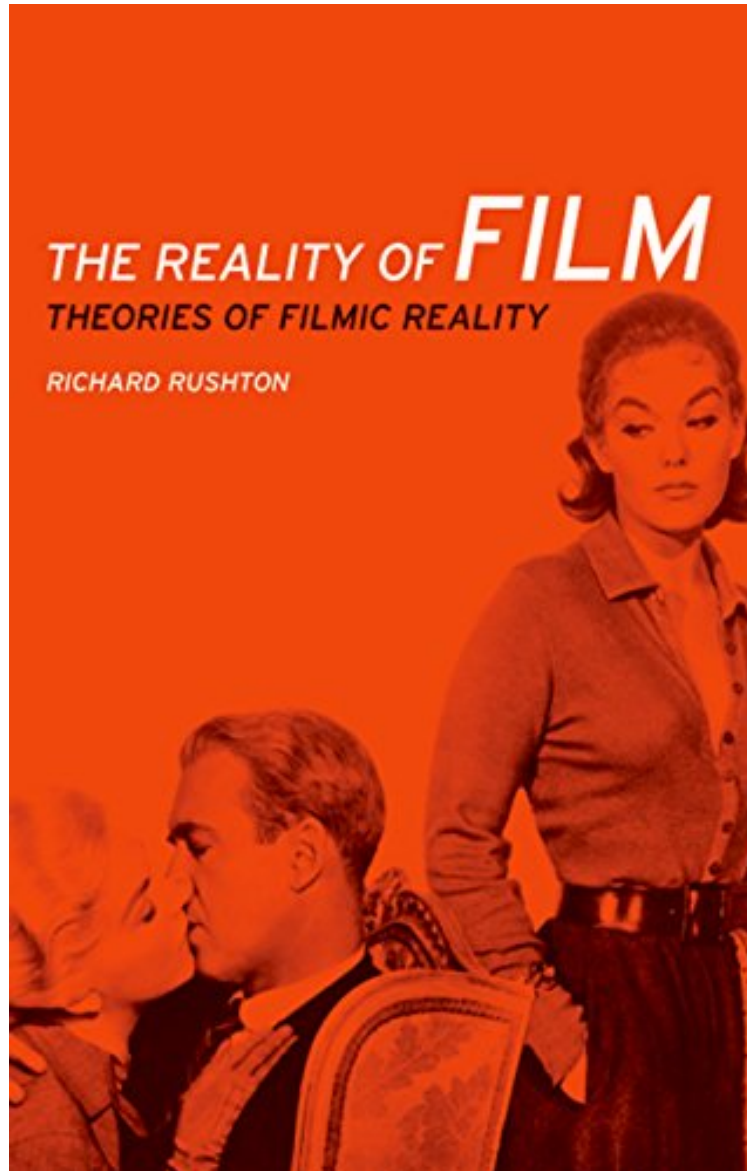


[Online library] The reality of film: Theories of filmic reality

The reality of film: Theories of filmic reality

Richard Rushton

*ebooks | Download PDF | *ePub | DOC | audiobook*



 Download

 Read Online

#2658535 in eBooks 2013-07-19 2013-07-19 File Name: B00STIELQO | File size: 49.Mb

Richard Rushton : The reality of film: Theories of filmic reality before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The reality of film: Theories of filmic reality:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An overview of theoretical approaches to film as a reality in its own right, rather than as secondary to the reality it depicts. By Nate. When film theorists talk about the connection between film and reality, they tend to be interested in how well or badly film depicts the reality that exists "out there," independent of its filmic presentation. They are asking whether film can do a good job of representing reality. Realists

argue that what is special about film, and what filmmakers ought to strive for, is its photographic potential to capture and depict aspects of reality just as they are. Others argue that "realism" is an effect, achieved deliberately by means of techniques that hide the artifice of cinema, and thereby dupe the audience into accepting what they see without question. Rushton argues that both camps get it wrong, that both begin with the illegitimate assumption that film is at best a mirror or representation, with a secondary status in relation to the reality it mirrors or represents. Both camps tacitly presume a reality that exists on its own apart from our representations of it and yet to which we have access enough in order to assess directly the adequacy or inferiority of film. As a challenge to this assumption, Rushton seeks here to explore the sense in which film itself is a part of reality, of that reality to which alone we have any kind of access, which means the reality of our shared experience as human beings. He looks at several prominent film theorists whose work hints at ways to conceive film as a reality in its own right, a reality with which to contend on its own terms and not only or primarily in relation to the subject-independent reality that it is supposed to depict. It's an ambitious and important project, even if it remains inconclusive since the author doesn't attempt seriously to work through the contrasts in the approaches he outlines, but rather lets each stand as just another way to think the reality of film. In the end, he argues that what unites them and what he finds fruitful in each approach is not so much a specific thesis or approach, but an attitude, of taking film seriously, of addressing it on its own terms, of treating it as a significant part of the world we live in rather than merely as a method or medium for depicting that world. The studies are generally illuminating, even if he tends not to focus on the work as a whole of the thinkers he addresses but tends rather to emphasize those aspects that show their work to challenge the prevailing dualistic assumptions within film theory and criticism that he finds problematic. Perhaps most helpful is his opening discussion of "political modernism" - a theoretical movement that in the main emphasized the illusory and ideological status of mainstream cinema, and championed avant-garde and "modernist" cinema in which the viewer's allegedly passive relation to the cinema was undermined. He argues that at the heart of this movement - which he shows to have a significant continued influence in the field in spite of its overtly waning popularity - is a somewhat naive dualism of illusory appearances or representations and true reality, a dualism that is problematized by the fact that our access to the allegedly true reality is as partial and selective as the cinematic image whose delusive status they seek to undermine. The author looks at Andre Bazin, and argues that his so-called "realism" ought to be understood differently than it is usually taken. The "reality" that interests Bazin is a shared, communal reality. He is not so much interested in film's capacity to accurately depict the world as it would exist without us; rather he is interested in film's ability to create a communal experience, to reveal what a shared reality is and can be. He argues that Christian Metz's study of the "imaginary signifier" helps to see the status of cinema as neither real nor mere imagination but as the dialectical unity of the real and unreal. Cinema is illusion, but the experience of cinema is one in which we at once recognize its illusory status and disavow this recognition such that the experience of the film can transform the viewer's relationship to the real. He considers Stanley Cavell and Gilles Deleuze, and shows that in spite of their sharp differences in approach and ideas, they each treat film as a part of the reality we live in, part of what shapes our experience and engenders self-reflection. He outlines Žižek's radical rejoinder to political modernism's insistence that mainstream film is ideological - with the claim that reality itself, no less than cinema, is inescapably ideological. He concludes with a look at Rancière's argument that cinema manages to bridge the tension between a pre-modern artistic tradition of representation according to rules and a modern "aesthetic regime" committed above all to delivering a certain kind of sensuous experience. The writing is somewhat uneven, reading at times like a polished dissertation that insists on tying every chapter back towards the same point, but more often it offers lucid and illuminating studies of an important theme in relation to a range of significant thinkers working in both philosophical and theoretical traditions of film study. The conclusion of the book offers a somewhat overhasty appreciation and critique of a book that appeared as the present book was being completed, and that raises a related range of concerns (but to this reader at least feels more fully developed) - John Mullarkey's *Philosophy and the Moving Image: Refractions of Reality*. What is most valuable here (and in Mullarkey's book) is not so much the set of conclusions he draws regarding each thinker, but the question the book as a whole raises, which has the potential to generate a whole range of valuable inquiries in film studies. The book challenges theorists of film to reconsider an emphasis on film as representation, which naturally raises the question how well or badly it represents, and to consider, rather than that film and the experience of film is a real and important part of modern life and to ask what it is and what it does and how it is to be understood in its own right.

In formulating a notion of filmic reality, *The Reality of Film* offers a novel way of understanding our relationship to cinema. It argues that cinema need not be understood in terms of its capacities to refer to, reproduce or represent reality, but should be understood in terms of the kinds of realities it has the ability to create. *The Reality of Film* investigates filmic reality by way of six key film theorists: André Bazin, Christian Metz, Stanley Cavell, Gilles Deleuze, Slavoj Žižek and Jacques Rancière. In doing so, it provides comprehensive introductions to each of these thinkers, while also debunking many myths and misconceptions about them. Along the way, a notion of filmic reality is formed that radically reconfigures our understanding of cinema. This book is essential reading for film scholars, students and philosophers of film, while it will also appeal to graduate students and specialists in other fields.

"... a lucid and careful intervention through the seemingly well-worn but under-scrutinized reality and film debate." "Insisting on cinema's activity, namely its ability to produce beyond its oft-lauded mimetic qualities, has arguably never been more relevant." "Many readers will find the strength of *The Reality of Film* is its accessibility." "... argument powerfully convincing and plausible." "... Rushton strives to confront political modernism's confines." "Its impetus and moral is to always (re)consider films anew and to commit to the wonder and awe that cinema can initiate, an affect, we would be wise to remember, mobilized by human imagination. In so doing, Rushton reminds the reader of the work left to be done in film studies, of the new avenues of inquiry wrenched open when cinema's questions are stirred and its potential awoken, its examination incomplete." "This book is a must-read for those who enjoy both film theory as well as social sciences, as Rushton skilfully balances the two subjects, and it's an interesting read for all film scholars as it provides a fresh perspective into a subject that has been examined by many before him." - Rachel Wassii, *Film Matters* 7.2 (2016) About the Author Richard Rushton is Senior Lecturer in Film and Cultural Studies at Lancaster University