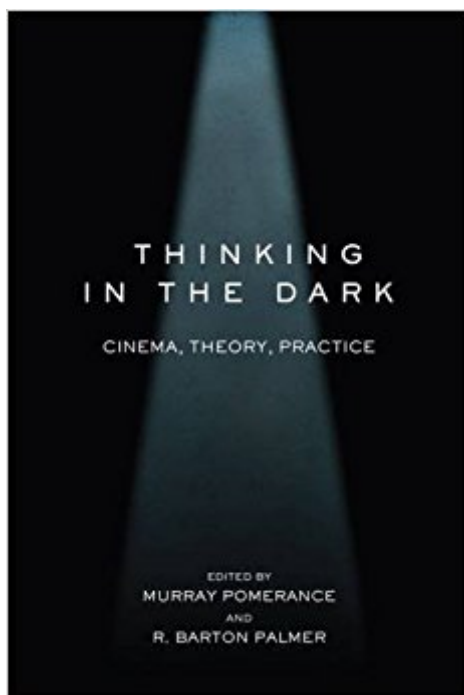


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Thinking In The Dark: Cinema, Theory, Practice



Synopsis

Today's film scholars draw from a dizzying range of theoretical perspectives—they're just as likely to cite philosopher Gilles Deleuze as they are to quote classic film theorist André Bazin. To students first encountering them, these theoretical lenses for viewing film can seem exhilarating, but also overwhelming. *Thinking in the Dark* introduces readers to twenty-one key theorists whose work has made a great impact on film scholarship today, including Rudolf Arnheim, Sergei Eisenstein, Michel Foucault, Siegfried Kracauer, and Judith Butler. Rather than just discussing each theorist's ideas in the abstract, the book shows how those concepts might be applied when interpreting specific films by including an analysis of both a classic film and a contemporary one. It thus demonstrates how theory can help us better appreciate films from all eras and genres: from *Hugo* to *Vertigo*, from *City Lights* to *Sunset Blvd.*, and from *Young Mr. Lincoln* to *A.I.* and *Wall-E*. The volume's contributors are all experts on their chosen theorist's work and, furthermore, are skilled at explaining that thinker's key ideas and terms to readers who are not yet familiar with them. *Thinking in the Dark* is not only a valuable resource for teachers and students of film, it's also a fun read, one that teaches us all how to view familiar films through new eyes. Theorists examined in this volume are: Rudolf Arnheim, Béla Balázs, Roland Barthes, André Bazin, Walter Benjamin, Judith Butler, Stanley Cavell, Michel Chion, Gilles Deleuze, Jean Douchet, Sergei Eisenstein, Jean Epstein, Michel Foucault, Siegfried Kracauer, Jacques Lacan, Vachel Lindsay, Christian Metz, Hugo Münsterberg, V. F. Perkins, Jacques Rancière, and Jean Rouch.

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Customer Reviews

Full disclosure: I am actually one of the contributors to this book, writing the chapter -- one of twenty-one -- on Bela Balazs. Nevertheless, from the perspective of someone who regularly has to teach film theory at the undergraduate level, I have to say that this book is a godsend. I've been teaching film theory for ten years now, previously using the standard anthology, Braudy and Cohen's, published by OUP, and more recently the alternate one by Corrigan, White, and Mazaj published by Bedford/St. Martin's. My experience has been that students are now incapable of reading the original theoretical essays and extracts collected in these anthologies. And to be fair, even with an editorial apparatus of introductions and footnotes, that theory is becoming more and more opaque, distant in socio-historical context and in mode of expression. Let's face it: most (pre-internet) theorists aren't actually celebrated for their concise and clear prose; and reading just an excerpt from their body of writing actually results in a fairly major distortion of their ideas. As a result of all this, the classroom experience has become a torment, for them and me. The great advantage of this new volume, then, is that it provides a very good sense of the sociohistorical context of each theorist, a nuanced overview of their key theoretical ideas (including the evolution of those ideas over the course of their lives), and a demonstration of how that theory can actually be productively applied, both to a "classical" film and a much more recent movie. Each chapter does all of this in a mere 5000 words (so you won't find any rambling academic prose in this particular volume)! I've just used this book in my film theory course for the first time and the change in the mood and energy of the class is unbelievable.

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