

## Under Duress

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As this issue went to press, movie theaters were preparing to roll out the coordinated April 4 national screenings of *1984* (Michael Radford, 1984), the cinematic adaptation of the George Orwell novel that has been flying off bookstore shelves ever since the election. A recent article on bookstores argued that they have become the new centers of resistance and that reading books is a new act of rebellion, noting for instance the new City Lights Bookstore section for “Pedagogies of Resistance.”<sup>1</sup> I wonder to what extent art houses will or can follow this model and what will be shown and where. Another recent piece tracked the origin of New York’s widely adopted Screen Slate that organizes the city’s vast trove of film programming into bite-size searchable bits, noting also an increase in both micro cinemas and innovative commercial theatres in the metropolis.<sup>2</sup> The serendipity of these two articles crossing my desk gives me a sense of hope that the public may turn to movie theatres in the era of “fake news” to share not just films but their experiences, emotions, and, yes, facts.

Of course, it’s hard to get on with the business of film and television watching, filmmaking, or film and television analysis, when the president is making moves to shut down the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, calling for immediate cuts, and rattling sabers yet again at the Public Broadcasting System and Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Shades of Ronald Reagan? He and his cronies tried that in the 1980s when the Republicans followed the lead of Jerry Falwell into a “Moral Majority” power slog; with the help of Hilton Kramer and other conservatives, the Republican right scored points on the back of artistic expression. Kramer died in 2012 but his attacks on the arts are an undying legacy (in the 1980s, he succeeded in having critics’ fellowships jettisoned from NEA funding). Yet there were cracks in the edifice even back then. Despite a punitive Republican tidal wave, independent filmmakers and their allies nonetheless managed to found the Independent Television Service (ITVS) as a way to ensure the funding of diversity would

continue. I hope that such points of contradiction are in play somewhere today. In the meantime, there ought to be a new word for political vampires that won’t stay dead and for the constant revival of depleted targets, hauled out over and over, presented as new to rally a mean-spirited and never-satisfied base.

### The Tale of Five Oscars

In April, Eleanor Coppola and Lynn Hershman-Leeson were each honored with an award for their body of work by the San Francisco International Film Festival. A few weeks earlier, they appeared together on stage at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts for another purpose: to discuss their beginnings as young artists in San Francisco and their early collaborations. One legendary collaboration began in 1973 with their exclusion from galleries and the decision to show, instead, in a pair of cheap SRO hotel rooms, a set of installation pieces that became known as the Dante Hotel exhibitions. Another involved Hershman-Leeson’s enactment of a “fake” persona named Roberta Breitmore who wandered around the city, having assignations and even seeing a therapist, not entirely unlike the self-created persona of Valie Export in that same era in Vienna.

While these tales are part of a finally well-known history of art in the Bay Area, one story was brand new to the occasion. Coppola recalled how she and Hershman-Leeson would take advantage of her husband Francis Ford Coppola’s absences, waiting until he was out of town to use the house or limousine for their own artistic purposes.

On one occasion, the two decided to hold a studio visit for a group of art collectors at the Coppola manse. Eleanor Coppola, though, suspected that the collecting class was far more interested in the house itself and in seeing her husband’s five Oscars than in the women’s artwork, so she devised a plan. She removed the five actual Oscars from the cabinet where they were on display. She then paused to explain a detail of her story to the audience: back in “those days,” the Academy presented the wife of an Oscar winner (presumed to be male) with her own miniature Oscar, a one-inch-tall gold charm with a tiny ring on its head for hanging from a necklace or charm bracelet. She had acquired five of them. After

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John Hurt as Winston Smith in Michael Radford's *1984*, originally released in theaters in 1984.

enlisting a jeweler friend to cut off the rings, Coppola arranged her five miniature Oscars in the display case so that the art collectors would have something to look at.

Eleanor Coppola is now eighty years old. Her story would be more amusing if the number of women with the big Oscars had caught up to those with the tiny ones.

### In This Issue

In this exceptional issue of *Film Quarterly*, scholars tackle a score of crucial works and issues, with an eye to both the past and the present.

Warren Crichlow brings his multiyear research on James Baldwin to bear on Raoul Peck's landmark documentary, *I Am Not Your Negro* (2016), unpacking both Baldwin's life and Peck's aesthetic trajectory to assess what Baldwin might mean in 2017. He discerns just how Peck constructs meaning across the decades through a "double voiced" strategy of mixing historic interviews with narration. Peck's style of "juxtaposing, qualifying, complicating, and recalibrating the archive" is, says Crichlow, fittingly Baldwinesque. He hopes, in fact, that the film will lead to a revival of reading Baldwin in the schools, not stopping with the film itself.

Michelle Stewart undertakes an inventory of the objections to Dominic Gagnon's latest work, *Of the North* (2015), in order to think about the effects of the internet and the ethical implications of "copy-left" appropriation that often disregards spaces of origin in favor of platforms of delivery. In addition to tracing the Indigenous objections to Gagnon's tactics and their results, she locates an alternative in the new videos being made and uploaded by young Indigenous makers as comfortable with online sharing as with tribal culture. Stewart considers how digital sovereignty might operate when good intentions conflict with online imperatives.

Paz Encina is better known in Latin America and Europe than she is in the United States, but hopefully this issue's collection of articles can help to change that. Natalia Brizuela weighs in on Encina's importance with an analysis and history of the Paraguayan filmmaker and installation artist's work that advances a theoretical approach to a new politics of representation, emphasizing the value of nondiscursive techniques for a post-totalitarian public. Brizuela also details Paz's trilogy of site-specific video installations, projected at locations with an intimate connection to the historical horrors revealed in the works. To provide a context for *FQ* readers, this issue also presents two new translated pieces that Brizuela has selected

to provide a greater understanding of Encina's work. "The Clearing" by noted scholar/curator Ticio Escobar examines the function of speech and silence within Encina's poetic rhetoric. In "Personal Thoughts on My Days in the Archives," an essay commissioned and translated especially for *FQ*, Paz Encina speaks of her own history and traces her life, her family's story under years of dictatorship, and her mission to bring the Paraguayan people "a sense of relief" through her cinematic works.

From London, Sophie Mayer and Selina Robertson offer a reappraisal of Sally Potter's *Thriller* (1989) in the historical context of the city's queer and feminist film spaces. Pointing out the squats and disused buildings that formed the core of artists' residences and "theaters" in those days, they link Potter's original critique of Puccini's *La Bohème* to contemporary spaces, institutions, and struggles from Greenham Common to gentrification. While they stop short of bringing up the question of Brexit and its likely effect on the arts in today's London, the implications broadcast by the Thatcherite politics of the 1980s are clear.

Looking back is a way of looking at the present, a theme shared by many of these articles. Josslyn Luckett delves into the history of black filmmaking in Los Angeles in her extended interview with Billy Woodberry, whose feature debut *Bless Their Little Hearts* (1983) was a foundational work of the "L.A. Rebellion" cinema of the 1980s. Newly reengaged with filmmaking, his investigation into the persona of legendary Beat poet Bob Kaufman is the jumping-off point for a conversation that explores the legacy of the early years as well as the twists and turns that documentaries can take as clues are pursued, abandoned, and explored.

The globe-trotting Paul Julian Smith reports from Mexico City, where the miniseries *Juana Inés* (Canal Once, 2016) is having an impact (as it is here in the United States, if you are watching on Netflix). The first major retrofitting of the legend of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in decades, the series is carving out a space on television for the biopic genre, which has been treated cinematically in recent works on Gloria Trevi and Catinflas but has been relatively underserved in Mexican television.

Caetlin Benson-Allott is also thinking about the biopic, in her case, its take on gender. Looking at recent films on Jackie Kennedy and Christine Chubbuck, she debates female embodiment, how women are represented in history, and where agency fails. Finding that, in the domain of the historical record, gender too often has been sacrificed to bromides, she points to the new films as key interventions.

Bilal Qureshi finds that residing in Delhi is an advantage when the filmmaker Deepa Mehta happens to come to town

with a new film in the lead-up to the seventieth anniversary of the Partition. He uses the opportunity to revisit Mehta's *Earth* (1998) and to think through, with her, the changes to Indian politics and Mehta's own filmmaking in the intervening years.

In Memoriam: Jerry White files for *FQ* on the passing of John Berger, the towering writer, and his film legacy. To claim Berger's influence on the field, White returns to his 1972 publication, *Ways of Seeing*, as a precursor to much foundational film theory, then tracks his involvement with the films of Alain Tanner and, up to the minute, with Tilda Swinton.

Festival reports flag coming trends and films to watch for. Brandon Harris files from Rotterdam, noting the mood of the festival in fraught times. Signal events were a Barry Jenkins retrospective that included his school films and everything he's done since, as well as a Black Rebels section with films by Horace Ové, Charles Burnett, Kevin Jerome Everson, and others. Of the new films, Harris singles out the first feature by online video essayist Kogonada, *Columbus* (2017), shot in Mike Pence's hometown.

At Sundance, Laura Thielen was struck by the trio of documentaries on the Syrian conflict and files a report here, pointedly noting the anguished cry heard in all three: "Where is humanity?" I report on the festival as a whole, from the Women's March to the Virtual Reality offerings, with an extended discussion of many documentary and fiction entries that are debuting in theaters and festivals throughout the year.

In Page Views, Regina Longo talks with Celestino Deleyto about his exploration of changes in Hollywood (the location, not the aura) movies since the time of the Rodney King beating explored in his book *From Tinseltown to Bordertown: Los Angeles on Film*. Deleyto analyzes the role of locations, in this case post-riot Los Angeles, as an overlooked mode of reshaping character and even narrative. It makes an interesting match with Luckett's Woodberry interview: where Deleyto is exploring the effect of the city on its mainstream films, she is recovering the role of the city in the films made by black filmmakers developing an alternative practice.

Reviewing Therese Grisham and Julie Grossman's book on Ida Lupino, Carrie Rickey surveys Lupino's career from her start as a reluctant child actress to a director of movies and television shows dealing with social problems and volatile subjects. Lupino's work is posited as a "cocktail of neorealism and noir," and her uniqueness as one of the sole women directors of her era is clarified as a mitigating factor in how to view her work. Other reviews in this issue take up new books by

Maureen Furniss, Marsha Gordon, D. A. Miller, TreaAndrea M. Russworm, Peter Sutoris, and Johannes von Moltke, all marked as important new contributions to the literature.

### Website Renewal

A new website is rarely interesting to anyone not directly responsible for its design, but your indulgence is requested: *Film Quarterly* is proud to present the relaunch of its website at [www.filmquarterly.org](http://www.filmquarterly.org). You will find a refreshed site that is fully responsive across devices and features full integration of photographs, social media, audio, and video. Full journal content continues to be housed at [fq.ucpress.edu](http://fq.ucpress.edu), but subscribers and non-subscribers alike can now access a selection

of free articles and new web-only features on the redesigned website. Select the Quorum page to access video of the panel, “Film and Media in a Time of Repression: Practices and Aesthetics of Resistance,” presented in December 2016 by *Film Quarterly* and the Film Society of Lincoln Center.

### Notes

1. Scott Esposito, “Independent Bookstore as Essential Political Act,” *Literary Hub*, March 28, 2017, <http://lithub.com/independent-bookstore-as-essential-political-act/>
2. Bilge Ebiri, “Q&A: Jon Dieringer Talks Founding *Screen Slate* and New York Moviegoing,” *Village Voice*, March 30, 2017, [www.villagevoice.com/film/qanda-jon-dieringer-talks-founding-screen-slate-and-new-york-moviegoing-9822361](http://www.villagevoice.com/film/qanda-jon-dieringer-talks-founding-screen-slate-and-new-york-moviegoing-9822361)