doing so, Breger argues that contemporary cinema's affective narratives and sensory addresses to spectators open up possibilities for collectively imagining, inhabiting, and remaking the world against the widespread recourse to "political hatred." Her readings of a wide-ranging set of films demonstrate how complex affects are instrumentalized in sociopolitical controversies around borders and migration, economic precarity, and right-wing populism. She argues that contemporary cinema can reconfigure belonging and resistance within the European and global contexts where conflicts around these issues have only intensified.

Making Worlds reframes contemporary films as "open worlds with porous boundaries" (11) against the backdrop of a Europe marked by fortified borders, deadly migration regimes, neoliberal austerity, and authoritarian resurgences. The "European" of the title is not circumscribed by filmmakers' nationalities, as instead Breger defamiliarizes Europe as a zone of precarious mobility and fraught contact.

It is with this aim that she studies films that affectively produce two modes of collectivity in Europe today: communal forms of intercultural solidarity amid displacement and exile as well as group attachments to structures of violence and exclusion. Breger's focus on Europe's ambivalent hospitality aligns itself with recent scholarship that reorients and politicizes the category of European cinema by highlighting "interzones" (Randall Halle), crises of ethnicity (Ipek A. Celik), and "precarious intimacies" (Beverly Weber and Maria Stehle). By attending to conflicting affects within such crises of collectivity, Breger demonstrates that "dismantling the imagined coherence of fascist, racist, and fundamentalist worldviews requires engaging their affective underpinnings in detail" (17).

Breger's methodological framework is inspired by Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, which provides a robust descriptive vocabulary for mapping the filmic traffic of affects, gestures, and implicated histories across local, continental, and global scales. Breger follows Latour's claim that agency is fundamentally "nonsovereign" and takes place between human and nonhuman actors that reconfigure collective worlds. This turn to agency shifts emphasis from postmodern critiques of representation to what Breger sees as a twenty-first-century "aesthetics of assembly." She underscores how contemporary films assemble "real-world materials"—such as insertions of documentary footage or visual references to present-day political struggles—to elicit specific affective responses in their reception. Breger draws on Latour to rethink the affordances of fictional films, claiming that cinema's "fictional worlds are never imaginatively closed and autonomous but remain bound to the life worlds surrounding them" (34).

Her methodological focus on agency further clarifies how film's nonhuman elements produce specific affective states that conjoin their "noticeably fictional but not impossible" (32) plots to their spectators' political realities. For instance, Breger repeatedly shows how the camera's position has the ability to construct distinctive shots that impart collective affective states, such as shared vulnerability. In doing so, Breger conceives filmmaking and spectatorship as part of an open-ended process of "affective worldmaking" across the porous bounds of real-world conflicts and their fictional portrayal in contemporary cinema.

Breger's first chapter examines Fatih Akın's *Auf der anderen Seite* (*The Edge of Heaven,* 2007) and Asghar Farhadi's *Jodaí-e Nadér az Simín* (*A Separation,* 2011), focusing on how each film probes the affective conflicts that arise when cultural differences are brought into proximate contact. Breger addresses Akın's labyrinthine narrative, which skips