two chapters are among the most interesting, if only because they will introduce many readers to Rozema’s film and prompt them to reevaluate Figgis’s digital experiment, shot on four separate cameras simultaneously in “real time.” Fabe makes a good case for *Timecode*, a commercial failure dismissed by many critics as little more than an extended gimmick.

While the descriptions of the films and scenes themselves are usually detailed and precise, there are still occasional inaccuracies of description or observation. Following the problematic English titling in many prints of *Potemkin*, Fabe erroneously describes the child being carried up the Odessa Steps by his mother as “sick” (31) but also (accurately) as “wounded” (34). She claims that during Kane’s slow walk through his endless reflections toward the end of Welles’s film, “all he can see are images of himself . . . a man trapped within his own narcissism” (92), but Kane of course is not looking at himself at all in that scene. Questions of interpretation also arise when the visual evidence is not strongly conclusive. Griffith’s use of an iris shot of Flora before she is attacked by Gus in *The Birth of a Nation* is, Fabe claims, “a foreshadowing of her doom” (14), but Griffith uses the same masking in the close-up of Gus reproduced on the same page. Leading up to Alicia’s theft of her husband’s key in *Notorious*, a shift from a long shot of Alicia in relatively deep focus to a close-up is described as dispelling the “feeling of freedom” that the set-up shot implied (145–46), but this is surely a matter of judgment. The depth of the shot is still in soft focus, and Alicia’s framing within a doorway provides no real avenues of escape. Much more functionally, the shot simply allows us to follow Alicia’s thought processes as she prepares to take the key.

In discussions of some other films and scenes, there are omissions of contextual material that could deepen readers’ understandings. Fabe discusses Truffaut’s personal relationship with Bazin, but ignores Truffaut’s own father-role to Jean-Pierre Léaud, and her references to the director’s homages in *The 400 Blows* totally ignore the importance of Jean Vigo’s *Zero for Conduct*. While briefly alluding to Carl Jung’s influence on Fellini (154), Fabe’s discussion of *8½* does not follow up on the importance of the Jungian “anima” to the Saraghina sequence or the film as a whole. She describes Radio Raheem’s “LOVE” and “HATE” brass knuckles in *Do the Right Thing* as “scarily reminiscent” of Robert Mitchum in *Night of the Hunter* (204), but fails to note that Raheem has a speech that actually paraphrases Mitchum’s in the earlier film. Indeed, by placing Lee’s film in the context of Eisenstein’s dialectics and more or less ignoring Lee’s desire for a “Black aesthetic,” the analysis of this film is the weakest of the book.

While one might wish for more (and color, when appropriate) illustrations here, the ones chosen are reasonably good frame enlargements and are used to good effect. However, the book as a whole would have benefited from further editorial attention. The chapters are somewhat inconsistent, giving detailed biographical attention to some directors (Griffith, Eisenstein, Welles) and little or none to others (Murnau, Hawks, Lee). Definitions of terms are smoothly integrated into the text in some chapters, but relegated to footnote(s) in others. Most chapters concentrate on a single scene or sequence, but others are more wide-ranging and less focused.

Such variations do help to prevent these analyses from falling into a monotonous lockstep with each other, but the inconsistencies also contribute to a sense of the book as a collection of pieces, rather than the unified approach to film viewing suggested by the book’s title. That sense is reinforced, when in some cases—notably *Potemkin* and *Notorious*—the scene being discussed stops short of its conclusion or immediate aftermath, which is crucial to a fuller understanding of both scenes. Most annoyingly, the text retains verbal markers of its origin in classroom lectures: phrases such as “as we have seen . . .,” “I’d like to conclude with a discussion of . . .,” and so on, recur throughout the book. Literate non-specialists in film can certainly learn a great deal about film and these individual movies from Fabe’s book. Whether this is the best place to start is another matter.

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**Cowboys As Cold Warriors: The Western and U.S. History**


*Cowboys As Cold Warriors* treats Western movies as one of the major constituents of American political culture from 1945 to the beginning of the Vietnam War. The idea is not a new one: John Lenihan’s *Showdown* (1980) related Western themes to McCarthyism; Philip French’s *Westerns* (1973) drew analogies between particular films and the political styles of Cold War presidents; and my own *Gunfighter Nation* (1992) saw the genre as the source of the cultural myths that led us into Vietnam. Stanley Corkin draws effectively on these earlier studies. What is new about his book is the systematic way in which he relates Western scenarios to theories of nation-state politics and to the evolution of policy ideas in Cold War think tanks, universities, and the national security apparatus.

His discussion of *Red River* in chapter one is a good example of his method. He frames the film with an analysis of the American role in shaping the postwar world economy, starting with the negotiations at Bretton Woods in 1945. The goal of U.S. policymakers was to open the international economy to American corporate initiatives. But their ambitions for the extension of American political and economic power were modified by their experience of the Depression and New Deal, and the rise of Hitler, which left them with grave concerns about corporations lusting for unregulated expansion and nations bent on a monopoly of power. Hawks’ study of the cattle baron Tom Dunson reflects “a fascination with the
development of a business strategy that rewards centralized production and the seeking of far-flung markets.” Dunson’s vision of a great ranch producing beef for hungry Americans enables him to create a successful business and overcome the post-Civil War depression. But the individualist passion that enables him to create his business and launch the drive to win new markets evolves towards megalomania and dictatorship—and (not incidentally) threatens the economic success of the enterprise. The ultimate success of the venture requires a compromise between Dunson and the more moderate and democratic regime of his adopted son, Matt Garth. The film thus serves as an arena in which ideological concerns of a fairly complex kind are projected and solutions play-tested.

Corkin shows how the development of U.S. responses to the Cold War unfolded, and were then reflected in new kinds of Westerns. His first chapter deals with the establishment of the postwar economic order, and brings in Red River and My Darling Clementine. Subsequent chapters trace the initial formation of Cold War foreign policy, modeled in Westerns as a choice between “masculine” (or coercive) and “feminine” (or consensual) approaches to establishing an American “empire” or hegemony (Duel in the Sun, Pursued, Fort Apache); and growing concerns about the necessity and the danger of relying on military force or violence (Broken Arrow, The Gunfighter). These chapters are the most interesting and original in the book, in part because Corkin uses them to develop his discussion of political theory, rather than piling all the theory into an introduction, as most writers do. Moreover, this is the period in which the fundamental structures of Cold War policy were being quietly established in government offices and think tanks, before the high drama of Korea, the New Frontier, and Vietnam.

The three chapters that trace the movement from Korea to Vietnam tie Western scenarios to the increasingly militant concepts of American nationalism that were being developed during this period. Corkin emphasizes the emergence of a theme to which earlier writers (myself included) may have given insufficient weight: the sense that the U.S. was in decline, relative to the Soviets. Kennedy’s response was to summon Americans to conquer a “New Frontier”: to roll back Communist gains in the Third World by applying the theories of political and economic “modernization” developed by W.W. Rostow and other policy intellectuals. Westerns, more subtly, framed the heroism of gunfighters and cowboys—traditional agents of progress—against the image of a vanishing West, the loss of a world of untrammeled possibilities. In contrast to the ideological simplicities of modernization theory, the films register a complex cultural response that accepts progress but also counts its cost. In a sense, the films are “smarter” than the policy intellectuals about the resistance modernization theory would face, in the U.S. as well as in the Third World.

Rather than use a “counterinsurgency” Western like The Magnificent Seven to set up U.S. intervention in Vietnam, Corkin frames the decision with three movies that mourn the loss of the cowboy’s West: Lonely Are the Brave, Sam Peckinpah’s Ride the High Country, and John Ford’s ironic elegy, The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance. Though The Magnificent Seven may be a better allegory of the direction of policy than Ride the High Country or Liberty Valance, Corkin’s choices highlight the way that films work by dramatizing and evoking desire—political as well as romantic. What attracted Americans to the “New Frontier” of Vietnam was not the prospect of displaying the technical expertise of the Seven. Rather, it was the desire to recover the lost possibility of heroic achievement that the West had embodied.

Corkin’s book is valuable for the thoroughgoing way in which it links the discussion of cultural themes and productions with political developments. Corkin traces the continuities of formal treatment and thematic concern which link these films as a genre, but does not slight the individuality of each production. Nor does he reduce the films to political allegories, or simplistic displays of a given political stance. Rather, he shows how current concerns play through a popular fictional form, and how imaginative artistic play can actually develop the complexities and consequences that are latent in political attitudes or stances. Corkin’s use of current theories of nationalism is deft and jargon-free, and a useful model for scholars and critics working on the connection between film and politics.

The one major limitation of the study is its too brief treatment of the linkage between the international politics of the Cold War and domestic racial politics, especially the civil rights revolution. The liberalization of racial politics was a direct response to the imperatives of the Cold War, the struggle for the “hearts and minds” of the non-white peoples of the Third World. Westerns were uniquely important during this period because the genre allowed artists to simultaneously engage the domestic struggle to redefine the color line and the international conflict between Communism and Americanism. Balance Corkin’s book with Armando Prats’ Invisible Natives: Myth and Identity in the American Western (2002) and you have a complete picture of the Western’s relation to Cold War America.


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**Giant: George Stevens, a Life on Film**


Except for Donald Richie’s slender monograph, *George Stevens: An American Romantic* (1970), and a few articles, Stevens has been generally ignored, even though he has produced an impressive body of work. But Stevens aficionados can now rejoice. Drawing on the riches in the George Stevens Collection at the Margaret Herrick Library of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences, Marilyn Ann Moss has transferred Stevens from Andrew Sarris’s “Far Side of Para-