

Film

FILM QUARTERLY
University of California Press. \$46 per annum (\$71, rest of the world).

MOVIE
A journal of film criticism
Biannual. University of Warwick. Open access online.
SCREEN
Quarterly. Oxford University Press. £138 (annual).

The online journal *Movie*, now on its second issue, is not in fact a new venture but the touching and welcome revival of a print journal that was founded in 1962, itself born of a now defunct university magazine, *Oxford Opinion*. An introduction in the first issue of the new run acknowledges that moving “from print to the internet marks an obvious break with the past”, before expressing its devotion to the “rigorous but accessible critical writing” associated with “the old *Movie*”.

“Rigorous but accessible” is one way of putting it. Pauline Kael, writing in *Film Quarterly* in 1963, had another: “the *Movie* group is like an intellectual club for the intellectually handicapped. . . . With all the zeal of youth serving an ideal, they carefully reduce movies to trivia”. *Film Quarterly* was, from 1958, a continuation of the *Quarterly of Film Radio and Television*, itself a continuation of *Hollywood Quarterly*, when the most recent issue, Summer 2011, calls itself *Volume 64*, Number 4; it is acknowledging those earlier incarnations. An editorial statement in the first issue of *Hollywood Quarterly*, in October 1945, said that the journal’s intention was to produce responsive, academic journalism: “If a clearer understanding, not only of current techniques of the film and radio, but also of the social, educational, and aesthetic functions, is arrived at, the editors will feel that the *Quarterly* has justified itself indeed”. True to its original intentions, *Film Quarterly* continues to document changes in cinema rather than in film studies, so there are articles on apps and digital technology, and reviews of new films, new film books, and newly released DVDs. *Film Quarterly* rarely runs pieces of outstanding interest, but thanks to its breadth of coverage and the authority of its contributors (including Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, D. A. Miller and Gilberto Perez), it appeals to lay readers interested in both the history and the future of cinema.

In 1963, *Film Quarterly* was more responsive to developments in film criticism, but–there was more to be responsive to then. The future of film appreciation and canon-making seemed to be at stake, and *Film Quarterly* served as the battleground. In a fierce article, “Circles and Squares: Joys and Sarris”, from Spring 1963, Kael promoted a Eurocentric vision of film art at the expense of a younger (male) generation’s claims for Hollywood cinema. The prime target was an article by Andrew Sarris, “Notes Towards an Auteur Theory in 1962”, but *Movie*, which shared Sarris’s essential vision but not his criteria for greatness, was caught in the cross-fire, with Kael accusing its contributors of displaying “fanaticism in a ludicrous cause”. Sarris retaliated in *Film Quarterly* with “The Auteur Theory and the Perils of Pauline”, as


 An illustration from “Mes Chers Parents!” (“The adventures of a Smith College student abroad in the 1950s”) by Judith Oksner in *Vintage Magazine*, Fall 2009, first issue (45 Park Avenue Suite 301, New York, NY 10016)

did *Movie*’s editorial board in a letter printed under the title “‘Movie’ vs. Kael”, to which Kael replied with “Criticism and Kids’ Games”.

When Kael talked of treating movies as “trivia”, she was referring to the young critics’ habit of describing in detail a film’s *mise en scène*, in search of subtleties and nuances of meaning. The rebooted *Movie* is, however, born into a very different time, in which, thanks in part to the old *Movie*, the likes of Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks and Otto Preminger are treated with more or less unquestioned reverence. Indeed, it may now seem hard to imagine a time in which their films were treated with scorn, but V. F. Perkins, in a retrospective on Ian Cameron, published in issue 1 (August 2010), evokes it well:

1958 was the key year. It was the year of *The Tarnished Angels*, *Touch of Evil*, *Party Girl*, and *Vertigo*, films to revere, to see and see again, but loftily dismissed by the critical establishment. It was the year, too, when Ian returned from a stay in Paris bearing copies of *Arts, Cahiers du Cinéma* and other evidences of a livelier and more congenial film culture across the channel. Orson Welles was crucial. The depth and eagerness of his response to admiring interrogation about *Touch of Evil* (in *Cahiers* 84) did two things. It showed us that film makers might rise to the level of the questions put to them, and it stoked our fury at the blinkered terms of this film’s and others’ reception in the English-writing world.

English journals were “predictable” both in their judgements and “in putting judgment ahead of appreciation”: they “offered next to nothing that could count as analysis, where a verdict or an interpretation come with support from argument”. During their trips to see “other films endorsed by the French”, the young men talked about “the ways and means of raising a challenge on behalf of vigorous cinema”. The new *Movie* pays tribute to this effort by reprinting Ian Cameron’s call for “detailed criticism”, “Films, Directors and Critics” (1962), one of the few great polemical statements in British film writing.

again, over the treatment of Hollywood cinema. It was felt by such early contributors as Sam Rohdie, Colin MacCabe and Stephen Heath that Hollywood was at once naive and corrupt, and that Roland Barthes had devised a more viable form of analysis than F. R. Leavis. The view was consecrated in MacCabe’s “Realism and the Cinema: Notes on some Brechtian theses”, in Summer 1974 (an essay which MacCabe himself recently described as “idiotic”); Britton, a critic well-versed in *Screen*’s variety of theory, mounted an attack in *Movie*, “The Ideology of *Screen*” (1978), in which he dismissed a remark made by MacCabe in another essay, “Theory and Film: Principles of realism and pleasure”, as “meaningless”.

The differences between *Movie* and *Screen* are still apparent. Patsy Duncan’s Foucauldian account of “heterosensblity” in Max Ophüls’s *Letter from an Unknown Woman* in the Summer 2011 issue of *Screen* has nothing in common with the pieces in *Movie*’s Summer 1983 special issue “Max Ophüls and Melodrama”: “What I pursue in this essay”, Duncan writes, “is less a juxtaposition of the historical and the ontological as disjunctive problems and domains, and more an interweaving of these terms, through a pursuit of what might be called the ‘historical ontology’ of cinematic images”.

So far, there has been a note of elegy and nostalgia around the online *Movie*. Just as Ian Cameron is the guiding spirit of the first issue, Robin Wood plays this role in the second, more than half of which is devoted to reprinting articles that first appeared in *Cahiers du Cinéma* and the *Times Educational Supplement*, as well as *Movie*. Wood was a Leavistite who, on his return to England from Canada in the 1970s, found the critical scene much changed and spent the next forty years attempting to bring Marxism, semiotics, queer theory and feminism in line with his position as an “unreconstructed humanist”. Of the fourteen new articles offered by the two issues, the most successful – such as George Toles’s “Acting Ordinary in *The Shop Around the Corner*” and Deborah Thomas’s “*Limbo*: Frustrated narration” – are in the best tradition of detailed criticism. What is missing is the old sense, perhaps gone forever, that something urgent and crucial is at stake.

Recalling the original decision to call the journal *Movie*, Perkins wrote: “I argued and argued for the title. . . the vulgar Americanism of the word gave it shock value”. He may have forgotten the passage in his book *Film as Film* (1972), in which he wrote that film is “the stuff that goes through the camera”, whereas “the subject of criticism” is “actually the movie”. *Movie* now has a new subtitle, “A journal of film criticism”, which serves a similarly pointed function. Most of the writing committed in Film Studies is not criticism as Andrew Britton, a contributor to the old *Movie*, defined it: “the systematic evaluation (that is, the reading) of texts”.

Instead, there is a lot of work informed by psychoanalysis and sociology, much of it written in *Movie*’s old rival, *Screen*, itself named, presumably, to signal its interest in television as well as cinema, and to suggest that a screen is something on to which more than merely light is projected. From the start, *Screen* exhibited a curiosity about Hollywood cinema similar in degree, but antithetical in spirit, to that of *Movie*. After the battle with Kael, *Movie*’s contributors were confronted by a group of even younger critics –

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To a certain extent, *Screen*, which in 2009 celebrated fifty years since the founding of its immediate predecessor *Screen Education*, continues in the same form – knotty, allusive, abstruse, occasionally thrilling. Few would go to the journal in the expectation of reading pleasure per se, but its attempts to see our responses to film using the widest possible lens are to be admired.

LEO ROBSON

Food Studies

CUIZINE

The Journal of Canadian food cultures/Revue des cultures culinaires au Canada
Biannual. Montreal: McGill University.
Open access online.

Europeans have long understood the importance of food to culture. But across the Atlantic, North Americans remain sceptical about Food Studies as a valid intellectual pursuit, especially in academia. So it is heartening to turn to *CuiZine: The journal of Canadian food cultures / Revue des cultures culinaires au Canada*, a biannual and bilingual, peer-reviewed e-journal launched in 2008 under the editorial direction of Nathalie Cooke, a professor of English at McGill University. Contributors to the journal are, for the most part, academics in the humanities and social sciences, although essays and articles by journalists and food writers also appear. With its sole focus on Canadian foodways, *CuiZine* differs from the other scholarly food journals, which cast a wider net. Yet even within its narrow field, the journal is multidisciplinary: it conveys an abundant sense of Canada’s diverse culinary cultures,