

**Mary Jane Miller**

*Turn Up The Contrast: CBC Television Drama since 1952*  
Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press and CBC Enterprises, 1987.

Our sense of the history of television programming in Canada is likely to be rooted in two realities. One is the continued absence of older programs from current schedules, a persistent theme of Mary Jane Miller's book. The other is the entrenched myth of a Golden Age, one marked by the ideal coincidence of an international climate supportive of innovation and the existence of national programming authorities sensitive to the particularities of local and national cultures. The cynical view, gaining ground in recent years, has argued that the myth of a Golden Age depends on this inaccessibility of early programs, which survive only through the memoirs and historical narratives of television before the Fall. The populist and demystificatory impulses of contemporary television scholarship, suspicious of claims to Quality and historical mythologies in general, have for the most part marginalized historical research (for reasons both good and bad.)

One of the merits of Mary Jane Miller's study of CBC television drama is its detachment from notions of a Golden Age and assumption that rudimentary forms of archival and descriptive work have yet to be undertaken. *Turn Up The Contrast* grows out of the viewing of an extended sample of dramatic programs from the 1950s to the present, drawing from the analysis of each some sense of style and theme and offering, when appropriate and available, production histories and information on audience response. The program analyses themselves display a great deal of caution, undertaking to extract from programs those qualities one might regard as essentially Canadian, but tempering this with an attention to the more global characteristics of particular genres. The attempts, however brief, to demonstrate the inflection of generic patterns by the particularities of the Canadian context are accomplished with considerable care, and avoid prolonged discussions of methodology which would, in this case, seem inappropriate.

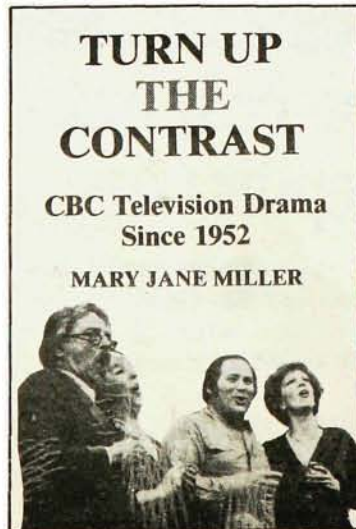
To the extent that Miller resists basing her analyses on a strident and elaborate notion of Canadianicity, her book does not stand or fall on the strength of its intervention in the ongoing debates around such notions. This caution, and resultant organization of the book around individual genres rather than historical periods, serve, however, to diminish the usefulness of its historical background. The political and financial conditions within which particular programs were produced are discussed within the textual analysis of such programs, and any sense of the larger context of corporate and political decision is fragmented and partial. The

book emerges as a very useful collection of case studies in programming types, with only partial attention to the ongoing struggles for political and cultural authority within the Corporation.

What emerges from a reading of *Turn Up The Contrast* is, in part, the sense that anthology drama remains the format most appropriate to the CBC's accomplishment of its stated objectives and public mandate. The development of series (dramatic and comedic) has regularly run up against the CBC's reluctance to develop star personae and the fiscal difficulty of producing and testing competing pilots for series programming slots. At the same time, it has weakened the once-productive links between the culture of television programming and that of local or national theatrical and literary activity – links at the root of what Miller sees as exciting and challenging in the programming of the 1950s and 1960s.

If *Turn Up The Contrast* seems without controversy, this is largely because her proposals for CBC programming recapitulate and endorse many of those put forward over a decade of governmental inquiries and commission reports, thus far ignored. Her observation that current dramatic programming suffers, not only in comparison to that of two or three decades ago, but relative to the current offerings of PBS or Britain's Channel 4, is a reminder of a familiar but scandalous fact. It should be noted, as well, that many of the strongest passages of *Turn Up The Contrast* are those in which Miller argues for continued exposure to the accumulated archive of CBC television drama (something best achieved, Miller argues, through the proposed "second channel"), less for the evidence such programs provide of lost glories than for the sense of historical continuity which may then be reestablished.

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**André Gaudreault**

*Du littéraire au filmique: Système du récit*  
Préface de Paul Ricoeur  
Les Presses de l'université Laval  
Méridiens Klincksieck,  
200 pp., ISBN 2-7637-7163-7

"Que le cinéma puisse devenir avant toute autre chose une machine à raconter des histoires, voilà qui n'avait pas été vraiment prévu" – Christian Metz

In 1857, the French writer Stendhal observed of his colleague Gustave Flaubert: "If one could forge in Birmingham or in Manchester story-telling or analyzing machines made out of good English steel that would function all by themselves by means unknown to dynamics, these machines would operate exactly like M. Flaubert." Stendhal's observation poses the problem of (modern) narrative that has since become the basis for the relatively new human science of narratology, a science whose interrogations begin with the question "Who speaks in a narrative?"

For there is, at least to the higher forms of discourse that describe themselves as science, something scandalous about all this unexamined yet proliferating babble. While there may be many kinds of *narrations*, tellings or recountings of events, why is it that only some become *narratives*; and only some achieve sufficient completeness to become *stories*. If stories, for instance, can be distinguished by the active participation of the perceiver in "narrativity", what is narrativity? And what are the forms of narrativity? Is 'it' a kind of language that would form a systematic whole within the presumed cultural unity of the Western world? Or do the different literary modes (prose, poetry, drama) invoke different narrativities? And what of *cinematic narrativity*, the encounter of story-telling with a real machine, whose outline Stendhal had foreseen in Flaubert? It is in response to such problems and how they are articulated along with other key related terms (e.g., the narrator), that narratology has developed.

But as with any new science (or perhaps any science), there exists a lack of expert consensus, particularly within the sub-field of film narrative, as to the definition of basic notions, for instance, the narrator in film narrative. Also, any science is to some extent its genealogy and narratology has been, in this sense, over-determined by the history of its development out of specifically literary studies. The challenge that prompts André Gaudreault's *Du littéraire au filmique* is, on the one hand, to establish the parameters common to the different forms of artistic practice (written, theatrical, filmic) relative to their narrativity, and on the other, to lay the foundations of a narratological theory of cinema. This, then, is the 'theoretical' portion of the system; a second volume in which the

system of cinema narrative is more fully applied will follow. Gaudreault argues that the filmic medium constitutes a more complex narratological object than either the written or the theatrical since it results from the combination of the narrative possibilities of both. Cinema combines both the narrativity of the written and Gaudreault calls the "monstration" of the theatrical, deriving from this combinatory cinema's narrative specificity as a system.

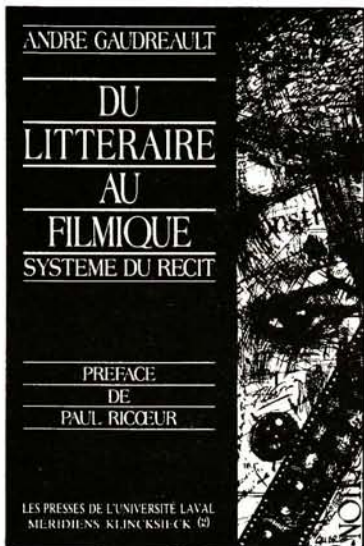
It is in deploying the systemic nature of cinematographic narrative that Gaudreault demonstrates the theoretic virtuosity that has made him, at 36, one of this country's leading film scholars and Laval University one of the world centres for the study of early cinema. In order to show the ponderousness of the system of film narrative (as opposed, for instance, to the lightness of a written narrative), Gaudreault assembles a battery of theoretical figures whose narratological adventures constitute some of the most fascinating chapters of *Du littéraire au filmique*. These figures include the mega-narrator, the filmographic narrator, the filmic mega-monstrator, the filmographic monstrator and the profilmic monstrator – narratological entities necessary to account for the functions of the vast array of machines (cameras, microphones, tape-recorders, editing benches, mixing consoles, projectors and so on) that operate to produce the system of film narrative. For cinematographic language, as Gaudreault points out, came about as the result of both the invention of a process (the camera) as well as the introduction of a procedure (montage of different shots).

More broadly, Gaudreault's deployment of a system of film narrative is accomplished through two moves: a philosophical return to the beginnings of narratology in Plato and Aristotle, and a theoretico-historical return to the early silent cinema of about 1900-1915. Literary critical tradition had set up an unfortunate and apparently irreconcilable opposition between Platonic mimesis or imitation of action and Aristotelian diegesis or the narrative of a narrator. On the one hand, imitation but no narrator; on the other, a narrator but no imitation. On the basis of the split, narratology had refused any narratological status to theatre because of the absence of a narrator. Rereading Plato (Book X of the *Republic*) and Aristotle (*Poetics*), Gaudreault contends that they've been misread philologically. The Platonic concept of mimesis, in which the poet can both narrate or speak through characters, contains the notion of *haplé diegesis*, narration without imitation, and that of mimesis, narration with imitation. Aristotle, for his part, drops Plato's *haplé*, and so slides towards the fatal opposition of diegesis and mimesis. This rereading allows Gaudreault to distinguish between mimetic and non-mimetic diegesis as the two fundamental modes of narrative communication, thus establishing a level of narrative equivalence between the



written and the theatrical. In turn, that permits him to shift from (written) narration to (theatrical) monstration and the narratological figure of the monstrator.

Turning to cinema, Gaudreault shows how cinema narrative is the result of the superposition of two distinct levels of narrativity, each due respectively to the double articulation of cinema: from photogram to photogram and from shot to shot. The narrative figure that Albert Laffay in the early '60s termed "the Great Imager", a virtual presence hidden behind all films, is, in fact, made up of three figures: the mega-narrator (the film itself), the filmic monstrator of the apparatus (photogram to photogram) and the filmic narrator of the montage (shot to shot). This all becomes even more complicated with the system of film narrative, as Gaudreault analyzes the chain of operations and corresponding narratological figures that make up the system: from *mise en cadre* (filmographic monstrator) to *mise en scène* (profilmic monstrator) to *mise sur film* (filmic mega-monstrator) to *mise en chaîne* (filmographic narrator) to *mise en film* (filmic mega-narrator).



The theoretical elaboration of the filmic narrative system is grounded in ongoing historical research on early silent cinema (the GRAF project that Gaudreault and Tom Gunning of the

State University of New York head at Laval, as well as the work of David Levy at McGill and Charles Musser at New York University). Thus Gaudreault excavates turn-of-the-century American legal debates as a rich proto-theoretical source relevant to the difficulties of establishing the facts of film narrative. For instance, in American copyright law, was a film to be defined as made up of many, discrete images or was it one continuous action? Was film simply a machine recording process or did the filmmaker contribute anything? And what of camera movements such as the pan? Equally interesting is Gaudreault's discussion of early cinema as a narrator-assisted monstrative spectacle or how between about 1895 to 1910 the figure of the live entertainer who narrated the story-line of the film to an audience was gradually absorbed within the medium itself either in the form of intertitles or later a voice-over narrator as cinematic narration became more formalized.

Essentially by systematically proliferating the number of mediating instances, Gaudreault shows how the system of film narrative is founded upon a series of precise manipulations

and interventions that make of cinema an art (at least) thrice removed from the real. Firstly, *mise en scène* by the profilmic monstrator. Secondly, *mise en cadre* by the filmographic monstrator. Thirdly, *mise en chaîne* by the filmographic narrator, editor or more generally the manipulation of images and recorded sound. By thus enriching our understanding of the phases of filmic *discursivity*, Gaudreault has not only produced a text of vital and direct interest to cinema specialists, but he has also given cinema, and early silent cinema in particular, a crucial place in the articulation of modern narrativity. With its masterly synthesis of the European critical-linguistic tradition and American film-historical research, *Du littéraire au filmique* makes a major contribution to film studies as well as to literary studies and beyond to a general theory of narrative communication. Written with verve, brio and humour, Gaudreault's text is a brilliant refutation of Roland Barthes' grumpy assertion that narratologists, like medieval scholars, are only seeking the world in a bean. Michael Dorland •

"Cinema Canada is an indispensable part of the cultural life of the nation, and should continue to be, as long as the nation has an indispensable cultural life..."



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