



The Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium

By Professor Gilberto Perez

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"Tough, smart, superbly engaging, *The Material Ghost* is a terrific book." -- Edward W. Said

In *The Material Ghost*, Gilberto Perez draws on his lifelong love of the movies as well as his work as a film scholar to write a lively, wide-ranging, penetrating study of films and filmmakers and the nature of the art form. For Perez, film is complex and richly contradictory, lifelike and dreamlike at once, a peculiar mix of reality and imagination. "The images on the screen," he writes, "carry in them something of the world itself, something material, and yet something transposed, transformed into another world: the material ghost."

"Dazzling... The sheer intelligence at work in these lucid pages is exhilarating." - Alfred Guzzetti, Boston Book Review

"A pleasure. Gilberto Perez is one of the smartest film critics writing anywhere." -- Jonathan Rosenbaum

"Strikes an ideal balance between insightful analysis and graceful writing... A model of thoughtful criticism." -- David Sterritt, Christian Science Monitor

"Brilliantly polemical in his critique of cynical reason ('the official philosophy of late capitalism'), no less passionate in defending the truth-value of cinema, Perez seems to be the clearest heir to the great humanist critic André Bazin." -- Sight & Sound

"The chapters on Keaton and Renoir are stunning, full of perceptive remarks; the chapter on Godard is a persuasive rehabilitation; none of the chapters is without memorable insights." -- Michael Wood, London Review of Books

"Gilberto Perez's ambitious, abundant, and cultivated book--the fruit of decades of thinking and teaching -- accompanies readers on a journey of discovery into the wonder of film." -- Stanley Cavell

"Few books of film criticism in the past twenty-five years have been so enjoyable or instructive... [Perez] has excellent things to say about authorship, about documentaries, about popular genres, about cinematic point of view and narrative

technique, about actors, and above all about camera style... He makes us want to look once more at the remarkable pictures he discusses." -- James Naremore, Cineaste

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The Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium By Professor Gilberto Perez Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #2418142 in Books
- Brand: Brand: The Johns Hopkins University Press
- Published on: 1997-12-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.47" h x 6.31" w x 9.28" l,

- Binding: Hardcover
- 448 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Few books of film criticism in the past twenty-five years have been so enjoyable or instructive... [Perez] has excellent things to say about authorship, about documentaries, about popular genres, about cinematic point of view and narrative technique, about actors, and above all about camera style... He never condescends to his audience or sacrifices his intellectual clarity, and most importantly he makes us want to look once more at the remarkable pictures he discusses. The virtues of his writing are quite rare." -- James Naremore, *Cineaste*

"Strikes an ideal balance between insightful analysis and graceful writing... A model of thoughtful criticism that treats the complexities of film and the sensibilities of readers with equal understanding, consideration, and respect." -- David Sterritt, *Christian Science Monitor*

"Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*, Antonioni's *Eclipse*, Ford's *My Darling Clementine*, Godard's *Breathless*. Perez's frame-by-frame analysis of them is always lucid and invigorating, reminding us why these films were considered classics from the first. Even better, Perez takes up lesser known films and filmmakers... The eclectic mixture of films is one the book's strengths, allowing Perez to write on a breadth of topics... Despite holding films to a high standard, Perez never comes off as a film snob; his readings remain rooted in a genuine and communicable love for the cinema." -- Jonathan Vogels, *The Republic of Letters*

"Perez's book may strike some readers as anachronistic because it is about nothing but the author's love of movies, its pleasure lying in the sheer intensity of his intelligence. In so far as this wonderfully flexible and expansive thinker has a thesis, it's that the illusionist medium of cinema is endlessly poised between reality and abstraction... Brilliantly polemical in his critique of cynical reason ('the official philosophy of late capitalism'), no less passionate in defending the truth-value of cinema, Perez seems to be the clearest heir to the great humanist critic André Bazin." -- *Sight and Sound*

"Dazzling... The sheer intelligence at work in these lucid pages is exhilarating." -- Alfred Guzzetti, *Boston Book Review*

"[Perez's] early and persistent love of film imbues *The Material Ghost: Films and their Medium*, which

moves gracefully from the documentaries of Robert Flaherty to the revolutionary epics of Alexander Dovzhenko to the pastoralism of Jean Renoir." -- Chronicle of Higher Education

"The chapters on Keaton and Renoir are stunning, full of perceptive remarks; the chapter on Godard is a persuasive rehabilitation; none of the chapters is without memorable insights." -- Michael Wood, London Review of Books

"The section on [Iranian director Abbas] Kiarostami in Perez's new book, *The Material Ghost*, is the best comment I've seen on the subject." -- Stanley Kauffman, New Republic

"Gilberto Perez's book, *The Material Ghost: Films and their Medium* (*****) ranks with the finest cinematic writing anywhere." -- Tony McKibben, *The List* (Glasgow and Edinburgh)

"It is as fine a book on film as I have ever encountered, a hypermarché of insight, precise and lovely writing, information, and clear thinking. Page after page elaborates arguments so acute and aptly formulated that I have no doubt I'll be exploiting them in the classroom and in writing for the rest of my career." -- Lesley Brill, *Criticism* 43.1

About the Author

Gilberto Perez is a professor of film studies at Sarah Lawrence College and film critic for the *Yale Review*.

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