Doris Baltruschat and Mary P. Erickson (eds), *Independent Filmmaking Around the Globe*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2015; pp. 328, RRP CAD $36.95 (Paperback).

*Independent Filmmaking Around the Globe* focuses on three main axes of independent film: its ontology (what is independent film or what defines a notion of independence); its influence on expression, meaning-making, and on shaping ways of film production and distribution; and, finally, the use of digital technology from independent filmmakers to surpass cultural, geographic, political, funding and economic constraints. Through the studies of film scholars and filmmakers, the book successfully manages to trace an overview, with enormous depth, of contemporary global film across a range of geographies and across different cultural, political and economic realities, using as case studies independent filmmaking from the United Kingdom, Southern Europe, Iraq, China, North America, Peru, West Africa and Australia.

One of the successes of the book lies in its organization, which combines and balances the informative power of the cases examined by each of the contributors, with their theoretical and critical relevance, never losing sight of the importance of each case study to a wider understanding of independent film. This is what gives the book particular importance in the context of film studies, since it touches not merely on local or regional aspects of independent film but uses local and regional case studies to offer a vision over independent cinema in its global and current configuration. For this reason, it is not only one of my favourite film studies readings for the year 2015, but a very helpful and fundamental anthology to assist teaching courses of related topics.

The book is divided into three parts, with a total of thirteen chapters, plus the valuable introduction by the editors Doris Baltruschat and Mary P. Erickson, and the foreword by filmmaker David Hamilton. Part one focuses on aspects of funding and how the concept of independence can be defined in light of a binomial relationship between independent film and Hollywood. From these chapters emerges the ever interesting dilemma behind the concept of independence: something can only be considered independent against something else, but in order to oppose two entities (such as independent and Hollywood film) the two entities need each other and they are, therefore, somewhat dependent on one another. Somehow, independent film needs to belong in order not to belong. For that reason, I believe the ontological discussion around independent film is one of the forefront runners in terms of theoretical interest in film studies, equal in terms of interest to the much more adhered debate of what is documentary and what is realism in film?
The five chapters in part one of the book discuss the meaning of independent film from the historical perspective of Hollywood’s creation of their independent divisions in the 1990s (Yannis Tzioumakis); the funding mechanisms for independent film in Europe, and how the legislation applying to that funding shapes the actual direction of filmmaking and access to opportunities (Teresa Hoefert de Turégano); the creation of independent film and its different conceptions through the influence of a cross-Atlantic dynamic, especially between independent film from the United Kingdom and the United States (Erik Knudsen); the case of independent film in Australia and how Hollywood, in spite of its long geographical distance, shapes the funding policies for Australian independent film, which on its turn shapes the expressive and aesthetic nature of Australian film (Mark David Ryan); and, finally, the last chapter in part one, which deals with the influence of dominant south American film industries, such as Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, on independent Peruvian film (Gabriela Martínez).

Section two of the book deals with the influence of cultural, social, economic and political constraints on the creation of independent film across geographies in the Middle East, Africa and China. Namely, how those constraints shape the voice, expression and authorial language of filmmakers. The five chapters in this part of the book examine New Greek Cinema from the 1960s as the stem of an independent Greek cinema strongly tied to the idea of art cinema and inventive aesthetics, and its legitimation through the Greek Film Center in 1980, but also its crisis derived from the recent economical crisis in Greece (Lydia Papadimitriou); the historical roots of Turkish independent film since the 1960s, and its focus on political content due to institutional pressure (Murat Akser); the rebirth of an independent Iraqi film from exiled filmmakers working from abroad, and the importance of filmmaking training from organizations such as the Independent Film and Television College in Baghdad or the Women Media Initiative of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, among others (Mary P. Erickson); the emergence of independent Chinese film in the 1990s, as result of the works of the so called Sixth Generation of underground filmmakers, such as Zhuang Yuan and Wang Xiaoshuai, and the influence of the privatisation of film funding for the development of independent film (Hongwei Lu); and, finally, the announcement of a maturity of independent African film, where filmmakers have been successfully using technological tools for their advantage in terms of fund raising, production and distribution (Martin Mhando).

Section three offers three case studies that reaffirm a successful use of digital technology for the practice of independent filmmaking in Malaysia, the Canadian Arctic and Africa. The three chapters look into how Malay filmmakers are building a domestic attention to their films by using digital means of distribution to disseminate their films abroad and gaining the attention of foreign audiences first (Gaik Cheng Khoo); how technology has made it possible to produce films in remote Arctic regions with much less financial resources that was ever possible in the past (Doris Baltruschat); and how, in Ghana, constraints of political and financial order have been circumvent through the use of technology.
The appropriateness of the research and scope of knowledge we can find in *Independent Filmmaking Around the Globe* shows that independent film is not a static domain in film studies. Nor is it a historical delimited period, but an object of study with complexity and ever changing dynamics, which will also influence and be influenced by the interconnectivity among actors in the field and by the technological means available for fund raising, production and distribution. As the book shows, “high-end digital cameras, editing software, Internet distribution sites, and increased ease of home viewing thanks to video on demand and cloud computing” (Baltruschat and Erickson, 2015: 4) are not mere add-ons but have a power of shaping the nature of filmmaking and offer not only challenges but also alternatives to surpassing economic, social, political and cultural constraints.

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