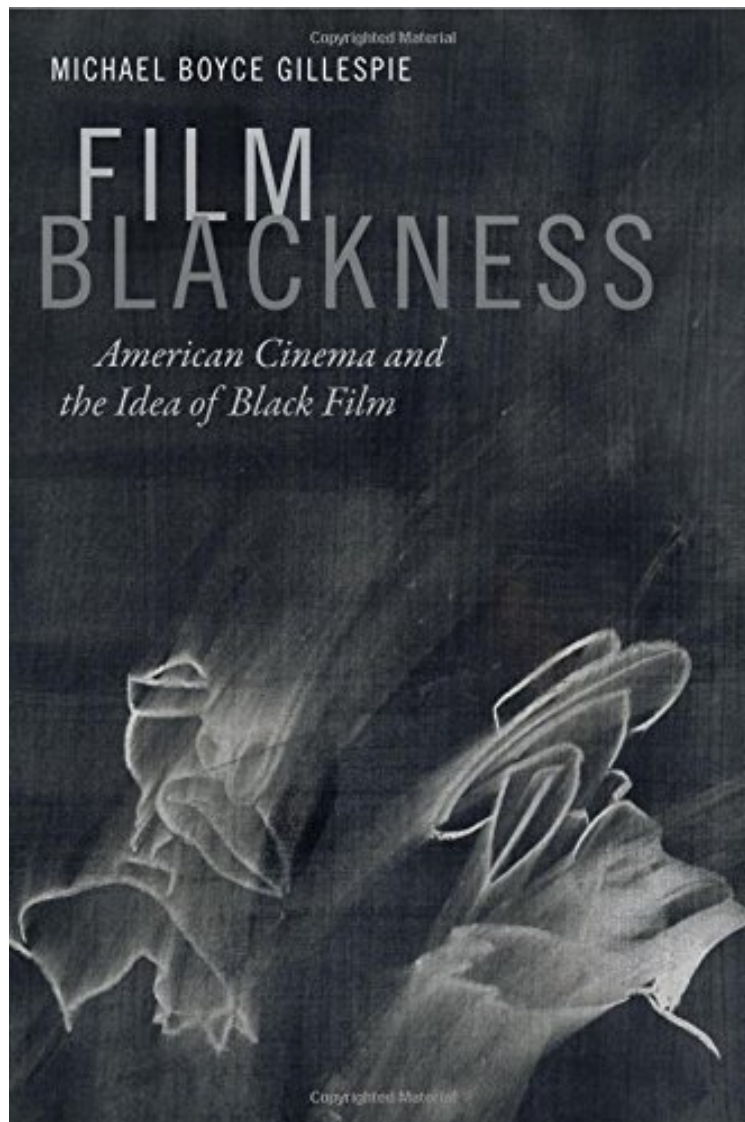


(Download pdf) Film Blackness: American Cinema and the Idea of Black Film

Film Blackness: American Cinema and the Idea of Black Film

Michael Boyce Gillespie

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Michael Boyce Gillespie : Film Blackness: American Cinema and the Idea of Black Film before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Film Blackness: American Cinema and the Idea of Black Film:

In Film Blackness Michael Boyce Gillespie shifts the ways we think about black film, treating it not as a category, a

genre, or strictly a representation of the black experience but as a visual negotiation between film as art and the discursivity of race. Gillespie challenges expectations that black film can or should represent the reality of black life or provide answers to social problems. Instead, he frames black film alongside literature, music, art, photography, and new media, treating it as an interdisciplinary form that enacts black visual and expressive culture. Gillespie discusses the racial grotesque in Ralph Bakshi's *Coonskin* (1975), black performativity in Wendell B. Harris Jr.'s *Chameleon Street* (1989), blackness and noir in Bill Duke's *Deep Cover* (1992), and how place and desire impact blackness in Barry Jenkins's *Medicine for Melancholy* (2008). Considering how each film represents a distinct conception of the relationship between race and cinema, Gillespie recasts the idea of black film and poses new paradigms for genre, narrative, aesthetics, historiography, and intertextuality.

"Film Blackness documents Michael Boyce Gillespie's long, intense devotion to seeing. To see, to visualize black cinema as it is and as it could be, is an act of prophetic description where theorizing is next to socializing, where the visible and the invisible converge. Gillespie constantly shows and tells us this with rigorous nuance. Happily, this long-awaited book is here and up ahead of us, waiting for the new ways of seeing it anticipates and inspires." (Fred Moten, author of *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*) "He questions prevailing trends that tend toward labeling a film, a filmmaker, or a movement in order to control it in a world where reductivism and conventionalism rule. Gillespie's research and writing are intrepid as he challenges these ways of thinking... In a world in which producers, festival organizers, critics, pundits, and scholars continuously overdetermine and instrumentalize works by black artists, insisting on their constitutive representation of a predetermined definition of blackness, Gillespie reminds his readers that there are myriad other ways of enacting and expressing black culture, many of which have yet to be realized, or imagined." (Regina Longo, *Film Quarterly*) "This astonishingly comprehensive, compact book does nothing less than synthesize nearly the entirety of thought to date on black cinema, blackness in the cinema, and scholarship in this vital area of film studies. In his introduction, "We Insist: The Idea of Black Film," Gillespie makes it clear that he intends *Film Blackness* as a call to arms. Arguing for a rethinking of present values, the author centers his discussion on *Coonskin* (1975), *Chameleon Street* (1989), *Deep Cover* (1992), and *Medicine for Melancholy* (2008). But these films are just the jumping off point for a dense, carefully structured, fascinatingly rich discussion of film history, audience reception, the entire business structure that creates these films, and many other subjects. Gillespie is well versed in black film theory and history, and he uses a wide range of disparate voices to give added heft to his work." Choice (Gwendolyn A. Foster, University of Nebraska-Lincoln) About the Author Michael Boyce Gillespie is Associate Professor of Film in the Department of Media and Communication Arts and the Black Studies Program at the City College of New York, City University of New York.