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Ends of Cinema, edited by Richard Grusin and Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece

Richard Grusin and Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece's edited volume *Ends of Cinema* begins with an assurance to the reader: this is not a book bemoaning the "death of cinema" at the hands of digital technology, prestige television, home video, Netflix, or even (if it had been published a year later) COVID-19. One of the book's clearest aims is to distance itself from the familiar debates around the death of cinema that saturated both academic film studies and film culture in the 2000s. This is a distancing not just from the elegiac—and sometimes conservative—tone that often accompanies such a discourse, but also from a manner of theorizing about the death of cinema at the turn of the twenty-first century. The problem with this theorizing, as this volume's title suggests, is the presumption of a singular "end" of cinema. Declaring "the death" or "the end" suppresses the plurality of "deaths" that have marked cinema's history. Before the digital killed cinema, there was synchronized sound, television, and the VCR. What never ends, it seems, is the very discourse of "ends" itself.

Of course, as *Ends of Cinema* acknowledges, similar points have been made before by the likes of John Belton, Philippe Marion, and André Gaudreault (who contributes a chapter), as well as by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (the latter a coeditor of this volume). What *Ends of Cinema* adds to these discussions is an interrogation of that discourse. In Szczepaniak-Gillece's words, "[I]t turns out that [the book] is not just about the ends of something—it's about the category of an end itself" (200). Why does cinema seem to court the rhetoric of its own death, and with such frequency? What deeper sentiments are encoded in the declaration of cinema's "end" being pronounced so often? As Szczepaniak-Gillece provocatively suggests, cinema's "ends are sources of both panic and secret desires, or even simply moments when something else is needed to shake up the standards and reconfigure what seemed natural" (ix).

While Szczepaniak-Gillece's introduction compellingly lays out these ambitious central hypotheses, the collection of essays that follow showcases a much broader range of ways to conceptualize the "ends of cinema." All adapted from presentations delivered at a 2018 conference of the same name, most chapters of *Ends of Cinema* explore the generative margins of the "death of cinema" discourse. What this approach loses in thematic consistency it gains in showcasing a variety of research interests as well as a rich diversity of moving-image works: the experimental shorts

of Bruce Nauman, Leila Weefur, and Momoko Seto; 1920s archival nature films; *Boyz n the Hood* (John Singleton, 1991) and *The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008). Each analysis is framed by the many meanings of the phrase "ends of cinema"—the deaths of cinema, the extinctions of cinema, the limits of cinema, the purposes of cinema.

Michael Boyce Gillespie's and Caetlin Benson-Allott's chapters, for instance, are less about the "death of cinema" than they are about death within cinema. Gillespie's chapter explores four short films by Black women filmmakers that meditate on black death and antiblack violence. Gillespie's poetic descriptions of these works attempt to capture the subtle effects of their formal provocations, from experiments with jarring tonal juxtapositions in *Everybody Dies!* (Nuotama Bodomo, 2016) to the scratch-film techniques in *An Ecstatic Experience* (Ja'Tovia Gary, 2015). Benson-Allott's chapter examines the racialized history of death, not on-screen but within the space of the movie theater, showing how violence in theaters has been differently reported along racial lines.

Mary Ann Doane's and Francesco Casetti's entries interpret "ends of cinema" in a different way: through the boundaries or "ends" of the cinema screen. Doane's piece continues her decades-long work on cinematic scale, investigating the spatial paradox of contemporary cinema: the simultaneous amplification and shrinking of the screen, from the IMAX theater to the iPhone. One of Doane's key insights is that both kinds of screens, despite producing wildly different forms of experience, seem to court the language of immersion—a sense of being wholly suffused within an environment. But only IMAX, Doane suggests, overwhelms its viewers, exceeding their perceptual field in all directions in a manner that conjures the sublime. Casetti's chapter complements Doane's investigation of screen scale with what he calls a "countergenealogy" of the movie screen—an examination of the screen not as a vessel for displaying an image, but as a physical object that creates and configures a setting. In constructing this genealogy, Casetti examines a range of understudied voices in film theory—Élie Faure, Ricciotto Canudo, László Moholy-Nagy—as well as virtually unknown ones: Antonello Gerbi, Joseph Roth, Eric Feldman. What results is a constellation of theories that situate the cinema screen more seamlessly in the contemporary screen ecology; less a device of display than a means of orienting spaces and bodies, the movie screen becomes one of many devices of spatial reorientation.

Jennifer Lynn Peterson's and James Leo Cahill's entries consider the apocalyptic dimensions of cinema's "ends,"

offering distinctly theoretical and historical explorations of climate change and the endangerment of the natural world. Peterson looks at archival nature films from a deliberately anachronistic perspective, asking how these films—which display once-thriving species, now endangered—unintentionally take on new meanings in light of the contemporary climate catastrophe. Specifically, Peterson traces the affective sense of “endangerment” that these films arouse, a “way of understanding the world through an attitude attuned to loss, disappearance, and preservation” (55). Mining the theoretical implications of this orientation toward film as archive, Cahill’s chapter weaves together two central metaphors of photographic media—“garbage” and “ghosts”—as they manifest themselves in the writings of Siegfried Krauer and Georges Bataille. While Cahill largely examines the figurative dimensions of garbage (photography’s contingencies, the waste on the cutting-room floor) and ghosts (cinema’s uncanniness, its illusory sense of presence), he also, importantly, considers their more literal status as the industrial by-products of both analog and digital film that quietly accumulate over time.

While these chapters largely touch upon associative links and affective charges conjured by the “ends of cinema,” others forge new pathways through more familiar terrain. Mark Paul Meyer’s chapter examines what’s been lost in the digital turn from the perspective of a film archivist trained in the careful physical inspection of celluloid film. Meyer considers the often-overlooked ways in which the materiality of film stock bears the traces of artistic and industrial history, such as the discernible difference between a splice made intentionally by the editor and one made as censorship. And as the entry’s dazzling array of color plates demonstrates, many forms of color processing—tinting, stenciling, Technicolor, hand-coloring—are discernible from the visual and tactile qualities of the filmstrip.

André Gaudreault’s entry also enters into familiar debates. Gaudreault relays the story of the 2018 conflict between Netflix and Cannes, when the film festival refused entry to any Netflix-produced films, including Orson Welles’s resurrected *The Other Side of the Wind* (2018). Gaudreault’s bigger aim with this anecdote is to examine the language that surrounds it: that many in France who supported the Cannes decision do not recognize Netflix films as “films,” that Orson Welles disliked the word “cinema” (and “motion picture” for that matter), and that the French language doesn’t quite have its own version of the medium-agnostic term “moving image.” In this thoughtful piece, Gaudreault traces a history of the word *cinema* and

its synonyms, its manifold connotations, and the persistence of its use in the face of the transformations of the cinematic medium.

Amy Villarejo’s chapter, titled “& Mediation: Television’s Partial Visions,” similarly concerns the nuances of language surrounding the ends of cinema discourse, but instead of tracing the history of “cinema” or interrogating the logic of “ends,” her entry begins by focusing on the ampersand—the mark of punctuation that slowly found its way into the names of film studies departments and journals over the last thirty years. Focusing on the ampersand triggers a refreshing discovery: the “death” of a medium is often simply a negative reframing of a conceptual expansion, a blurring of boundaries. The “and” is a nonhierarchical tool for signaling that expansion by joining one idea or concept to another: so, if something of cinema has indeed ended, this is just an opportunity for new linkages to be made.

Clearly reminiscent of André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion’s *The End of Cinema?* (2015), Grusin and Szczepaniak-Gillece’s *Ends of Cinema* discards the question mark of that previous book. *Ends of Cinema* is not quite an attempt to question the dogma of cinema’s recent “death” by challenging its claims to historical uniqueness. That is well-trodden territory. Rather, *Ends of Cinema* uses the rhetoric of cinema’s finality as a generative framing device, a way of linking together disparate fields of research that are rarely put into conversation.

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KOEL BANERJEE

***Struggles for Recognition: Melodrama and Visibility in Latin American Silent Film*, by Juan Sebastián**

Ospina León

Juan Sebastián Ospina León’s *Struggles for Recognition: Melodrama and Visibility in Latin American Silent Cinema* historicizes Latin American silent cinema by tracing film melodrama’s northbound journey from Buenos Aires to Los Angeles. Echoing Linda Williams’s influential reading of melodrama as “the fundamental mode” of popular American cinema, Ospina León makes a case for melodrama as the “dominant mode” that made visible the experiences of modernity in early-twentieth-century