Film Analysis

Film Criticism:

1. Newspaper and Television Reviewing—emotional reactions, little historical perspective

2. General-Interest Journal-Based Criticism—e.g., Pauline Kael (linking film theory/history knowledge with exposure in popular venues)

3. Scholarly Criticism—journals such as Cinema Journal, Film Quarterly, Wide Angle, Camera Obscura

Film Theories:
From the Prince textbook:

1. Theories of realism
   Bazin’s Realist Theory--Deep focus & long takes, the ethical contract

2. Auteur theory—consistency of theme and design across films; ignores the collaborative basis of most film

3. Psychoanalytical theory—e.g., voyeurism, fetishizing the body, taboo images

4. Ideological film theories--includes political ideology (e.g., left-center-right); can be first-order (explicit) or second-order (implicit); may present ideological
support, ideological critique, or ideological conglomeration

5. Feminist film theory—(a) analysis of images of women in films that have been created largely by men, and (b) analysis of feminist filmmaking

6. Cognitive theories—perceptual processing (sensory) and interpretive processing (higher-level); book says this is research-based (not really!!)

From other sources:

7. Historiography—assessment of film in terms of (a) its place in film history, and (b) its place in human history

8. Genre theory—see other notes

9. Gay theories—similar to feminist theory, can involve (a) analysis of images of gays in films that have been created largely by straight filmmakers, and (b) examination of Queer Cinema

10. Formalist (expressionist) film theories--Mise-en-scene very important, also all “form” features (techniques)

11. Structuralism and semiology--Analysis of symbols; how and what films signify
Selected Film Movements:

1. German Expressionism (1920's)

* Emerged in film post-WWI
* Characterized by an emphasis on the fantastic & grotesque
* Use of distorted sets, highly stylized acting, lighting, camera angles
* Major impact on auteurs who followed (e.g., Tim Burton)

Key examples:

- *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919)
- *Nosferatu* (F. W. Murnau, 1922)
- *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927)
2. New German Cinema (1960's-early 1990's)

* Four factors shaped it:
  1. system of public funding for films
  2. legal framework for TV co-production
  3. international reputation of several key directors
  4. politicized and media-conscious student movement of 1960's and 1970's

* Not a cohesive movement, but rather a loose assortment of young, daring writer/directors

* Generally take the "little guy" approach to narration--denial of societal responsibility (e.g., for Nazi atrocities)

Key examples:

* The Tin Drum (Volker Schlondorff, 1979) [Banned in Oklahoma in 1998!]
* Aguirre, Wrath of God (Werner Herzog, 1972)
* Nosferatu the Vampyre (Werner Herzog, 1979)
* Fox & His Friends (Rainer Werner Fassbinder, 1975)
* Wings of Desire (Wim Wenders, 1988)
* Europa, Europa (Agnieszka Holland, 1991)
3. **Italian Neorealism** (late 1940's)

* Mussolini control 1935-44
  "White telephone" films

* Contributed to rise of I.N.:
  * Govt. hands-off policy during WWII
  * Grim realities of war
  * Financial challenges in post-WWII Europe (e.g., uneven film stock)

* Roberto Rossellini: *Open City* ('45), *Stromboli* ('50)

* Vittorio DeSica: *The Bicycle Thief* ('47)

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**Federico Fellini** (directed films 1950's-1980's)

* **Auteur** who got his start in Italian Neorealism (worked on *Open City*)
* Fellini moved **beyond** the IN techniques to mix realism, surrealism, fantasy (*8-1/2, Amarcord, La Dolce Vita*, etc.)
* Many autobiographical motifs (e.g., the "large woman")
* A major metaphorical motif: "Life as circus."
* The term "Felliniesque" has entered our language
4. French New Wave (early 1960's)

* Arose not out of dissatisfaction with society (like It. Neo.), but out of a dissatisfaction with traditional French aesthetics of film.

* 6 young men hanging out at the Paris Cinematheque:
  - Francois Truffaut (*The 400 Blows*, 1959)
  - Jean-Luc Godard (*Breathless*, 1960)
  - Alain Resnais (*Hiroshima, Mon Amour*, 1960)
  - Claude Chabrol
  - Eric Rohmer
  - Jacque Rivette

All made 1st film about 1959; all contributed regularly to Andre Bazin's *Cahiers du Cinema* journal, developing auteur theory, genre theory, and more.

* Attacked "old guard," contending that film should be more of the camera than of the pen:
  * importance of mise-en-scene
  * films characterized by:
    * originality, vitality/energy
    * eclectic or inconsistent style, a "playful sloppiness"

Other examples:
  * *Shoot the Piano Player*, 1960, Truffaut
  * *Alphaville*, 1965, Godard
  * *My Night at Maud's*, 1970, Rohmer
Third Cinema

*Films produced in nations that have not historically had a long film tradition (e.g., Argentina, Ireland, African nations); unfortunately, such films are typically shown only at special venues such as the Cinematheque.

*At the same time, film industries have been active in many countries over the last 40 or 50 years: e.g., India ("Bollywood"), Hong Kong, Egypt, Cuba, Brazil, Australia.

Other International Auteurs--These “deans of cinema” transcend movements, sometimes defining “national cinemas”

* Ingmar Bergman (Sweden)
* Jean Cocteau (France)
* Luis Bunuel (Spain/France)
* Jean Renoir (France)
* Michelangelo Antonioni (Italy)
* Sir Carol Reed (Great Britain)
* Sir David Lean (Great Britain)
* Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger (Great Br.)
* Ousmane Sembene (Senegal)
* Sergei Eisenstein (Soviet Union)
* Akira Kurosawa (Japan)
* Satyajit Ray (India)
Bollywood

* India is the #1 moviemaking nation with approx. 1000 feature releases per year

* #1 Movie Star in the world: Amitabh Bachchan

* Originally named for Bombay (now Mumbai) + Hollywood. . . (to non-Indians) now represents Indian commercial cinema, regardless of city of origin

* The typical Bollywood film:
  - is 3 hours long
  - is a music-integrated musical, regardless of other genre content (e.g., romantic comedy, drama, war film)
  - shows multi-generational families
  - features the wealthy (fantasy)
  - has a boy-meets-girl theme. . . will they get together? Often, an arranged marriage is a barrier
  - has a happy ending
  - employs “playback singers” who dub the actors’ singing, and are famous in their own right—a dual market of movies/music recordings
  - is in one of the many Indian “mother tongues” (#1=Hindi)

* The Bollywood audience:
  - India’s population is more than 3 times that of the U.S.
- In India, most families attend cinema at least once a week
- The growing Indian diaspora has created a worldwide Bollywood market for emigrants and “Desis”—who need subtitles!
- This has resulted in the diffusion of Bollywood into non-Indian markets, and the embracing of Bollywood ideals and aesthetics by non-Bollywood entertainment forms—e.g., *Moulin Rouge, Bombay Dreams* (Broadway), *Monsoon Wedding*