


**THINKING
ABOUT**

30 V I C E

D EDITION

**PETER LEHMAN
and WILLIAM LUHR**

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THINKING ABOUT
MOVIES

Watching, Questioning, Enjoying

THIRD EDITION

PETER LEHMAN
and WILLIAM LUHR

 **Blackwell**
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THINKING ABOUT
MOVIES

For my son, David, with admiration and love

William Luhr

For my grandson, Jonah Theodore Grantz, with love

Peter Lehman

PREFACE

Film studies continues to grow both in popularity and enrollment, with course offerings found in a wide variety of departments: film, art, theater, English, and communications. The third edition of *Thinking about Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying* has been written specifically for the student with no previous film background, who has never taken a film course, and who, in many cases, may never take another. This textbook provides a valuable introduction to the plurality of critical approaches that characterizes current studies of film.

This book's goal is to make students more perceptive and critical viewers of the kinds of film that they already watch, as well as to expand their tastes to include a broader variety of material. The book is structured so that teachers can organize classes to include a weekly film screening chosen from the films we analyze in detail or, if they desire, from other films raising related issues. These film examples have been selected with careful consideration of their availability on DVD and video, since the reality of the current academic situation is that those are the formats used in most film courses. Most of the titles are available on DVD in their proper aspect ratio. Our analyses, however, are written and illustrated in a manner that should be useful to students regardless of which films are screened in class to accompany our text.

The first half of each chapter introduces critical issues in a broad manner and illustrates them with brief references to a variety of films. The second half analyzes films in detail in relation to the issues raised in the preceding portion of the chapter. Numerous stills from the films will facilitate discussion and criticism. Throughout the book, films have been chosen that represent a balance between those that are likely to be familiar to most students, such as recent Hollywood films, and those that are likely to represent styles of filmmaking that most students have not previously encountered, such as films from various national cinemas and historical time periods. Following each chapter is a brief, annotated bibliography,

the primary purpose of which is to provide students with further reading related to the broad theoretical and critical ideas presented in the text. We also annotate and acknowledge articles and books upon which we have drawn in our discussions.

This book devotes attention to aesthetic as well as social and cultural issues. We believe that all are equally important and, in fact, inseparable. It is hard to speak insightfully about how women or people of color are represented in films without knowledge of how films function as a representational system. It is equally limiting to talk about visual composition as if it had no social significance. Learning to see in a more sophisticated fashion what is transpiring on the screen should be linked to thinking more critically about what is represented, how it is represented, and how it affects its audience. *Thinking about Movies: Watching, Questioning, Enjoying* is based upon that conviction.

The third edition of *Thinking about Movies* expands upon the second in many ways. Well over half of the concluding chapter is new, enlarging the previous focus upon digitalization to include globalization and convergence. The world we live in and the place of film in that world are changing dramatically on a yearly, if not daily, basis. When we wrote the second edition approximately four years ago, few could have imagined the popularity of video iPods or video programming for cell phones. Yet both are now part of our everyday lives and they are only the tip of the iceberg. Students can no longer study film removed from these developments or the global economy in which they occur.

We have also continued to update our book by making substantial changes in the films that form the primary examples in our close readings in the second half of two of the chapters. In keeping with the attention that Robert Rodriguez's *Sin City* (2005) received, we have replaced *Murder, My Sweet* (1944) with it in chapter 5 on genres, and, similarly, our discussion of *Psycho* (1960) has been replaced by Peter Jackson's *King Kong* (2005) in chapter 6 on remakes. Both films show talented contemporary filmmakers engaging with such important issues as, respectively, reworking *film noir* and remaking a Hollywood classic. We have also added examples from recent films throughout the book wherever appropriate to the chapter topics.

We have both written, together and separately, on a variety of areas in film studies and have drawn upon our research in writing this book. Although we feel an obligation as scholars to cite published sources of our own from which we have drawn, we do not consider it appropriate, with one exception, to do so in the chapter bibliographies for fear of appearing to give undue attention to our own work. Consequently, we will place those citations here:

Chapter 1 (Introduction): Peter Lehman analyzes the X motif and relations between men and women in the 1932 *Scarface* in *Running Scared: Masculinity and the Representation of the Male Body* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

Chapter 2 (Narrative Structure): William Luhr and Peter Lehman give a formal account of narrative, including a discussion of free and bound motifs

and the distinction between story and plot, in *Authorship and Narrative in the Cinema: Issues in Contemporary Aesthetics and Criticism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1977).

Chapter 4 (Authorship): Peter Lehman analyzes *The Searchers* utilizing a detailed discussion of visual motifs, narrative structure, and issues of race and gender in "Texas 1868/America 1956: *The Searchers*" in *Close Viewings: An Anthology of New Film Criticism*, edited by Peter Lehman (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1990), pp. 387–415, and in "The Limits of Knowledge in and of *The Searchers*" in *The Searchers: Essays and Reflections on John Ford's Classic Western*, edited by Arthur Eckstein and Peter Lehman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), pp. 239–64.

Chapter 5 (Genres): William Luhr analyzes *Murder, My Sweet*, including the roles of the disoriented, blinded detective and the sexually alluring black widow, in *Raymond Chandler and Film*, 2nd edn (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1991). Luhr discusses changing film and television representations of Wyatt Earp in "Reception, Representation, and the OK Corral: Shifting Images of Wyatt Earp" in *Authority and Transgression in Literature and Film*, edited by Bonnie Braendlin and Hans Braendlin (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 1996), pp. 23–44.

Chapter 6 (Series, Sequels, and Remakes): William Luhr analyzes the 1933 and 2005 *King Kong*, as well as other films related to them, with reference to reception and censorship issues in "Reprocessing Kong: Censorship, Repression, and Compensatory Strategies," a paper delivered at the 2007 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Annual Conference.

Chapter 8 (Audiences and Reception): William Luhr discusses the position of *A Woman of Paris* in Chaplin's work in "A Woman of Paris and Charles Chaplin's Career," *Griffithiana*, 40/42 (October 1991), pp. 104–17. Peter Lehman analyzes the representation of the male genitals in *The Crying Game* in "Crying Over the Melodramatic Penis" in *Masculinity: Bodies, Movies, Culture*, edited by Peter Lehman (New York: Routledge), pp. 25–42.

Chapter 9 (Film and the Other Arts): Peter Lehman analyzes the differences between how language functions in plays and movies in "Texas 1868/America 1956: *The Searchers*" in *Close Viewings: An Anthology of New Film Criticism*, edited by Peter Lehman (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1990). William Luhr and Peter Lehman discuss the distinctions between literature and film, using *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as an example, in *Authorship and Narrative in the Cinema* (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1977). William Luhr analyzes the relationship of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel to both stage and film versions of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as well as narrative structure, visual motifs, and issues of sexuality in *Dracula* and *Nosferatu*, in *Victorian Novels on Film* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1979).

Chapter 12 (Gender and Sexuality): Peter Lehman analyzes male power and sexuality in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Rio Bravo*, *Rio Lobo*, and *American Gigolo* in *Running Scared: Masculinity and the Representation of the Male Body* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993) and *Silence of the Lambs* in "In the Dark

Basement: *Silence of the Lambs* and Female Vision in the Hollywood Cinema,” lecture delivered at the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, 1992.

Chapter 13 (Race): William Luhr examines racial and national representation as well as the influence of *film noir* in *Out of the Past* and *LA Confidential* with relation to the cultural shifts in the fifty-year period between the films in “Border Crossings in *Out of the Past* and *LA Confidential*,” *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingue*, 23 (3) (1998), pp. 230–6.

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