

productions while also acknowledging the essential role his hands-on leadership takes in the realization of the film. This chapter ultimately reveals the ways auteurist theory fails to take into account the director's role in simultaneously leading and collaborating with the many voices involved in the processes of making and publicizing a film.

Chapter 4, "Performance," offers an up-close look at the practices that define Loach's work with film actors, notably nonprofessional or first-time actors. Most revealing is the analysis of Loach's famous method of withholding parts of the script from actors, which results in moments of heightened authenticity and bridges the gap between performer and character. Through an analysis of crew call sheets and interviews with the actors, Archibald emphasizes the comfortability of this approach for both professional and nonprofessional actors. Archibald effectively analyzes two sequences of comedic shock in *The Angel's Share* that utilize this approach, by relating their power to Loach's wide observational approach to shot setup. The chapter also features an account of Loach's direction of a sequence depicting a whiskey tasting. What may seem at first like an insignificant or unmemorable scene in the film is given more importance through Archibald's observation of Loach directly interacting with and instructing extras, and his use of a hole-in-the-wall observational camera setup, where we see so much of what has been theorized about Loach's style become tangible.

Chapter 5, "Words: Between Script and Screen," interrogates Loach's notion that the writer has the most important role in the construction of a film. While focusing primarily on Loach's ongoing partnership with Scottish screenwriter Paul Laverty, Archibald considers Loach's past collaborations with writers such as Nell Dunn, Jim Allen, Barry Hines, and Rob Dawber. Archibald connects Loach's interest in authenticity to his preference for writers with strong regional ties, such as Laverty with Scotland, the setting for *The Angel's Share* as well as some of his other films. The chapter excels with Archibald's analysis of the film's on-set production in relation to Laverty's screenplay. Focusing on the filming of two scenes, Archibald examines how Loach remains faithful to the written script but leans on input from actors to add verisimilitude in dialogue and staging.

The final chapter, "Politics beyond the Screen," explores Loach's engagement with film festivals and his films' tendency to spark wide political engagement and debate within England. Archibald centers this chapter around the premiere of *The Angel's Share* at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival, where it won the Jury Prize. Archibald revisits the tension between Loach's reception in Europe as an auteur and his steadfast rejection of the label. Loach's status and celebrity

let him use the platform of his Cannes press conference for the film to spark discussions on the crises of capitalism.

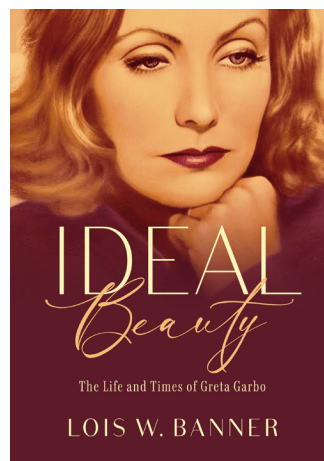
Successfully building on past studies of Loach and new observations of the making and reception of *The Angel's Share*, Archibald demonstrates the benefit that in-person observation can have in analyzing the politics, aesthetics, and reception of a film. *Tracking Loach* successfully distinguishes what makes Loach's approach to filmmaking politically distinct and radical in contrast to commercial modes of filmmaking and the larger structures of capitalism. In its focus on Loach's technique, Archibald's analysis offers a path forward for future directorial studies that deemphasize auteurism for a more nuanced focus on the team dynamics that inform the process of filmmaking.

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BOOK DATA David Archibald, *Tracking Loach: Politics, Practices, Production*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. \$120.00 cloth; \$24.95 paper; \$24.95 e-book (EPUB); \$110.00 e-book (PDF). 216 pages.

GABRIELLE STECHER

Ideal Beauty: The Life and Times of Greta Garbo, by Lois W. Banner



More than thirty years after her death, the sphinxlike Greta Garbo continues to elude, despite the best efforts to posthumously pin down the woman who so famously rejected public life. The mononymic Garbo, not unlike her successors Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, remains a lumi-

nary in Hollywood's pantheon of stars. These glamorous icons of the past still inspire hero worship, creating an appetite for biographical studies that address the yearning for authenticity and intimacy among their fans. This presents a particular challenge when the subject is as famous for her desire for privacy as her performances; such is the case with Garbo. While there have been numerous biographies published on the Swedish film star over the past three decades, Lois Banner's *Ideal Beauty: The Life and Times of Greta Garbo* is unique in the way that Banner privileges context as much as she does chronology.

Rather than simply repeating familiar narratives regarding Garbo's illustrious career as a top earner at MGM or her fluid experimentation with gender expression and sexuality, Banner frames Garbo within the sweeping contexts—political, personal, historical, and societal—in which she lived and worked. *Ideal Beauty* positions the star within a discourse that prioritizes her “role in the histories of beauty, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality” (2). Building upon Banner's previous scholarship regarding the American social history of beauty, this text foregrounds how the statuesque Garbo embodied the glamorous ideal of her time: “sophisticated, scornful, and superior, but humanely warm, and deeply emotional and mysterious” (82).

Part 1, “The Steichen Photo” provides Banner's most explicit engagement with an image of Garbo and how her pose in Edward Steichen's 1928 portrait for *Vanity Fair* simultaneously registers personal and postwar desperation while radiating the power of a star “both immortal and beyond gender” (31). As this chapter attests, writers often evoked various mythological or religious traditions—Nordic, Greco-Roman, Christian—to describe Garbo's beauty and presence. Banner provides a sweeping survey of the construction of Garbo's image, which ranged from a Valkyrie to Venus. Perhaps the most original insight into Garbo's uniquely iconic presence comes from her fellow actress and screen icon Louise Brooks, for whom Garbo was “a mater dolorosa, the mother of Christ mourning her son who had died on the cross” (17).

In part 2, “Maturing,” Banner backtracks to Garbo's impoverished childhood in Sweden, her early theatrical endeavors, and her formative relationships with Mimi Pollak, an early romantic companion, and the Swedish director Mauritz Stiller, who discovered the young star and negotiated her contract at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Consulting previously overlooked Swedish archival material, Banner provides a never-before-seen glimpse into Garbo's family tree, which included members of the nobility along with a witch and a professor. Banner suggests that some of Garbo's “complexities” may be traced back to these Gustafsson ancestors (40).

Greta Gustafsson's Hollywood transformation into Greta Garbo would prove difficult. As an émigré to Hollywood, she suffered from the separation from her family and the premature death of her sister. Yet she persisted, successfully defying the artistic restrictions inherent in the popular vamp typecast and leveraging her star power to ensure that MGM would grant her necessary accommodations during periods in which her health was especially precarious.

In part 3, “The Star,” Garbo's health battles become all the more evident. Banner repeats the following catalog of ailments several times throughout the text: “anemia, insomnia, menstrual issues [ovarian and cervical inflammations], and a manic-depressive syndrome, mostly with depressive lows,” as well as chronic bronchitis from smoking and anorexia nervosa, the latter a response to cultural and industry demands for thinness (3). Banner positions herself in the prologue as a “discoverer” of Garbo's sexual health and chronic pain—a move that, if not navigated carefully, can be ethically dubious in cases where the biographer attempts to diagnose their subject based off exploitative, unsubstantiated rumors (11). Banner, however, is a careful analyst of Garbo's correspondence, working to decipher how the star narrated her pain in her own terms. Banner also suggests that Garbo likely experienced bipolar disorder, a condition shared by “many successful artists and writers throughout history” as “the hypomanic state between depression and elation, in particular, can produce a controlled creativity, providing incentive and self-discipline” (49). Although Banner cites one older published source here (Kay Redfield Jamison's *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament* [1993]), her claim reflects the way biographical writing about artists has been used to support theories about the connection between creativity and bipolar disorder.

Banner's survey of the chronic pain from which Garbo perpetually and seriously suffered leaves the reader desiring deeper critical engagement with the discourse surrounding women's health and its impact on their creative labor. In chapter 6, “The Agony and the Ecstasy,” Banner describes the April 1927 breakdown that Garbo suffered following the release of *Flesh and the Devil* (Clarence Leon Brown, 1926), related to a gynecological condition. Where earlier Garbo biographer Mark Vieira suggested that the breakdown could have been the result of a botched abortion, Banner cites a debilitating combination of weakness caused by anorexia nervosa and ovarian inflammation that she attributes to gonorrhea, the symptoms of which Garbo was “heroic in coping with” (121). Banner is careful to laud the courage required of Garbo to excel in front of the camera despite the intense fatigue the inflammatory flare-ups caused her.

The biography's second half discusses Garbo's career in a variety of contexts, including fashion, censorship, and sexuality. Part 4, “Choosing Sides,” begins with a useful survey of four decades of fashionable “It girls,” from the late nineteenth-century Gibson girl to the tall, glamorous women idealized in the 1930s. Banner then unpacks Garbo's relationship with Adrian, the MGM head costume designer, who helped construct the Garbo image. Garbo's

career during the pre-Code era is discussed in another chapter, as is the filming of the biopic *Queen Christina* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1933), a film that resonated so deeply with the Swedish actress that she was willing to undergo plastic surgery to embody the monarch as accurately as possible. After experiencing years of fatigue due to depression and her ovarian inflammation, Garbo retired from the film industry in 1942 at age thirty-six. In part 5, “Celebrity,” comprising the book’s remaining three chapters, Banner interweaves discussions of Garbo’s friendships and love affairs with figures such as Salka Viertel and George Schlee with descriptions of her relocation to New York, physical decline, and spiritual pursuits before her death in April 1990.

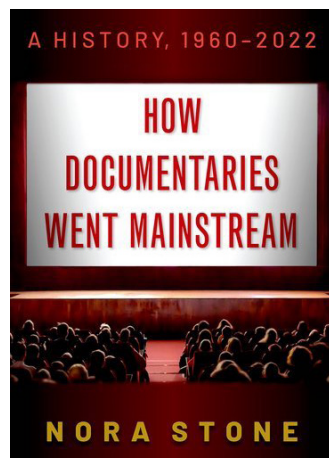
Banner’s biography provides a comprehensive introduction to the forces that shaped Garbo’s working environment and celebrity, making this a recommended text for anyone who seeks to learn more about a woman whose power to fascinate has never dimmed. Of all Garbo biographies, Banner’s may possess the most pedagogical promise, as it provides thorough yet accessible context for students new to the history of classical Hollywood while also suggesting diverse avenues for further research.

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BOOK DATA Lois W. Banner, *Ideal Beauty: The Life and Times of Greta Garbo*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. 2023. \$34.95 cloth. 286 pages.

DEVIN THOMAS

How Documentaries Went Mainstream: A History, 1960–2022, by Nora Stone



Documentary comes into the world torn between its virtue as a public service and its value as commodity. This tension is central to Nora Stone’s meticulously researched book *How Documentaries Went Mainstream: A History, 1960–2022*, which charts documentary’s progression from Hollywood’s margins to the bread and

butter of online streaming platforms. In this refreshing addition to the history of nonfiction film, Stone foregrounds

distribution and circulation as the locus of documentary’s influence, tracing evolutions in infrastructure, film culture, and market machinations to explain the genre’s commercial transformation.

The book progresses chronologically, with each chapter focusing on a different era in the development and proliferation of documentary film and its distribution networks. Stone draws on a wealth of sources such as archival documents, trade journals, popular media, and interviews with filmmakers and distributors to paint a detailed picture of documentary as industry. She emphasizes the role of “the documentary ecosystem”—an infrastructure network that spans theatrical distribution, public television, cable television, film festivals, nonprofits, government granting agencies, home video, and streaming services (7). She supplements this attention to distribution and circulation with key cinematic case studies. In this way, *How Documentaries Went Mainstream* exposes the ways these transmedia relationships have helped shape the content, structure, and commercialization of documentary films from 1960 to today.

Chapter 1 opens in the postwar period, an age of precarity for documentary. Frustrated by the constraints of journalistic television, the pioneers of Direct Cinema desired to make films that pushed the boundaries of nonfiction storytelling but were met with rejection from Hollywood and network television. To find their audience, filmmakers had to be innovative in both style and distribution strategy. Stone lays out the different circulation methods and cinephile communities that allowed documentary to blossom despite industry antagonism. Societies like Cinema 16, journals such as *Film Culture*, and the creation of filmmaker collectives all laid the groundwork for documentary circulation. By the end of the 1960s, the breakout success of two self-financed and independently distributed films, *Dont Look Back* (D. A. Pennebaker, 1967) and *The Endless Summer* (Bruce Brown, 1966), proved the commercial viability of documentary. These films about popular music and youth culture, respectively, hit on a formula for success: a built-in fan base ripe with potential for cross-industry partnerships.

In chapters 2 and 3, Stone dissects the documentary ecosystems of the 1980s through the lens of two key distribution channels: independent cinema and public television. In chapter 2, Stone argues that documentary was central to the 1980s American independent-film market. Increased demand for documentaries and the emergence of more small distribution companies set the groundwork for the commercial acquisition of documentary films and paved