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❖ **Mills, Jane - Loving & Hating Hollywood: Reframing global and local cinemas, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW 2009, (pp. 249) ISBN 9781741756647**

Reviewed by Hart Cohen

The title of Jane Mills' book immediately sent me back to an early 1970s conversation with a film critic with whom I had been discussing the then emergent revolutionary Cuban cinema. Our conversation focussed for the most part on the alternative "third" cinema of the Cubans in political and aesthetic terms, to provide a counter to Hollywood's imperialist and hegemonic hold on cinema. "... so the Cubans really hate Hollywood", I said. "No", said the critic, "not at all – they love Hollywood films!" It is certainly Jane Mills' project in her book, *Loving & Hating Hollywood*, to move us to understand how we must hold both sentiments in the same space of how we think about Hollywood and its various others.

Mills' argument – initiated in the early chapters and then reiterated throughout the book – aims to undermine the binarism that tends to dominate thinking and writing about the relationship of Hollywood cinema to the range of other filmmaking enterprises around the world. This binarism most often results in placing Hollywood cinema in a dominant and inviolate space against which other cinemas do battle for money, audiences and aesthetic freedom (ideas). Undoing (or re-framing) this thinking requires some subtle arguments to demonstrate the constant imbrication of Hollywood cinema and its others from the early period of Hollywood cinema, through its phases of massive domination to its contemporary engagements in a fully globalised world.

The early chapters invoke the use of Appadurai's social-cultural-economic theories. They inform Mills' arguments to provide an appropriate frame for the way new flows of cultural and economic capital disturb older constructions of control and influence, authority and power. Mills' key concept of 'screenscape' emerges from the new cartography that Appadurai suggests must now prevail in the global cultural economy.

This model prefers a non-linear centre-periphery flow of influence and instead insists on a complex range of cross-fertilised cinema practices. The unpicking of these practices in Mills' hands is a celebratory 'cinophilic' feast. For example, successive chapters set out case studies in the areas of national cinemas, experimental cinema, French New Wave, First Nation Cinema and Women's Cinema. On Jim McBride's *Breathless*, a re-make of Godard's *A Bout de Souffle* – itself a touchstone of the French New Wave's take on Hollywood – Mills writes:

The issue, however, is not about the fidelity or infidelity of one text to another. ... Rather, it is about the hybridising, creative tensions in a mobile and constantly transforming screenscape. (137)

It has been the trend to dismiss re-makes – particularly of art cinema – as poor imitations of the originals. This is partly because the power of a cinema like the French New Wave, was dependent on the context into which it entered, and that space was a unique confluence and contestation of French and Hollywood critical values. Not incidental to the emergence of the French New Wave was the role of *Cahiers de Cinéma*, the French film journal that spawned the critical and filmic values of the New Wave generation.

However, in her close reading of the re-made Hollywood version of *Breathless*, Mills is not swayed by the gap in contextual difference, but is able to connect the aesthetic investments of the French New Wave – itself a response to Hollywood – to this later response by Hollywood so as to have these earlier investments ‘made again’ anew. In her mind, this is further indication of how fluid the sites of films actually are, which through the instance of their projection, open on to the future as they approach it from behind.

In the setting of this book, I was persuaded by these arguments that required a re-calibration of the space for what we think of as ‘Hollywood’ and the cinemas that persist along side it. And at every juncture, such as Dali’s work with Disney and Hitchcock, or the exchanges between Japanese cinema and Hollywood, the status of Hollywood as imperialist is opened to include it as a collaborator and often the source of creative impulses for other cinemas.

In working with these vast relationships, Mills does not represent the documentary as an explicit genre though her examples of First Nation’s and Women’s Cinema both reflect cinemas that have strong documentary connections. One example of cinematic intrigue that connects Hollywood to an ‘other’ cinema that would be worthy of inclusion, concerns the institutional story of the National Film Board of Canada created by John Grierson, reputed champion of the documentary cinema. Grierson was a major influence in moving film to realise its propagandistic potential in the context of WWII. Once established, the National Film Board of Canada had a much larger presence and worldly influence than films associated with a Canadian National (feature) Cinema. Significantly, Grierson, who occasionally wrote admiringly about Hollywood, (while denigrating it – therefore an ideal candidate for this book), was involved to effectively restrain the development of a feature film industry in Canada to allow for a kind of ‘national’ documentary cinema to be constructed with the NFBC. The events surrounding the restriction of a Canadian cinema industry are based on historical accounts of the postwar National Film Board (NFB) involving purges of NFB staff against the backdrop of the Red Scare (communism). In a recent article by Ira Wagman, the National Film Board of Canada is situated within a context of postwar economic reconstruction and an administrative review of the NFB by the consulting firm Woods Gordon – part of a broader effort to redefine cultural agencies in economic terms. This anecdote is added here to indicate that other kinds of non-Hollywood cinema – but not a national cinema in the traditional sense, (for example, Japanese cinema), exist as part of the story and is consonant with the examples included in this book about local cinemas in the cultural and global economy. It also suggests that the relationship of Hollywood to documentary would have been an interesting interrogation. This is especially pertinent given the now well-documented exchanges between these cinemas (Grierson and Flaherty’s interest in Hollywood), and the power of individual films when Hollywood directors turned to documentary. An example is consummate Hollywood director John Huston’s wartime documentary *Let There Be Light* about the traumatic effects of combat. The film was confiscated by the U.S. Army in 1946 and not shown publicly until 1981.

The other engagement of Mills' book that moved me was its treatment of what is referred to as "First Nation Cinema". This term is adapted from North America and while Australia is also an example of a nation in which there were groups of people living on the land before the arrival of the European colonising powers, the tendency in Australia has been to name those groups by their language name (e.g. Warlpiri) and as peoples who moved about the continent along tracks and across specific geographies aligned to preferred trajectories to do with ceremony, kin and country.

When Mills suggests that "... cultural hybridity lies at the heart of First Nation cinema ...", she enunciates a key aspect of this contemporary cinema, one that has moved from thinking of itself exclusively as a kind of essentially Indigenous cultural practice, to one that sees its strength in communicating across cultural divides. This was not always the case – as in the emergent period of, for example, Warlpiri film and media production in the 1980s, when the need to essentialise the identification of these practices against a mainstream – even if imagined – was necessary to sustain it.

I can recall a screening of an early selection of films made by Warlpiri people at the Chauvel cinema in Sydney in 1987 not long after the first broadcast licence was granted to Imparja in Central Australia. The viewing experience of the Warlpiri films was a difficult one for the Sydney audience in that the films in this instance reflected a minimal interest in using film aesthetics that would be meaningful to a non-Warlpiri audience. These films were more akin to viewing experimental or avant-garde film and therefore invited a poetic rather than a narrative framing.

In subsequent years, and across other First Nations, these kinds of films would prove to be viable for a "hybrid and interstitial" space appropriate to these works. In this regard, the hybrid and syncretic view of First Nation cinema that prevails in Mills' view of a First Nation cinema, offers more communicative possibilities than in the past. This cinema was built on cultural practices grounded in the margins of mainstream cinema and read through a poetics of film. There are First Nation films that continue to be sustained in this manner.

The details in the close readings of Japanese cinema, the French New Wave, First Nation's and Women's Cinemas, all testify to Mills' longstanding dedication to, and love of, cinema. In this sense the book is as much a declaration of love for cinema as it is a critique of an outdated and reductionist view of Hollywood cinema. Space does not permit engagement with other scenarios and debates that are addressed in this book, one that will endure and be a source of great value to those scholars wishing to grasp emergent cases of local cinemas (e.g., Hong Kong cinema) that continue to both face Hollywood and negotiate a globalised cultural economy.

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