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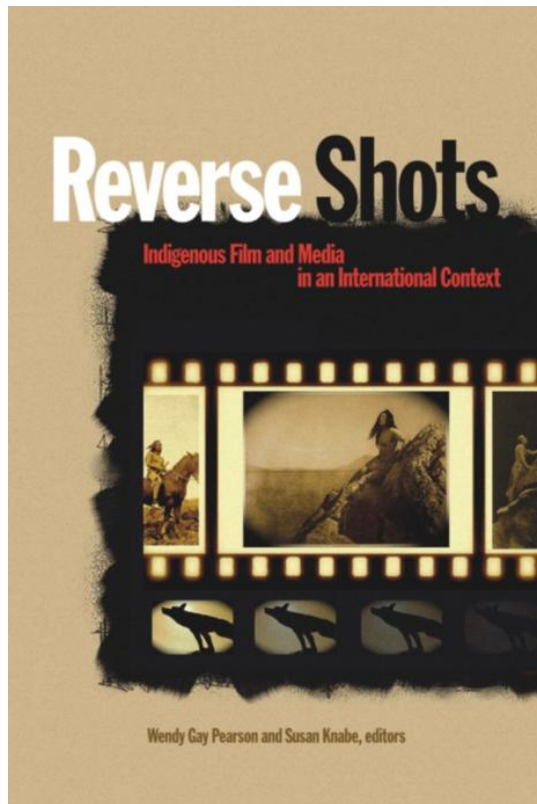
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Reverse Shots: Indigenous film and media in an international context edited by Wendy Gay Pearson and Susan Knabe. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014, pp. xii + 376, CAN \$42.99 Paperback, ISBN: 9781554583355.



Based on the 2007 ‘Indigenous Film and Media in an International Context’ conference held at Wilfrid Laurier University in Canada, this edited volume is a welcome contribution to the increasingly significant field of Indigenous Media Studies. The field’s most basic tenet is to enact a shift from studying representations of Indigeneity, and challenging institutionally embedded stereotypes, towards an analysis of the mechanisms, institutions and practices of self-representation. Most crucial to such a shift is the recognition that challenging stereotypes and producing self-representations is of limited strategic value without concrete, material control (however limited) over the institutions of production, distribution and broadcast of film and media. It is to the editors’ credit that this volume casts its theoretical and methodological net wide enough to accommodate different elements and approaches along this spectrum of interests without enforcing a contrived unity. That said, the volume does reflect the structural and thematic

flexibility of any conference proceedings, but this is off-set by an informative introductory section, ‘Dream Makers’, which includes a notable performance piece by Michael Greyeyes, ‘He Who Dreams’. (41-57)

Working across multiple geographies and histories, but with a focus on Indigenous communities in Canada, America, Australia, New Zealand and Northern Europe, the volume’s five sections explore a variety of themes: authenticity (particularly the neo-colonial tendency to read urban, mediatized Indigeneity as ‘inauthentic’); appropriation (both the Indigenous appropriation of colonial/neo-colonial materials, techniques, technologies and institutions and the appropriation of Indigeneity by others); collaboration (forming a ‘spectrum’ [263] from reclaiming colonial subjects’ agency through to negotiations between contemporary Indigenous communities, filmmakers and others); and ‘survivance’ (158) (a critical approach to cultural survival that sidesteps the dual tropes of prelapsarian ‘noble savage’ and contemporary urban ruination).

The second section, ‘Decolonizing Histories’, is a broadly ‘textual’ or formally focused analysis of the processes through which filmmakers reclaim colonial/neo-colonial materials, techniques, technologies and institutions. It addresses both histories, cultural materials and techniques that are decolonized ‘after the fact’ and those that decolonize themselves under the force of critical pressure. Australian Studies scholars will be interested in Susan Knabe’s meticulous reading of Tracey Moffat’s work, ‘Taking Pictures B(l)ack’. (81-102) Also particularly notable in this section is Colleen McGloin’s rather striking analysis of the pedagogical uses of Wayne Blair’s films, ‘Australian Short Films as a Pedagogical Device’ (131-142), a lamentable reminder of how infrequently academics write about their teaching practice in this climate of instrumental ‘research outputs’.

The third section, ‘Mediating Practices’, shifts the focus to a more sociological analysis of

media techniques, practices and institutions. This is one of the most fruitful sections of the volume, bringing together an analysis of cultural representations in New Zealand, Australia and Canada with an analysis of their institutional embeddedness. This combination is of considerable political as well as methodological significance because the core barriers to Indigenous media are often basic issues of training, access to materials and distribution and broadcast networks. Erin Morton and Taryn Sirove's article, 'On Collectivity and the Limits of Collaboration' (199-217), is a particularly engaging analysis of the reception of First Nations film across Canada, reading it as a form of problematic but generative collaboration. The authors' rigorous self-reflexivity demonstrates just how rich a contextually thickened analysis of film can be.

The fourth section, 'Documentary Approaches', builds upon much of the textual/contextual analysis of the previous section, but extends it into contemporary documentary practices (mainly in Canada) that are pushed to their experimental/genre limits by Indigenous filmmakers. Ute Lischke's insightful article on humour in Drew Hayden Taylor's work, 'Whacking the Indigenous Funny Bone' (233-246), is particularly suggestive of a largely unmined seam of analysis that spans the core themes of the volume: authenticity, appropriation, collaboration and 'survivance'.

The final section, 'Other Perspectives', is a somewhat idiosyncratic miscellany that addresses non-Indigenous films touching peripherally on Indigenous themes. Deploying the concepts of *flânerie* and hybridity respectively, Tanis MacDonald and Davinia Thornley's articles ('Filming Indigeneity as *Flânerie*' [285-300] and 'Playing with Land Issues' [301-313]) challenge the reader to consider the constitutive role of Indigeneity in films (Terrance Odette's *Heater* and Harry Sinclair's *The Price of Milk*) where it is seemingly peripheral.

While most of the authors are at pains to maintain a rigorous level of local contextualization, there is a possible question mark over the volume's international/comparative focus. Given the complex differences between and, crucially, within Indigenous communities, such comparisons can feel a little laboured at times, despite the potential strategic significance (for instance in pan-Indigenous political movements). One of the justifications for such an approach, demonstrated to great effect in the 'Mediating Practices' section in particular, is when the comparativism/internationalism is intrinsic to the medium in question (for instance where local or national films are screened out of context or internationally to varied audiences). Such sections appear less strained and more plausible in their analyses.

One other small gripe is with the volume's occasional recourse to rhetorical generalisations, like 'the colonial gaze', 'the colonial imaginary' or 'the colonial project', generalisations which arguably do little to challenge the plurality and complexity of colonial projects. The volume might have engaged with more recent contextually nuanced strands of postcolonial theory (such as Nicholas Thomas's work). This is not with a view to being a colonial apologist, but with a view to sharpening the critical edge against colonialism's plural forms and legacies, not least because such nuance is often where local, national and international resistance is to be found.

These minor reservations aside, this is a commendable and worthy addition to the field and will be of considerable interest to Australian Studies, Indigenous Studies and Film and Media Studies newcomers and existing contributors alike.

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