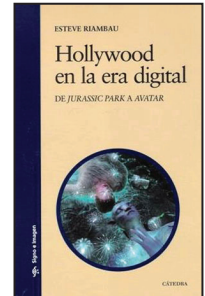Riambau, E. *Hollywood en la era digital. De 'Jurassic Park' a 'Avatar'*. 1st ed. Madrid: Cátedra, 2011. (Colección Signo e Imagen, 135), 435 p.
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by José Luis Sánchez Noriega

Lecturer in the history of cinema - Universidad Complutense de Madrid

From cinema stalls to multimedia experience

We have spent some time reading pressing articles, interviews and all kinds of reflections (some improvised, others more thought through, some more intuitive) that diagnose a time of radical change in the history of cinema taking place right now due to the mutations being experienced in terms of the industry, technology and exhibition. In effect, today we are faced with the fact that cinema companies form part of large media groups that bring together information and entertainment (infotainment), that the computer revolution has changed how images are created, assembled, stored, distributed and exhibited and (the definitive fact) that films are no longer seen principally in cinemas, as different channels and other media have proliferated. Together with the emergence of talkies (1927-1930) and the transformations of new cinemas (1959-1965), today we can consider that a great change is taking place in the history of cinema that still needs more time due to its size but which we can date back, as Esteve Riambau does in his book, to a time between the films of *Jurassic Park* (1993) and *Avatar* (2009). Although it's true that, during these fifteen years, we can identify events of a diverse nature, and that some factors of this big change, such as electronic cinema or the reformulation of genres, actually started in the 1980s.

The very precise title indicates a place (Hollywood, not even all North American films) to underline the fact that it refers mostly to commercial cinema with a hundred year tradition in the Californian industry; and to an era characterised by an expression ("digital era") that the reader should conceive beyond its initial meaning referring to data compression technology applied to audiovisuals, covering a series of broader phenomena. Studying mass cinema during this period of change is an appropriate and more than interesting task, albeit a little hasty insofar as we lack perspective for such an analysis: ultimately, we need to wait a couple of decades to see whether *Avatar* has been the start of a new audiovisual format or a failed attempt to reanimate the defunct 3D to combat piracy. Luckily, professor

Riambau is an accredited specialist with an already wide bibliography (with monographs on Resnais, Chaplin, Costa-Gavras, Coppola, Kubrick, etc.), of particular note being his exhaustive studies on Orson Welles in Spain, the biography of Ricardo Muñoz Suay and essays on French cinema (1958-1998) and, in collaboration with Casimiro Torreiro, on the Barcelona School. It's only fair to point out his track record in order to take note of the credentials with which this history of today's Hollywood is being tackled.

Riambau's work is intelligent, precise, considered and, albeit provisionally, offers an excellent panorama of contemporary mass cinema, deciphering its lines of force, those features that give it identity. It's not all cinema today and we must also remember that it's not the most innovative artistically nor the most fascinating intellectually, that's why *Hollywood en l'era digital* is recommendable complementary reading for, in my opinion, the best study of the aesthetic renovation of that era: *Cine e imaginarios sociales. El cine posmoderno como experiencia de los límites (1990-2010)*, by Gérard Imbert (Madrid, Càtedra, 2010). The latter deals with non-Californian films, principally the emerging figures of Asian and European cinema. But there are some common links (an analysis of works by Gus van Sant, Tim Burton, David Fincher) that relate one text to the other.

Riambau's work is structured into a first chapter on the current studio system, explaining the Hollywood film industry, and seven chapters on different lines or features that might characterise this commercial cinema of the digital era, based on technological or aesthetic innovations as well as on themes, archetypes, genre reformulations, etc. Aware that, when all is said and done, talking about cinema is talking about films and that what serves the reader best are filmographic analyses rather than lucubrations or sociological digressions, the author focuses on the fifty significant, symptomatic films of the dominant trends of this contemporary cinema (what some now unremittingly call *mainstream*). These analyses are thorough and intellectually insightful, revealing a creative cultural

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contextualisation and extensive knowledge of the history of cinema, something which not only makes them a model for reflection on the films that should help the reader/viewer in his or her own learning but also turns them into the pieces of the mosaic that go to make up this fundamental chapter to the history of Hollywood cinema in the digital era.

This cinema occurs within the industrial framework (chapter 1) of large multimedia groups that facilitate synergies and encourage global marketing via franchises or fashions that are fed by television series, theme parks, videogames and comics, so that the films are set within a production framework that goes beyond the individual film and the vehicle of cinema *per se*. It is therefore not surprising (beyond the traditional adaptations of literature in cinema) to see the proliferation of crossovers between television, comics, videogames and/or creation using various media (ch. 3). The digital revolution does not only lead to drastic transformations in the industry (ch.2) but also opens the doors to new aesthetics or new formulations of reality; for good reason a key feature of this kind of cinema is the rewriting of old films (ch. 6) or the revamping of classic adventures via new heroes (ch. 7). That's why it can be said that "Reality in contemporary cinema is always subsidiary to an image that, in addition to reproducing it (as done earlier), transforms it, subverts it and even ignores it to generate a new entity converted into a simulation of what is real" (p. 18).

In some way this new entity breaks the radical dichotomy of reality/fiction to blur the boundary, advocating intermediate states, strengthening the rhetoric of *mise en abîme* and calling dualism into question, whatever it's called (real/imaginary, actual/potential...), proposing the representation of parallel universes of a diverse nature, as Riambau explains very well in his splendid chapter 9 with an analysis of *Memento*, *Adaptation*, *Inland Empire*, *Minority Report*, *The Matrix*, etc., in which this seems to be the most singular feature of this digital era cinema. Lastly, we should also note his reflection on the language of this cinema (ch. 4), much more diverse than appears at first sight, and the reformulation of genres (ch. 5) carried out by some films with great impact (*Titanic*, *Forrest Gump*, *Blair Witch Project*...) and that allow us to talk sometimes of postmodern cinema and other times of post-classical cinema. As the reader will have deduced, *Hollywood en la era digital* is an excellent, apposite approach to contemporary cinema that deciphers its identity from various angles, contributing greatly to such study.

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