

Elizabeth Cowie is Professor Emeritus Film Studies at the University of Kent. After graduating with a degree in history, politics and sociology I worked in publishing, and was editorial assistant for the journal *Screen* from 1972 to 1976 at a time when it was transforming debates about cinema and culture through its often controversial introduction of new French approaches to film, including semiotic and psychoanalytic theories. My involvement in these debates led to my change in career, and I began a post-graduate degree at the Slade School of Art, while I edited the 1978 catalogue of films funded by the British Film Institute Production Board, involving avant-garde and independent short and feature length films, and as well as teaching film at a number of institutions and universities in London.

At the same time I was also involved in feminism, and working on issues of women and film, and founded the feminist theory journal, *m/f*, with Parveen Adams and Rosalind Coward, and we were later joined by Beverley Brown. The journal, which published 12 issues between 1978-1986, was committed to developing theoretical work on the social and psychical organisation of sexual difference, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault and of Jacques Lacan in his 'return to Freud'. A collection from the journal was published as *The Woman in Question*, edited by Parveen Adams and Elizabeth Cowie, by MIT Press in 1990.

I came to the University of Kent in 1981 to teach on its new programme in Film Studies and the department has since grown to become one of the UK's foremost university centres for undergraduate and postgraduate study of film, television, and film practice.

Research

The central focus for my research and writing was to understand how representation works to produce meanings and identities in relation to political and cultural questions of gender and sexual difference. I published several key essays in *m/f*, in particular, 'Woman as Sign', 'The Popular Film as Progressive Text - a discussion of *Coma*', and 'Fantasia'. These have appeared in a number of anthologies, most recently in 2000 and 2009, as well as appearing in revised form in my book, *Representing the Woman: Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1997), in which I undertook a critical reassessment of the ways in which cinema has been described as an apparatus for fetishistic and voyeuristic masculine pleasure. I develop an account of identification understood through psychoanalysis and film theory which recognises feminine pleasure and identification as a complex psychical and cultural affair in the cinema. For both men and women, fantasy and fetishism in cinema are audio-visual settings or *mises en scène*, in which sexual difference is constructed, confronted, and disavowed. The audio-viewing spectator is an active partner in the passivity and activity of these pleasures.

These conceptual concerns have continued in my recent work in publications on the horror of the horror film, where I consider the spectator as an ethical subject within the audio-viewing experience, and the horror or horror through examining *Eyes Without a Face* (Georges Franju, 1959), and the psychoanalysis of anxiety. In my discussion of Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957) my focus is dreams and film, and I explore ways in which cinema's ready-made dreams engage us in a further 'dream-work' of our own. And on trauma and mourning in Egoyan's *Exotica* (1994) in 'Documentary, memory and trauma are the focus of my work in relation to fiction film and Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* ('Traumatic Memories of Remembering and Forgetting', 2000), and in documentary video-art and photography, in the work of Serbian artist Milica Tomić, on paranoia and video art (2006) and in relation to my colleagues and film-makers Clio Barnard's *Dark Glass* (*differences* 2010), and Sarah Turner's *Perestroika*

The focus of my recent research is the documentary film and its spectator, and documentary video art. This work has two strands, one which is concerned to develop an historical understanding of the genre of documentary in film and video both as a project of recording the real and as a cinematic form and to relate this to contemporary broadcast and video documentary. A second strand of this research is the interrelationship of pleasure and

knowledge which characterises documentary. Here I consider the ways we are moved to feel for the social actors we see and hear, and the ways in which, as a result, we are brought to understand them and their worlds. This interrelation of specular pleasure (or, voyeurism) and identification is central to my recent publications on reality tv, video art and traditional documentary in my monograph *Recording Reality, Desiring the Real* (2011), and my essay 'Specters of the Real: Documentary Time and Art, in *differences* (2007). Across both these strands, the politics and art of documentary are central, and I address the work of theorists including Jacques Lacan, Slavoj Žižek, Jacques Rancière, and Michel Foucault.

A very different project was my audio commentary for Juan del Gardo's video work, 'Who are You Entertaining To?', in *Aspect*, dvd journal, vol 3, 2004, 'The Artist as Content'

WWW.Aspectmag.com.

Books

Recording Reality, Desiring the Real, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

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Articles and Chapters in journals, edited collections and other formats since 2000 - Full list can be found on University of Kent Academic Repository

<http://kar.kent.ac.uk/>

Surveillance Section editor with introduction, and essay 'The World Viewed: Documentary Observing and the Culture of Surveillance, in *A Companion to Contemporary Documentary*, eds Alexandra Juhasz and Alisa Lebow, pp 580-610.

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'Documentary Space, Place, and Landscape', *Media Fields Journal*, no 2, 2011,

<http://www.mediafieldsjournal.org/documentary-space-place-and-la/>

'Mourning, Loss and Trauma, and the Ambiguities of Proper and Improper Desire in *Exotica* (1994), in *Film Moments* eds Tom Brown and James Walters, London: Palgrave/BFI, 2010, ISBN978-1-84457-335-6, pp140-143.

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'Specters of the Real: Documentary Time and Art, in *differences* vol 18, no 1, Spring 2007, pp 87-127.

'Ways of Seeing: Documentary Film and the Surreal of Reality', in *Building Bridges: the Cinema of Jean Rouch*, London, Wallflower Press, 2007, pp 201-218, ISBN:978-1-905674-47-3.

'What do you see? Would you like to move on to another image? Yes' on Clio Barnard's *Road Race* and *Dark Glass*, catalogue entry, Herbert Read Gallery, Canterbury, 2007.

'The Art of Paranoia', catalogue entry, '*Paranoia*', curated by Predrag Pajdic, Leeds, Southend, London, 2006.

'On Rear Window', *Film Analysis: A Reader*, eds R. L. Rutsky and Jeffrey Geiger, W. W. Norton & Company ISBN: 0393979830, 2005.

'Seeing and hearing for ourselves: the spectacle of reality in the Holocaust Documentary', in *The Holocaust and the Moving Image: Film and Television Representations Since 1933*, eds Toby Haggith (IWM) and Joanna Newman (LJCC), Wallflower Press, London 2005, pp 182-188. ISBN 1-904764-51-7.

'Dokumentarische Kunst: das Reale begehren, der Wirklichkeit eine Stimme geben' ('Desiring the Real, Voicing Reality in Documentry Art'), in *Auf den Spuren des Realen Kunst und Dokumentarismus*, ed Karin Gludovatz, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Wien, 2005, pp15-41. ISBN 3-902490-05-5.

'The Cinematic Dream-work of Ingmar Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*', in Andrea Sabbadini, ed, *The Couch and the Silver Screen: Psychoanalytic Analytic Reflections on European Cinema*, London: Brenner-Routledge, 2003, pp 181-201. ISBN 1-58391-952-X.

'The Lived Nightmare: Trauma, Anxiety, and the Ethical Aesthetics of Horror', in Steven Jay Schneider and Daniel Shaw, eds, *Dark Thoughts: Philosophic Reflections on Cinematic Horror*, Scarecrow Press, 2003, pp 25-46. ISBN 0-8108-4792-2. Extract at www.kinoeye.org/02/13/cowie13.php.

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