

imagination," a stance which fundamentally departs from the "libertarian imagination" in imagining an alternative world, in imagining that there could be "anything else."

According to Ross, it is crucial for intellectuals to forsake "the intellectual option of hectoring from on high," to learn to live with contradictions. This is an ongoing theme of Ross's work, a sustained critique of "political correctness." In *Men in Feminism* (Jardine and Smith, 1987), Ross speaks of the "invocations of correctness and fears of incorrectness alike," reflected in the MLA sessions on "Men in Feminism," which characterize the negotiations of women and men over a space for men in feminism. Ross finds it ironic that strict notions of "correct" politics, this spectre of feminism's own historical repudiation of Left-Leninist thinking, would now emerge from within the feminist community. However, regardless of how may times we say that the unconscious is fundamentally conservative, that we must wait for the unconscious to learn because it will not be taught, these are hypothetical and ahistorical assertions. One does not have to read much Andrea Dworkin to feel the anger seething beneath the perhaps essentialist, closed prose. Nor should it be a surprise that the anger (and fear) which motivated "Take Back the Night" marches across North America should find its way into text. Anti-antiporn feminists may be right in bringing pleasure back to the fore, and also in claiming something in common between feminism and pornography, both of which have insisted that women are sexual beings and have made sex an experience open to public examination and debate. However, these same anti-antiporn feminists would hardly repudiate issues of danger as a formative influence to the women's liberation movement.

This may seem patently obvious to Andrew Ross, and to the many readers who are familiar with the contours of the pornography debate. Nonetheless, it calls into question Ross's own political correctness in choosing to minimize the resonance which the anti-porn position has for both intellectuals and "ordinary" folk. In my view the weak link of his discussion of "The Popularity of Pornography" is his reference to Al Goldstein, "the ebullient publisher of *Screw*," "who boasted, in 1973, that if he caught his wife cheating on him, he would probably 'break her legs off and pull her clit off and shove it in her left ear.'" Ross states that "while obviously horrific" this comment "can be read as a contextual reference, unconscious or otherwise, to the displacement of the clitoris into the heroine of *Deep Throat*." Whether Goldstein, an organic intellectual of the pornography industry, had to wait to discover the clitoris at a film targeted to "an audience with higher interests than the simple pleasure of arousal" is questionable; more disturbing, however, is the ongoing conflation of sexual education and liberation with misogyny. Of course, this is the nasty side of "impure criticism," that "what the truck driver wants" might entail contradictory positions which are

offensive, not only to intellectuals with a liberatory agenda, but also to those at the receiving end of racism, sexism and other bigotries.

It seems that *No Respect* does quite a few of the things it takes other intellectuals to task for: it has its own "highly priced discourse," its own "correctness" and its own "big social picture." However, in calling for a self-reflective cultural politics for our times, *No Respect* is both refreshing and elucidating. Ross's book is, after all, a manifesto for more than just critical reflection; it also calls for action. It interpellates its readers as the "new intellectuals" with a "liberatory imagination," but without the "preachy disdain of technology, popular culture, and everyday materialism" of an earlier generation. With Foucault, Ross suggests that as "specific intellectuals" we must limit our site of intervention to specific struggles that demand our specific knowledge and expertise. And in the case of "professional humanists," the area of contestation is "our specialist influence over the shaping of ethical knowledge and the education of taste." The task, according to Ross, is for professional intellectuals to find some "common ground" with a broader popular base. Ross warns: "But the challenge of such a politics is greater than ever, because, in an age of expert rule, the popular is perhaps the one field in which intellectuals are least likely to be experts." ♦

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Hollywood Narrative in the 1940s

Power and Paranoia
by Dana Polan

New York: Columbia University Press,
1986, 336 pp.

Social historians and scholars of the Classical Hollywood cinema will find a wealth of useful information in Dana Polan's exhaustive and somewhat eclectic reexamination of American popular culture in the 1940s. *Power and Paranoia* is an attempt to give a fairly exhaustive analysis of some 700 films and numerous cultural documents released between 1940 and 1950.

Interweaving the work of a veritable who's who of social theory from Marx to Foucault, a cursory reading of hundreds of films and dozens of books, and a critical engagement with the work of other film theorists, the book is extremely ambitious in scope.

The author sets out to produce a "historical deconstruction" of some of the narrative strategies deployed by the American culture industry, especially the Hollywood cinema, during the decade that included the Second World War and the immediate post-war period. As Polan puts it:

I want to look at the ways that a dominant power and a disturbing paranoia interweave and find each to be a parodic image of the other. Power here is the power of a narrative system especially — the power that narrative structure specifically possesses to write an image of life as coherent, teleological, univocal ... Paranoia here will first be a fear of narrative, and the particular social representations it works to uphold, against all that threatens the unity of its logical framework.

In other words, Polan wants to show how the strategies of containment employed by the Hollywood cinema began to be unravelled by the social pressures of this rather unsettled period in American history. There is already a wealth of scholarship that places this shift in the American cinema at the end of the Second World War.

Polan acknowledges this, but then goes on to argue that in fact this neat dualism, between wartime unity and post-war disillusionment (especially as evidenced in the *film noir*), is itself problematic. In fact, many of the "war-affirmative" films of the early forties themselves exhibit contradictory narrative formations. The drive to unite a nation behind such an enormous war mobilization – one fought abroad in combat and at home in the factories and even inside the family – irrevocably transformed America.

Power and Paranoia is divided into an introduction and six chapters. The introduction and the first two chapters are methodological in orientation, raising issues of cultural and film historiography, and examining the "drive to narrativity in the war-affirmative" films.

In the third chapter Polan attempts to address the internal weaknesses of the drive to narrative coherence in the films, and the contradictions that undermine the gloss of wartime unity in American society.

The preoccupation with the power of the sciences and rationality in American society during the forties is the subject of the fourth chapter. Here Polan contends that the re-emergence of sci-fi and horror films in this period points to new forms of narrativizing the conflict between desire and rationality.

The increasing forms of defamiliarization in representations of time and space that come into play in the narratives of the Hollywood cinema, and the rise of a non-narrative spectacle are seen as expressions of a reified and completely commodified post-war society. In the final two chapters of the book, the author tries to map out the possible connections between these phenomena.

Polan's reading of many of the films of the period works well in fleshing out the cinema's recording of the important changes that took place in American society during the Second World War and the dawn of the Cold War. Under this reading Polan attempts to connect the narrative concerns of certain films with the social

upheavals and transformations that took place in American society.

Polan demonstrates that wartime issues such as racial segregation in the armed forces, labour unrest, and the breakup of families, are handled allegorically through narratives that magically affirm racial and ethnic unity, working class solidarity against the enemy, and the miraculous reunion of separated couples. The Hollywood machine was forced to work overtime to heal the rifts that arose in a fractured society.

Nevertheless, the films were not entirely successful in portraying a nation united in facing its challenge in a rationalistic and altruistic manner. Narrative drives were often in conflict with one another. This is evident in a particularly popular narrative of "conversion" from 1943:

a combined American populism ... and American spiritualism ... can conflict potentially with the oedipal structure of classic romantic narrative where au-



In no other decade in history did Hollywood come under closer scrutiny by the forces of government.

thority figures are also sexual figures – rivals – and women are the objects of desire for men.

In *Casablanca*, for example, the conversion narrative is in tension with an oedipal narrative. It may not be insignificant that the screenwriters report their confusion all through the days of production as to which ending to use (Should Rick stay with Ilsa or not? Should desire or duty triumph?); their hesitation is the hesitation of the Hollywood machine at this moment, the hesitation of narrativity itself at this moment.

This examination of narrative conflict in the wartime films, which Polan uses to reassess the received view of wartime unity, is continued in his examination of the post-war period in which, most commentators have argued, Hollywood narrative strategies became seriously unravelled. Here conflicts like those between desire and rationality, power and paranoia, wartime victory and post-war disillusionment become clearly evident in a large body of films, especially *film noir*, which entered its darkest period after the war,

and in numerous horror and science-fiction films (which, respectively, reflected contemporary fascinations with psychoanalysis and the downside of scientific positivism).

However, despite Polan's interesting re-reading of the history of the Hollywood film in this period, *Power and Paranoia* suffers from several weaknesses. The first, and perhaps most evident, follows from the enormity of the project the author has undertaken. Because Polan tries to address so many individual films, his analysis often falls back on generalities and simple dualisms (as in the reading of *Casablanca* quoted above).

The other problem with the book is Polan's decision to focus almost exclusively on film narrative itself. There is virtually no discussion of the extra-filmic, political interference exercised on the Hollywood film industry by the American state, despite the fact that in no other decade in history did Hollywood come under closer scrutiny by the forces of government.

During the war, institutions like the Office of War Information had a tremendous power over what Hollywood could, should and should not show on the screens across the country. Its manual became a significant guide to industry self-censorship. Polan only alludes to this phenomena in a couple of passages in his book.

The post-war period was also the beginning of the Cold War, the heyday of American anti-communism. While Polan does discuss the late forties rise of the sub-genre of anti-red films, he makes no attempt to look at the impact that the communist witchhunt, initiated by the House Un-American Activities Committee, had on the industry. The government's attack on "leftist" influence inside the industry, and the subsequent blacklisting carried out by the studios themselves, led to the dismissal of some 600 to 1,000 of Hollywood's most creative talents. This attack led to a relative artistic decline in the films made at the end of the decade and into the 1950s.

Perhaps it was a conscious decision on the author's part to exclude these extra-filmic political influences on Hollywood narrativity. However, this exclusion tends to give the book a mono-thematic character. Polan discusses outside social influences on the cinema only where they seem to directly affect the interplay of different narrative strands in specific films.

As a discussion of narrative dissonance in the 1940s, *Power and Paranoia* has few precedents, and is worthy of serious consideration as an immanent critique of the Hollywood cinema. The difficulty lies in the fact that it leaves the impression that narrative conflict is self-generating or, at best reflective, almost impervious to the general and indirect impact of outside social forces. ♦

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The Therapy of Culture

**Pathologies of
the Modern Self:
Postmodern Studies
on Narcissism,
Schizophrenia,
and Depression**
ed. David Michael Levin

New York: New York University Press,
1987, 548 pp.

In recent years literary, cultural, and social theorists have borrowed liberally from theories of the human subject that derive from the consulting room and clinic. Practising therapists and analysts have, however, tended to seal themselves off from extra-disciplinary influences, even from what used to be called "applied psychoanalysis." Disciplinary lines have hardened and specialization has removed the specialist from movements in "general" intellectual culture. David Michael Levin's collection of 16 essays attempts to redress this imbalance. The volume is witness to the encounter between various contemporary psychotherapeutic practices and those recent theoretical developments that we have come to call postmodern. Here Jacques Derrida visits the consulting room, Martin Heidegger roams the backwards of state psychiatric hospitals, and Michel Foucault drops in for Awareness Week at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur.

The rationale for these encounters is Levin's call for a "cultural epidemiology" for our times. That is, the volume's project is an investigation of those psychic disorders that are now culturally dominant, with the assumption that these are characteristic expressions, perhaps the truest products of the postmodern condition. This assumption is based on the frequently asserted claim that the types of disorder on which Freud founded psychoanalysis – notably hysteria – are rarely encountered by today's analysts. Other types of disorder are now dominant. This shift is in part the result of changes in nosological definitions but is also a sign of the inevitably historical character of psychic disorders.

Emphasized here are the intricate linkages between the human subject and its society. These linkages cannot be seen in simple terms of cause and effect but are figured rather as a set of reversible *trompe*

l'oeils of figure and ground. The disturbed subject is not simply the product of a pathogenic environment (family, institutional structure, workplace) as the anti-psychiatry movement of the 1960s claimed. Rather the subject is both produced and productive and is only institutionalized when that productivity drops below a pre-set level. This project marks a reassertion of Freud's insistence on the continuum between the disordered and the functional members of a society, a continuum that disguises itself as a binary opposition by occluding the middle and by developing a massive psycho-medical establishment to police that occlusion. This policing function is the focus of several contributions to the volume. Notable among these, and the collection's most typically postmodern study, is Irene Harvey's deconstruction of the American Psychiatric Association's 1980 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-III). This manual serves as guide to those who separate the "mad" from the "sane" and, as Harvey demonstrates, presumes a radical pre-diagnostic divide between the two. This divide permits identical sets of symptoms to signify entirely different conditions. Senses of uniqueness, individuality and self-initiation are, for instance, signs of normality in the normal and of disturbance in the disturbed. As the essay concludes, "If one were actually to submit to the manual's concept of normality – what it calls our 'sense of self' – one would lose one's job."

The instruments with which the "therapeutic community" creates taxonomies are clearly open to question but these questions do not make the patients (in the literal sense of those suffering) vanish. The way the patient is seen may transform that patient but it is difficult to maintain that the diagnosis *creates* the disorder and the suffering it brings with it. Moreover, even if diagnosis helps to create the disorder, it does so as part of society's pathogenic apparatus.

This last possibility is one of the abiding concerns of Levin's volume and is one of the three primary reasons why the contributors to it feel the need to appeal to contemporary social theory for aid. The first of these is that if technological late capitalism is productive of specific sets of pathologies that can be labelled "character disorders," then some attention to the character of that society is necessary on the part of those who are attempting to cure its victims. Unfortunately this question is addressed directly less often than one might wish. The exception is Cisco Lassiter's committed but disconcertingly brief "Dislocation and Illness," a study of the disorders characteristic of those Navajo forced into urban society by the 1974 Land Settlement Act.

The second reason is that if Foucault's analyses of the birth of the clinic and the