adaptation and more genuinely focused and adventurous studies in areas such as popular adaptations, screenwriting 'auteurs', the script, specific ideological approaches to adaptations, teen adaptations, adaptations of graphic novels, adaptations of history, novelizations, video game adaptations, television-to-film adaptations, film-to-theatre adaptations, or adaptations before sound. Each of these deserves a book-length study of its own rather than being fleetingly glanced at in studies that try to do too much. As both these volumes reveal, the terrain seems limitless, and to try to fence it in it is to do it a disservice.

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Steven Ricci, *Cinema and Fascism: Italian Film and Society, 1922–1943*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA and London: University of California Press, 2008, 233 pp.

Noa Steimatsky, *Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema*. Minneapolis, MN and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, 246 pp.

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Fascism poses problems for historians of Italian cinema. While the work produced during that period is no longer entirely disavowed or discredited, it nevertheless provides an uncomfortable antecedent to the heroic moment of postwar neorealism and cinema's much-vaunted role in national reconstruction. Part of the problem is that fascism, like the advocates of neorealism, believed in the potential of the medium to create a common culture in its audiences. Debates around the political and aesthetic particularities of neorealist cinema uneasily negotiate any residual attachments to fascism, most evident in continuities of personnel in the industry. While it is now clear that feature films made with the support of the fascist regime were not overtly propagandistic in content, and were more thematically varied and technically accomplished than once had been allowed, they offer an unwanted inheritance to a body of work that sought to break from Italy's immediate past.

Steven Ricci's *Cinema and Fascism: Italian Film and Society, 1922–1943* and Noa Steimatsky's *Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema* ostensibly sit on either side of the divide created by the fall of Mussolini and the new republic. Ricci's attempt at clear periodization, however, contrasts with Steimatsky's reluctance to section off the past from the present. The contrasting sense of temporality is indicative of other differences between the two books. While in a broad sense both are part of recent attempts to reinterpret the cultural history of Italy during and after fascism, their methodological approaches are distinct. While Ricci is much more concerned with cinema's relationship with the state, and with its audiences, Steimatsky interrogates film as an

element of a broad cultural field, drawing on an expertise in early painting, photography and architecture in order to offer a rich contexualization and detailed textual analysis of the works she studies.

Ricci's main focus is on 'the relationship between the rise of fascism and the experience of cinema in Italy' (p. 3). He is interested in the wide range of social and economic factors that would have shaped film production and audience responses in Italy during the twenty years of the fascist regime. Ricci begins by looking at how film historians have viewed films made under fascism. He offers a useful overview of the conditions in which films were made in this period, then in the following chapter examines more closely the relationship between the state and film production. A particularly interesting theme of the book is Italian cinema's ongoing relationship with Hollywood and how the industry tried to respond to the alluring models that it produced. The third chapter explores in more detail a range of films comparing ideologically driven historical epics with popular comedies set in the 1930s. The key point here is the tension between fascism's avowed modernity and its cultivation of the past. The regime's commitment to modernity was shown in its relationship to the USA. Ricci's discussion of the documentary *Mussolini Speaks* (1932), made for an American public, reveals Italy talking back to its cinematographically dominant partner. A key point to emerge from Ricci's engagingly written and wide-ranging volume is the importance of documentary production under fascism as a means by which the state could both represent and address the nation. The very charged realism of these films provided, amongst other things, the backdrop to the counter-representational strategies of neorealist filmmakers who began to imagine Italy differently. While Ricci's book has much to offer, it is a pity that the author was unable to engage with the most recent work in Italian, most notably Vito Zagarrio's *Cinema e fascismo*.[1]

As its title suggests, Steimatsky's *Italian Locations: Reinhabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema* is interested in revisiting both the geographies and histories of Italian cinema. Focusing on a carefully selected corpus of work by key directors of the postwar period, the book is also testimony to the enduring interest in neorealism as a crucial experience in the aesthetics and politics of film production. To return to neorealism should be a daunting task in that so much has already been written on the subject. Yet Steimatsky's work is far from being a familiar rerun of an arguably over-analyzed set of films, and critical topoi. Firstly, the chronological span of her book exceeds conventional periodization. Beginning with a discussion of Antonioni's early documentary production in the late 1930s, she concludes with an extended exploration of Pasolini's work around *Il vangelo secondo Matteo*/*The Gospel According to Matthew* (1964) in the mid 1960s. In the intervening chapters, she looks at work by Rossellini and Visconti. Yet her decision here to focus on Rossellini's *Germania anno zero*/*Germany Year Zero* (1948) and Visconti's *La terra trema* (1948), ostensibly two films

1 Vito Zagarrio, *Cinema e fascismo: film, modelli, immaginari* (Venice: Marsilo, 2004). For an invaluable overview of recent work in Italian see Alan O'Leary, 'After Brunetta: Italian cinema studies in Italy, 2000 to 2007', *Italian Studies*, vol. 63, no. 2 (2008), pp. 279–307.

indelibly associated with neorealism, is motivated by a desire to situate them in a different critical space. The book is divided into four substantial chapters, each devoted to the work of a particular director. Yet Steimatsky's challenge is to read the work of each through an organizing trope that illuminates the part while connecting it to a broader set of cinematic and cultural concerns. The determination to rethink the terms of engagement with neorealism is evident throughout the book.

In her introduction, Steimatsky sets out the contentious histories and geographies that she goes on to elaborate. Insisting on the 'newness' of neorealism, she also holds on to its strenuous attachment to the past. Situating its energies as part of Italy's postwar 'predicament of reconstruction' (p. xi), she negotiates its commitment to the future by attentive examination of the dialogue between 'the realist ethos as a natural ally in a national project of reconstruction' and its 'modernist critical elements' (p. xxii). The problem of modernism was its association with fascism, yet a conventional realist aesthetic might have proved too conciliatory. As a solution to this apparent impasse, Steimatsky argues for an 'oppositional realism' that would retain a politically motivated commitment to representation, while offering openings to an as yet unrepresentable future. The potential displacement inherent in this conjunction anticipates the work of Bazin and Deleuze in the international context who prise the neorealist aesthetic away from its dependence on the contingent circumstance of postwar Italy.

Under the rubric 'aerial', Steimatsky prefaces her discussion of Antonioni's short documentary *Gente del Po* (1942/1947) with an examination of his earlier writing on the 'spirit' of landscape. Yet she complicates his idealist vision by situating it in terms of fascism's general enthusiasm for aerial themes in art and cinema.[2] The possibilities offered by documentary for avoiding cinematic narrative conventions are not eradicated by these associations, but are certainly complicated by them. In the subsequent chapter, Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero* and his significantly later *Viaggio in Italia/Journey to Italy* (1954) are the terrain on which Steimatsky pursues an investigation of the 'ruinous' as a defining trope of postwar Italy. Conceptualizing the ruin as both evidence and commemoration of the past, she argues that Rossellini articulates an aesthetic of the contingent or everyday that disrupts the past's monumentalization. In exploring Rossellini's work in conjunction with contemporary debates in architecture and town planning, and his cinematic displacements of the ruined landscape to Berlin and Pompei, Steimatsky reveals an uncanny temporality at the core of his contemporary representations.

La terra trema, inspired by nineteenth-century literary realism, is approached through a consideration of the photography of Sicilian novelist Giovanni Verga. Tracking a 'subterranean genealogy of cinematographic modernity' (p. 116), Steimatsky argues that Visconti goes beyond the representational function of the still photographic image to find an expressive function in the landscape itself. The length of time

2 A fascinating parallel to Steimatsky's work is Angela Dalle Vacche's chapter on aviation and Italian cinema's early female stars: Angela Dalle Vacche, *Diva: Defiance and Passion in Early Italian Cinema* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008), pp. 105–28

he took to shoot the film reveals an almost obsessive desire to capture the mythical promise of the Sicilian countryside promoting it from mere backdrop to choral participant. Visconti's glimpse of atemporality in what appears resolutely present leads on to the book's final chapter on Pasolini, read through the trope of the 'archaic'. Having spent a considerable amount of time on location in Palestine, Pasolini chose to film *The Gospel According to Matthew* in southern Italy showing his characteristic ambivalence towards modernity through consciously elected anachronism and displacement. His use of frontal mise-en-scene depends on an eclectic borrowing from early Italian painting intimating the vital remnants of a still-to-be superseded past embedded in the present.

Too little work in English has been done on the texts and contexts of Italian cinema. The dominant and persisting tendency to rest on an auteurist model of criticism, however innovatively articulated, necessarily limits the field. Both these books are to be welcomed for their contributions to expanding the field and methodologies of Italian film studies.

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Catherine Wheatley, *Michael Haneke's Cinema: the Ethic of the Image.* Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009, 216 pp.

JOHN ORR

To my knowledge, Catherine Wheatley's book is the first full-length study of Michael Haneke written in English. While good anglophone criticism does exist, it is in essay form. The pieces that spring to mind are the landmark essay by Brigitte Peucker on Haneke's 'modernist melodramas' and the astute articles by Maxmillian le Cain and Matthias Frey for the online journal *Senses of Cinema*.[1] Wheatley's book goes much further by being doubly ambitious, providing a detailed and brilliant reading of Haneke's film career to include the remake of *Funny Games* (2007) but also reconsidering Haneke through the concept of spectatorship and the meaning of the act of watching, or what she calls 'the ethic of the image'. Whereas semiotic theories have previously tried to show how the spectator is positioned, ideologically speaking, within the cinematic apparatus, Wheatley's quest is to show how Haneke tries to position his audiences outside of it, perceptually naked and alone, forced to judge for themselves, a positioning which implies, following the director's own controversial metaphor, 'raping his spectators into awareness'. A contradiction in terms? Certainly. But Wheatley's exploration of that contradiction while reading the films themselves, thereby trying to kill two birds with one stone, works triumphantly. This is a bold, lucid and fiercely intelligent book, a vital addition to the study of contemporary cinema by one of the UK's brightest young film critics.

1 Brigitte Peucker, 'Violence and affect: Hanke's modernist melodramas', in *The Material Image: Art and the Real in Film* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 129–58; Maximilian Le Cain, 'Do the right thing: the films of Michael Haneke', *Senses of Cinema* <http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/03/26/haneke.html>; Matthias Frey, 'Michael Haneke', *senses of cinema* <http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/directors/03/haneke.html> [both accessed 16 September 2009]