

the nuanced and complex meanings of Chinese femininity to theorize postsocialist feminism within the context of modern and socialist Chinese history. Her critiques of neoliberalism in the PRC, Hong Kong, and Taiwan pay attention to each area's historical and geopolitical positions. Huang's theoretical approach is an excellent model for contextualizing Western theories and philosophies for Asian studies.

Huang asks a number of thought-provoking questions in this book, one of which involves the ethics of representing precarity and resistance in an era of global complicity. When the sights and sounds are funded and produced by institutions of financial capital, how can the future of the image and the future of art be reconsidered? Huang does not have an answer, but her vision is not pessimistic. *Urban Horror* is infused with passion and hope for the future of the cinema, as if embodying a cinematic aesthetic of waiting, along with the films Huang analyzes, in anticipation of a future of cinematic revolution.

LI ZENG is an associate professor of film studies at the School of Theatre and Dance at Illinois State University. She has published book chapters as well as film reviews and articles in peer-reviewed journals including *Jump Cut*, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, *Asian Cinema*, *Visual Anthropology*, *Critical Arts*, and *Adaptation*.

BOOK DATA Erin Y. Huang, *Urban Horror: Neoliberal Post-Socialism and the Limits of Visibility*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020. \$99.95 cloth; \$26.95 paper; \$14.55 e-book. 288 pages.

## OLGA BLACKLEDGE

### ***Nightmares in the Dream Sanctuary: War and the Animated Film* by Donna Kornhaber**

A monumental project, Donna Kornhaber's *Nightmares in the Dream Sanctuary: War and the Animated Film* analyzes animated films that focus on wars, experiences of wars, and their real and imagined consequences. Kornhaber engages films produced over a century-long history of animation, from the first screened animated film, *Matches: An Appeal* (Arthur Melbourne Cooper, 1899), to the most recent ones, released less than five years ago. The historical depth of Kornhaber's project is matched by its geographical scope, with discussion of films produced on all continents and across a staggering number of countries: Japan, India, Nepal, Australia, Kenya, Israel, Chile, Uruguay, Russia, the USSR, and many others. Some films are classics of animation, but others are lesser known, and their inclusion makes the project particularly important.

Despite the ambitious quantity of films the book analyzes, it is organized simply, into an introduction and two parts—"At War" and "After War"—themselves organized into two

chapters each. Each chapter focuses on one of Kornhaber's categories of animated films dealing with the topic of war. Chapter 1, "Resistance," comprises films that work against the official narratives of the countries within which they were produced. These films present, in James Scott's terms, "the hidden transcripts," the narratives of the oppressed and marginalized. Kornhaber insists that resistance animation stands in opposition to propaganda animation; the latter, she points out, is supposed to support and justify the mission of the state in times of war and conflict (33).

Kornhaber discusses strategies of resistance animation in both totalitarian and democratic contexts. Following Walter Benjamin's discussion of allegory and symbol, she argues that to be successful in a totalitarian context—that is, to be undetected by the authorities as an act of resistance—an animated film should work on two plains: on that of allegory (a characteristic, for instance, of fairy tales) and on that of symbol. Kornhaber gives examples of such successful films produced in totalitarian contexts—Paul Grimault's *L'épouvantail* (*The Scarecrow*, France, 1943) and Hermína Týrlová's *Ferda Mravence* ([*Ferda the Ant*], Czechoslovakia, 1944), both released under Nazi occupation; Wan Guchan and Wan Laiming's *Tie shan gong zhu* (*Princess Iron Fan*, China, 1941), released under Japanese occupation—that were celebrated by the authorities as universal fairy tales, while local audiences recognized the films' deep national symbolic meaning. Kornhaber points out that resistance animation produced in democratic contexts is overtly symbolic. In *Escalation* (Ward Kimball, 1968), *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam* (Whitney Lee Savage, 1969), and *The Barbarians* (Jean-Gabriel Périot, 2010), audiences immediately recognized the object of criticism: militaristic politics.

In the second chapter, "Pacifism," Kornhaber discusses films representing the war as ultimately destructive, as an affair in which nobody wins. This chapter traces the genealogy of pacifist films back to the animated shorts that Otto Messmer and Walt Disney made in the aftermath of World War I. Here, the author connects such thematically and aesthetically diverse films as *Neighbours* (Norman McLaren, 1952), *Pink Panzer* (Hawley Pratt, 1965), *Kolač* (*The Cake*, Daniel Šuljić, 1998), and *The Extremists' Game Destroys the Innocent* (anonymous, 2015), among many others. Kornhaber argues that the very act of turning an animated object into an inanimate one—a thing—is a defining characteristic of the medium of animation. It is also the function of violence, given that "turning a subject into an object, . . . turning a person into a thing" (103), both literally and metaphorically, is what warfare does. Unlike the first chapter, which focuses on film interpretation, this chapter investigates the

films' aesthetics. Kornhaber's analysis demonstrates how animation gives representation to experiences that are impossible to capture with photographic media.

Kornhaber continues her in-depth analysis of the aesthetics of animated films in the third and fourth chapters, focusing on "memory films" and "memorial films," respectively. For Kornhaber, memory films are those that address personal experiences. These films are "[o]ften reticent to foreground their politics and [are] generally unconnected to the film production apparatuses of the state"; they "perform the act of witness in its most direct and unmasked form," with animators conveying "some aspect of what they themselves saw and experienced in wartime" (141). Among the examples of such films are *Kinshasa Septembre noir* (*Kinshasa, Black September*, Jean-Michel Kibushi, 1992), *Skazka skazok* (*Tale of Tales*, Yuri Norstein, 1979), and *Fatenah* (Ahmad Habash, 2009). The three films choose to deal with the representations of war experiences from different perspectives: the first from that of an omnipresent narrator created by the collective of children drawing the images for the film; the second through the eyes of a character from a folk song, a wolf; and the third from the perspective of a deceased woman.

Contrary to memory films, the memorial films that the fourth chapter presents are less concerned with personal war experiences than with the documentation or recording of war events. Tracing the genre of the memorial film back to *The Sinking of the Lusitania* by Winsor McCay (1918), regarded as the first case of documentary animation, Kornhaber states that the memorial film is "a work that comes into being at the intersection of remembrance and fantasy, whether [as] a shared imagining between survivor and artist or else an interpolative reconstruction of an event never recorded" (197). However, here, too, the author insists that animation can bear witness, whether it is *Lusitania* or Isao Takahata's *Hotaru no haka* (*Grave of the Fireflies*, Japan, 1988). Such an insistence begs the question, What does it mean when a medium bears witness?

Starting with the book's introduction, Kornhaber insists on the ability of animation to bear witness to the atrocities of war. In fact, this medium-specific axiom is key to sustaining the book's central argument: that animation is the medium that is best equipped to bear witness, much more than other media—photography in particular. Throughout each of the book's chapters, however, "bearing witness" comes to mean different things, which range from paying attention to testifying, imagining, and animating.

One of the most useful things about this book is the care it takes to contextualize the historical and cultural specificities of each film alongside a detailed analysis of its aesthetics. In

so doing, *Nightmares in the Dream Sanctuary* becomes an invaluable contribution to animation studies. However, at times the contextualizations are too broad, with the films pushed into preset historical and political categories that overlook nuance. For instance, in the analysis of Czech animator Jiří Trnka's *Ruka* (*The Hand*, 1965), Kornhaber interprets the film as a symbol of an artist's resistance against a totalitarian (Soviet) state, using Cold War rhetoric, while overlooking possible interpretations of the film as an allegory of an artist (an animator) who resists the pressure of capital (the market), which dictates the artistic choices of those working in the culture industry. Neither interpretation is better than the other. I would argue that they coexist, or are superimposed, so to speak, just as the animated image is created by the superimposition of various media, including drawings and photography. Maybe this is also the meaning of bearing witness by way of animation: that any one image can be and can do many things at once.

The richness of the material as well as the stimulating insights make the book a highly fecund read that provides encyclopedic knowledge on the aesthetic diversity of animation, from stop-motion to drawing on paper and cartoons based on comic strips to 3D computer-animated films. Through its focus on animated films related to war, the book raises broader questions—about the medium specificity of animation and its aesthetics—that make it an excellent point of entry into the area of animation studies in general.

OLGA BLACKLEDGE, a media studies scholar, is an assistant professor at Bethany College. She has published in English and Russian on animation and life-action film, engaging such topics as cultural and gender representations, space construction, violence, body, and movement.

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## MADELEINE COLLIER

### ***The Process Genre: Cinema and the Aesthetic of Labor* by Salomé Aguilera Skvirsky**

If you are one of Facebook's 1.62 million monthly users and have the time to do a bit of scrolling, you have likely noted the rise of the "hand and pan" video format, though you may not recognize it by that name. Beginning in 2015, several corporate media subsidiaries (notably the BuzzFeed-affiliated Tasty and TheSoul Publishing's 5-Minute Crafts) have racked up millions of views on short-format instructionals that feature step-by-step recipes for everything from fluffy soufflé pancakes to slip-on sandals made entirely of hot glue. These videos follow a fairly precise grammar: