Rise and Fall of the UK Film Council; Paul Moody's *EMI and the Limits of British Cinema*; Nathan Townsend's *Working Title Films*; and Laura Mayne's forthcoming *Channel 4 and the British Film Industry, 1982–1998*), Chapman's pre-history is at its forensic best on film policy, the changing relationship of cinema and state in Britain, and the role of public (NFFC) and private (Film Finances) institutions. It does not touch on successive and largely ineffectual efforts to stimulate international film partnerships via government sponsored co-production agreements (another story), but that omission is a minor caveat in what is by any standards a comprehensive study.

This is also a history of UK film finance and policy, not an *economic* history of the British film industry. That said, for those who crave hard data, across five appendices Chapman presents in clear tables the production costs and revenues of selected feature films in the late 1940s the National Film Trustee Company's production costs and receipts; the budgets and costs of selected British first features guaranteed by Film Finances, NFFC Annual Accounts, 1950–85, and a list of feature films supported by the NFFC, 1949–85. Chapman leaves his readers to ponder the question whose frequent repetition has taken on the tone of a bleakly prosaic mantra: 'Why investors have continued to invest in film production at all given the uncertainty of public taste and the ratio of success to failure?'. Either British cinema has been sustained by a lineage of poor gamblers who take no account of the form book, or (as I would prefer to have it) there are people out there who care more about films than money. Thank goodness.

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Laura Mulvey (author), Peter Wollen (author), Oliver Fuke (editor), *The Films of Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen: Scripts, Working Documents, Interpretation* (London: BFI, 2023), pp. xi + 368, ISBN: 9781839025259 (pb), £24.99.

Gathering varied materials and commentaries, *The Films of Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen: Scripts, Working Documents, Interpretation* is a carefully constructed palimpsest of a book. Nine of its 21 chapters are newly compiled scripts, detailing the sounds, images, scenes and sources used in the influential experimental films Mulvey and Wollen made from the 1970s onwards, after each had published landmark texts theorising cinema and the filmic gaze (including Mulvey's 'Visual

Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' [1973] and Wollen's *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* [1969] among others). Despite the significant influence of their writings internationally, this is one of the first publications to document their extraordinary working practices, examining their evocative, multi-layered films with insightful depth and innovative use of the printed form.

The scripts are punctuated by analyses of the films written by Nora M. Alter, Kodwo Eshun, Nicolas Helm-Grovas, Esther Leslie, Volker Pantenburg, Griselda Pollock, B. Ruby Rich and Sukhdev Sandhu. The collection includes two insightful introductions, one by the book's editor, curator and researcher Oliver Fuke, and another by Mulvey herself, who worked closely to transcribe the films meticulously over several years, during which time Wollen sadly passed away (having lived with Alzheimer's for an extended time). Despite the keen absence of a recent perspective on Wollen's part, the publication provides much-needed insights into the extraordinary work by both of them.

This collection extends discussions surrounding the screening series *Laura Mulvey & Peter Wollen: Beyond the Scorched Earth of Counter-Cinema* (Whitechapel Gallery, 2016) curated by Fuke and the exhibition *Art at the Frontier of Film Theory* (Birkbeck Institute of the Moving Image, 2019), co-curated by Fuke and book contributor Nicolas Helm-Grovas. An extended section of beautiful 'Working Documents' at the end of the book showcases invaluable and otherwise hard-to-find archival materials from the latter exhibition – including notes and diagrams.

The scripts document the trilogy *Penthesilea: Queen of the Amazons* (1974), *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977) and *AMY!* (1980), and the later films *Crystal Gazing* (1982), *Frida Kahlo & Tina Modotti* and *The Bad Sister* (both 1983). Grouped into five sections, the book chapters first consider the collaborative practice of Mulvey and Wollen, followed by sections dedicated to their separate projects, with a fascinating exploration of their unmade collaborative films *Possible Worlds* (1978) and *Chess Fever* (1984), printed here for the first time.

Working largely with 16mm film and sometimes shooting and re-filming video, Mulvey and Wollen worked with television in their final collaboration, *The Bad Sister*. This final work was made for 'the intriguing newfoundland of Channel 4 and its state-sponsored avant-gardism' (Sandhu, 211). This was a time of fast-paced development in independent experimental film- and video-making in the UK, and Mulvey and Wollen's films bridge the radical politics and political campaigning of this time – by organisations such as the Independent Film-maker's Association (IFA), Channel 4 and the London Film-

makers' Co-op with which they were involved – to create a poetics of theory all their own.

Helm-Grovas's early essay on *Penthesilea* foregrounds the makers' aim to start film-making from zero, the 'scorched earth' upon which they would construct a counter-cinema, to use Wollen's term. Outlining their intention to create film as discourse, their approach to remaking the gaze and their involvement with feminist and political activism at the time (including collaboration with artist Mary Kelly), Helm-Grovas asks whether a route into their work can be found that 'doesn't pass through the dominant, ideological forms that Mulvey and Wollen were anatomising in their writings at this time?' (65).

Departing from the idea that scripts are the first stage of film-making, the book presents very different kinds of texts. Fuke observes how Mulvey and Wollen's 'project of working critically with narrative [was] often accompanied by instances of poetic, speculative and constrained writing' (9). In both this collection and the films it documents, 'the writing process is more akin to critical reworking or adaptation' (9). Indeed, Mulvey and Wollen's early collaborative films examined mythic retelling. As Helm-Grovas writes, in *Penthesilea* 'quotations and allusions are carefully placed and referenced, their sources marked, suggesting scholarly practice as well as artistic montage' (65).

Ideas of literary and contextual translation are significant to the mythic narratives their films explore, which involve a poetic mode of address that the typeset scripts further remediate. Starting with *Penthesilea*, Mulvey and Wollen's trilogy first examines the story of this Amazon warrior who loved/fought Achilles, as retold by Heinrich von Kleist (during the Enlightenment, although Kleist's work found popularity later, in the Romantic period). They then examine different depictions of the sphinx throughout history before finally juxtaposing the 1960/70s and 1920/30s in their portrait of aviator Amy Johnson. Later projects traverse cultural meaning and creative labour. *Crystal Gazing* merges parallel fictionalised stories/sounds, focusing on four creative characters – a musician, a PhD student, an illustrator working in science fiction and a researcher of space photography – to consider the meaning of utopianism in the dystopian setting of Thatcher-era Britain. *Frida Kahlo & Tina Modotti* considers the radical politics of these artists and friends, exploring their parallel lives and artworks (Mulvey and Wollen curated the influential, separate exhibitions *Frida Kahlo* and *Tina Modotti* at the Whitechapel Gallery, both in 1982). The least known and last of their collaborative films, *The Bad Sister*, is based on Emma Tennant's 1978 novel, which reworked an earlier

epistolary novel (a text made up of multiple documents, diaries, letters, accounts – unauthored, unreliably transposed and/or found) by James Hogg from 1824: *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Tennant's version examines the murder of a wealthy Scottish landowner and his daughter, seemingly committed by his other daughter and a commune leader. As Mulvey writes, the form of these scripts allows for the 'poetic aspect of the work to emerge more clearly, and for the diverse modes of writing therein to be appreciated independently' (7). Considering that they needed 'careful and patient reconstruction, often from scattered fragments' (18), the retrospective creation/collation of these 'instances of scripting' (Fuke, 5) is no small feat, making this collection essential reading, providing detailed maps of the complex discourses, sources and structures at play.

Mulvey and Wollen's films include a variety of composers, voices, effects and musics (much of which was provided by Larry Sider under the title the Evanston Percussion Unit). These are meticulously documented in each script, another particular achievement of the publication, which includes a huge amount of otherwise undocumented information. As Fuke observes, this is connected to their working process, as 'one of the many major differences between mainstream cinema and avant-garde cinema concerns the status of the script and synchronised sound' (4). The relationship between text, sound and voice is also fundamental to the audio-visual framework of Mulvey and Wollen's films via the oral/aural concept of the pre-Oedipal 'chora', discussed by Mulvey (referencing Wollen's writing) in her superb Introduction. Posited by Julia Kristeva in 'The Subject in Process' (*Polylogue*, 1977) during discussion of writer/poet Antonin Artaud, the semiotic 'chora' is an instinctual state prior to language, connecting back to the oral origins of the myths explored in the films. The concept of the chora represents 'a narrow edge between words as image and as conveyor of meaning' (19), and it

> crystalises the conjuncture between the various radicalisms that interested [them]: avant-garde aesthetics, feminist politics and psychoanalytic theory, for all of which semantic structures, words, their comprehensibility or difficulty, were of central significance. (19–20)

The essays on each film examine how Mulvey and Wollen developed audio-visual methods for examining dominant cultural signification through/by feminist reassessment of meaning and status, with contributions by the influential art historian Griselda Pollock and critic B. Ruby Rich. Pollock's essay on *AMY!* considers the cultural implications of Johnson's celebrity and worldwide colonial and

feminist struggles both in the 1930s and 1979, outlining how, through the anti-heroism of the film, 'we are re-centred in a de-mythified subjective space of questioning and struggle' (121). This pluralised timeframe is important to Esther Leslie's analysis of the financial systems of the 1980s in *Crystal Gazing*. B. Ruby Rich considers the symbolic meaning of fame in *Frida Kahlo & Tina Modotti*, insightfully weaving in new discourse about the Whitechapel exhibitions, observing how the reception of people/artists can transform and 'come alive and matter in new ways, acquire new meanings and remind today's viewer of the pain and joy of lost histories . . . an archive of our time as well as theirs' (172).

Writing on *Riddles of the Sphinx*, Pantenburg emphasises how Mulvey and Wollen explored 'modes of research' long before more recent artist-led approaches (or research-based practice/practice-based research) emerged. The 'theoretical instruments' of film-making (91–8) that they used and created are foregrounded in other contributions to the publication, highlighting their inventive use of slide projectors (Rich), rostrum (Pollock), music (Fuke) as well as still photos and archive footage.

The inclusion of outlines of Mulvey and Wollen's unmade collaborative projects, *Possible Worlds* and *Chess Fever*, provides new insights into their practices. The first outline is a scene-by-scene description of three interlocking fictional narratives examining money, computers, and labour. The second fictional story explores the relationship between two chess players during a tournament, with parallel experimental depictions of animated/computerised gameplay. These scripts provide glimpses of tantalising speculative directions in the development of their ideas, shapes of not yet fully formed ideas. Printing them here, alongside their individual later works, indicates their varied approaches to examining 'a past that evolves based on the present condition', to use the words of Alter (304). Mulvey and artist Mark Lewis's film *Disgraced Monuments* (1994) examines monument creation and replacement in Soviet states from the revolution to post-Soviet history revision during the neoliberal era after 1989 (the script here originally appeared in the journal *PIX*). Alter's essay on the film includes rigorous explanations, offering an important conceptual centre to the ideas expressed in the films and commentaries. Alter writes: 'The moment something gets frozen and memorialised, ideas become calcified and retrograde, mired in the past instead of embracing the future' (304). This sense of past, present, future – and political transformation – is significant to Leslie's writing on *Crystal Gazing*, 'this augury, this crystal gazing, is economic

prediction. Here it gleams the first twinkling of neoliberalism … cultural labour, specifically intellectual labour, as central to a new phase of capitalism' (156).

Mulvey and Wollen's use of iterative storytelling shifts from mythopoesis in *Penthesilea* to a speculative conception of the future in the prescient *Crystal Gazing*, a transition that carries forward in Wollen's short story and script for *Friendship's Death* (1976/87). In *Friendship's Death*, a journalist encounters an extra-terrestrial 'artificial' life form named Friendship (played by Tilda Swinton in the film version), who unintentionally lands during the 'Black September' of the civil war in Jordan in 1970. Due to technical issues, Friendship is cut off from communicating with the life forms who sent them. The book includes two versions: a reprint of the short story originally published in *Bananas* (1976) and the film script. These are also the only sections of the publication authored by Wollen.

Eshun's essay on *Friendship's Death* is a must-read. Highly eloquent in its historical scope and analyses of versions of the story, it discusses Wollen's

> ambition to emancipate white British science fiction from its reliance upon the generic figure of Klaatu, the white, male, intergalactic patriarch whose ecumenical message of 'peace and goodwill for all mankind' epitomises the imperialist humanitarianism of capitolocentric science fiction. (268)

Of course, Wollen's work did not 'decolonise or desegregate white Britain's science fiction cinema', as these narratives persist today, but it did involve a 'reorientation of armed resistance around the prospect of artificial intelligence' or 'artificialisation as intelligence' as Eshun outlines (268). Friendship is 'an alien residing within, yet living outside of, the human species, Friendship does not enact the Riddle of the Sphinx; instead, she confronts viewers with the Riddle of Simulation' (269).

Adding to these riddles, the outlines for the unmade films, *Possible Worlds* and *Chess Fever* – the first a scene-by-scene outline, the second an extended prose description – focus on computing and mechanisation, considering consciousness, epistemology, freedom, cultural othering and labour. The technological, future focus in these unmade solo works anticipates developments in gaming and media theories – on ludology, flow, immersion, ethics and AI – with prescient ideas arising on the potential internalisation of bias – the cultural signifiers, linguistic and conceptual, of race, gender and class – as they are encoded into the programming from which computational and digital tools are created.

Today's critiques of perpetuated inequality have roots in the very different forms/experiences of capitalism considered in Mulvey and Wollen's film-making, scrutinising key moments of neoliberal emergence and transition. To use a term taken and expanded by Sandhu (via Michael Kustow) (208) during his invaluable exploration of *The Bad Sister*, the 'timeshifting' methods of both Mulvey and Wollen re-emphasise the oscillating political potentials of retelling stories, reverberating further forward to today. Sandhu explores media and other technologies, providing a much-needed account of how this rarely examined film gives us 'a tantalising glimpse of how Mulvey and Wollen's work might have evolved going forward. To watch it, as is the case with so many of their films, involves looking forward as much as looking back' (215).

The final script, *23rd August 2008* (2013) was made by Mulvey and Lewis with researcher Faysal Abdullah. In this digital film, Abdullah recounts the story of his brother Kamal, a distinguished left-wing Iraqi intellectual driven into exile by Saddam Hussein's regime in the 1980s. Kamal returned to work at the new Ministry of Culture in Iraq, formed in 2003, but was assassinated on 23 August 2008. As Mulvey writes, even though the family's attempts to seek justice or explanation were blocked, a younger generation of the Iraqi Left publicly commemorates this intellectual loss and historical erasure each year. Mulvey and Abdullah foreground histories of the Iraqi Left and this important, moving film indicates Mulvey's collaborative spirit and alertness to the international filtering and promotion of particular narratives/experiences, an important point when considering narratives of colonial resistance and cultural erasure in this region today.

Mulvey's final essay points to an essential difference between the textual scripts printed in this volume and the filmic acts to which they connect:

> But there is also something happening on the screen, in the image, that the written script presented in this volume cannot capture: the way that this unbroken 'chunk' of time builds a portrait of the speaker and his relation to words, to a particular language and to gesture. (315)

The variety of registers and formats compiled here conveys Mulvey and Wollen's work as artists in ways different from the audio-visual registers of their films, and ways that contrast with their work as critics, writers, theorists, researchers and educators/professors. It does much to rebalance what could be said to be an over-emphasis on particular types of writing (namely theory). Indeed, Wollen's theories

of avant-garde practices are far from accepted among film-makers and thinkers, now as then. Information about the personal shifts in their relationship, as collaborators, (married) partners and later (separated) co-parents and friends, particularly in Mulvey's open introduction, is vital, as is her emphasis that her account might not reflect that of Wollen.

The final vivid archival image survey reminds us of writing as a way of thinking, as part of an expansive process of ideation and dialogue. By returning to text and remediating stories within and about their films, these scripts continue the cycles of retelling that they contain.

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Louis Bayman and K. J. Donnelly (editors), *Folk Horror on Film: Return of the British Repressed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023), pp. xiii + 249, ISBN: 978 1 5261 6492 6 (hb), £90.

While Summerisle's apple harvest may remain uncertain, writing on folk horror is abundant. Recent output in this field includes the edited collections *Folk Horror: New Global Pathways*; *Future Folk Horror: Contemporary Anxieties and Possible Futures* and *The Routledge Companion to Folk Horror*, all published in 2023. *Folk Horror on Film: Return of the British Repressed* furthers this bountiful harvest.

Much has happened in the field since Adam Scovell initiated efforts to define filmic folk horror around 'Unholy Trinity' exemplars *Witchfinder General* (1968), *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971) and *The Wicker Man* (1971) in his 2017 monograph, *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange*. The 'paucity' of writing on the subject noted by Bayman and Donnelly in their Introduction (1) suggests that perhaps it was written before the recent expansion of the field, because now there is plenty.

The editors also explain in the Introduction that with this volume they are attempting to define the 'folk horror' term (while resisting the temptation simply to spot 'motifs'); to explore folk horror in sociological terms, in that they perceive it as centring on a class-conscious awareness of, and fear of, 'the folk'; and to identify those elements of mise-en-scène and narrative structure demonstrably evident within it. This book differs from those mentioned above in that it draws specifically upon examples from British film, and, the editors suggest, such specificity reflects a desire to narrow the canon rather than to extend it.