

Introduction

The topic of this book is aesthetic evaluation, and its application to film. What is meant by 'aesthetic evaluation' will become clear as the book proceeds because explicating the topic is the purpose of the project. However, here is a basic definition for preliminary orientation: the assessment, based on close examination, of the merits (or demerits) *of the form* that something takes. An example of an evaluative claim concerned with the form of a work would be this by V.F. Perkins about the structure of *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophüls 1948 US): it 'arrive[s] at order and comprehensibility without falling into an impoverishing neatness' (Perkins 2000: 41). Another example, from my own work, claims that the resolution of *The Philadelphia Story* (George Cukor 1940 US) 'is ... satisfyingly worked out, without looking as if it is being ponderously worked through. The film avoids presenting negotiations in series, and appearing too careful' (Klevan 2005a: 42–3). A final preliminary example, by Andrew Sarris, highlights a shortcoming: '[T]here seems to be something more tentative than intuitive in [John] Ford's ideas about ... [*She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949 US) and *Rio Grande* (1950 US)], as if he were drifting in an obscure reverie for which he had not found an articulated form' (Sarris 1976: 156). These overarching claims would have to be substantiated with evidence, and they might lead to revision or rejection, but they are examples of statements that make evaluations about the formal merits or demerits of the films¹.

¹The terms merit and demerit are used throughout the book as they tend to be the formal vocabulary used in the philosophical literature. Although they have other associations, they are probably more neutral and dispassionate than good/bad or

The book is divided into three parts. Part I explores the philosophy of evaluative aesthetics; Part II explores aesthetic criticism, the practical wing of that philosophy, which evaluates the form of individual works. One background purpose of these first two parts is to show that although aesthetic criticism preceded modern forms of critical theory it is not from a naive, pre-theoretical world, nor is it without grounding, secure conceptual underpinning, or self-scrutiny. Part III, the longest part, is devoted to the aesthetic evaluation of film. All three parts are made up of numbered segments, most of which are organised around relevant terms or concepts, for example, 'aesthetic pleasure', 'perception', 'medium' or 'convention'². Some of these segments consist of just a few paragraphs, while others, especially those in Part III, are relatively lengthy. Although the segments are arranged to be read in a particular order, and there is continuity from one section to the next, they are not stages in a single, sequential argument. Each segment is contributing to the whole, filling out a multifaceted picture.

The book becomes more specific as it proceeds, moving from first principles to firm particulars. The reader should not expect substantive exemplification from individual film sequences until Part III. This is because, although the first two parts are disposed towards film, they are foundational and comprehensive. The aim is for the material to be sufficiently general to be widely applicable to all types of films, and not let an extended example suggest special applicability or distract with singular circumstance. The hope is that these two parts will also be of use to those interested in the aesthetic evaluation of things other than films, from novels to furniture (and to those interested in evaluation more generally). At the same time, the material is not simply preliminary or supportive, preparing the ground for Part III; it is presented as worthwhile in itself. Some important ideas are left, and then elaborated upon in later segments: for example, the topic of 'category' is brought up in Part I under 'Aesthetic qualities' and 'Specificity', picked up again in Part II under 'Comparison, category, and context', and then again in Part III under 'Convention'. At

positive/negative which have stronger moral and emotional connotations. Merit and demerit may sound blunt, but they are used as shorthand to cover a range of possibilities. For example, demerit may refer to a feature in the work which is not quite working, not fitting, not realised, or not achieving very much; it need not refer to something that is simply bad.

²The segments are not encyclopaedic accounts of the use of the concepts in aesthetics and criticism: the focus is on how the concepts relate specifically to, and are illuminated by, evaluation.

the same time, to avoid repetition, Part III, while exemplifying the first two parts, putting their ideas into practice in relation to a specific art, does not necessarily explicitly refer to every idea introduced earlier. They are absorbed into another layer of concepts (that are themselves also applicable beyond film).

The book is a contribution to the philosophy of criticism. This philosophy mainly aims to understand and clarify the vocabulary and methods at stake in evaluation. Most books and essays about the philosophy of criticism are devoted to fine art, literature, and music. Historically the field has tended not to use film as its exemplary art, and the book acts as a rectification. Furthermore, this field is not as prominent as it was in the first half of the twentieth century. There is a thriving field that is entitled the 'Philosophy of Art', but most of its concerns are not those of evaluation. The Philosophy of Art is interested in philosophising about, for example, matters of artistic medium, language, authorship, narration, emotion, and spectatorship and is not necessarily interested in how these matters bear on the principles and processes of evaluation in general, or in how they relate to the evaluation of individual works. An aim is to rejuvenate the philosophy of criticism, partly by exploring it in relation to film, and partly by weaving the various strands of it together (something that was never done, to my knowledge, even when the field was more active). The book rescues its concerns and insights from an interest that is merely historical and, because they are now rarely present in classrooms or in humanities culture more widely, makes them available for use. Even core terms like 'judgement' and 'aesthetic', which are seemingly familiar and often deployed as if they are satisfactorily understood, are in need of enriching clarification and renewed application. One sympathetic colleague poetically likened the project to the removal of limescale from an encrusted filament.

The more important interdisciplinary intention, however, is to introduce the philosophy of criticism to Film Studies. Despite the long tradition within Film Studies of theorising, and the contemporary burgeoning of the field of 'film and philosophy', my experience is that film academia is unfamiliar with what was once an important branch of philosophical aesthetics. Even in previous generations, there was little explicit crossover although some of the concerns and insights of evaluative aesthetics did make their way into film criticism (or they were discovered independently). The book intends to help film evaluation discover an unknown ancestry, or at least foreground a lineage. In 1993, Carl Plantinga wrote an article in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* entitled 'Film Theory and Aesthetics: Notes on a Schism', the opening line of which is: 'The relationship between

film theory and traditional aesthetics has been marked to a great extent either by mutual inattention or by open suspicion' (1993: 445). He notes that in the classic film theory readers such as that edited by G. Mast, L. Braudy, and M. Cohen (originally published in 1974) there are few references to major figures in aesthetics such as Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Wittgenstein, or Monroe Beardsley (447). Also missing are references to David Hume, Frank Sibley, and Arnold Isenberg. Their work will be explored in these pages, as will the work of F.R. Leavis from *Literary Studies*, and Rudolf Arnheim, André Bazin, and V.F. Perkins from *Film Studies*. They are crucial to the history of aesthetic evaluation, and this book, although primarily conceptual, includes a relaying of that history. Plantinga notes that film theory tended to be influenced by French theorists or non-French theorists influenced by French theory³. The reasons for the predilections and omissions of *Film Studies* are involved and complex, but Plantinga suggests that aesthetics lacked the political, cultural, and philosophical radicalism of the French theory (449). He also suggests that notable exemptions aside – Rudolf Arnheim, André Bazin, V.F. Perkins – film theory was interested in film 'as a signifying practice', rather than in aesthetic evaluation, artistry, and achievement. He writes, 'In its investigation of conventions and codes of meaning, semiotics has encouraged a shift away from thinking of film as an art toward a conception of film as a signifying practice with important cultural connections' (450).

Even twenty-five years after Plantinga's article, with *Film Studies* made up of a variety of approaches, aesthetic evaluation is not a distinct component. Although there have been important interventions in this area especially in the formative years of *Film Studies*, and more recently as interest in the area has revived, they have been disparate. They have also been relatively recessive because of the hegemony of other disciplines and pedagogies. Furthermore, some work in film evaluation was not acknowledged as making an intervention. Perhaps this was because it took the form of criticism of individual films, seemingly promising only specific relevance; perhaps because it did not sufficiently conceptualise, or formulate general principles or conclusions; perhaps because it did not explicitly proclaim its import, or polemicise; or perhaps because it did

³ For example, André Bazin (who is also an important figure in evaluative aesthetics), Raymond Bellour, Thierry Kuntzel, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Christian Metz. If he was updating his essay, Plantinga could now add Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Rancière, and Gilles Deleuze.

not speak to prevailing academic pursuits. At the risk of appearing grand, I would like Part III to construct a field out of individual interventions that have never been brought together. More modestly, I would like to shine a light on an existence that has hitherto been somewhat clandestine and then exhibit it in a coherent form. This will, I hope, help the aesthetic evaluation of film to situate itself in relation to concepts and debates, and move forward more transparently and confidently as a field of research. Although there have been a few books on film advocating individual theories of aesthetic evaluation – such as Rudolf Arnheim's *Film as Art*, or V.F. Perkins' *Film as Film* – this is the first book (in the English language), once again to my knowledge, to explore the terrain holistically.

The book, therefore, intends to connect threads and present a perspicacious picture. It is a work of archaeology. I made my way through a host of essays and books on aesthetics and criticism excavating what was valuable and piecing together fragments. It brings together a wide variety of sources, which are distilled, synthesised, and conceptualised. Sometimes I simply endeavour to elucidate this material and explain through exegesis what is at stake in it. Although the three parts are constructed to explicate each of the main areas – evaluative aesthetics, aesthetic criticism, and the aesthetic evaluation of film – they will also reveal, explicitly and implicitly, what is advantageous in them. Sometimes I elaborate on matters arising, or give the old ideas renewed relevance, often in relation to film. Sometimes I enter into critical conversation, even dispute, with the scholarship. In Part III of the book, much of the film analysis is my own⁴. One important intention of this part is to demonstrate the practice of aesthetic evaluation by engaging closely with film sequences.

I have tried to be as explanatory as possible. The book aims to guide the reader through the subject and its associated skills from its fundamental aspects to those that are more advanced. The purpose is to provide a supportive framework for academics working or teaching in the area and to be accessible to students. The approach and form of address also make the book efficiently informative to anyone unfamiliar with the area, and to those outside institutionalised education. It would be disingenuous to deny that the persistent and detailed scrutiny of form and style that the

⁴In a work that includes a large amount of citation a note on referencing procedure might be helpful. Where I employ the exact words of another scholar, I quote directly with the use of quotation marks. When I précis their work I provide a citation at the end of the sentence. If a sentence does not conclude with a citation then it consists of my own observations.

book encourages is made possible by the time and space enjoyed by academia, and the approach to film evaluation it expounds is academically aligned. It does not follow, however, that the approach is not of interest, or cannot be enjoyed and practised, outside the academy.

It is always worth managing expectations in an introduction, so what does the book *not* intend to do? It does not valorise one category or genre of film as superior to another, say the 'art' film over the 'mainstream' or popular film, or serious political drama over slapstick comedy. However, the examples in Part III are taken from the narrative fiction film partly because that is my sphere of expertise and experience, and partly because a lot of evaluative film criticism has developed in relation to it. The concepts and the approach are applicable, or adaptable, to a wide variety of film forms such as documentary, non-figurative film or animation (and to other art forms)⁵. It does not decisively announce the best films ever made, nor the one blueprint which will reveal them, although it does discuss films that have been singled out as having high aesthetic merit⁶. Finally, it does not, unlike many interventions on the subject, proclaim a set of essential criteria that confer merit, although it does highlight criteria that have been central to the tradition of criticism, and remain pressing concerns to aesthetic evaluation. It will show that many individual criteria and theories of excellence are crucially instructive, but not definitive; and if the book has a position or a thesis it is that the aesthetic evaluation of film should be flexibly informed by a cluster of concerns about medium, constraint, convention, choice, perception, prominence, pattern, and relation (all explored in Part III). Correspondingly, the book also advocates and models a type of approach, attention, process, and discourse (rather than espousing a criterion, a theory, or a particular film style).

⁵ A close study of these forms, however, might throw up different evaluative possibilities, or different priorities. The analysis intends to be exemplary rather than exhaustive. An alternative title for the book could have been 'Aesthetic evaluation and the fiction film', but that would have disguised the presence of valuable transferable aspects.

⁶ The films analysed in detail are 'classic' examples that have received an explicitly evaluative treatment in pre-existing criticism (within the Anglo-French tradition). They are used to illustrate the concepts and procedures. Equally good films, from different countries and periods, would benefit from this treatment. Furthermore, the study recognises that *any* type of form and content, beyond that of the films under consideration here, can be subject to aesthetic evaluation and appreciation, and that the concepts and procedures will be applicable. Aesthetic evaluation does not stop with authorised or canonised films.

The book is about the evaluation of film form and is not a neutral study, analysis, or history of form and style. Plenty of distinguished work of this nature already exists. Nor is it about close analysis of form in and of itself because this method is used in many fields of study – from structuralism to formalism to historicism – that are not ostensibly or primarily evaluative. It is also not about all the types of value that inhere in, or are produced by, artworks of which there are many (and too many for one book to encompass): for example, ideological, ethical, cultural, pedagogical, entertainment, or personal value⁷. Aesthetic value is the focus while recognising that it does not exist in a vacuum and that it intersects with these other types. Some work in, for example, ideological, ethical, and cultural studies, does engage with form and value although aesthetic value is clearly not the central concern. Therefore, I will simply be reversing the emphasis. Indeed, where evaluation is practised it tends to be in these fields partly because they can make a more urgent case for relevance. Nevertheless, the *dedicated* attention to the formal detail of artworks in order to ascertain value is hardly an irrelevance. Although the reasons for this dedicated attention will explicitly and implicitly emerge, it is useful to highlight some fundamental ones at this stage. One reason is that such a concentration is stimulating, demanding, and rewarding in many respects: perceptually, cognitively, imaginatively, emotionally, and sensuously. Another reason is that it is responsive to the *kind* of object the work is: one that is made, constructed, *formed* out of many elements (for example, images, shots, sounds, performers, objects, and environments). It therefore brings us closer to the actual work rather than to a resemblance because the form of the work *is* the work. Consequently, it will help with any type of evaluation, indeed any type of assessment. Furthermore, although artworks in general, and films in particular, are made for a variety of reasons, many creative personnel intend to ‘achieve substantive aesthetic effects ... and in doing that ... try to make something of aesthetic value’ (Zangwill 2012: 39). Artworks, including films, serve all sorts of ‘nonaesthetic functions’, and undergo ‘nonaesthetic pressures’ and intentions, for example, religious, institutional, political, or commercial, but the aesthetic component can still be highly significant, and these other

⁷ I am using ‘artwork’ as a catch-all, collective term for any work produced by the various branches of creative activity, for example, literature, painting, sculpture, or music. It is used when making claims that do not only apply to film, and it carries no special honorific meaning. Similarly, ‘artist’ simply refers to someone engaged in creative activity.

'functions' may well rely on it (47). Aesthetic value can be *distinguished* without being autonomous.



Why does the evaluation of artworks deserve to be a sphere of serious intellectual activity (both within and beyond the academy)? What follows is a range of reasons⁸. They are introduced briefly as basic underlying justifications for the book's concerns. Although these reasons can also be taken as encouragements, they are presented in a spirit of inclusivity rather than exclusivity, and to engender parity: they are not intended to usurp – and nor is anything else in this book – the reasons for adopting other approaches and fields.

- 1 Evaluation is a natural and vital part of human experience. Barbara Herrnstein Smith, the writer who has written the most in-depth study about the evaluation of the arts, and who laments its marginalisation in the academy, states that it is not a discrete act that punctures experience, but rather it is 'indistinguishable from the very processes of acting and experiencing themselves ... for a responsive creature, to exist is to evaluate' (1983: 19). Evaluations are 'among the most fundamental forms of social communication' as we assess and reassess in order to satisfy needs (20). In stark terms, survival depends on judging whether something is good or bad for us and assessments are made, sometimes explicitly, sometimes intuitively, about gradations of value all day long. Frank Sibley notes that from early in childhood, '[c]ertain phenomena which are outstanding or remarkable or unusual catch the eye or ear, seize our attention and interest, and move us to surprise, admiration, delight, fear, or distaste' (2006 [1962]: 22). It is reasonable to suggest that these evaluative impulses are not artificially halted when dealing with artworks. It is also reasonable to suggest that some of our analysis of artworks should be satisfyingly continuous with instinctive proclivities and common behaviours while it cultivates and evolves them.
- 2 An initial response to an artwork is often evaluative, even if the evaluation is undecided, and subsequent enquiries into it may wish to honour this. Mary Rawlinson, in reference to fine art, talks about being 'accosted by the work' and 'being set in motion by it': the experience of, for

⁸Not all of them refer specifically to the aesthetic aspect of evaluation.

example, a 'WOW' in front of an artwork 'inaugurates a debate about why a work seems compelling and valuable' (2006: 142). Honouring the initial response would not mean that it is sacrosanct: it could in time be modified or even rejected. Indeed, the aim would be to become more agile at including and testing the initial response.

- 3 Artworks unavoidably solicit an evaluation by addressing us in a certain way, and we may want to learn how to deal with this. The expressions of artworks are like many communicative utterances which according to Stanley Cavell make claims on us (1999 [1979]). They aim, like utterances, 'to effect particular goals, such as persuading another person to believe something', or come to see something, or react in a certain way (Guyer 2014c: 439). In addition, many artworks are evaluating things in the world including the behaviour of people and situations. How do we feel about the way in which the work wants us to see, react, believe, and value; what do we think about what it 'says' to us, and *how* it says it? In reference to Cavell's work, Stephen Mulhall writes, 'Artworks mean something to us ... in the way people do – we speak of them in terms of love and affection, or scorn and outrage; and they are felt as made by someone – we use such categories as personal style, feeling, dishonesty, authority, inventiveness, profundity and meretriciousness in speaking of them' (2007: 110). As is the case with ordinary human communication, it will take effort and skill to ensure that our response to artworks is apposite and conscionable.
- 4 Evaluative qualities are experienced as properties of an artwork – 'it is subtle', 'it is crass' – and avoiding them in an account can feel like a distortion of the work's identity and the experience of it. This holds true even if the experience of the work changes, or if one person's experience differs from another. An evaluative approach helps us to be faithful to these ostensible properties of the work and to the experience.
- 5 Evaluation of artworks can be an enjoyable human practice. It is enjoyable because evaluation can be 'moved by enthusiasm'; because it can be satisfying to be able to weigh up achievements carefully, and consequently feel insightful and just; and because it can be stimulating to work through problems of judgement which are occupying and puzzling (Sparshott 1967: 152–3). Enabling the best features of this enjoyment is worthwhile.
- 6 Evaluation of artworks can also be a necessary practice. 'Wherever there is a recognizable *kind* of object' or entity – televisions, footballers, restaurants, politicians, *and* the laws they make – there will often be

the need to evaluate and discriminate within a 'field of alternatives' (Beardsley 1981b: 153). This is unavoidable for many reasons, not least for the basic ones of time and money. Personal preferences aside, it will often become clear that one object of a kind is better than another, or differently good, and some people will want to understand and articulate how and why this is so.

- 7 Artworks, and especially films, are constantly evaluated in everyday life, so it is worthwhile having formal practices that correlate to the informal reckonings. Noël Carroll recognises that 'evaluating films is something that we all do all the time' and he invites the academy in particular to 'talk to the film-goer where she or he lives' (2000: 265–6). According to Carroll, 'it is this aspect of film-going to which recent scholarship pays little attention', and yet it is reasonable for film scholarship to be connected to an activity that is 'part of the typical life of film-going ... [where evaluation] is something that ordinary film-goers care about deeply ... something that they want to do' (266). Everyday evaluations often occur in restricted modes, for example, journalistic reviews, social media, promotional material, award ceremonies, and curtailed exchanges. It is beneficial, therefore, so that they are not the sole evaluating practices, for them to be balanced by more thorough formats. A field of aesthetic evaluation could usefully contribute to mainstream critical culture. This may seem a high-minded fantasy, but it would be an accepted ambition of many educational practices and fields of expertise.
- 8 Value is often already bestowed on artworks by the critical culture. It is incorporated into the identity of a work by the time it is experienced (Shusterman 1984). Notable examples from the world of film are *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock 1958 US) and *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles 1941 US) which come to us as 'masterpieces' or 'classics' (or even 'the best films ever made'). Viewing is inescapably affected by this knowledge, and evaluative skills would help negotiate it. The value of these works also then affects the identity and culture of future works. Herrnstein Smith writes that 'stylistic and generic exemplar[s] ... energize the production of subsequent works ... canonical work[s] ... shape and create the culture in which its value is produced and transmitted' (1983: 28–9). In turn, our own identity is over time affected because 'we develop within and are formed by a culture that is itself constituted in part *by* canonical texts' (29). An evaluative practice would scrutinise these formations and transmissions, and fruitfully contribute to them.

- 9 Some creative personnel are striving to make good artworks. In addition, artworks are often made with the intention to be appreciated because ‘making things to be appreciated by others is a fundamental human impulse’ (Iseminger 2004: 25–6, 137)⁹. These works are therefore ‘constructed to be objects of value; so value judgments [in relation to them] cannot be peripheral and accidental things’ (Hough 1966: 8). More specifically, artworks – even quite limited works – are built out of evaluative processes and so it is natural to respond in kind. Herrnstein Smith describes them as crafted, made up of countless ‘individual acts of approval and rejection, preference and assessment, trial and revision that constitute the entire process of ... composition’ (1983: 24). She calls this ‘a complex evaluative feedback loop’ and because she expands on this tellingly it is worth quoting at length:

[I]n selecting this word, adjusting that turn of phrase, preferring this rhyme to that, the author is all the while testing the local and global effectiveness of each decision by impersonating in advance his or her various presumptive audiences, who thereby themselves participate in shaping the work they will later read. Every literary work – and, more generally, artwork – is thus the product of a complex evaluative feedback loop that embraces not only the ever shifting economy of the artist’s own interest and resources as they evolve during and in reaction to the process of composition, but also all the shifting economies of his or her assumed and imagined audiences, including those who do not yet exist but whose emergent interests, variable conditions of encounter, and rival sources of gratification the artist will attempt to predict – or will intuitively surmise – and to which, among other things, his or her own sense of the fittingness of each decision will be responsive. (24)

In turn, many ‘audiences’ are struck, moment-by-moment, with whether something fits or not, whether it feels right. Using a simple example, if it is sensed that at a particular moment in a scene a filmmaker *could* have chosen a close-up ‘for cheap emotional effect, we may praise her or his intelligence and discrimination in resisting that obvious temptation’ (Lyas 2002b: 399). A meticulous evaluative practice can mirror the responsiveness of artist and audience.

⁹This is not to deny that many other intentions, for example, commercial or doctrinal, may also be involved.

- 10 An effective evaluation of an artwork may enrich another person's engagement (especially when it takes the form of a meritorious appreciation), or help them make a more informed assessment. Some works do not necessarily reveal all they have to offer in one sitting: their merits (or demerits) are not immediately apparent. Unlike many objects such as a breadknife that can be evaluated relatively easily by how well it cuts the bread, the functions of an artwork may not be so straightforwardly ascertained. A helpful evaluative discourse is needed, given that time is finite, to illuminate purpose, relevance, and import (Reichert 1977: 182). If we only latently sense something, or there is indecision, assistance may be required to sort out our thoughts, to 'stabilize and clarify' them, and arrive at a satisfactory conclusion (Sparshott 1967: 157). Equally, we may be decided, and it is reassuring to have experiences confirmed especially as initial appraisals are often made in private. Commonality is thereby affirmed – you thought it too. On the other hand, the evaluations of others can challenge apparent certainties. They encourage a dialogue with our assumptions.

- 11 The careful evaluation of artworks might be required for ethical reasons.

Firstly, one might feel a responsibility to acknowledge the work, and its creative personnel, especially if it is felt that something done well has not been sufficiently understood or appreciated. Vigilance is often required to keep alive works of the past, or works that are difficult, not easily sold to a consumer, or ones that are unassuming, not noisily advertising their significance. Roger Scruton writes that 'we strive ... to extend and enhance the web of sympathy' (1999: 370). Alternatively, a response may not always be sympathetic and the ethical desire will simply be to evaluate fairly and honestly. This can result in a less than enthusiastic appraisal of the work or in reservations about certain features of it. For most of us, it will take training and experience to acknowledge works judiciously.

Secondly, one might feel a responsibility to the self. Improving powers of discrimination may contribute to well-being, and intellectual, emotional, and cognitive development.

Thirdly, one might feel a social responsibility to help foster a culture where knowledge 'of what kinds of success and failure are possible' is shared (Sparshott 1967: 149). Artists too would operate within this more informed evaluative culture, and it might benefit the production and reception of their work.

- 12 Within academia, the explicit evaluation of artworks would put it in line with its other unmistakably evaluative practices. Rónán McDonald points out that academia is 'saturated' with value judgements all the way from the grading of student work to appraisals of fellow academics (and their work) (2007: 30). At academic conferences, phrases such as 'she gave a good paper' or the opposite, and a variety of more finessed variations, are omnipresent. McDonald argues that there is then a contradiction, or at least a disjunction, when academia refrains from explicitly evaluating its own objects of study. In addition, implicit evaluations unwittingly abound in ostensibly non-evaluative work. Wayne Booth argues that all writing on artworks is implicitly valuing because even a basic description has made choices about the best way to describe and about what is worth remarking upon (1988: 96). Some analyses which purport not to be in the business of evaluation nevertheless make assumptions about the value of films and other related matters, for example, the values of 'the spectator'. All of this would be less anomalous if there was a visible field of evaluative practice to sit alongside non-evaluative academic approaches. Herrnstein Smith writes that although evaluation is rarely granted its own dedicated disciplinary space, it does occur in academic work and in classrooms. It is permitted 'as long as it comes under cover of other presumably more objective types of ... study, such as historical description, textual analysis, or explication' (1983: 6). This sort of evaluative activity is often transitory, casual, superficial, and without rigour (understandably as it is a relegated concern).

Having introduced a range of reasons that support a developed practice of evaluation, I will now begin my elucidation of the specifically aesthetic variant of this practice.

