

Book Reviews

FILM, MUSIC, MEMORY. By Berthold Hoeckner. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019. 320 pp.

Berthold Hoeckner's *Film, Music, Memory* is an invigorating read which provides a detailed, critical, different and original dialogue on the manners in which film music plays a role in determining one's experience of certain films or more simply the relation that music has to cinema and memory. With great criticality Hoeckner shows how cinema's innate visualism is entwined with the auditory faculties of film music which allows for a representation of human memory to flourish. In the cinema scholarship of the recent decades there has been a step beyond the limitations of earlier film theorists and musicologists making critical interjections and headways to the questions of film history and aesthetics especially with regards to the question of film music. Hoeckner furthers these questions by providing a critical and nuanced narrative to the familiar bond that persists between the visual style of cinema to film music and their intimate entangling with narrative markings and thematic propositions.

This book takes one step ahead of stopping at merely tracing the ways in which musical leitmotifs or themes coincide with 'moods or actions' within the schema of narrative films but scrutinizes the ways in which the entangling of visual and music affects the viewers. The function of film music has been deemed as that which accentuates and births the affective responses around a film. Hoeckner tries to unearth how film music can go beyond the signification and evocation of memories by leading the spectator to participate in active measures of recollection to past moments or the extent of a character's memory or recall.

Tom Gunning in his foreword rightly refers to the book as 'an archeology of film listening and viewing' because Hoeckner here theorises an optical-auditory unconscious taking on the Benjaminian optical unconscious as has been interrogated in cinema and photography scholarship. Hoeckner's analysis fills a lacunae where the scholarship on the visual has been prioritised over the aural. The book places itself as a reading of technological memory that lies outside of the paradigm of the human body as he dissects through film scores with informed nuance. The Platonian lament of the atrophying of memory is more pervasive as artificial memory renders one suspect of constantly technologically mediated cultures privileging the act of recording over living memory but Hoeckner doesn't succumb to the trope of this dichotomy between living and technical memory, but shows the technological as a distension of the human. This understanding especially with respect to the question of aesthetics can help the reader understand and mould in new ways how one thinks and feels.

Hoeckner places his critical questioning of memory without assuming it to exist a priori. His role as a critic takes front and centre in this book along with the successful overlapping of theories of film music and memory as well as putting forth a set of tactical tools and ways to understand cinema and memory. As a critic he unearths the authenticities and specificities which are latent to individual cinematic texts through conventional theories and concepts. By taking individual filmic texts in the case studies from Hollywood films such as 'Sleepless in Seattle', 'Penny Serenade', 'Letters from an Unknown Women' and 'Little Voice' to name a few, Hoeckner brings to light unprecedented stratum of intricate ramifications in what have been glossed over through apparently harmonious harkening of memory especially in films that are often unnoticed or discarded by cinema scholarship which he does in the remarkable analysis of 'We Bought a Zoo' as a film text

that treated as equally telling about memory as the art house classic *La Jetee*. The critical analysis in the book has very little to do with constituting value to a film but in revealing how the mechanisms of mainstream storytelling potentially meshes together tier after tier of emotional lives.

Hoeckner's work demands one to engage with the subtle yet explicit entanglements that memory has with music and story, time and image in the realm of cinema. As cinema scholarship and cinema in itself has defined modern culture and memory cultures Hoeckner illustrates how these changes have been dependent on the mnemonic, recollective powers possessed by film music. Throughout the book he demonstrates cinema's faculty of storing the past and reprojecting it to constantly create new forms of cultural consciousness that are not only shaped through memory in film but memory of film. Hoeckner consciously remains in the realm of cultural history attesting to the dispositions in recent cinema scholarship moving on from traditional ontological and methodological ways to a field paradigm that provides authentic interpretation instead of systematic revelations.

Hoeckner focuses specifically on the representations of memory in American and European cinema, cinema about memory, where cinema becomes conscious of its own history addressed through remakes, quotations or cinema about old methods of film making etc. Debunking the tropes of a historical trajectory Hoeckner builds seven chapters across three thematic sections where concepts and theories which display how music influences cinematic representations of memory in historically specific ways yet reemerge across different historical contexts are shown with authentic criticality. In the first part entitled *Storage*, the consternations pertain to the crossroads where mental and material processes intersect, what Hoeckner says is the 'mnemonic techniques internal to the human body and technologies of an external recording apparatus'.

In the first chapter "Record Recollections," he tracks the shift in the physical autobiographical preservation in the body of the musician to being recorded and stored in material objects like vinyl which he exemplifies through the reading of the film 'Penny Serenade' (1941) and the conjuring of an absolutely new apparatus the 'phono-photograph'.

Chapter 2 entitled "Tertiary Rememories," signpost Bernard Steigler's work on 'tertiary memory' and 'retentional finitude' in its theoretical framework, Hoeckner through the example of Omar Naim's 2004 film 'The Final Cut' talks of the apprehension about the unmitigated socioeconomic aftermaths that are affected by memory technology. Hoeckner complicates Steigler's proposition of the retentional finitude where bodies with exteriorized memory show cinema to be alive and music with its innate temporality to accomplish that promise.

The Second part of the book entitled *Retrieval* has three chapters which outline the role played by music in cinema as a method of retrieval. Chapter 3, "Double Projections," demonstrates how a burgeoning phenomenon where the utilisation of preexisting music as an adjunct accessory to cinema existed during the era of silent films worked to distract its audience. Initially this confrontation of the internal and extraneous realizations were deemed to be confounding; it eventually generated a completely different and authentic mode of intertextuality that reached beyond the discord of the sound and visual to become compounded as an audio-visual experience. And it is this new mode which then became a definitive factor which adds to the recall of cinema within cinema through music. Hoeckner here takes the conversation further through what he refers to as 'critical interferences and formal synchronicities between memory image and screened image' through the examples of the high modernist cinema of Godard and Kluge, pivotal figures in a thriving body of cinephiles as well as audiophile, who used protracted montages implementing familiar music to engage viewers.

In "Auratic Replays", chapter 4 Hoeckner takes examples of American cinema including Woody Allen's 'The Purple Rose of Cairo' (1985) and Nora Ephron's 'Sleepless in Seattle' (1993). He shows through the course of the chapter how the protagonists are much like the cinephiles and audiophiles of the previous chapter who repeatedly watch their favorite films allowing the scope for a 'reenactment' to take place where music plays the part of evoking significant moments or noteworthy scenes which can then be 'replayed' in the real life of the film characters within the films.

In Chapter 5, “Panoramic Flashbacks,” Hoeckner takes the example of ‘Letter from an Unknown Woman’ to explicate how cinematic tools such as flashbacks and/or frame-tale narrations use the perspective of death to study what he refers to as the ‘quasi-cinematic recall’ of someone’s life. He demonstrates how music, as something obsessive or the origin of an emotion, infiltrates modern life as a memento which harkens back to an encounter or acts to represent one.

The final section entitled *Affect* is the most complex and critical part of Hoeckner’s book for it expands the scope into far bigger socio-cultural questions for it deals with music’s relation with trauma (where music acts as a mnemonic callback to replay traumatic memories) and affective compartments (music implemented as a way to underline affective connections). In Chapter 6, “Freudian Fixations,” Hoeckner brings to notice the connections that complimentary histories of psychoanalysis and cinema as realised in the body of a musician who function as the exemplification of the ways in which events of a traumatic nature get located and locked into the mind and visage of the victim which can only be expunged by living through the trauma to arrive at a moment of ‘cathartic cure’. Hoeckner takes the examples of ‘The Seventh Veil’ and ‘Little Voice’ to demonstrate how the figure of the performer (most often female) work as a means to contain and communicate childhood trauma. This chapter plays a crucial role for Hoeckner to display the crucial role psychoanalysis persistently plays in cinema wherein Freudian models take front and centre as the way to understand the interlinked bonds that memory shares with culture and technology.

Chapter 7, “Affective Attachments” works as something akin to a foil to the previous chapters where he uses ‘I Remember Mama’ and ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ to explicate how cinematic recollections pertaining to the non-traumatic and nostalgic childhoods perpetrated an aesthetic attachment within the realm of the detrimental aftermath of war or violence. Noting again the cinematic tool of flashbacks from the perspective of the erstwhile young daughter to tell the child-parent story where music guarantees those affective attachments to come to the fore as a representation of the generally trustworthy relationship between a child and their parent and allows the addressal of the trust of the spectator to acknowledge the abstract truth of the cinematic rendition. Hoeckner’s captivating conceptualization of the ‘Optical-Acoustic Unconscious Trust’ helps in the understanding of cinematic recollections maintained through music and films’ complicated yet omnipresent relationship to music and memory.

Hoeckner shows through the course of the book how sound has the innate ability to transform any image and their ability to store images and function as an indication to retrieve them. He sees the potential of the optical-acoustic unconscious as a medium working within a medium where it negotiates between the similarities of memory and imagination for music beyond recalling images also creating more whereby making the critical assertion that even though the psychoanalytic conceptions of cinema more often than not attempted to hide the cinematic apparatus, audiovisual memory when cinematically represented makes the mode of production a pivotal juncture.

One can easily echo Gunning’s comment that ‘Hoeckner does for the ear what Benjamin did for the eye’.

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RITWIK GHATAK AND THE CINEMA OF PRACTICE: CULTURE, AESTHETICS AND VISION. By Diamond Oberoi Vahali. UK: Springer, 2020. 250 pp.

A crucial signpost to the reading of the book is that the personal is political, in this case especially the personage is political. This book is about Ritwik Ghatak, his journey, politics,