

## Book Review:

David Martin-Jones, *Scotland: Global Cinema, Genres Modes and Identities*.  
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, 254 pp.

Reviewed by Richard Butt, © 2011

The national cinema paradigm, for many years the frame through which film produced outside of Hollywood was viewed, is now widely regarded as both limited and limiting. The movement of people, film and finance across national borders challenges the concept of a domestic cinema produced primarily for an audience curtailed by geo-political boundaries. Indeed, while filmmakers may use film to reflect on the 'state of the nation', the economics of film production, distribution and exhibition have long required them to look beyond that nation for funding and audiences. The use of overseas locations and international casts is increasingly common across the spectrum of film production, while the digital circulation and downloading of film content, both legitimate and otherwise, has radically enlarged the range of narratives and images available for consumption. In short, the landscape of film is a global one and film scholarship has responded by refocusing its lens from the national to the transnational.

In small nations, cultural policy makers remain concerned with the (in)adequacy of levels of indigenous film production, while critics bemoan the national myths that dominate the cinematic imaginary, celebrating the few 'auteurs' their nation has produced that transcend them. Such concerns were common in film discourse in Scotland until the late 1990s, part of the necessary critical examination of the country's filmmaking histories and narratives. But Scotland's political devolution, and the emergence, however transitory, of a 'New Scottish Cinema', requires a new critical framework, one that can account for the ways in which contemporary film mediates between the local and the global, where films made within the national space are recognised for their transnational narratives, ideologies, and aesthetics.

The central concern of *Scotland: Global Cinema, Genres Modes and Identities*, as is immediately clear from its title, are precisely these transnational dynamics. David Martin-

Jones's book, now published in paperback, breaks decisively with the implicit cultural nationalism of the national cinema paradigm by focusing on films made in Scotland, rather than films necessarily made by or about Scots, although they too are included in his analysis. The second way in which the author breaks with previous accounts of Scottish cinema is by examining films made in Scotland as genre films and the ways in which their engagement with specific generic conventions enables their negotiation of questions of identity and belonging. This productive approach both broadens the range of films under discussion to include hitherto neglected cinematic 'traditions', such as low budget genre movies and popular Indian productions, alongside art-house cinema, costume drama, and the 'woman's film', and widens the academic discussion of filmmaking in Scotland beyond its usual discursive limits.

Focusing on films made in the 1990s and 2000s, each of the book's chapters maps the transnational economic and cultural forces that both shape the films' production and are reflected by the plurality of Scotland's, real or imagined, produced by their narratives. Further context is provided by a brief review of the pertinent academic literature. A plot synopsis precedes analysis of the films themselves, typically two per chapter.

The first two chapters, for instance, examine popular genre films. Chapter One begins with film comedies, specifically *Gregory's Two Girls* (1999) and *Festival* (2005). The author argues that comedy has had a productive role within the history of indigenous Scottish filmmaking, but that the comedic mode of the films has largely been overlooked. By contrast the author engages directly with the ways in which the films' comedic mode facilitates the narratives' self-conscious examination of the nature of Scottish identity within a global context. Chapter Two offers a similar discussion of the road movie, arguing again that the films under discussion reject a homogeneous construction of national identity, either through foregrounding the hybrid nature of diasporic identity (*Soft Top, Hard Shoulder*, 1993) or by identifying similarities between the Scottish working classes and other manifestations of the global underclass (*Carla's Song*, 1996 and *Tickets*, 2005).

Chapter Three examines the representation of the Indian diaspora in Scotland in three popular Indian films and the Scottish produced *Nina's Heavenly Delights* (2006), identifying both the cultural and economic logic behind the increasing use of Scotland as a 'fantasy tourism' space for the new global Indian middle class, and the ways in which these films are also used 'to explore the South Asian diaspora's financial success, and the maintenance of middle-class Indian values in a foreign environment' (p. 74). Chapters Four and Five examine the horror genre, specifically the Loch Ness monster movie and werewolf movies respectively, arguing that the former is a knowing repackaging or 'auto-exoticising' of established myths of Scotland, while the later represents a kind of return of the tartan repressed in monstrous form.

Chapter Six examines the costume drama and the increasing narrative focus of their historical spectacle on women, arguing that in *The Governess* (1998), for instance, Scotland again functions for its female protagonist 'as a Romantic, Gothic restorative space' (p. 144), but one which facilitates a reconsideration of diasporic Jewish and female subjectivity. Similarly, Chapter Nine argues that the female friendship film, influenced by the episodic and distinctly cinematic aesthetics of the US Indie film tradition, provides a narrative space for the exploration of female autonomy, sisterhood and interiority. Diaspora is also the focus of Chapter Seven, which argues that the 'families' of the gangster genre enable a narrative exploration of dispersed immigrant communities and the continuities of experience and identity between their local and global members.

Chapters Eight and Ten are concerned with Scottish social-realism and art cinema. While this is more familiar terrain for academic discussions of Scottish film, the focus is again on the transnational: the ways in which the national is eclipsed by the local/global in the 'universalised post-industrial masculinity' (p. 193) of the social-realist melodrama; and the way in which the 'self-exoticising' Scottishness of earlier art cinema (cf. *Young Adam*, 2003), proved a less successful strategy for international festival circuit success than the deployment of a contemporary European art cinema aesthetic (cf. *Red Road*, 2006).

Across the book, the author carefully avoids replacing the negative assessment of the so-called regressive discourses structuring earlier Scottish film with an uncritical celebration of the auteurs of the 'New Scottish Cinema'. Rather he identifies the ways in which across a wide range of film narratives a multitude of real and fantasy Scotlands are constructed, Scotlands populated by protagonists whose identity is a negotiated process of becoming shaped by a variety of transnational forces. As Martin-Jones writes, the filmmaking sector in Scotland is once more in a period of uncertainty. What is certain, however, is that future filmmaking in Scotland will take place in an economic and cultural territory that is both local and global, a space his excellent book has productively mapped.

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