

these different academic selves or if we should renounce our traditional disciplinary selves altogether and at what cost that might be done. I would dearly love to discuss these issues with Aysan Sev'er - she is clearly someone who would be wonderful to talk and share ideas with and from whom I could continue to learn.

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*The Girl From God's Country: Nell Shipman and the Silent Film.* Kay Armatage. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003; 351 pp; ISBN 0-8020-85423; \$32.95 (paper).

When Kay Armatage was writing her PhD dissertation on Gertrude Stein there were only a few of Stein's works in print, but by the time she finished there were at least five major Stein biographies. How could a culture be so fascinated with Stein's life in the absence of her work? "This phenomenon," Armatage says, "seemed to capture exactly the problematic of women artists - they were more interesting as personalities than as artists." Armatage's work on Nell Shipman, a Canadian-born woman and one of the pioneer film makers of the 1920s, brings together these two divergent forces.

Part biography, part film history, and part theory, the subtext of *Nell Shipman* is "modernity," the decline of a pre-industrial, artisan system of production and the subsequent development of a large corporate structure with a new complex, hierarchical division of labor. Nell Shipman (1892-1970) belonged to the earlier era; she raised the money, wrote the scripts, directed the films, acted in them, edited them, and peddled them to New York distributors. Stunningly beautiful, an accomplished actress, ambitious, hardworking, she had no reason to doubt that she would be successful. And she was. She was eventually defeated (and died nearly destitute), not by her declining energy, fading beauty, or a loss of creativity but by the new Hollywood studio system and the mass production of mass culture.

As the novelty of movies wore off and unions were leading the studios into heavier and heavier debt, Hollywood became more and more a caricature of itself, while a new era of post-modernism was emerging and displacing it. The new organization was a mix of large and small-scale production, along with a deconstruction of canonical texts. No one understands the transition and the contemporary period better than Armatage, a professor of film studies and a film maker herself who has for many years introduced audiences of Toronto's film festival to a new generation of women film producers and writers, women creating a new paradigm in the context of post-modernism.

The change was too little and too late for Shipman, whose personal lifestyle had a certain affinity with Scott Fitzgerald's women - light headed and careless, living for the moment. Shipman's imagination was tougher, closer to Jack London, and like London she was drawn to "the call of the wild." London, a socialist, was shocked by the exploitation of men seeking gold and cared little about the aesthetics of his stories, while Shipman viewed the North as a site for strong, fearless women who drove dogsleds, rescued injured men and nurtured wilderness animals. She defined a new feminist consciousness and anticipated contemporary environmentalism. It is this two-tier analysis of Shipman, who was both the victim of social change and the voice of an emergent feminism, that Armatage handles so well, adding brilliantly and immeasurably to our knowledge of gender and film and how to analyze them.

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with the assistance of Naomi McCormack, film maker

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*Ni vues ni connues ? femmes, VIH, médias.* Maria Nengeh Mensah. Montréal: remue-ménage, 2003; illustrations; appendices; 221 pages; ISBN 2-89091-207-8; \$19.95 (paper).