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Dr Michele Aaron

Senior Lecturer in Film Studies

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Qualifications

- B.A (London)
- M.A., PhD (Southampton)

Biography

Michele Aaron did her first degree in Literature at QMW, University of London, and both her MA, in Culture and Social Change, and PhD on Contemporary Film and Fiction, at Southampton University. Previously, she taught film studies at Brunel University, where she co-edited the online journal *EnterText*.

She has written books on Death and Dying in Mainstream Cinema and film theory and the pleasures and ethics of Spectatorship, and edited three collections of essays. Her journal articles include work on spectatorship, Cinema's 'queer Jews', and cinematic fiction. Her most recent publication, in *Cinema Journal* (Feb. 2014), was an essay on Cinema and Suicide.

Teaching

- Introduction to Film Studies
- Film Theory Politics
- Death and the Moving Image
- Postcolonial Film

I also teach on the MRes Gender Studies and on the 'Colonial Encouters' module for the Birmingham Foundation Academy.

Postgraduate supervision

I have supervised to completion PhD and MPhil students on a broad range of topics, such as Fatherhood in 1990s Hollywood, the Psychiatric Institution in Cinema, Lesbian Fandom, and Self-representation in contemporary artists' moving image work through a queer-theory framework.

I currently have PhD students working on Ethical Spectatorship and the 'Arab Spring', and Grief Therapy from Literature and Film.

I welcome research proposals that fall within my broad research specialisms but am open to suggestions on related topics. I am particulalry interested in work that addresses the ethical and aesthetic potential of film to effect social, political or personal change.

Research

Death

My most recent book, *Death and the Moving Image*, examines the representation of death and dying in mainstream Western cinema from its earliest to its latest renditions. Exploring gender, race, nation and narration, the study isolates how mainstream cinema works to bestow value upon certain lives and specific socio-cultural identities in a hierarchical and partisan way. Dedicated to the popular, to the political and ethical implications of mass culture's themes and imperatives, this book takes this culture to task for its mortal economies of expendability. It also disinters the capacity for film, and film criticism, to engage with life and vulnerability differently.

In 2009, I ran an international multi-disciplinary conference on Death and Visual Culture which emerged out of collaboration with the 'End of Life' Head of the West Midlands' NHS. As a result of this event, I put together an edited collection drawn from a selection of the papers presented. This book, entitled Envisaging *Death: Dying and Visual Culture* was published in October 2013.

Queer theory/texts

I have an ongoing interest in theories of gender and sexuality, especially as they interact with the construction of Jewishness and race more broadly. I have published and presented a series of pieces on the intersection of queerness and Jewishness. Grounded in the discourses of race and gender of late nineteenth century Europe, these explore Hollywood, European and Yiddish film and history, and more recently television.

Ethics and film theory

My previous work on the 'ethics of spectatorship' has progressed into a questioning of the racialised or imperial, or simply partial, assumptions underlying philosophically informed Western film criticism which addresses the dynamics of watching the suffering of others. While such a questioning underlies my other research projects, it represents a future and more transnational trajectory of my work.

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Publications

Books

- *Death and the Moving Image: Ideology, Iconography and I* (Edinburgh University Press; 2014) Distributed by Oxford University Press in the US.
- *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking On* (Wallflower; 2007) Distributed by Columbia University Press in US.

Edited books

- Ed. *Envisaging Death: Visual Culture and Dying* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2013)
- Ed. *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004)
- Ed. *The Body's Perilous Pleasures* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999)

Edited journal

- Ed. "Text < - > Screen" *EnterText* 1.2 (Spring/Summer 2001)

Journal articles

- "Cinema and Suicide: Necromanticism, Necropolitics and the Logic the Vanishing Point" *Cinema Journal* Vol. 53, no. 2 (2014)
- "Passing Through: Queer Lesbian Film and *Fremde Haut* Journal of Lesbian Studies Vol. 16, no. 3 (Summer 2012)
- "(Fill-in-the) Blank Fiction: Dennis Cooper's Cinematics and the Complicitous Reader" *Journal of Modern Literature* Vol. 27, no. 3 (Winter 2004)
- "Pass/Fail: Screen Debate on Boys Don't Cry" *Screen* Vol.42, no. 1 (March 2001)
- "The Queer Jew: From Yidl to Yentl and Back Again" *Jewish History and Culture* Vol. 3, no. 1 (Summer 2000)
- "The Historical, the Hysterical and the Homoeopathic" *Paragraph* Vol.19, no.2 (Summer 1996)

Book chapters

- ''Looking On and Looking the Other Way: *Hotel Rwanda* and the Racialised Ethics of Spectatorship' in James Walters and Tom Brown, *Film Moments* (London: BFI: 2010)
- 'The New Queer Jew: Jewishness, Masculinity and Contemporary Film' in Harry Brod, Shawn Zevit. *Brothers Keepers: New Jewish Masculinities* (Men Studies' Press, 2010)
- From Complacency to Culpability: Conflict & Death in post 9.11 Film' in Mei Renyi & Fu Meirong, eds., *Changes and Continuities: the United States after 9.11*, Beijing: World Affairs Press, 2009. Chinese Language
- 'Towards Queer Television Theory: Bigger Pictures sans the Sweet Queer-After' in Glyn Davis and Gary Needham, *Queer TV* (Routledge, 2008)
- 'Pass/Fail: Screen Debate on Boys Don't Cry' in Jackie Stacey and Sarah Street, eds., *The Queer Screen: A Screen Reader on Queer Cinema* (Routledge, 2007) Reprint
- 'New Queer Cinema' in Linda Ruth Williams and Mike Hammond, eds., *American Cinema Since 1960* (Open University Press, 2006)
- 'New Queer Cable: The L Word, the Small Screen and the Bigger Picture' in Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, eds., *The L Word* (London: I B Taurus, 2006)
- 'Looking On: The Spectacle of Death and the Complicitous Reader' *Spectacle of the Real* (Intellect Press, 2004)
- 'The Queer Jew: Masculinity and Yiddish Cinema' in Phil Powrie, Bruce Babbington and Ann Davies, eds., *The Trouble with Men: Masculinities in European and Hollywood Cinema* (Wallflower Press, 2004)
- "New Queer Cinema" and "The New Queer Spectator" in Aaron, ed. *New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004)
- "Hardly Chazans: Yentl and the Singing Jew" in Bill Marshall and Robynn Stilwell, eds. *Musicals: Hollywood and Beyond* (Intellect Press, 2000)
- "'Til Death Us Do Part: Cinema's Queer Couples Who Kill" in Aaron, ed. *The Body's Perilous Pleasures* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999)
- "The Blunt Cutting Edge: Taking the Knife to the Body of Evidence" in Deborah Cartmell, Ian Hunter and Heidi Kaye, eds. *Sisterhoods: Feminists in Film and Fiction* (Pluto Press, 1998)

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