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Erin Y. Huang, *Urban Horror: Neoliberal Post-Socialism and the Limits of Visibility*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020; US\$26.95 pbk (ISBN: 978-1-4780-0809-5), xii + 271 pp.

Reviewed by Samuel Poirier-Poulin, Tampereen yliopisto/Tampere University, Finland.

Erin Huang’s *Urban Horror: Neoliberal Post-Socialism and the Limits of Visibility* proposes a Marxist analysis of neoliberalism and Sinocentric post-socialism through the close reading of blockbuster films, documentaries, and video art produced in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan since the 1950s (and mostly since the 1990s). The book alternates between politico-economic analysis of these regions and in-depth analysis of the imaginaries of the post- and the speculative forces of cinema. Throughout her book, Huang is interested in intimate sensory experiences and investigates ‘urban horror’, i.e., ‘an invisible force ... that springs up when the excesses of contemporary violence embedded in the neoliberal production of space overwhelm the existing frames of cognition’ (p. 3). In contrast with scholarship that reads horror as a visible form of monstrosity related to social taboos and the abject, Huang builds on Engels’s (1845/2009) concept of industrial horror and sees horror as ‘the paralysis of existing tools of comprehension and response’ (p. 219). This approach is especially innovative and allows the author to link horror to the urban and the idea that the space of the city is reproducible according to a neoliberal and post-socialist logic.

Urban Horror is divided into five chapters. The first three chapters centre on mainland China, whereas the fourth chapter focuses on Hong Kong and the fifth one on Taiwan. Chapter 1 proposes a reading of the factory film and examines the ruination of the socialist-era factory as a form of post-socialist nostalgia and glorification of labour. The chapter especially shines in its analysis of the factory gate as a liminal space that highlights the dichotomy between socialism and capitalism, production and consumption, and in the socialist cognitive mapping it offers through the close reading of *Resplendent Light* (1949) and *Fiery Youth* (1976). Drawing on post-socialist feminism, chapter 2 centres on intimate dystopias in the work of Li Shaohong, focusing on the complex meanings of femininity and the notion of the feminist interior. As Huang strongly demonstrates, the work of Shaohong shows women being displaced, homeless, and disappearing because of an enduring system of violence that extracts their labour, reproduces commodified femininity, and circulates cultures of misogyny. In this context, the most familiar settings become sites of horror. Chapter 3 turns to the New Documentary Movement, mostly investigating the representation of time in Cong Feng’s *Stratum* (2012) through the tradition of ruin gazing, ‘where the sights of ruination, gentrification, disappearance, and destruction create screen events of time that are displayed with different velocities, durations, and rhythms’ (p. 115). While the author’s analysis of memory, ruin-in-reverse, and sound and music in *Stratum* is fascinating, her analysis is surprisingly long and detailed compared to her analysis of Huang Weikai’s *Disorder* (2009). Considering that this chapter is framed as a comparative analysis of these two films, Huang’s analysis of *Disorder* feels rather short—a similar critique could be made about chapter 4. Chapter 4 explores the relationship between bodies and space in post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, showing that ‘embodiment

and disembodiment haunt the public imagination in a space that was created as a zone of exception' (p. 150). Huang's reading connects the narrative of decline in the films of Fruit Chan with a new body-centred aesthetic of urban horror, the Umbrella Movement, and speculations about the futurity of the image, highlighting the many ways in which Chan challenges the notion of traditional borders. Lastly, chapter 5 examines the work of Malaysian Taiwanese filmmaker Tsai Ming-liang and the ethics of representing precarity in art institutions that are complicit in the neoliberal system. Huang situates Tsai's reflection on precaritized bodies in the geopolitical space of Taiwan, i.e., 'an island of precariousness' (p. 188) which political sovereignty, histories, and languages continue to be challenged by the imaginaries of global empires like China, Japan, and the United States. More importantly, she seeks to move beyond the acknowledgment of complicity and rethink the future of the image by examining the strategies of resistance offered in Tsai's cinematic practices.

Though challenging at first and at time jargon-heavy, *Urban Horror* proposes a fascinating reading of the post- in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, showing that cinema is 'a mediator and disseminator of emergent feelings that are produced in specific social settings' (p. 21). The author's theoretical framework builds on the work of Friedrich Engels, Henri Lefebvre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jacques Rancière, and is especially strong at creating a dialogue between Marxist phenomenology, film theory, and geography. The monograph also contains a noteworthy comparative analysis of Chinese- and French-language cinemas, notably through a reflection on Louis Lumière's *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895) and Chantal Akerman's *D'Est* (1993). With its innovative take on horror in the contemporary world, *Urban Horror* will prove insightful to graduate students and researchers interested in film studies, urban studies, East Asian studies, social theory, and sociology through film.

Reference:

Engels, Friedrich (1845/2009) *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, New York: Oxford University Press.