

The following chapter deepens this observation by studying shots driven by “the character who is the object of the gaze” rather than the one who is “aligned with the camera” (99). Morgan finds “object-defined” (103) camera movements in the work of Fritz Lang and Guru Dutt that generate a tension between the perspectives afforded by the position of the shot and those expressed by the way the shot “unfolds” (95). In such instances of camera movement, as Morgan argues, the camera abandons its characterological proxy and evokes intensities associated with what the proxy sees. (Morgan’s reading of Von Wenck’s encounter with Dr. Mabuse is especially illustrative of this effect.)

Morgan elaborates on this tension between subjective and objective perception in the next chapter when he discusses Max Ophüls’s signature tracking shots as instances of “dual attunement” to the perspective of key characters as well as a moral perspective on those characters and the world they inhabit (137). Ophüls’s camera gestures toward alternative possibilities and affective resources to those currently available in the characters’ world. In *The Earrings of Madame de...* (1953), Morgan shows, the virtuosic, creative, and responsive movements of Ophüls’s camera acknowledge the demand that Louise and the Baron’s “claim to happiness” (149) places on a world hostile to its flourishing, while also forging a perspective—floating out- and alongside the lovers—from which to grasp the stakes of that failure.

Continuing to move away from the notion of camera movement as subjective access, Morgan shows how Terrence Mallick presses camera movement in service of an “antiperspectival” approach to filmmaking in *The Thin Red Line* (1998), *The New World* (2005), and *The Tree of Life* (2011). Mallick’s camera never rests with any one perspective for too long, instead wandering among positions including but not limited to those of persons. But this feature of Mallick’s filmmaking, Morgan argues, does not express an empty fetishization of new technologies, as is often assumed. Rather, in decentering human orders of space and time, Mallick contributes to the “long-standing philosophical (and literary)” examination of irony as the “dispersal of authority within a text” (178). He thus creates a “cinema without a final position,” in which the viewer is “never allowed to settle, even into disorientation” (218).

In his final chapter, Morgan examines digital film’s contributions to camera movement, particularly when multiple cameras are involved. He examines *Adieu au langage* (Jean-Luc Godard, 2014), whose manipulation of standard protocols for producing 3D images generates a distinctive “perceptual unsettling” (234) aimed at exposing the ocular operations of three-dimensional visualization. Whether

bringing the two cameras needed to produce a 3D image “too close together” or pushing them too close to objects in the profilmic space, Godard and cinematographer Fabrice Arago “transform our perception of the world” by “mak[ing] us newly aware of it” (234).

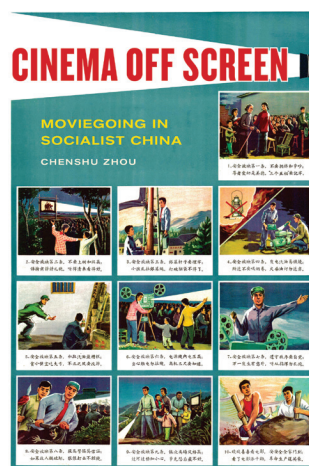
The most destabilizing technique that Godard and Arago deploy—and the most consequential, for Morgan’s argument—is the “radical separation of the two cameras” (235). In such moments, “the ‘right eye camera’ separates from the ‘left eye camera.’ ... [O]ur vision, literally comes apart for a period of time—only to return ... at which point the two images coalesce again into a single one” (235). In a stunning argumentative turn, Morgan claims that such ostensibly static moments function as camera movement. The “entire camera array” may not be moving, he writes, “but *a* camera is,” opening up “new aspects of space” and suggesting that sight itself is a “*montage between the eyes.*” Indeed, Morgan concludes that movement is at play in the very act of seeing: “each eye always takes in a different view, however slight, of the world” (238). Deeply informative, vast in scope, and beautifully written, *The Lure of the Image* is essential for those interested in the very concept of movement in and on film.

BOOK DATA Daniel Morgan, *The Lure of the Image: Epistemic Fantasies of the Moving Camera*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021. \$85.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper. 306 pages.

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AMIR KHAN

Cinema Off Screen: Moviegoing in Socialist China by Chenshu Zhou



Chenshu Zhou has written an extremely reader-friendly account of moviegoing in socialist China. Though she attempts to anchor her discussion in empirical data (taken from the testimony and film remembrances of sixty participants), this is an attempt to put forward a type of film history that

engages with where and how a film is shown and consumed. Because her approach ignores “intent” of any kind, whether by a director, a producer, or an actor, it is a type of film criticism without films.

Zhou’s study of moviegoing in socialist China from 1949 through the end of the Cold War in 1992 has two fundamental takeaways: (1) that moviegoing in China under Mao created new possibilities for human liberation; and (2) that the conditions of collective (socialist) movie watching are superior to the current “multiplex” model based on theaters and theater screens as sites of a meaningful movie culture. Zhou, with graceful exegesis rather than aggressive polemic, is pushing back against the common assumption that any art produced in China under Mao was simply a belligerent and crude means of indoctrination. By focusing on the cinematic contingencies surrounding how a movie is shown rather than on what is shown, Zhou resituates cinema’s ontological significance “off screen.”

Zhou offers up a type of materialist, rather than idealist, critique whereby ideal film screening conditions are not readily equated with scenes of urban modernity. People in the countryside participated in meaningful cinematic experiences divorced from any particular film’s content. Through her discussion of ramshackle outdoor open-air screenings in rural settings, Zhou explores a host of new ontological possibilities for film, including “space,” “labor,” “multimedia,” “atmosphere,” “discomfort,” and “screen” (each of which makes up a chapter).

Zhou’s first two chapters, for instance, are not interested in space and labor as depicted in the movies but rather in the spaces in which viewings took place and the type of labor that went into the act of screening itself. She notes that prior to 1949, between “596 and 678” movie theaters existed in China, with the majority in large urban cities (39). The socialist cinema project was intended to get films out to workers and peasants. Workers and their families, for instance, were guaranteed access to films on an almost “daily basis,” and workers’ clubs were mandated to have “facilities for entertainment and exercise” on-site (45–46). In addition, via “mobile projection teams” (essentially film equipment strapped to a donkey), the CCP sought to “bring culture to its people, including ethnic minorities and those in remote rural areas” (49).

Despite the significant hardships of terrain and weather, the socialist push to acculturate the population with film was so successful that, by 1960, “rural audiences made up 60.5% of all audiences” (47).

As a principle of cultural production, “serving workers, peasants, and soldiers” complicated the

widespread belief that Chinese socialist cinema was a propaganda tool, which at best tells half the story. From movie theatres to film clubs and mobile film exhibition teams, these exhibition outlets, while striving to create propaganda spaces, were also public interfaces that mediated socialist ideals of mass access and mass culture that were supposed to be balanced between education, recreation, politics, and entertainment. (50–51)

One sees very clearly a conception of cinema in which the bias tips toward access and opportunity rather than box-office ticket sales—a reminder that perhaps a reliance on box-office statistics overdetermines histories of the cinema experience. *Cinema Off Screen* highlights how taking movies *to the people* (rather than asking customers to find their own way to the cinema) fundamentally alters what cinema is.

A cinematic viewing experience, moreover, might include other “multimedia” technologies like the slide show, since films shown during the socialist period were often prefaced by local news and educational topics coalescing around *huandeng*—slides that depicted “content closely related to the daily life and agricultural productions of the local communities” and “admirable deeds by real people” (92). While audience reactions were mixed, slide shows infused both exhibition spaces and classrooms with a type of cinematic content that sought to fuse education and entertainment. Moreover, projectionists themselves often took the role of lecturer and were, for many, the sole mediator between film and audience. In terms of labor, the projectionist (who remains invisible in Western accounts of cinema) was thus seen as an equally significant participant in the important work of cultural production that was otherwise centered on “screenwriters, directors, actors, [and] distributors, [rather than] projectionists” (73).

In her fourth chapter, titled “Atmosphere,” Zhou more forcefully attends to the means of projection and, subsequently, the way that virtually all films today are consumed—that is, as commodities. The “now standard multiplex that sells films like goods in a store” (110) vitiates the collective possibilities once fostered by cinema projected outside of “luxurious downtown cinema palace[s]” (110). Zhou further problematizes a bias in cinema studies that continues to validate what Julian Hanich, whom she cites, terms “an uninterrupted projection of a film in a dark space” as *the* transhistorical viewing ideal, all other spaces existing as “deviations” (108–9). Even positing such a space, Zhou notes, reflects an Occidental bias because those spaces were first consolidated as mainstream venues in the United

States and Western Europe. The function of a Western-style multiplex, of course, is not to enhance a medium-specific aesthetic but rather to accumulate box-office revenue more efficiently via cinematic franchising.

In her fifth chapter, Zhou seeks to include physical discomfort within her specific off-screen film ontology. Not only did “barefoot” projectionists suffer hardships; viewing audiences in open-air rural galleries had to suffer potential “cold, heat, wind, rain, snow, and mosquitoes” (139) as well as “precarious physical position[s]” (140). Zhou equates such hardships with a “happiness of struggle” (143) related to the “path-clearing” sharpening of mind associated with “torture” (151). Rather than reduce the pain of discomfort to a Lacanian sense of “*jouissance*,” Zhou posits that cinema culture in Maoist China emancipated “profound emotions” that were meaningful precisely because “active struggle, including the struggle of the body to overcome pain and discomfort, were seen as revolutionary, transcendent, and desirable” (144–46). While some may dismiss China’s entire cultural project in this period as totalitarian, Zhou posits in her final chapter that such “[e]mbodied spectatorship” (155) actually breaks the hold of cinematic propaganda concomitant with Western spectatorship.

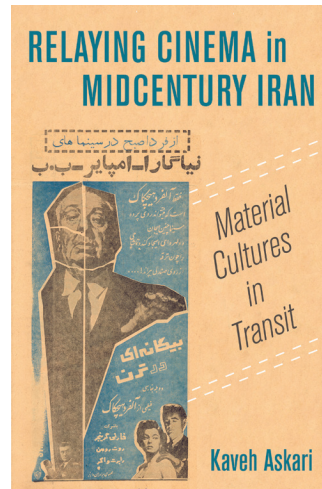
Zhou has written an impressive and impassioned tribute to moviegoing in socialist China. Nonetheless, it is clear that Zhou’s rhetorical strategy is to come to the defense of a political project discredited in the academic mainstream without admitting that the project’s most exhilarating achievements had anything to do with politics. This is a common strategy today in Western historiography that seeks to speak positively about Mao’s China. As scholarly consensus generally forbids direct reappraisal of Mao’s politics, it has become customary to suggest how the hard revolutionary goals of the Communist Party were achieved surreptitiously via the soft and inadvertent accidents of culture. Zhou seeks to analyze how lived experience is marked by the “*dispositif* of cinema—that is, where and how films were shown, [rather] than by political rhetoric and campaigns” (54). At best, her analysis succeeds in rehabilitating the noblest aspirations of socialist China; at worst, it remains a careful elision of revolutionary politics.

BOOK DATA Chenshu Zhou, *Cinema Off Screen: Moviegoing in Socialist China*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021. \$85.00 cloth, \$34.95 paper, \$34.95 e-book. 282 pages.

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BABAK TABARRAEI

Relaying Cinema in Midcentury Iran: Material Cultures in Transit by Kaveh Askari



Until about a decade ago, Iranian film histories limited themselves to a double dichotomy. First, they represented Iranian cinema prior to the 1979 revolution as a constant battlefield between the highbrow art cinema—namely, the New Wave of the late sixties—and the lowbrow popular films collectively known as *Filmfārsi*. Second, they focused on the postrev-

olutionary Islamization of the cinema, which led to the emergence of an oppositional cinema in the form of both politically poignant films and a new mode of poetic realism in the works of several festival-favorite auteurs.

This dominant historiographic approach underwent a considerable change in the 2010s, led by Hamid Naficy’s four-volume *Social History of Iranian Cinema*, along with a few other valuable monographs and edited collections: Pedram Partovi’s *Popular Iranian Cinema before the Revolution*, Golbarg Rekabtalaei’s *Iranian Cosmopolitanism: A Cinematic History*, Blake Atwood’s *Underground: The Secret Life of Videocassettes in Iran*, and Matthias Wittmann and Ute Holl’s edited collection *Counter-Memories in Iranian Cinema*. This new generation of scholars has begun a move toward more sociocultural histories where concepts such as the popular, the forbidden, the technological, and the national are redefined and explored anew. Continuing this trajectory, Kaveh Askari’s new book opens the young field of Iranian film studies to alternative histories of film distribution and reception.

“It is a book on circulation written during a peripatetic twelve-year period,” writes Askari in his acknowledgment (xi). But rather than Iranian films, or cinema, the subject of the book is the national *and* transnational circulation of objects such as film prints, scores, and publicity materials in Iran during a time when the country’s policies were manifestly pro-Western. As a child of “circulation studies and media archeology” (8), Askari provides a fascinating history of nonfilmic objects, much in the same way as Eric Smoodin and others do as they document the trend of New Cinema