Nussbaum's attack on Judith Butler in 1999 (Chapter 5) and explores how Butler's 'mode of hypothesizing' (p. 162) might be seen as vulnerable to reductive (though she doesn't use the term) readings such as those of Nussbaum (and, Pearce implies elsewhere, too, not least in teaching contexts). For Pearce this is evidence for the need to be alert to the 'rhetorical politics of contemporary thought'. She concludes that the example demonstrates 'the enduring power of, and need for, that "single declarative sentence" of classical rhetoric: even those texts which despise and eschew it *in and of themselves* cannot escape the readers construction of the same' (p. 165, original italics). The book then serves to illustrate the ways in which texts work, their 'nuts and bolts' but also stresses, in keeping with poststructuralists insights, the fragility of the process, the risks posed by the contexts of reading, as well as the rhetorical successes.

The book offers a valuable reminder to some, and introduction to others, of the concepts of classical rhetoric and their contemporary inflections; my use of an 'example' in the above paragraph, for instance, is a deployment of what Pearce argues is a form of argumentation which is so commonplace as to have become 'a ...rhetorical tool in its own right'. The book is dedicated to students writing theses and indeed it makes an important study for anyone embarking on a thesis in the humanities or social sciences but equally, I would suggest, for anyone interested in questions of the relationship between writing, thinking and reading. However, the real achievement of this book is, for me, be the reminder that all writing employs rhetorical strategies and that the critical pleasures of exploring these enable a reading experience of the most active – in the political as well as in the sense of 'alert' – kind. Pearce both offers here readings of academic and popular feminist texts and provides a mapping of the rhetorical terrain of 20 years of feminist writing but, crucially, the book also demonstrates what it purports to be describing, subtly alerting the reader to the means by which the book as well as the texts described, persuades. Reading the book is therefore to participate in its project; the reader can hardly help but perform the analytical moves that Pearce makes, highly persuasive at the same time as instructing the reader in how it persuades.

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Alice Guy Blaché: lost visionary of the cinema

Alison McMahan; Continuum, New York and London, 2002, 384p, ISBN 0-8264-5158-6 £45.00 (Hbk)

One of the tasks film feminism set itself at its outset was to reclaim its lost histories. Organizing a spate of film festivals in the early 1970s, which showcased

the work of female filmmakers, past and present, offered an opportunity to rewrite film history and assess the contributions made by women like Alice Guy Blaché (1873–1968) to the development of a cinema previously ignored, neglected – or simply forgotten. Preserving the reputation of the almost lost Guy Blaché for the archive started years earlier when the director herself set about locating surviving films. Beginning in 1927, and resuming her search in the 1950s, Guy Blaché only managed to find three films before she died. Writing Alice Guy Blaché back into film history maybe central to this extensive and well-researched book, but underlying the feminist project is the role played by women in making visible that history in the first place. Daughter Simone Blaché and later daughter-in-law Roberta Blaché, for example, worked as custodians of the estate, and the author, Alison McMahan, aims ‘to make her films more intelligible to modern viewers’ (p. xxxiii). Questions of what gets rescued, reclaimed, and lies forgotten, form an additional narrative to the first book length critical consideration of the work of ‘the first woman filmmaker and the only woman filmmaker for the first decade of the industry’s history’ (p. 242).

Alice Guy Blaché had an extraordinary career. It spanned the entire early film period, from 1896 to 1920, and its longevity stands as ‘testament to her ability ... to meet the changing demands of the industry ... and fulfil various roles’ (p. xxvi). She had almost sole responsibility for production at photographer and film pioneer Léon Gaumont’s company until 1905, as long as it did not interfere with her duties as his secretary. The year 1907 saw her leave for America, where she would own and operate the film production company and studio, Solax. Increasingly, her interests became absorbed by those of her husband Herbert Blaché, but with her last film released in 1920, followed in 1922 by divorce and bankruptcy, Guy Blaché decided to return to France with her children, after which she fell into obscurity.

Why should someone who achieved such considerable success, both in France and in America, become lost to the film archive is a central question explored by McMahan. Reasons are complex she argues, but the loss says much about the difficulties of situating Guy Blaché within traditional historiographies and the existing theories of how we understand the emergence of cinema. Léon Gaumont, for example, did not consider the films as significant as the technical achievements, which would explain why he gave over production almost exclusively to his secretary. Given that Guy Blaché is rarely mentioned in the company’s official documentation, as well as the practice during the early years of film to not cite directorial credits, it was perhaps predictable that film histories written before her autobiography in the mid-1970s failed to acknowledge her accomplishments.

Such effacement, in turn, has led to several persistent myths shrouding her life and career. Each chapter of McMahan’s study addresses one of these controversies, debunking the ‘myths and [clarifying] the real issues that the myths obscure’ (p. xxxiii). In so doing, McMahan assesses the pioneering contribution made by Guy Blaché to film narration as well as early sound film production, which never gets

mentioned in the standard accounts. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the American years, and seek to place her career within a broader context of the difficulties faced by the independents as the American film industry consolidated and expanded its operations around a few big studios. Uncovering Guy Blaché thus makes visible a much more complex history of early cinema than previously suggested, and the book belongs to recent revisionist endeavours that suggest much more work on the hidden contribution made by women remains to be done.

'Of all the arts there is probably none in which (women) can make such splendid use of talents so much more natural to a woman than to a man and so necessary to its perfection,' observed Guy Blaché in her 1913 lecture at Columbia University. Maybe not a feminist in the modern sense, but in her statement that women were ideally suited for filmmaking Guy Blaché, McMahan argues, nonetheless demonstrated a feminist sensibility. Her films, and particularly her cross-dressing comedies, are 'used to question, undermine, and subvert the socially delimited concept of gender' (p. 239). Her work placed enormous emphasis on female agency, in which women characters made choices, overcame obstacles set down by patriarchal society and shaped their own destinies. But perhaps the most important feminist trait of her work is the way she spoke to women, her direct feminine modes of address and her advocacy that women could achieve success on their own terms. Given her importance for the feminist canon and for early cinema, I find it quite astonishing that no sustained history has been undertaken until McMahan started this present study.

Alice Guy Blaché: Lost Visionary of the Cinema belongs to the Women Make Cinema series, a collection of titles committed to uncovering hidden histories and assessing the contribution made by women to the development of cinema. This book certainly fulfils the brief and is a welcome addition to this fascinating and laudable series. Taking 10 years to research, and involving extensive travels to locate sadly only a fraction of the thousand films directed by Guy Blaché, this book offers a comprehensive history of a truly remarkable woman and original filmmaker.

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Settler romances and the Australian girl

Tanya Dalziel; University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2004, 208p, ISBN 1-9206-9420-X £20.50 (Pbk)

Offering a detailed reading of turn-of-century adventure fictions and early ethnographies, this intriguing study explores how highly charged narratives of