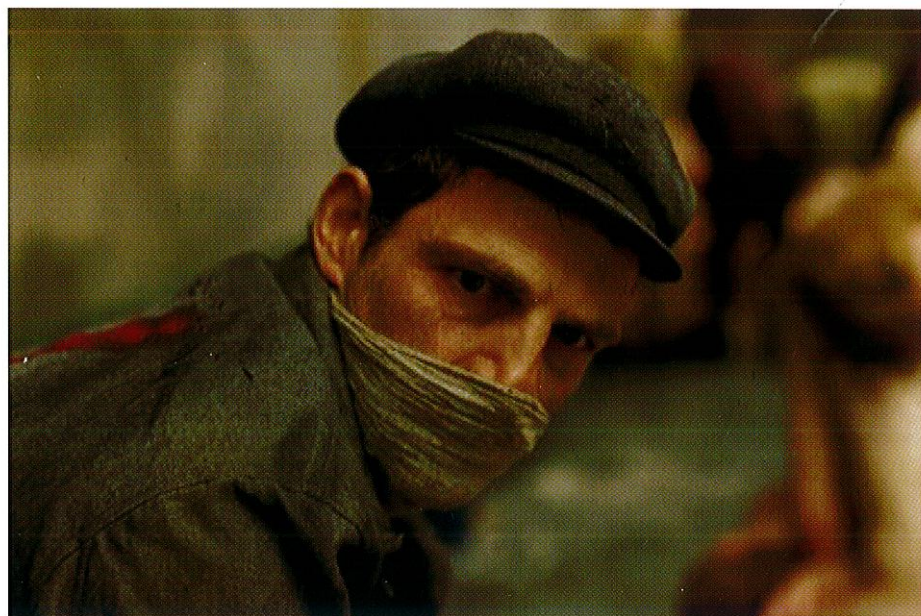


# FILM CRITICISM

Vol. XXXIX, No. 3

Spring, 2015



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## Contents

Editor's Note .....	1
Lloyd Michaels	
Incoming Editor's Note .....	4
Joe Tompkins	
Temple of Youth .....	6
Chad R. Newsom	
The Crisis of the Individual as a Precept of Political Cinema: <i>Kuhle Wampe</i> (1932) and <i>Monsieur Verdoux</i> (1947) .....	26
Angelos Koutsourakis	
Understanding Tony Scott: Authorship and Post-Classical Hollywood .....	48
Robert Arnett	
Festivals	
Cannes Film Festival 2015: To Gaze, To Glimpse .....	68
Karin Badt	
Books	
<i>Indie 2.0: Change and Continuity in Contemporary American Indie Film</i> .....	78
By Geoff King	
Reviewed by Jesse Schlatterbeck	
<i>Gendering Science Fiction Films: Invaders from the Suburbs</i> .....	82
By Susan A. George	
Reviewed by Maria Gil Poisa	
<i>America is Elsewhere: The Noir Tradition in the Age of Consumer Culture</i> .....	84
By Erik Dussere	
Reviewed by David Sidore	
Contributors .....	88

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## Editor's Note

You hold in your hand the last print copy of *Film Criticism*. Beginning in January, 2016, we will become an online, open access journal under the editorship of my colleague at Allegheny College, Joe Tompkins. All correspondence from this point forward should be addressed to him. Although our coverage will broaden to include television studies, we will continue to be peer reviewed and (as our title suggests) focused on close readings of visual texts.

This seems a propitious moment for a transition. After forty-two years of teaching in the English Department and editing *Film Criticism* for nearly all that time, I retired from the faculty in September 2014. As academic journals continue to upgrade their websites and publish online articles, I have lagged behind in guiding FC into the twenty-first century. As the production and distribution of visual narratives has also changed, my personal preference has remained the study of films (including those shot with digital cameras or in front of blue screens) intended for projection in front of communal audiences. I am confident that *Film Criticism's* new editor will retain the high scholarly standards and attention to publication details that I hope I have brought to the job, while generating new ideas by adding to our editorial board and expanding the journal's accessibility. Both innovations are important. Any journal needs to replenish its intellectual resources in order to remain vital; most of the current board members have been helping me for more than twenty years. And while *Film Criticism* remains extremely proud of maintaining a steady, on time production for those forty years, we have done so at the cost of distribution, being without the resources to advertise, sell at bookstores, participate in book fairs, or otherwise promote our work. My task has always been focused on turning out the next issue.

To do so, I have relied on a handful of great friends. Everyone on the editorial board has contributed to the success of *Film Criticism* by carefully evaluating manuscripts, occasionally editing guest issues or contributing articles, by lending their scholarly prestige to the journal, and simply by reinforcing my faith in the project. I would like to single out two persons for special praise. Dudley Andrew guest edited a special NEH-sponsored double issue on film theory in our third year that helped to establish *Film Criticism* as a viable academic



resource. He has remained a loyal supporter ever since, including his splendid introduction to the issue on the *Cahiers* critics in *Arts* magazine that began Volume 39. Walter Metz has been, for the last decade, the journal's virtual associate editor. He has certainly read more manuscripts than anyone else on the board, and very few articles we have published have not undergone his scrutiny.

Harry Kloman, who was my student at Allegheny and one of the first editorial assistants for *Film Criticism*, has been the book review editor for the past decade. He has done a marvelous job. I have been able to count on him for 12-20 pages of cleanly edited copy (he has long served as a journalism instructor and faculty adviser for the daily student newspaper at the University of Pittsburgh) for every issue since 2005. Mary Michaels has designed the covers for *Film Criticism* for the past twenty years. Perhaps more than anything, I will miss the artistry of those designs as we move to the digital format. Thank you to both these (unpaid) friends who have contributed so much to FC's style and substance.

I also need to acknowledge the enormous help of the two people responsible for the actual production of *Film Criticism* almost from its beginning. Don Thompson, of Commercial Printing in Butler, PA, has been printing the journal since its inception, always at the lowest possible cost and with the greatest of care. He works closely with Mary on the cover designs and frequently with me on last-minute corrections—always with patience and concern. No less than for the rest of us, his has been a labor of love. I am equally grateful to Roxanne Free, composer in the print shop at Allegheny. For about thirty years—ever since we stopped cutting-and-pasting with Exacto knives in the student newspaper office—she has been responsible for preparing final copy, fitting in *Film Criticism* while performing numerous other tasks for the college. Several times during the past forty years I have been approached by commercial publishers with the idea of expanding our circulation and revenues by contracting with them to put out the journal. I always resisted because without the flexibility, personal attention, and care shown to me by Don and Roxanne, I could never have edited FC while continuing to fulfill my teaching and administrative duties.

When Lucy Bohne and Chris Dubbs asked me to join them to publish a film journal in 1976, I saw an opportunity to connect with the field of cinema studies that seemed far away. Back then, I

would regularly travel to Pittsburgh or Cleveland, both about 90 miles away, simply to see the movies that interested me. With a doctorate in American literature and no formal course work in film, I had no colleagues in what was then an emerging discipline, my only resources being *Film Quarterly* and *Literature/Film Quarterly*, whose editors, Ernest Callenbach and Jim Welsh, both helped me in those early days. Editing *Film Criticism*, very simply, changed my professional life. Although I continued, quite happily, to teach the majority of my courses in literature, I became, through the journal, a film scholar. At the end of a career that has included four books and four years as Allegheny's chief academic officer, editing *Film Criticism* remains my proudest intellectual achievement. Thanks to all who helped along the way, and best wishes to Joe Tompkins as he introduces a re-booted FC to many more new readers around the world.

L.M.



## Incoming Editor's Note

I take this opening to offer thanks to Founding Editor Lloyd Michaels for his many years of intrepid work leading FC through the vicissitudes of academic film studies, and for his generous words on my behalf. Indeed, Lloyd has steered a magnificent ship in FC, and as managing editor it's been my privilege to get a "behind the scenes" look at his careful, conscientious hand in evaluating manuscripts, ushering the work of both senior and junior scholars, and crafting what continues to be an estimable journal in the field. Above all, I take note of Lloyd's dedication to publishing work of the highest academic quality, which aims to consistently provide readers with approachable writing that centers on close textual analysis. No doubt I am honored with the responsibility of stewarding FC into a new "rebooted" era.

To that end, I have taken on the task of editing the journal with a full sense of its gravity. On the back end, I'm working to expand the editorial board, with new arrivals sharing space alongside continuing editors to maintain a smooth transition. Additionally, I look forward to FC's conversion to open access in January 2016. As the world of academic publishing continues to undergo significant reinvention (much like the cinematic medium itself), I'm confident that converting to an online, free-to-access format will not only expand FC's audience but also provide opportunities for new and exciting scholarship. It is my hope that the journal might continue to evolve through its digital conversion, alongside cinema studies, while incorporating converging areas of research into other moving-image media.

On the front end, two forthcoming issues attest to this commitment. First, our inaugural online issue will feature an array of established and emerging scholars tasked with the question: what is the role of film criticism in the digital age? At a time of ongoing media convergence and widespread changes to production, distribution, and viewing technology, I believe it's important to affirm the qualities perceived as vital to "film criticism," while also taking stock of what's at stake amidst these transformations. Accordingly, the first online issue will afford contributors the opportunity to offer their vision for what film criticism is, should, or could be in the contemporary moment. The subsequent issue (tentatively planned for July 2016) will be a

special guest-edited issue, helmed by Stephen Groening, and devoted to the aesthetics of online video. While scholarship in this area tends to rely on sweeping statements about emerging technology and its social impacts, this issue will turn attention to the formal and stylistic aspects of online videos as aesthetic objects worthy of close analysis and interpretation. It is my hope that, together, both issues will help "boot up" FC as a potential polestar in guiding the development of a "twenty-first century film criticism." And I look forward to hearing from you, the readers, about your own ideas, concerns, and desires for this endeavor in the days, months, and years to come.

Please stay tuned for updates in the meantime: <http://filmcriticism.allegoheny.edu/>.

**Joe Tompkins**