



Sexual Politics & Narrative Film

Robin Wood

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One of the most distinctive voices in film criticism explores relationships between narrative style and sexual politics. Robin Wood, well known for his books *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* and *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*, probes the political and sexual ramifications of fascism and cinema, marriage and the couple, romantic love, and representations of women, race, and gender in contemporary films from the United States, Europe, and Japan. He looks closely at the works of Leo McCarey and Jacques Rivette, Ozu's "Noriko Trilogy," and the recent Generation X films *Before Sunrise* and *The Doom Generation*. In a chapter on fascism and cinema that juxtaposes Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* and Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*, Wood finds that what is most important is not these films' record of another time and place but "the light they can throw on our contemporary cultural situation." Wood's central concern in these chapters is the ways in which the films relate to sexual politics and the organization within our culture of gender and sexuality. Seeing humanity as a "battleground" of a struggle between forces for Life and those of Death, Wood holds out hope for a joining of the forces of feminism, antiracism, lesbian and gay rights, and environmentalism necessary for authentic movement toward liberation.

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Isaac Davidson says

Radical Marxist/Feminist/Freudian criticism of films from apparently disparate cultural modes (from Renoir, to Ozu, to Bergman, to Linklater, etc.) that are ultimately linked by their status as products of an overbearingly capitalist-patriarchal ideology. Wood's project is largely to demonstrate how these films--whether intentionally or not--prove readily available for radical leftist appropriation toward sexual, and therefore human, liberation. Despite the density of the premise, Wood is always honest, precise, and engaging, rejecting impenetrable, jargon-ridden theory in favor of authentic humanism and lively prose.

Anyone interested in a more serious understanding of film but would rather not have to dedicate their time toward a crash course in film theory would be well off with this or any of Robin Wood's books.
