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Arnd Scheider - *Expanded Visions: A New Anthropology of the Moving Image*, 2021, (pp. 212), Routledge. ISBN: 978-367-25367-4

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With the title inspired by Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* (1970), this is a tightly woven book about the points of contact between anthropology and the genre of filmmaking associated with experimental or avant-garde cinema. Certainly, Youngblood's book was a major intervention in the emergent forms of the then 'new' cinema driven as much by technological innovation as by original ideation. While it is not the first time this confluence of the filmic (as the author notes, 'writ large and in all formats') (1) has been broached (see Schneider & Pasqualino, 2014), the intersection between the ethnographic and the cinematographic has not been a major focus for either anthropologists or film theorists. Schneider has some prior form here and includes a redux of his essay, *Rethinking Anthropology through Experimental Film* re-versioned for this volume as chapter three.

Entering into this confluence via Schneider's project produces a mix of older theoretical interventions such as that of Baudrillard with a range of exemplary practices of visual challenges within anthropologically related tropes. The book shows this confluence as fertile ground for insights, for example, into the ethos of de-colonisation. This theme is introduced in passing as part of the introduction to a film work by Emmanuel LeFrant (*The Visible and Invisible Parts of a Body under Tension*, 2009).

The theme of de-colonisation re-appears with a chapter on Mapuche filmmaking along the lines of how a filmmaking project embedded within an Indigenous community reflected back the contradictions inherited by colonisation. I found this example somewhat limiting in the context of a now substantial engagement by Indigenous people with production processes including Mapuche. (The author appears to be aware of this in citing in footnotes the work of Faye Ginsburg and others.)

The theme of anti-colonialism is reasserted with a reference to the 1953 Marker/Resnais film, *Statues Also Die*. Known well in the field by those with an interest in de-colonisation, the chapter which ends the book uses this film to canvas the idea of 'restitution' – the re-negotiation and return of Indigenous heritage, both tangible and in-tangible, to their rightful owners. There have been a few films that have focussed on this process where it has been viewed as a lengthy struggle for this kind of 're-patriation' (sometimes referred to as 're-matriation' to make the gendered point that those involved were not uniformly male.) *Totem: The Return of the G'psgolox Pole* (Gil Cardinal, NFB, 2003) is a conventional documentary and so would not likely qualify as sufficiently 'experimental' for this book. However, it may be that this designation, 'experimental' can be subverted, and that the critical issues opened up by this confluence of experimental and anthropological thinking is itself subject to a values approach – where the expression of anti-colonialism may take precedence to the experimental and the sometimes alienating features of that genre to those less familiar with it.

In returning to chapter 3, *Rethinking Anthropology Research and Representation through Experimental Film*, the author seeks to set out his main argument about how experimental film can inform critical thinking in Anthropology. Experimental film as an art form is, by definition an attempt to challenge conventions of perception and conventions of perspective. In general, they are meant to open the viewer to the idea that what they may think of as 'real' (linked to the visible) may be open to challenge. For Schneider, anthropology, through its main methodological tool, ethnography, could harness the experimental film ethos to introduce this kind of re-thinking to its own subjects and field. There is some acknowledgement that this has not occurred as a feature of anthropology's reluctance to entertain this form of methodological revision. When it does occur, for example, with the emergence of auto-ethnography, it tends to happen outside anthropology – in the instance of auto-ethnography, in literary studies. Indeed the resistance to mediation – such as film – had dominated anthropology as a discipline for most of the 20th century.

Finally with some grudging acceptance, it is expected that a minority genre within cinema, the experimental film, would not find a purchase in the discipline of anthropology. What has happened to some extent, is that the sheer expansion of film and media work as part of the digital age and Internet-based media, has opened up the boundaries that had been so carefully guarded in the past. Anthropologists and others cannot ignore this explosion of media production, in particular when central questions are raised to do with key episodes that have made an indelible mark on the discipline.

One important example by Schneider which emulates these concerns the extensive account of Juan Downey's engagement with the Yanomami (also known as the Yanomamo), a well-documented Indigenous group whose lands span the border of Brazil and Venezuela. Downey is a well-known video artist whose work would be familiar to academics, media practitioners and media critics. Schneider notes that there are major ethnographic works that have focussed on the Yanomami in the early 1970s, for example, by anthropologist, Napoleon Chagnon and filmmaker Timothy Asch and the French anthropologist Jaques Lizot. In particular Chagnon and Asch produced a series of over 20 films

documenting aspects of Yanomami culture and social practices. Out of these, the most notable film (and cited by Schneider) is titled, *The Axe Fight*. This film, the best known of the series, over time, engendered some of the most critical responses to the filmic treatment of the Yanomami. The critique was largely based on depicting Yanomami as violent (as suggested by Chagnon's title of his monograph, *Yanomamo: The Fierce People*). Schneider does not deal with *The Axe Fight* even though it could certainly qualify as a potentially disruptive approach to the ethnographic film genre. Instead, the substantial concern raised by Schneider's account is by way of speculation, as to whether Downey was aware of Chagnon and Asch's work (resolved in the affirmative). When he embarked on his own engagement with the Yanomami, Downey did know this work.

The vexed issues surfaced in relation to *The Axe Fight* and other works also needs context. The substantial disenfranchisement of Yanomami from their land, forced migration and genocidal intent on behalf of gold miners have resulted in deaths of Yanomami and destruction of Yanomami villages. In a review of Downey's work with the Yanomami (*Yanomami, Let's Talk*), Manuela Carneiro da Cunha and Helene Vilata tease out the various debates, some of which are canvassed by Schneider in *Expanded Visions*. This work demonstrates that while Downey's work undoubtedly qualifies for Schneider's meeting of ethnography and experimental media, the knowledge values implicit in his works are not at all clear. As suggested by da Cunha and Vilata, Downey both supports and negates the prior work by Chagnon and others. An interview with Jacques Lizot is rendered in a fashion as to suggest a mock interview. Downey's earlier video works frequently played with media representation – such that it was a strategy of provocation as to what could be believed or trusted in regards these representations. Placed in somewhat difficult positions with difficult choices, these are contested territories for critics especially seeking ground upon which anti-colonial gestures can be made. It is in this context that we also can see as Schneider suggests, that a rich vein of epistemological insights is tapped in the meeting of these two radically positioned discourses.

Expanded Visions is a worthwhile overview of media works that have emerged out this confluence of anthropology and experimental media. The examples are both selective and important to the case set out by Schneider in that we uncover a substantial set of complex issues and media art practices originated in the space where anthropology and experimental cinema intersect.

About the reviewer

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