A PHILOSOPHY OF CINEMATIC ART

A Philosophy of Cinematic Art is a systematic study of cinema as an art form, showing how the medium conditions fundamental features of cinematic artworks. It discusses the status of cinema as an art form, whether there is a language of film, realism in cinema, cinematic authorship, intentionalist and constructivist theories of interpretation, cinematic narration, the role of emotions in responses to films, the possibility of identification with characters, and the nature of the cinematic medium. Groundbreaking in its coverage of a wide range of contemporary cinematic media, it analyses not only traditional photographic films, but also digital cinema, and a variety of interactive cinematic works, including videogames. Written in a clear and accessible style, the book examines the work of leading film theorists and philosophers of film, and develops a powerful framework with which to think about cinema as an art.

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For Morag
Contents

List of illustrations ix

Preface xi

Introduction 1

1. Film theory and philosophy 2

2. Moving image technologies 6

1. The challenges to cinema as an art 21

1.1 The causal challenge 22

1.2 The reproduction challenge 34

1.3 Film and communication 42

1.4 Digital cinema as art 43

2. Language and realism 51

2.1 Film as a language 51

2.2 Digital cinema and language 56

2.3 Realism: traditional and digital cinema 60

2.4 Transparency: traditional and digital cinema 78

3. Cinematic authorship 98

3.1 Two puzzles 98

3.2 Varieties of auteurism 99

3.3 Minimal auteurism 102

3.4 Three strategies for single authorship 105

3.5 Cinematic utterance and single authorship 118

3.6 Ontology and multiple authorship 125

3.7 The multiple-authorship view refined 128

3.8 Digital cinema and authorship 133

3.9 Interactivity and authorship 140

4. Understanding cinema 152

4.1 Intentionalism 152

4.2 Constructivism 164
## Contents

4.3 The patchwork theory 180  
4.4 Digital cinema and interpretation 192  

5. Cinematic narration 197  
5.1 Symmetry or asymmetry? 197  
5.2 The a priori argument 199  
5.3 Three models of implicit cinematic narrators 202  
5.4 Absurd imaginings and silly questions 209  
5.5 Literary narrators 218  
5.6 Other narrative features 221  
5.7 Interactive narration 224  

6. Emotion and identification 244  
6.1 Emotion and cinema 244  
6.2 The concept of identification 252  
6.3 Identification and film techniques 263  
6.4 Identification and emotional learning 268  
6.5 Emotion and interaction 272  

7. The role of the medium 282  
7.1 Two tendencies in the philosophy of art 282  
7.2 Medium-specificity claims 286  
7.3 Evaluating artworks 292  
7.4 Explaining artistic features 296  
7.5 Media and art forms 300  
7.6 Conclusion 306  

Bibliography 308  
Index 318
Illustrations

6. Tajomaru, the bandit (Toshiro Mifune) and Masago, the wife (Machiko Kyo) in *Rashomon* (1950). Source: Daiei Films/The Kobal Collection.  
Preface

In 1987 I was working towards my PhD at Princeton and was surprised to discover that the Department of Philosophy was offering a course on the philosophy of film. I had no idea that such a subject existed. I was interested in the philosophy of art and had a passing interest in film, so I decided to sit in on the lectures. The course was a revelation: one could actually do philosophy about film and moreover do it in a way that was both intellectually rigorous and also acutely sensitive to the aesthetic qualities of individual films. The visiting professor who taught that course was George Wilson, who has been a friend and something of a mentor ever since. My greatest intellectual debts in the philosophy of film are to him. Had he not taught that course, this book would probably never have been written.

Having been inspired by George’s course, I attended several film courses run by P. Adams Sitney and Tony Pipolo at Princeton. I sat well back in a large lecture theatre, and I suspect that they never knew I was there. But their lectures showed me, along with George’s wonderful interpretations of films, how powerful and interesting films could be and that films were capable of far greater depth than I had previously imagined. My debts to these two scholars are considerable.

On moving to St Andrews in 1990, I was delighted to discover that my new colleagues encouraged me to start a philosophy of film course, and they have been unfailingly supportive of my endeavours since then. I also owe a great deal to several generations of St Andrews undergraduates and postgraduates, who have attended the various philosophy of film courses I have taught. Most of the material in this book has been, in various versions, road tested on them. They no doubt suffered through early drafts of this material, but several of them, as well as some of my erstwhile colleagues who taught the course when I was on leave, have gone on to teach philosophy of film courses since then, so I suppose that I must have been doing something right. Roy Cook, Brandon Cooke, Matthew Kieran, Kathleen Stock, Hamish Thompson and Kate Thomson-Jones were among my victims.
Preface

I would also like to thank the many philosophers and film theorists who have over the years given me comments on papers or talks, material from which has been incorporated into this book. These include Noël Carroll, Diarmuid Costello, Greg Currie, Julian Dodd, Jonathan Friday, Peter Goldie, John Hyman, Andrew Kania, Jerry Levinson, Paisley Livingston, Dom Lopes, Patrick Maynard, Bence Nanay, Alex Neill, Michael Newall, Carl Plantinga, Greg Smith, Murray Smith and Kendall Walton. I am particularly grateful to Richard Allen and David Davies, who read a draft of the entire manuscript and provided many helpful comments on it. I am also grateful for the comments on the book by members of my M.Litt. seminar on the philosophy of film in 2008. I also owe a special debt of gratitude to Noël Carroll, whose work on the philosophy of film played a critical role in convincing me early on that the subject is one that can support serious philosophical endeavours, and whose writings and friendship have been of great importance to me in helping me to develop my own philosophy of cinema.

I would like to thank the University of St Andrews for funding two periods of research leave and the Leverhulme Trust for granting me a Research Fellowship to work on the book. I am also very grateful to Hilary Gaskin and Gillian Dadd at Cambridge University Press, whose encouragement for me to write this book has been much appreciated. And I am indebted to the staff at the Kobal Collection for being unfailingly helpful and efficient in providing the illustrations for this book.

Preface


Finally, as always, my thanks go to my parents, and to Morag, Suzanne and Robert. The dedication of the book speaks for itself.