

In This Issue

Welcome to the Fall 2009 issue of Mediascape. In light of the increasingly diverse range of texts available for study in the present media environment, we sought in this issue to consider genre from our contemporary and multi-media point of view. As a theoretical paradigm, genre studies have longstanding roots in film and media scholarship, but as with all standards, periodic reconsideration and revision helps to reinvigorate the field. We were interested in looking at the evolution of genres over time; the effects of globalization and emerging technologies on genre categories and conventions; how traditional genres might function in our multi- trans- media environment; and whether genre remained a valid historiographic categorization in light of any of the above questions. While we do not successfully tackle and resolve all of the above concerns in this issue, we have put together a diverse and compelling array of work that we hope contribute to the discussion.

The "Features" section includes work that approaches genre both obliquely and head-on. Kenneth Chan, in "The Shaw-Tarantino Connection: Rolling Thunder Pictures and the Exploitation Aesthetics of Cool," focuses on an examination of Tarantino's short-lived attempt in the mid-1990s at a distribution venture called Rolling Thunder Pictures, which released theatrically, and on video and DVD, works of international film and exploitation cinema, including the Shaw Brothers' 1970s production, The Mighty Peking Man. In Ken Feil's "Sex, Comedy and Controversy: Kiss Me, Stupid, What's New, Pussycat?, New Hollywood, and Metropolitan Taste," Feil draws attention to the impact of sex comedies Kiss Me Stupid and What's New Pussycat on the demise of the Production Code Administration (PCA) and installation of the Classification and Ratings Administration (CARA), the loosening of televisual standards and practices, and the emergence of the New Hollywood art film. "A Hell of a Place': The Everyday as Revisionist Content in Contemporary Westerns," by Erica Stein, uses case studies of Dead Man, The Proposition and Deadwood to argue that contemporary Westerns aspiring to a revisionist stance eschew both classical narrative structure and the revelatory posture taken by Hollywood Renaissance revisionist Westerns with regard to the classic iterations of the genre. Instead, contemporary revisionist Westerns utilize a noticeably looser, more circular narrative structure and that such a mode of storytelling has ethical implications for both the Western genre in particular and filmic representations of history in general.

"Columns" chose to look at sports media as a potential subgenre. In "This is what's really cool about NFL Films': An Interview with Margaret Ruffing Morris," Jennifer Porst talks to Ruffing Morris about the history, business, and art of NFL Films, and Ruffing Morris's role as a senior producer in a male dominated industry that is facing changes precipitated by digital media. Sudeep Sharma, in "Reading ESPN Against Niches," looks at another behemoth of sports media, ESPN, and argues that sports media has become so big and such a reliable source of content and revenue for many media conglomerates that scholars should see sports television not as a mere genre or niche programming, but as simply television. He contends that shift in perspective would offer important insight into how vertically integrated media conglomerates reach all media consumers.

Since the round table with scholars on politics from the Fall 2008 issue was such a success, "Meta" decided to try it again and invited a group of scholars to weigh in on a variety of questions related to genre. The contributions of Professors Jason Mittell, Scott Ruston, Timothy Shary, and Vernon Shetley offer a concise and insightful examination of the practice of genre scholarship past and present, and provide a glimpse of what the future may hold for genre studies. In "Urban Script: Constructing the Site Through Narrative and Documentary Structures," Diane Davis-Sikora talks about her experience directing fifth-year and graduate-level architecture studios that focused on the use of digital filmmaking and documentary techniques as the principal method of site analysis, concept development, and design. Her experiences highlight the fact that although more academics are beginning to explore direct applications of digital filmmaking processes in architecture to push the limits of representation beyond traditional, static orthographic projections, and routine fly-throughs, the documentary form in particular has remained an underutilized resource for spatial and analytical inquiry.

Finally, we are introducing a new section dedicated to a form we believe may be a large part of the future of Cinema and Media Studies: visual essays. In "Towards a New Genre of Video Game Play," Drew Morton, David O'Grady, and Jennifer Porst explore the body at play in relationship to new interfaces of video game consoles that offer digital agency beyond the click or the thumb and the experiences those games offer from industrial, theoretical, and generic perspectives. In "White House, Black President," Clifford Hilo, Maya Montañez Smukler, and Julia Wright argue that while only in the most contemporary moment has the notion of a black president

been a historical reality, this imagined figure has been represented in film as far back as 1933's Rufus Jones for President, and this essay studies the imagination of black presidency and its politics of representability in American film. Ben Sampson, in "Layers of Paradox in F for Fake," explores how Orson Welles used F for Fake to comment on his long and troubled career in filmmaking, and to express his personal views concerning two subjects that had hounded his professional life: the ambiguity of authorship and the negative effects of commerce on the art world. Last but certainly not least, in "HBO's Cinematized Television," Erin Hill and Brian Hu pick up where John Caldwell left off in his discussion of post-network permutations of style and narrative in 1995's Televisuality and discuss HBO's forging of a unique brand of quality through its original series beginning in the 90's.

As always, it is our goal at Mediascape to not only consider all mediums – film, television, new media, print media, etc. – but also their interconnectedness. We hope that the journal's current issue not only provides an opportunity to rethink the function and value of genre in our academic field, but also encourages critical thinking about how genres materialize and are debated within the academic community, in our work as media scholars, as well as in the classroom with our students.

-- Jennifer Porst and Maya Montañez Smukler, Co-Editors-in-Chief