The semiotics of light and shadows: modern visual arts and Weimar cinema

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part presents four different genres of stereoviews: views of children (Chapter 5); views of marriage scenes (Chapter 6); views depicting eroticism (Chapter 7); and views of New Women and/or older bachelor men (Chapter 8). More specifically, 'Kids in View' argues that children were 'essential to demonstrating both the necessity and the effectiveness of the women's sphere', whilst at the same time 'the battle for the mother's exclusive control of the children' allowed an expansion of women's power (87). Moving on from the child to the whole family, 'Marriage Views' argues that 'the stereoview produced a fantasy emblem book', allowing viewers to 'recognize the standards for middle-class aspirations, modern romance, and the expectations of family life' (116). 'Erotic Views' focuses on the female body, arguing that in parallel to the 'specularization of the female body in nineteenth-century stereoviews' there were many other 'voices that were not singing in unison' (145). Historians should not approach desire and the gaze from 'a unilateral conception', Davis explains, because this is problematic, multivalent, and undetermined (ibid.). Lastly, 'Gender Bunglers' focuses on those characters that could 'form nonthreatening resistance points within the very institution in which they appeared', allowing them to offer 'an extension of imaginative possibilities and covert critiques by simple contrast' (174). The section pays particular attention to the married New Woman, demonstrating how she succeeded in performing as a satirical, as well as fascinating, attractive, decisive character, whilst her 'bungling husband' is the hopeless other half (ibid.).

As mentioned above, *Women's Views* offers an impressive amalgamation of technological, philosophical and socio-historical material; however, the manner in that these various elements have been organised and presented is not always effective. For example, the introduction begins with a discussion about a comic strip, and then moves on to a lengthy explanation on how to use the stereoviewer provided with the book. Both elements seem to injure the momentum, because they focus on information that, one might argue, is not as exciting as the main gist of this book, which was probably what attracted readers in the first place. Furthermore, Part One feels as if it is the starter before the main meal; though rewarding, it does not offer analyses of stereoviews, as such, in the way that Part Two does. In other words, the reader has to hike through four lengthy, heavily typed chapters before they can be allowed to have the main meal. Providing instructions on how to read the chapters also feels a little too restrictive. Nevertheless, this book undoubtedly presents an important contribution primarily to the history of photography, and also to

American women's history. It is absolutely evident that the author has devoted a lot of time and effort in this work, not only to challenge already established biased ideas about stereography, but also to offer a history of the stereograph that acknowledges the central role of women.

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The semiotics of light and shadows: modern visual arts and Weimar cinema
by Piotr Sadowski
London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, 288 pages
ISBN: 9781350016149 (hardback) Price: £95.00
Reviewed by Elisa Jochum, Independent Scholar

In his book, Piotr Sadowski presents how 'light, darkness, and shadows […] become meaningful signs' (1) in visual media, prioritising the filmic art. The emphasis is on the monochrome cinema of Weimar Germany, the republican era stretching from 1919 to the beginning of the National-Socialist regime in 1933. Sadowski stresses that the cinema screen displays, even from a mechanical point of view, a collage of shadows: during the film exhibition the lamp of the projector throws light on film strips, letting shadows of what is registered on these strips appear on the screen facing the projector. This gripping book is part of the series 'Bloomsbury Advances in Semiotics' which has brought forth a variety of publications ranging from series editor Paul Bouissac's *The Semiotics of Clowns and Clowning* (2015) to Neil Cohn's *The Visual Language of Comics* (2013).

Sadowski's thematic scope extends from Eastern European myth to the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima during the Second World War. Methodologically, he draws on film studies, evolutionary theory, psychology, philosophy, history as well as cultural and art history, bringing together secondary and primary sources. (Readers interested in how Sadowski's exploration relates to existing works will find a selection of them and direct connections in-text, while he places others in a more summarising fashion in the notes.) On the subject of the cinema, the book offers extensive film-historical information on the economic, political, creative, and technological aspects of the industry and of individual productions. Sadowski provides inspired, close readings of a large collection of filmic case studies – readers searching for individual films and for their whereabouts in the study can trace almost all of them by their title in the elaborate index at

the end of the book. The Weimar films include, for instance, the tellingly titled *Schatten* (*Warning Shadows*, Arthur Robison, 1923) as well as renowned works like *Nosferatu* (Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, 1922) and *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1922). Sadowski also reaches far beyond the films of 1920s Germany, integrating cinematic examples such as *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, USA, 1941) and productions by the Lumière brothers. The author's approach demonstrates a special interest in the deliberations behind films, considering what the film crews bring to the figurative table and seeking to distinguish between planned and unplanned shadows.

The Semiotics of Light and Shadows consists of a short introduction and six chapters – the final pages of the last chapter implicitly serving as an epilogue. In the first chapter, Sadowski illustrates how mythology and folk tales from diverse countries and time periods have thematized shadows, turning 'a natural optical phenomenon into a meaningful visual sign' (11). With reference to semiotics, he understands shadows as '*iconic index*[es]' (24), which are inherently tied to, as well as optically reminiscent of, the entities that occasion them. In situations where people cannot discern these entities, the semiotic potency of the shadows increases. Sadowski discusses how evolution has taught Homo sapiens to regard such separate shadows both as intriguing and, for all they know, as harbingers of pending hazards – which comes to bear when cinema audiences see shadows on film. The book moves in the next chapter on to the different categories of shadows and engages with their painted versions in art history, pointing out their weight for the cinema. The third chapter shows in particular how art practices that preceded the filmic medium, such as shadow theatres and silhouette portraits, fed off the indexicality of shadows, and how Weimar cinema builds on these practices. Subsequently, Sadowski explains the technological and semiotic origins of lighting and shadows in film history. In the two final and longest chapters, the author focuses on the film industry of the Weimar Republic and on the styles of Expressionism and the New Objectivity. He examines a series of significant filmic case studies and how shadows and light operate in them. During the film-by-film analyses, Sadowski continuously draws connections between these case studies.

His extremely keen eye becomes visible in the more than 100 black-and-white illustrations. Beyond screenshots, the astutely chosen and extensively captioned images encompass, for instance, paintings and photographs. The author's sentences flow nicely.

His wording is as clear as his book's structure, systematically dividing chapters into sequences of subsections. In the course of the book, Sadowski repeatedly and wonderfully brings the visual shadows closer to readers through his language, finding puns and metaphors in what he calls '[o]ur chase after shadows on Weimar screen' (6).

References

Bouissac, P. 2015. *The Semiotics of Clowns and Clowning: Rituals of Transgression and the Theory of Laughter.* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

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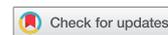
Between matter and method: encounters in anthropology and art
edited by Gretchen Bakke and Marina Peterson
London: Bloomsbury, 2018, 227 pages,
26 black and white illustrations
ISBN: 978-1-4742-8923-8 (paperback) Price: £24.99
Reviewed by Uschi Klein, University of Brighton

The relationship between anthropology and art is increasingly explored in contemporary anthropological practices. Since there is no one established way of working within an anthropology illuminated by the arts and art practices, Gretchen Bakke and Marina Peterson offer a 'multi-authored musing on the nature of creative action' to explore the tensions and questions between the interdisciplinary crossings of anthropologists and artists (xiv). A rather peculiar book, *Between Matter and Method* brings together a dozen anthropologists who include creative and critical elements of artistic practices and processes into their writings and research methods. The book's peculiarity lies in its experimental approach, at least to some extent, with some contributions reading as if they were work-in-progress pieces or explorations of ethnographic writing; their content is diverse and their focus is very much on the 'artistic process emergent in contemporary anthropological practice' rather than in the subject matter or the outcome (xiv). The chapter Another World in this World is an interesting intervention in the book; it 'gives pause' (xvii), as the two editors note, and presents most of the texts and images that the contributors of the book produced during a twenty-