

Other People's Diasporas charts with acuity a phase of cultural representation that moved in tandem with “a shift in the status of the Irish as an ambiguously raced ethnic group in Britain, the United States and elsewhere to a white, European ethnic group unwilling to share the spoils of sudden and unprecedented economic prosperity” (192). It enriches the literature in contemporary Irish and American studies and will be of interest to a range of readers in those fields and beyond.

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Journal of American Studies, 48 (2014), 4. doi:10.1017/S0021875814001583

Mark Gallagher, *Another Steven Soderbergh Experience: Authorship and Contemporary Hollywood* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013, \$54.00). Pp. 336. ISBN 029 274 421 8.

Film scholar Robin Wood once wrote that Steven Soderbergh, prolific director of nearly thirty films since 1989, was a “director of obvious significance, though of exactly what kind I remain uncertain. I cannot seem to get a firm grasp on his films” (quoted at xl).¹ With the wide-ranging analysis undertaken in *Another Steven Soderbergh Experience: Authorship and Contemporary Hollywood*, Mark Gallagher has accomplished just that, a firm grasp that pins down his elusive subject and not only gives Soderbergh’s complex *oeuvre* the rigorous examination it deserves, but delivers a significant contribution to authorship studies and media industries studies.

Soderbergh has had an unlikely career in Hollywood, having acted in various capacities as director, producer, editor, cinematographer, and camera operator of his own films, as well as having produced numerous films for his colleagues. While most contemporary Hollywood directors are solidifying their brand name and signature style, Soderbergh has consistently pursued different challenges in cultural production, resulting in a diverse résumé and body of work. This past year, he announced his retirement from feature filmmaking and moved into television and theatrical production, an optimal moment for Gallagher’s retrospective.

Collaboration is one of the key themes of *Another Steven Soderbergh Experience*, upending the traditional film studies approach that focusses exclusively on the director as the primary authorial agent, or “auteur.” In fact, for Gallagher, Soderbergh is merely a nodal point in a wide network of varying elements that contribute to the enactment and perception of film authorship. Gallagher traces Soderbergh’s own discursive acts to position himself as author, including the dialogue with film history that Soderbergh enters into through the press; DVD commentaries; and the intertextual, associative nature of his films. Journalists, critics, and audiences then further this discourse of taste and legitimation with differing investments in authorship. Gallagher’s emphasis on the material work of authorship, rather than the interpretative work of a text, makes *Another Steven Soderbergh Experience* a refreshing take on the time-honoured scholarly activity of auteur analysis. Like Dana Polan’s *The Sopranos* (2009), Jonathan Gray’s *Watching with the Simpsons* (2005), and Barbara Klinger’s *Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture and the Films of Douglas Sirk* (1994), Gallagher’s work is less about the particular author or text itself, and rather about the discourse and

¹ Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

context that surrounds it, proving a fertile ground for his many evocative conceptualizations.

The idea of “transhistorical taste cultures” (47), for instance, is a useful perspective on the way authors and critics engage with particular texts and practices of film history and art cinema, enshrining a particular, strategic narrative while leveraging it for their own cultural capital. A related concept is the author’s attempt to achieve a degree of “global auteurism” (91), earning a reputation that travels, as it were, through circulation at international film festivals and participation in localized discourses, and by establishing a global production footprint. Gallagher demonstrates both of these discursive strategies with regard to Soderbergh’s particular production and textual practices, but one could easily and productively apply these concepts to other authors.

Gallagher also provides a new model to read screen representations as situated within multiple contexts, what he terms “cosituated textualities” (139). Moving beyond a text-centered focus, Gallagher interrogates textual features alongside a range of contexts that each suggest rationales for particular representational choices: production, reception, culture, genre, and form. As evidenced by his nuanced readings of race and gender in Soderbergh’s varied output, this model can provide a more comprehensive and complex constellation of the often conflicted nature of representation. Even Gallagher’s minor conceptualizations could prove useful if applied more broadly, such as his formulation of the “parafictional form” (197), in which a screen text presents a proximity to both fiction and nonfiction, establishing a connection to reality through real events and people, yet also dramatizing and recontextualizing them for its own liminal ends.

Gallagher’s analysis, which foregrounds discourse and context, might be perceived as austere and distant, particularly among cinephiles, for whom auteur analyses are passion projects that, at least minimally, celebrate the filmmaker while paying respect to the formal technique and issues onscreen. A reader may expect such an approach from a book entitled *Another Steven Soderbergh Experience*; if this is the case, they may be disappointed. For instance, Gallagher discusses the promotion and reception of *The Girlfriend Experience*, notable for its casting of an adult film star, but doesn’t actually discuss the character or plot of the underrated movie, an intriguing story about transaction filmed during, and bearing noticeable traces of, the financial crash in 2007. To be fair, textual analysis is not the stated intent of the book, but what the book may lack in textual analysis it more than makes up for with Gallagher’s movement beyond an auteurist methodology. Fittingly, Soderbergh has faced criticism throughout his career that his films are cold, brimming with ideas but lacking characters with chemistry. Befitting his subject matter, then, Gallagher enacts the precise, methodical, thoughtful analysis that Soderbergh’s films and career warrant.

Ultimately, the audience for *Another Steven Soderbergh Experience* is far beyond film scholars and Soderbergh aficionados; it will appeal to anyone interested in the current climate of Hollywood film authorship and production, as well as the industrial manufacture of American culture. Fact-checked by Soderbergh himself and featuring an in-depth interview, the book is the most authorial source available on the filmmaker and his body of work. Moreover, it is perhaps the most authorial work on contemporary Hollywood film authorship itself.

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