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Fernando Vidal

Performing Brains on Screen

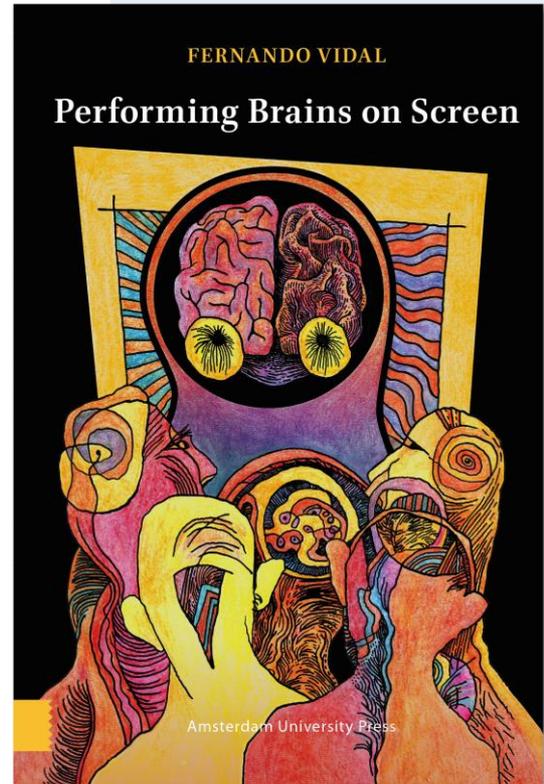
Performing Brains on Screen deals with film enactments and representations of the belief that human beings are essentially their brains, a belief that embodies one of the most influential modern ways of understanding the human. Films have performed brains in two chief ways: by turning physical brains into protagonists, as in the "brain movies" of the 1950s, which show terrestrial or extra-terrestrial disembodied brains carrying out their evil intentions; or by giving brains that remain unseen inside someone's head an explicitly major role, as in brain transplantation films or their successors since the 1980s, in which brain contents are transferred and manipulated by means of information technology. Through an analysis of filmic genres and particular movies, *Performing Brains on Screen* documents this neglected filmic universe, and demonstrates how the cinema has functioned as a cultural space where a core notion of the contemporary world has been rehearsed and problematized.

BIOGRAPHY

Fernando Vidal is Research Professor of ICREA (Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies) at the Medical Anthropology Research Center, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona, Spain.

*"The Cartesian subject may be dead but our brains still haven't figured that out. In *Performing Brains on Screen*, Fernando Vidal provides an impressive survey of the brain as protagonist across a pulpy expanse of fiction and cinema, examining how the continuing equation of brain and selfhood informs popular understandings of identity, consciousness, and memory. Essential reading for neuroscientists, cinephiles, and anyone else who has ever pondered the odd yet enduring convention of brains transplanted, escaped, switched, uploaded, and otherwise liberated from the body as spongy receptacle of selfhood."*

- Jeffrey Sconce, Professor in the Screen Cultures program at Northwestern University and a Guggenheim Fellow for 2020-2021.



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