Reviews

The Matrix Trilogy: Cyberpunk Reloaded

edited by Stacy Gillis. London: Wallflower Press, 2005

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agree, for example, his inclusion of police procedurals in his category of film noir. Police procedurals tend to present protagonists who are stable and conservative team players and who utilize technology and science to solve crimes whereas film noir tends to present tough guy loners, who use their street smarts, fists, and guns to see justice served. Although Dimendberg explains that he wanted to avoid becoming bogged down in an attempt to define film noir, as he notes so many other critics have attempted to do, a precise sense of his criteria—especially his distinction between early and late film noir—might have helped clarify a few aspects of the discussion; however, this, by no means, presents a major flaw in his argument. Most intriguing, perhaps, would have been if Dimendberg argued that the defining feature of the cycle of film noir—and what differentiated it from classical Hollywood films of the same period—was their representation of the city.

Dimendberg presents a thoroughly innovative approach to film noir that takes it from generic definition and corpus quibbling much more firmly into the realm of cultural studies with an examination of the cycle's close relationship to American culture at the time through the representation of the city. And, hopefully, it will give new direction to the discussion of the cycle—or mood, or tone, or style, or genre—of film noir. As Dimendberg notes, "Tensions between centripetal and centrifugal spatial tendencies provide an important key to understanding the film noir cycle of the 1940s and 1950s" (171).

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Ironically, the idea that the world we inhabit may, in fact, be an illusion, a projection, or a simulation has become an ubiquitous subject of pop-culture rumination, in our cybernetic world, in the illusions of the movies: *The Truman Show* (1998), *eXistenZ* (1999), and *The Island* (2005) are just a few of the most recent features to toy with an idea that perhaps first found imaginative form in western philosophy with Plato's allegory of the cave of shadows. The Wachowski brothers' *Matrix* trilogy, however, is no doubt remarkable for the apparent philosophical rigor with which this same idea, given a futuristic spin but essentially reflecting the circumstances of our contemporary, post-industrial life, is probed and explored. Showing Neo in possession of a copy of Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* early in the first film (a book which the principle cast were instructed to read), the *Matrix* trilogy sets itself up as ideal grist for an academic mill which is increasingly adapting itself to the study of popular culture, the now-seamless Matrix that pervades our own lives.

Indeed, in her introduction to this new contributory volume on the subject, Stacey Gillis defends the importance of the *Matrix* trilogy not with reference to the popular success of the films, which diminished massively with the release of the second and third parts, but

Acknowledgments

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