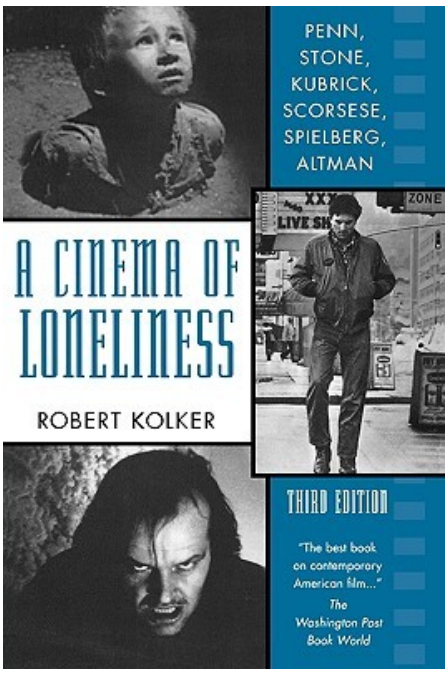

A Cinema of Loneliness: Penn, Stone, Kubrick, Scorsese, Spielberg, Altman

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In this twentieth-anniversary millennial edition, Kolker continues and expands his inquiry into the cinematic representation of culture by updating and revising the chapters on the directors discussed in the first edition--Stanley Kubrick, Martin Scorsese, Robert Altman, and Steven Spielberg-- to include their most important works since 1988, analyzing those films which have made important advances in the directors' careers and which have given cause for rethinking the films that preceded them. Included is a profile of Arthur Penn's career followed by a new comparative study of Oliver Stone, who mirrors Penn's practice of drawing his films out of historical and ideological currents. Placing the films of Penn, Stone, Kubrick, Scorsese, Spielberg, and Altman in an ideological perspective, Kolker both illuminates their relationship to one another and to larger currents in our culture, and emphasizes the statements their films make about American society and culture. This edition includes a new preface, a requiem for Stanley Kubrick, updated filmography, and 48 images from various films discussed through the text.

A Cinema of Loneliness: Penn, Stone, Kubrick, Scorsese, Spielberg, Altman Details

Date	:	Published May 1st 2000 by Oxford University Press, USA (first published January 3rd 1980)
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From Reader Review A Cinema of Loneliness: Penn, Stone, Kubrick, Scorsese, Spielberg, Altman for online ebook

Leftjab says

Very interesting read - gets a little too film theory for my tastes, but I enjoyed it nonetheless. Would love the author to make a companion to this about six more contemporary filmmakers. He kinda starts this book in the 4th edition of this one: David Fincher, Todd Haynes, Ramin Bahrani, maybe throw Jeff Nicholls in there, David Gordon Green, Kathryn Bigelow, Wes Anderson, PT Anderson? As the book is an exploration of the modernist legacies of Hitchcock, Welles, and Ford (the modernists of the golden age of the Hollywood studio system), he has little time for Tarantino, and probably at the time of writing this edition, PT Anderson was seen in the postmodernist mode for aping Tarantino, Altman, and Scorsese - but I would hold that Anderson's 21st Century movies (Punch Drunk Love, There Will Be Blood, The Master, and Inherent Vice) have taken Tarantino, Altman, Scorsese and even elements of Ford and Welles (not to mention Ophuls) and incorporated them into his approach; There Will Be Blood would make a fine night of viewing alongside McCabe and Mrs. Miller (and Peckinpah's The Ballad of Cable Hogue!). I'm guessing Lynch and the Coen Brothers fall into the postmodern absurdity realm, though I would think that both filmmakers have transcended this several times over (Tarantino owes so much to Lynch - Blue Velvet is a defining American movie of the 80s - but Lynch's brand of black humored surrealism owes very little to Welles or Ford, though MUCH to Hitchcock, maybe even moreso than DePalma who has made a career blatantly ripping Hitchcock off.) (The Coens are all over the place - though their treatment of genre in a way owes much to Altman, quite possibly the only other filmmaker who has made so many movies in varying genres that nonetheless feel the work of one imagination. Maybe Michael Winterbottom but he has entered into Altman's 80s in his career lately.)

It's funny to see the author's tastes writ large - his pages on superhero movies and 80s action heroes are very close to my heart (rightfully at the start of the Spielberg section!), and I liked his expounding upon what he sees as the more important works in the directors' respective filmographies, but I was also wondering about my personal favorites he skimmed over, most likely because they strayed thematically from the book - Spielberg's Empire of the Sun (not even mentioned), Stone's The Doors (also not mentioned, understandably, but I love it!), Scorsese's After Hours (barely mentioned). Altman's California Split gets a few pages and it as well doesn't have the heft of McCabe and Mrs. Miller or Nashville, but I love it nonetheless. Full Metal Jacket gets pages but largely in the Spielberg and Stone sections. (Corollary to this - Arthur Penn is a difficult director to pin down. Kolker rightly spends a great deal of time with Night Moves - an excellent film - but beyond the seismic impact of Bonnie & Clyde, Penn seems to me to be a fringe director more than a focal point. Mickey One is interesting in how it blatantly integrates French New Wave technique into an offbeat American story, but I wonder how much the impact of Bonnie & Clyde can be attributed to Warren Beatty more than Penn. Altman and Beatty had a tempestuous relationship on McCabe as well and Kolker spends arguably as many pages on McCabe as he does on Bonnie & Clyde - a key film in this context that is also strangely missing is Hal Ashby's Shampoo. Thematically Shampoo, Bonnie & Clyde, and McCabe and Mrs. Miller are all connected - though it would contradict Kolker's auteurist approach to say that the driving creative force behind those movies was Warren Beatty rather than their respective directors!)

An excellent book for film nerds like myself.

Michael Clayton says

A fantastic look at five of the most influential directors from the best period in Hollywood's history.

Blair says

I confess - I've only read the Scorsese and Kubrick chapters. But the Kubrick chapter is groundbreaking. To prevent all of our ears bleeding, I wrote my thesis with many of Kolker's principles in mind. If you want to know more, contact me. Really - I could use any extra interpretations.

Josh says

Everything about phallic symbols, patriarchy, and film as a tool of social change and collectivization is pretty silly, and Kolker tends to look at film a lot differently than I do, but he's one of the most readable academic film theorists, and his focus on form and content instead of plot mechanics and symbolism (again, except for the phallic symbol stuff) is welcome. He's admittedly weak on analysis of acting and music, but he has some insightful things to say about each filmmaker's specific formal style, especially Scorsese's and Altman's.

Carol Storm says

The sections on Stanley Kubrick are brilliant, especially A CLOCKWORK ORANGE and DR. STRANGELOVE. On the other hand, it's hard to take THE SHINING seriously, and Professor Kolker takes it very, very seriously indeed.

The more you read of Kosker's writing, the more unpleasant his personality becomes. It's a classic case of a dazed, embittered Sixties Survivor who wants to keep fighting all the old battles over and over, just like some old Kentucky colonel forever mourning the fall of the Confederacy.

I have nothing against the Sixties, or Sixties radicals, but the premise of this book seems to be that the only movies that matter are the movies that reinforce the leftist politics of the critic. This makes some sense, I suppose, with a movie like Dr. Strangelove, which can be read as an anti-military satire. But when it's a movie like A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, the whole thing becomes problematic. Because the radicals who "rescue" Alex after his "cure" are revealed to be just as stupidly greedy for power as the government ministers they attack. This is not a complex insight, but it seems to be completely beyond Kolker's grasp. He goes so far as to call psychotic teen murderer Alex "admirable" (the reasons are a little vague) but never seems to notice that the canting, preening, murderous radical F. Alexander is simply contemptible. Stanley Kubrick and Anthony Burgess were men of the world, guys who came up the hard way, and they had no illusions about the sanctity of the left. Robert Kolker is a college professor who knows from nothing about hard times. Or hard men. Or anything, really, but the sanctity of his own convictions.

Emily says

I bought this book for a class I ended up not taking . . . but I've read sections of it over and over. There's a great chapter on the weirdly fascist action movies that came out in the 80s . . . the Scorcese chapter, especially the section on Taxi Driver, is excellent, as is the Kubrick analysis.

Emily says

The title of this book is what grabbed me, but the penetrating essays on film form—and the directors who subverted convention to create an open, inquisitive cinema—are what held me. There were many revelations. For example, I'd always experienced Stanley Kubrick as icy and inaccessible; this book helped me see how he used that cold eye to "document (human) loneliness in the face of progress" through films such as "2001." For Kubrick, characters are "less the psychologically motivated creations we are used to seeing in American film and instead more obsessive, maniacal ideas released in human form" (think "Full Metal Jacket" and "The Shining"). The author deepened my appreciation for the body of Oliver Stone's work by explaining that he consistently uses "temporal editing as a major tool in the cinematic representation of history… inviting us to look at what we believe we know and to imagine alternative fictions…" That explains the exhilarating feeling I get each time I watch "JFK." We can all appreciate the kinetic energy of a Martin Scorsese film, but for those of us who seek to understand what drives Scorsese's manic violence, consider this: "He is addicted to cinema… a filmmaker who devours other films and infuses what he absorbs into his own work… to create films in dialogue with one another." In this way—through allusion—he keeps "the history of cinema alive within any individual film." I get chills just thinking about the sweep of this statement!

Joey says

i enjoy films. i enjoy loneliness. this book is a must read for anyone who wants to read about loneliness in some of the most intersting films of the past 30 or 40 years.

Thom Sutton says

Really insightful analysis of a few select directors whose work revitalized American film in the 60s and 70s. My copy is the 2nd edition, which is unfortunate in that it excludes any films post its 1985 publication date (and the decision to replace a section on Coppola with one on Spielberg makes a lot less sense now than it must have then), but is also a great edition in that one of the blurbs featured on the back cover is a quote from Scorsese recommending it to people who have directed films written about in the book.

Craig says

Seems more like it was published in 1968 than 1980. Kolker is a very strong reader and some of his analyses are excellent, but the number of great films that he pans (Clockwork Orange, Nashville) and the convolution in some of his arguments is staggering.