

Anatomy of Film (3rd ed)

By Anton Karl Kozlovic

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THE POPULAR Hollywood cinema has grown from toy to tool to become a mainstay of contemporary culture, which in turn has generated its own need for increasingly complex introductory guides. Bernard F. Dick's *Anatomy of Film* is one such offering. It sits well alongside other honourable exemplars in the field such as *An Introduction to Film* (Thomas & Vivian Sobchack), *An Introduction to Film Studies* (Jill Nelmes), *The Art of Watching Film with CD-ROM* (Joe Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie), *The Cinema Book* (Pam Cook & Mieke Bernink), *Film: An Introduction* (William H. Phillips), *Film Art: An Introduction with Tutorial CD-ROM* (David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson), *How to Read a Film* (James Monaco), *Movies and Meaning: An Introduction to Film* (Stephen R. Prince), *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson) and *Understanding Movies* (Louis Giannetti).

Like fine wine, each introductory textbook has a flavour and bouquet that appeals to some and not others. Dick's book is particularly enjoyable because it derives its content from first principles that make logical sense, it displays a sense of continuity and contains many important film topics not usually encountered elsewhere (e.g., intertitles, logos, Christ-figures, machine voices, subtexts). Dick's infectious enthusiasm for his field is contagious and easily relayed to the reader.

Organizationally speaking, it is comprised of ten uneven chapters (with many helpful hierarchical sub-headings), namely: (1) understanding the medium, (2) graphics and sound, (3) film, space, and mise-en-scène, (4) enhancing the image: colour, lighting, and visual effects, (5) film genres, (6) film subtext, (7) the film director, (8) film and literature, (9) film analysis, and (10) film theory and criticism. All of them contain useful information and perceptive insights written in a clear style. Dick makes an effort to balance the contemporary (e.g. *X-Men*) with the classics (e.g. *Citizen Kane*) and provides useful tips and guidelines for practical film criticism, including student paper exemplars and director interviews (e.g., Billy Wilder, Alan Alda). Regrettably, chapter seven is the poorest written, especially "Collaboration," which consisted of one basic point and numerous tedious examples that could be better packaged as a table.

Anatomy of Film is scholar-friendly with an informative table of contents, detailed list of films and directors, a guide to online resources, video and DVD rental and purchase information, a glossary of motion picture terms, an index and numerous black-and-white film stills. Regrettably, there were no colour stills, even when discussing the colour film and the colorization process. Furthermore, there is no listing of the film stills used, no consolidated bibliography to avoid laboriously searching through the notes, and very disappointingly, no current references in the respective fields, with chapter nine having no notes or references at all.

The book would also benefit from a further reading section per chapter. Many genres and topics were ignored (e.g., queer films, third world cinema, religious films etc.), whilst film terms used in the text were not defined in the glossary (e.g., farce, satire) and films referred to in the text were not included in the filmography (e.g. *Psycho II*, *Psycho III*, *Psycho IV*). Similarly, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade was mentioned in the text and filmography, but missing from the index. Some film titles were also unnecessarily truncated (e.g. *Close Encounters* instead of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*) although correctly labeled elsewhere. All of these minor errors mars a work that otherwise reeks of precision.

Overall, Bernard F. Dick should be congratulated for continually expanding his popular textbook into its 5th incarnation, and for making it fun and useful for novices, teachers and scholars alike. *Anatomy of Film* deserves a place in any introductory film library. One only hopes that its future incarnations include CD ROM versions of the text with DVD audiovisual clips illustrating the film exemplars and animated sequences demonstrating the concepts examined.

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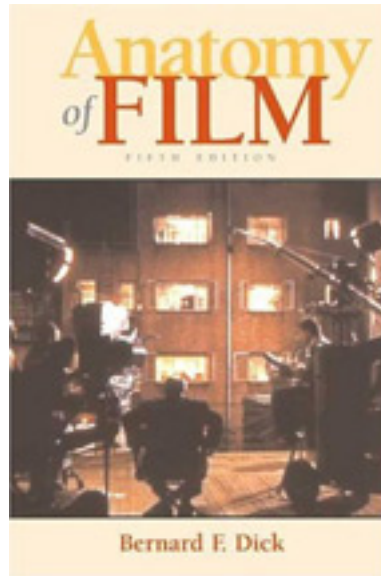


Figure 1: *ANATOMY OF FILM* 3rd ed. Bernard F. Dick. ¶ Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's, 2005. 418pp. ¶ ISBN 0-312-41516-8 (softback), \$40.95.

the biblical cinema of Cecil B. DeMille. He has published in journals including *Australian Religion Studies Review*, *Belphegor: Popular Literature and Media Culture*, *The Film Journal*, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, *The Journal of Religion and Film*.