


Feeling Our Way

Our journal did not come into the world with authority and certainty but did so, instead, with some hesitation and tentativeness. The narrator of Jonathan Swift's eighteenth-century satire on modern learning, *A Tale of a Tub* (1704) claims for himself "an absolute authority in right" as the "last writer" and "freshest modern." We make no such claim. At this point we may be both new and fresh, but we need to feel our way, to discover what is out there and what we might realistically expect to come into our own purview. But tentativeness is good. It allows us to be responsive to a variety of articles so long as they satisfy our goal of exploring film and mind. Tentativeness also allows us a sustained and continuing debate.

We present to our readers, in this, our second issue of *Projections: The Journal for Movies and Mind*, an interview with a director whose work extends our discourse on the connection between mind and art, between psychology and form—something we also hope to do in future issues. No one who has seen Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation* is likely to forget the film. Made on an iMac at the reputed cost of \$218.32, the film screened at the Sundance Festival in 2004 to immediate acclaim. J. Hoberman in *The Village Voice* said of the film: "Jonathan Caouette's precocious memoir-cum-psychodrama . . . is so raw that it bleeds," and Peter Travers in *Rolling Stone* calls it "some kind of miracle." In our journal, Adrienne Harris introduces *Tarnation* in an article that seems to capture and respond to the very spirit of the film, while Laurence Hegarty's interview of Caouette walks us through the origins and creation of the work.

Caouette achieved his film because he was able to use the digital media to edit what already existed on film and video and what had been recorded from the world in front of the camera. But what we now often see in film has never existed in the real world and is also the product of the digital revolution. Film theory must adjust and develop some of its major tenets to apply to the changes from analogical to digital technology. How does the very fact that there is no original object for many of the images we see on the screen today impact on our thinking about film and how does it change the affect of film? Steven Shaviro segues from the writings of two important theorists, André Bazin and Roland Barthes, who discuss the analogic relation-

ship between image and external reality (the “indexicality”), to three recent films that significantly employ digital technology to create their own “realism.” In discussing this digital realism, Shaviro seems to point the way to a new aesthetics of cinema.

While the world of the German film director Michael Haneke is very much in front of the camera, his striking vision, psychology of character, and film technique are creating for him an international audience in much the same fashion as did the works of Bergman, Fellini, and Antonioni in the second half of the last century. Haneke’s adaptation of nobel-prize winner Elfriede Jelinek’s novel, *Die Klavierspielerin* [*The Piano Teacher*] (1983) into his own *La Pianiste* (2001) presents for us a somewhat bizarre, disturbing but fascinating filmic experience. Vicky Lebeau takes the popular themes of film theory—sexuality and visuality—to a new level when she explores in Haneke’s film the maternal dimension of modern media.

In its own way, the documentary film *The Aristocrats* (2005) seems as untraditional and bizarre as *Tarnation* and *La Pianiste*. The very thought of a documentary about the “world’s dirtiest joke” seems absurd and implausible. But somehow the film works and is improbably funny. Greg Smith in his article on the film offers a way of understanding *The Aristocrats* as a documentary by discussing how we process our viewing of such a film (and thus recuperate it).

Experimental-confessional, fictional-narrative, and documentary—we cover a good deal of ground in this issue. In future issues we shall expand our venue even more, this time by publishing articles written by neuroscientists specifically for this journal, articles that will take us into the brain itself to show us how we perceive and comprehend the motion picture before our eyes.

We also invite the reader to examine the reviews at the end of this issue that are meant to open the journal to points of view, subjects, and significant works related to our own concerns. In the present issue we call attention to three works that we think will be of special interest—a most unusual DVD, *The Perverts Guide to the Cinema*, featuring the notorious Slovenian philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek and his always stimulating ideas about cinema and psychology; Daniel Frampton’s controversial philosophic discussion of film, *Filmosophy*; and Vivian Sobchack’s important new work, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image*, that connects mind and body in the experience of cinema. As always, we invite submissions, subscriptions, and suggestions.

The Editors
