

# Book Reviews – February 2014

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## ***Watching the World: Screening Documentary and Audiences***

**By Thomas Austin**

Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007. ISBN 9780719085581. 217 pp. £11.99 (pbk).

## ***A Journey through Documentary Film***

**By Luke Dormehl**

Harpenden: Kamera Books, 2012. ISBN 9781842435908. 31 illustrations. 189 pp. £12.99 (pbk).

## ***American Documentary Film: Projecting the Nation***

**By Jeffrey Geiger**

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. ISBN 9780748621484. 22 illustrations. 288 pp. £24.99 (pbk).

## **A Review by Douglas C. MacLeod Jr, SUNY Cobleskill.**

Documentaries seem to have become more marketable over the years, both in Hollywood and in academia. More and more directors, scholars, and university departments are delving into a cinematic (and televisual) world that has vastly changed due to a dynamic political climate, technological advances, and shifting ideas as to what constitutes reality and its viable representation. Because of this, a mass of work both within and about the documentary genre has been produced, with varying degrees of success. This review will examine three academic works found vying for attention as textbooks that help to navigate this unwieldy collection of primary and scholarly material in the classroom. Thomas Austin's *Watching the World*, Luke Dormehl's *A Journey through Documentary Film* and Jeffrey Geiger's *American Documentary Film* each provides an interesting study on the subject matter, but only the last of these is altogether comprehensive and, in short, is one of the better books on documentary (and film studies discourse) that I have read in quite some time.

At the beginning of *Watching the World* Austin tells us that the book is meant as an exploration "not only of documentary texts, but also some of the commercial, discursive and social contexts in which they circulate and are watched, and the expectations and responses of some of their audiences" (1). Austin explores audience response by first starting with the "booming" importance of documentary filmmaking over the last twenty-or-so years, and then uses "case studies" (5) and empirical data

(certain films, both cinematic and televised, and audience statistics) to prove his hypothesis. Text and context have been widely studied, but audience reaction to documentaries is generally not as well covered, as Austin dutifully points out: "Hopefully, this book will provide an example of some of the insights that can be achieved by turning attention to this unaccountably neglected object of study" (2).

Unfortunately, much of Austin's text is written in this prescriptive fashion. Another example comes in a chapter entitled "'Suspense, fright, emotion, happy ending': Documentary Form and Audience Response to *Touching the Void*":

Perhaps surprisingly, ethical issues were rarely raised in my audience research. Very few respondents voluntarily mentioned ethics—in terms of either film-making decisions or film form. And when presented with a deliberately open question—'Do you think the film ran into any ethical or moral dilemmas or problems?'—most took this to be a reference to Yates' difficult decision to cut the rope on his partner.

Austin proceeds to re-write the question, and provides the reader with three responses similar to the introductory statements above; one states: "Yes—obviously Simon cutting the rope knowing he was sending Joe to his death. A dilemma but justifiable in the circumstances " (75). Austin's repetition of points and choices of wording do not allow the reader the opportunity to think for him or herself; each point is given to the reader and then spelled out accordingly, which tends to get wearisome.

Another novel point of interest comes in his truncated, seemingly incomplete chapter entitled "Approaching the Invisible Centre: Middle-Class Identity and Documentary Film", where the writer positions himself as an audience member. In trying to place himself as the subject, and after watching *Paradise Lost: the Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills* (Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky, 1996) and *Paradise Lost 2: Revelations* (Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky, 2000), Austin begins to understand his place in the class structure, which allows him to understand how class structures can, indeed, affect how one views documentary films.

I should point out here that I think of myself as belonging to what might be loosely called the *Guardian*-reading English middle class. (The *Guardian* is the British daily newspaper traditionally read by left/liberal middle classes, particularly public sector employees.) My mother grew up in a lower middle-class family, and my father in a rural working-class one. Both my parents worked in the public sector: she as a school secretary and then a social worker, he a teacher. (112)

In a footnote, he also makes sure to let us know that he is aware of the other facets of his “‘dominant’ identity”, his “maleness, whiteness, heterosexuality, and able-bodiedness” (121). Although seemingly an aside, these moments of autobiography move the reader away from the clinical prose that introduces that same chapter (and most of his other ones):

So far in this book I have considered various engagements with screen documentary made by viewers other than myself. In this chapter I turn attention to some of my own responses to documentary films, and explore how my identity, particularly its middle-class aspect, has shaped these reactions. (109)

Much of the success of any book like *Watching the World* stems from how comprehensively the author defines and critically analyzes the terms with which he or she is concerned. *Watching the World* does an excellent job in unpacking why it is that particular audiences feel the way they do towards such films as *Etre et avoir* (Nicolas Philibert, 2002), *Touching the Void* (Kevin Macdonald, 2003), *Capturing the Friedmans* (Andrew Jarecki, 2003), and wildlife programmes. His extensive use of direct quotations from his interviewees does help Austin to combine “textual and contextual investigations of documentary forms with qualitative audience research” quite successfully (184), as well as in proving his thesis that “watching a documentary may contribute towards a shift in senses (both cognitive and emotional) of the world ‘out there’, and associated attitudes towards it”, and one’s self (181). The issue is in Austin’s belief that the data should spell that out for us, when more critical analysis and evaluation is needed.

*Watching the World* does have a small section on defining the term ‘documentary’, but because his focus is more on audience reaction towards the genre, most of the definition stems from the ideas of other critics and theorists and provides neither a comprehensive nor an original understanding of the term. Luke Dormehl, however, in his simple but effective book *A Journey through Documentary Film* provides the reader with a broad understanding of what documentary is, and a straightforward way of looking at these films, which would certainly be helpful for any undergraduate student interested in the subject matter; it may not, however, be as helpful for upper-level documentary film students looking for more in-depth commentary.

Posing his basic question, “So what is documentary?” (12), Dormehl claims we can look at the term in several different ways. One possible answer is that “documentaries deal with the truth. Documentaries present reality, populated by real people, real places and real events. When we, the audience, watch a documentary we are watching a film that addresses the world in which we live, as opposed to a world imagined by the filmmaker” (12). Although I am quite sure that this would not connect well with Austin’s definition, which is much more specific as to whom “the



audience" is, Dormehl does go on to state that the dictionary definition he presents "carries intrinsic problems" (12). He starts by writing about the differences between reality and fiction, and that audience members have what he calls a belief matrix, which is "audience's reading of the cinematic text based on their pre-determined expectations of where it should be critically situated" (15). He claims that, by and large, the audience understands that a certain amount of cinematically "fictional" manipulation is involved with documentary; techniques in cinematography, editing, musical scores, and so on, are incorporated into the reality of the situation for emotional effect, even when 'truth' (which is itself shaped by the culture it is produced in) remains a generic expectation.

Further complexity is found in the related concepts of subjectivity and objectivity. Documentaries, Dormehl says, are considered to be primarily objective; but subjectivity is bound to play a significant role in the creation of these films, whether they are more direct (observational) cinematic texts or overtly participatory films, where "the role of the author as part of the documentary process" (20) is more prominent. This moves Dormehl into the realm of narrativity, which, he says, is not only relevant for fiction but is necessary to discuss when talking about all genres of cinema (25). Although these thoughts are not original and repeat well-rehearsed philosophical challenges to concepts of truth and authorial distance, Dormehl does present them in a very accessible way that could help film students enter these debates easily.

*A Journey through Documentary Film* is divided into "four separate modes: participatory, fly-on-the wall, poetic-experimental, and essayistic" (31). This compartmentalization, once again, eases the reader into learning about essential works in the documentary canon. However, what takes place is not so much a study as to how each of these films connects with one of the four modes, but cursory (and somewhat predictable) textual analysis of the just over 60 films presented. This makes for an entertaining read but the work fails to get into each work with in-depth critical analysis.

His first chapter (and his strongest) is on essayistic films, which he describes as "expository in nature, a rhetorical discourse designed to provide information about a particular subject or historical event" (35). Most of these types of documentaries have an argument, and offer material in support of that argument. Essayistic documentaries include: *Nanook of the North* (Robert J. Flaherty, 1922); *Night Mail* (Harry Watt and Basil Wright, 1936); *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (Pare Lorentz, 1934); and, one of Dormehl's favorites (and one of his better entries), Orson Welles's confusing masterpiece *F is for Fake*. I also learned much from his piece on *When We Were Kings* (Leon Gast, 1996), a somewhat forgotten (but fantastic) film about the 'Rumble in the Jungle' between

Muhammad Ali and George Foreman, as well as his thoughts on *An Inconvenient Truth* (Davis Guggenheim, 2006). In this section, Dormehl also provides compelling commentary on lesser known films like *The War Game* (Peter Watkins, 1968), *Powers of Ten* (Charles and Ray Eames, 1977), *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (Sophie Fiennes, 2006) and *King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters* (Seth Gordon, 2008).

His second chapter is on participatory films, which "revolve around the interactions of the documentary maker (and sometimes his or her crew) with the subject of their film" (91). These films are more interview-based and are more subjective and emotionally driven. *Grey Gardens* (Albert and David Maysles, 1975), *The Thin Blue Line* (Errol Morris, 1988), *Roger & Me* (Michael Moore, 1989), *Capturing the Friedmans*, *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara* (Errol Morris, 2004), and *Grizzly Man* (Werner Herzog, 2005) are just some of the entries in this chapter. Here, the reader gets more of a sense as to how Dormehl feels about the manipulative elements of documentary filmmaking. For example, his attack on *Super Size Me* (Morgan Spurlock, 2004) and *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Michael Moore, 2004), while fairly convincing, seem out of place with the rest of the text. Although he calls *Super Size Me* "alternately terrifying and hilarious" (118), Dormehl also goes as far as to say that Spurlock's "hypothesis is redundant" (118) and the film sometimes veers "into 'shock doc' territory, drawing a parallel between the documentary film and MTV's popular *Jackass* stunt show" (119). While this reader could not fully agree with Dormehl's glib assessment of the film, he does give the insightful observation that Spurlock "employs many stylistic devices Moore has honed during his career" (120), most especially in *Fahrenheit 9/11* in which the filmmaker opens "himself up to criticism for misdirecting the audience" (122).

Dormehl describes the poetic-experimental documentaries as "lyrical and impressionistic in their characterization of the world, and place more emphasis on imagery and aesthetics than in the conveying of factual information" (141). Most of these films were produced in the 1920's, and are reactions to formulaic fictional filmmaking. Such films include *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* (Walter Ruttmann, 1927), *The Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929), *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1955) (which is more essayistic in this reader's professional opinion), and *Baraka* (Ron Fricke, 1992). This particular chapter is not as well fleshed out as the first two, although one could say that the omission of *Salesman* (Albert and David Maysles, 1968) and *Mr. Death: The Rise and Fall of Fred Leuchter, Jr.* (Errol Morris, 1999) is quite glaring. The same thing can be said about his chapter on fly-on-the-wall documentaries. These films, according to Dormehl, are filmed on location, in the present, and the director does not seem to take part in the action, which is characterized by "the apparent unobtrusiveness of the crew's presence in the making of the picture" (159). Included are *Triumph of the Will* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1934), *A Time*

for *Burning* (Barbara Connell and Bill Jersey, 1966), *For All Mankind* (Al Reinert, 1989), *Hoop Dreams* (Steve James, 1994) and *Crumb* (Terry Zwigoff, 1994). He also includes *Harlan County, U.S.A.* (Barbara Kopple, 1977), a conspicuous error on the writer's part given that Kopple and her cameraman do, indeed, become overtly participatory; in fact, they got roughed up on camera, and nearly shot and killed by the gun thugs they filmed. The film should be re-examined if, in fact, revised editions of Dormehl's text are published.

*A Journey through Documentary Film* would have benefited from a thorough conclusion, something that let the reader know what precisely the book was trying to accomplish. Because there is no fundamental argument, other than the implied one that documentaries can (and must) be looked at via one of the several terms Dormehl uses, the text is left without any satisfying ending. The same cannot be said for Jeffrey Geiger's *American Documentary Film: Projecting the Nation*, a text that is both comprehensive and convincing. Beautifully combining research with his own thoughts on the subject, Geiger has written a book that should be used in all undergraduate documentary classes, and could be used by more advanced students as well. Simply put, this is one of the definitive texts on the subject, not out of place among the likes of John Grierson, Erik Barnow, and Bill Nichols.

Geiger begins by explaining his scope:

*American Documentary Film* explores key themes, moments and movements in US documentary over the course of more than a century of cinema. In spite of the ambitious title, this is not a survey or exhaustive history of documentary. Rather, this is an effort to distill important aspects of the documentary idea while tracing the form's development over time, focusing on the ways documentaries have engaged with US national identity, and perceptions of American belonging. (1)

This beautifully formulated intention is a sturdy foundation for the rest of the text, which starts off with an meticulously researched definition that proves that the term 'documentary' can most properly be defined precisely by its often being "less than clear" (5). The one element of documentary that all could agree on is that, even if considered non-fiction, the genre uses fictional elements to persuade the viewer, almost to a fault. As Geiger writes:

Even with this range of arguments framing documentary's enunciatory and social particularity, many have contended there is little difference between documentary and fiction. Though as a cinematic form documentary is aligned to nonfiction and factuality, and therefore not viewed as 'fancy' or fantasy, it's easy enough to

see that documentaries are constructs containing elements of subjective interpretation, selection, fictional techniques, narrative modes and so on. (8)

With that being said, Geiger wants the reader to recognize that a documentary reality does exist, and that it is “a cinematic experience of reality that indexes—and points towards—real people, places, and events. It is socially produced, and experienced through cognitive and bodily processes” (11). The book focuses on American made documentaries, only because Geiger needs a focus to prove his comprehensive thesis; each chapter “examines a key set of themes or movements (historical, political social, aesthetic), while also containing a ‘case study’ of a single film” (13).

Geiger’s first chapter delves into what the “documentary *impulse*” is: the need to enlighten or engage the viewer with spectacle, even if one is filming reality. Using *The Midway Plaisance* as his historical example, it is here where Geiger briefly explores race, ethnology, and entertainment; how the three connect to each other to create a spectacle one could enjoy. Also, Geiger provides the reader with analysis of historical texts, like the photographs and early motion pictures of Eadweard Muybridge, The Lumiere Brothers, and Thomas Edison, to prove that documentary was, arguably, the first type of film to be produced. His filmic examples are *Blacksmith Scene* (William Kennedy Dickson, 1893), *Buffalo Dance* (William Kennedy Dixon, 1894), and *Mess Call* (James H. White, 1896), all of which are interactive, observational, narrative, performative, and yet seemingly real or authentic. Geiger carefully weaves all of these elements not only in this chapter, but in each one that follows.

Geiger’s second chapter “Virtual Travels and the Tourist Gaze” explores the documentary’s facilitation for virtual mobility. Documentaries became a way for people (Americans, in particular) to see what is happening on the other side of the world, which, Geiger argues, is problematic in that viewing documentary in this way seems to equip the western viewer with a certain sense of superiority over and possession of the “foreign” individuals or families that are being documented (53-54). He uses *Nanook of the North* as his example. It would be easy for any writer to provide the factual information one associates with this film (for example, the film was made for \$53,000, or Nanook’s real name was Allakariallak, or several key sequences were staged by Flaherty for the purpose of effect (amongst others)); but Geiger complicates the filmic analysis with evocative statements such as: “*Nanook* evokes nostalgia for a seemingly more harmonious way of life—a way of life that perhaps never existed. Here an idealized western self is projected onto a cultural or racial other—partly real and partly imagined—familiarizing the subjects of difference while reducing the complexities of other cultures to a series of easily digestible tropes or themes” (56). This sort of critical analysis, although not the true trajectory of either of the first two books, would have allowed

Austin and Dormehl to provide a better understanding of the concepts and definitions with which they are dealing. It is passages like this, going beyond the basic aspects of the film itself to deeper social and political issues, that, while not integral to the overall aims of Geiger's book, give it a persuasive conceptual clarity that sets it apart.

The contrast in mastery of the topic is stark when we compare Dormehl's own section on avant-garde documentary with Geiger's chapter "Serious Play: Documentary and the Avant-Garde", where we get a clear understanding of what avant-garde films are: "subversive artistic endeavors that spanned national boundaries and traditions" (67). Avant-garde films are not important just for their disjointed aesthetic value, but also because they come out of a certain (trans)national context. An example of this would be *Manhatta* (Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand, 1921), which is widely viewed as a classic of both documentary and the avant-garde, and is given an intricate and academically valuable analysis by Geiger.

Geiger argues that documentary films became more overtly nationalistic during the 1930s and the 1940s, partially because America needed to find means of national unity (whether towards the war effort against a global enemy or against factions within the nation). His chapters "Activism and Advocacy: The Depression Era," "Idea-Weapons: Documentary Propaganda," and "'Uncontrolled Situations': Direct Cinema" together provide a detailed history of how the genre progressed technologically (voice-over narration, mobile cameras, and so on) and, more so, ideologically. In these three chapters, Geiger breaks down *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, *The Memphis Belle (A Story of a Flying Fortress)* (William Wyler, 1944), and *Grey Gardens* (respectively), exposing why it is these films are discernibly American films.

Geiger's final chapters are on the drastic changes that have taken place in documentary film since television and, more recently, the Internet were invented. "Relative Truths: Documentary and Postmodernity" and "Media Wars: Documentary Dispersion" discuss how films were recognizing that the camera existed and played to it; the documentary "became a fruitful if problematic site for investigating postmodern questions about truth and representation" (195). The documentary also found (and finds) itself being produced in other venues like television and the Internet, which brings *American Film Documentary* to a well-rounded conclusion. As Geiger states:

The range of approaches and styles encompassed by documentary is vast and, depending on how strictly one wants to define it, might include everything from reality television to home-made shorts on YouTube and Google Videos, or hybrid forms such as documentary musicals. (219)

Geiger's book succeeds most notably in its careful organization of a wide array of case studies and historical foci, constituting a beginning, middle, and an end that systematically encompass what the writer set out to accomplish. That is not to say that either Austin or Dormehl doesn't accomplish his goals, but only that the goals themselves need to be re-evaluated and fleshed out more to be solidly grounded and comprehensive. If this had taken place, documentary studies and students of the discipline would have benefited from three new and steady voices in the field as opposed to just one.

## ***Performance in the Cinema of Hal Hartley***

**By Steven Rawle**

Amherst: Cambria Press, 2011. ISBN: 9781604977455. 25 illustrations, xv+341pp. £70.99 (hbk), £39.00 (eBook).

## ***Hal Hartley***

**By Mark L. Berrettini**

Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2011. ISBN: 9780252077913. 20 illustrations, xii+122pp. £46.55 (hbk), £12.99 (pbk).

## **A review by Jennifer O'Meara, Trinity College Dublin**

Hal Hartley has been consistently writing, directing and scoring his own films since the late 1980s, but has received relatively little scholarly attention. In order to address this gap, Steven Rawle and Mark L. Berrettini have simultaneously prepared the most detailed studies on Hartley's work to date. Although neither appears to be aware of the other's project, the coincidental timing is unproblematic since their books complement each other particularly well. Berrettini's commentary on Hartley is part of the University of Illinois Press's Contemporary Film Directors series and, in keeping with the collection as a whole, provides a concise but critically engaged overview of one film-maker's body of work. It outlines the main themes and stylistic traits that run throughout Hartley's filmography. In *Performance in the Cinema of Hal Hartley*, on the other hand, Rawle makes a more focused argument about Hartley's main contribution to art cinema being an experimental approach to



character construction and embodiment that emphasises “the illusionistic nature of performance in mainstream cinema” (306).

The title of Rawle’s book somewhat belies its complex theoretical framework, since his conceptualisation of “performance” goes far beyond physical acting, ambitiously opening the discussion onto how Hartley’s characterizations convey performances of a sociopsychological or anthropological nature. However, Rawle also charts the acting of various performers across Hartley’s body of work, distilling recurring traits that include an unemotional tone of speech, and performative activity that is limited to just a few parts of the body. Berrettini similarly views Hartley’s preferred performance style as an area prime for discussion, although his shorter book has less scope for detailed acting analysis. He does, however, identify features that Rawle explores in greater detail, such as the underplaying of emotional displays in dramatic or tragic scenes. Both consider the repertoire of actors (including Martin Donovan, Parker Posey, Bill Sage and Thomas Jay Ryan) with whom Hartley regularly works, and who maintain a consistent acting style across the director’s oeuvre.

In exploring how Hartley exposes “the performer as performer”, Rawle contrasts his films with more mainstream, “realist” acting that is supposed to come across as, “natural, unrehearsed and immediate” (66). Using work by Bertolt Brecht and Wilhelm Worringer on abstraction and alienation, Rawle investigates how and why Hartley creates a distance between the viewer and the text, preventing them from consuming it passively. He convincingly argues that Hartley’s work exposes elements of the actor’s rehearsal process, as well as making an abstract feature of “the signs of performance that actors often seek to hide” (57). For example, despite the emotive language of the dialogue, their faces and voices are often kept deliberately inexpressive. Berrettini more generally identifies Hartley’s filmmaking style as departing from realism, also drawing on Brecht’s estranging “V-effect” to suggest Hartley reveals the construction of reality within narrative films (2-3).

As noted, one of Rawle’s crucial arguments is that Hartley foregrounds characters’ *sociopsychological performances*. Through close textual analysis of characters who are required to role-play, pretend and make changes to their appearance (often to fit stereotyped gender roles), Rawle convincingly argues for a double articulation of performance, by considering how both the actors and the characters are shown to be acting. This involves the application of Erving Goffman’s theories from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Doubleday, 1959), a book that examines the dramaturgy of everyday performances to show how, “the external signs that constitute a social role (place, costume, make-up, gesture, movement) are similar to those that combine to constitute an explicitly fictional construct” (307). Rawle’s analysis of *Trust* (1990), for example, reveals “how the actor is transformed into a character and how

those characters perform socially" (101). He does, however, overstate the timeliness of his use of Goffman, claiming in the introduction that, "despite the obvious centrality of performance to both cinema and the presentation of sociocultural subjects", film studies has not fully embraced his pioneering work in social psychology (12). Although he is right that no extensive incorporation of Goffman's work has been undertaken, Richard Dyer did identify its relevance in *Stars* (BFI, 1979: 112-3), while several other scholars have also applied Goffman's theories to contemporary film-makers. In his 2008 article on the Coen brothers in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, Paul Coughlin shows how Goffman's work illuminates character inconsistencies in *Fargo* (1996) and *Miller's Crossing* (1990); and since Rawle's publication, Donna Peberdy has also incorporated Goffman into her analysis of Wes Anderson's work in an article in the *New Review of Film and Television* in 2012.

Although Rawle does not draw comparisons with other film scholars' application of Goffman's work, he nonetheless proves its usefulness in analysing Hartley's representation of social performances. In relation to *Simple Men* (1992), he identifies how characters show "slippages and incoherency in the performance of an intended (stereotypical) masculine self" (311). Meanwhile *Flirt* (1995) "exposes the artifice of socially mandated roles of gender and sexuality", by interrogating "the visual, auditory, and behavioural signifiers" that together construct such performances (196-7). In much the same way, Berrettini considers how Hartley's male protagonists, "struggle to live up to popular ideals of heteronormative masculinity", while females try to "break from heteronormative conceptions of women as mothers, caregivers, and/or sexual objects" (4-5). Ultimately, given Rawle's, Coughlin's, and Peberdy's successful applications, it would seem that further links could be drawn between reflexive film characterization and Goffman's writing on the dramaturgy of everyday performance. As their choice of film-makers (Hartley, Anderson, the Coen brothers) would suggest, this seems to apply particularly to independent or "Indiewood" cinema, with its tendency to foreground character over plot.

In chapters three and four, Rawle identifies the centrality of choreography to Hartley's style of performance. Strong links are drawn between his incorporation of dance, particularly in the early 1990s, and highly-stylized movement in his scenes of violence. The two authors provide similar analysis (based on deconstruction of the norms of the musical) of the dance sequences of *Surviving Desire* (1991) and *Simple Men*. Berrettini asks if a dance in the former amounts to a commentary on "the contrived nature of realist musicals' spontaneous emotional displays?" (27-8). Rawle provides a detailed answer to this in his discussion of the same dance scene in *Surviving Desire*. Performed without music, it lacks "the slickness of movement and precision customarily found in musical performances" (113). The two authors' analysis of *Simple Men's*



memorable dance sequence diverges somewhat, however. Both discuss it as an homage to the famed dance in *Bande à part* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1964). But Berrettini uses it to further develop his points on unprofessional choreography, since the dance draws attention to the artificiality of Hollywood-style choreography, while Rawle is more concerned with the gender dynamics at play.

Like his discussion of dance, Rawle analyses violent scenes intertextually, demonstrating that Hartley's slapstick violence borrows heavily from physical comedy and cartoons. He applies Brecht's theory of a social or cultural "gest," which criticises "the action that other films would tend to represent in a graphic realist manner" (153). In other words, Hartley abstracts violence to such an extent that the viewer may reconsider the pleasure they take from watching more realistic representations. Berrettini comes to a similar conclusion in his summary of Hartley's violent scenes as "slapstick, overdone, or even clumsy in its style" (4). Rawle also informatively applies Brechtian dramaturgy to Hartley's dance sequences, to explain how the viewer has to process a "conscious quotation" (130). For example, when a character leaps onto a gate in apparent joy, while maintaining a mask of inexpression, this draws attention to the illusionistic nature of more typical filmed dance sequences.

Another area of overlap between the two books is their focus on Hartley's deconstruction of genre, as evident in the discussion of the musical-style dance sequences above. Rawle is concerned with *The Girl from Monday* (2005) as "a playful experiment" with science fiction's generic norms (278), and *Fay Grim* as a parody of both the comic book film and the spy film (284-5). He notes that the latter makes a feature of the canted angles of film noir, something Berrettini also considers in relation to *The Book of Life* (1998). That film features voice-over from an existentialist Jesus character, presented as "a film-noir antihero trapped by a social structure, not a man-god who is an agent within his life" (63). Again, their approach and analysis is complementary and, taken together, creates a fuller picture of one of Hartley's preoccupations.

The authors identify some of the same moments in Hartley's filmography as marking breaks, as with Berrettini's description of *Amateur* (1994) reflecting a "move away from the suburban family drama and social rebellion to a much darker escalation of violence and crime" (34). Rawle also focuses on the film's use of violence, while both he and Berrettini agree that *The Book of Life* is "a definite aesthetic break in Hartley's work" (Rawle: 265). Berrettini rightly comments on the film as a departure from Hartley's dialogue-driven narration, to structure the film's 'loose images' with a first-person voiceover (57).

Since the release of *The Book of Life* in 1998, Hartley's focus has become more image-based and Rawle describes his later features and shorts as "hypervisually mediated" (265). This might be said to be concomitant with his turn to digital film-making, to which Berrettini dedicates the final section of his book. *The Book of Life* was one of the first features shot entirely on digital video, and even scholars with little interest in Hartley's work should be interested in both authors' discussion of his creative digital cinematography techniques. Berrettini proves particularly adept at detailing Hartley's aesthetic choices throughout, but his section on *The Book of Life*'s visuals, including "onscreen lights, reflective surfaces, and windows [that] create lens flares", is notably strong (61). Rawle similarly notes that Hartley makes a feature of blurred and overexposed images, and cites specific technical details, such as cinematographer Jim Deneault's use of a shutter speed of just 15 frames per second (261).

Both supplement their textual analysis with illuminating quotations by Hartley. Such inclusions are well-measured and support their interpretations without giving excessive explanatory power to the filmmaker himself. Berrettini's book also concludes with two previously-published interviews with Hartley from 1997 and 2007. Separated by a decade, the choices fittingly capture his changing perspective of his own work. In fact, Hartley's interview with Robert Avila of the San Francisco Film Society explicitly supports the conclusion made in both books that his films have increasingly experimented with generic expectations. In reference to *Fay Grim*, for instance, Hartley explains that, "[s]ometimes making use of a genre can allow you to treat quite serious stuff in a lighter manner" (92).

Overall, Rawle's analysis of performance adopts a variety of theories that prove complementary. However, his focus changes in the final two chapters, in order to deal with the evolution in Hartley's work since 1998, in terms of medium (digital or HD video, rather than film), content and production context. In chapter six, Rawle contextualises Hartley's position as auteur within the Independent/Indiewood scene of the 1990s and 2000s noting how his career trajectory departed from other indie filmmakers (Todd Haynes, Gus Van Sant, Steven Soderbergh) with whom he was frequently compared in the early 1990s. While his peers transitioned slowly and successfully into more large-scale productions, after the commercial and critical failure of his most mainstream film, *No Such Thing* (2001), Hartley "reassert[ed] his independence" and moved to the other extreme (250). Berrettini also chronicles the significance of Hartley's decision to relocate to Berlin in 2004, where he varied his creative output by directing opera and music videos, and making a variety of shorts. While Rawle's discussion of Hartley's work since the early 2000s remains insightful, he admits that it aligns less well with his focus on performance. In order to maintain his argument, he frames his analysis of Hartley's "much more visually mediated spectacle", in terms of "the

dynamic performance of the image" (260). This could appear as the author forcing his overarching argument to fit the whole career but, given that it only applies to a narrow portion of the book, his framing of the material does not detract from his argument's force.

Hartley's career trajectory is a fascinating example for scholars of independent and art cinema, since his decisions represent "a step back toward a more romantic notion of authorship and artistic freedom" (Rawle: 251). The concluding chapters of Rawle's book, therefore, offer a strong case study for readers with an interest in industry conditions and, crucially, the changing opportunities for film production and distribution available to digital auteurs as a result of cheaper technologies and the internet's potential to act as efficient channel of distribution; Hartley's website, entitled Possible Films, sells his films, books and soundtracks in physical or digital format. Rawle makes good use of Catherine Grant's writing on the commodification of contemporary authorship (for example, her book *Auteur Machines?: Auteurism and the DVD*; Routledge, 2008), drawing on the marketing strategies of Hartley's website to argue for his dual role as *auteur* and e-commerce "businessman" (253).

Although Rawle's is a more expansive book, for his part Berrettini does broaden our understanding of Hartley's work in several ways. Within his generalised framework he pays greater attention to the careful integration of Hartley's sound design with the various channels of narrative signification. For instance, he details Hartley's layering of sound and the lyrical significance of pre-existing music choices by independent musicians like Sonic Youth and PJ Harvey. Berrettini also provides more in-depth analysis of Hartley's verbal style; various monologues are dissected and he identifies unreliable narration as a recurring feature. Unfortunately his discussion does not extend to the third element of the soundtrack, despite Hartley's sound effects being noticeably expressive and well-integrated. Not explored in much detail in either book, this is one potential avenue for future study.

In fact, a further notable point about both books is how they indicate, albeit often implicitly, several aspects of Hartley's work that could be expanded on further in the future. Rawle makes explicit reference to Hartley's thematic fascination with religion (particularly Catholic iconography), with various female characters channelling Mary Magdalene, while Jesus and Satan play out their rivalry overtly in *The Book of Life*. Rawle explains how Hartley and Robert Bresson are undoubtedly connected by their "concentration on gesture and the movement of the body", as well as by their Catholicism (9). Comparisons could also be drawn between Hartley's theological focus and that of Whit Stillman, another contemporary writer-director whose work incorporates a surprising amount of religious material. In fact, although both authors draw fitting comparisons with Godard (Rawle also clarifies important

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differences, to stress that Hartley does not simply imitate), there remains considerable scope for contextualising his body of work with that of other filmmakers.

To take one example, Berrettini notes that Jim Jarmusch's films can be placed alongside Hartley's for their tendency to disorient the viewer. This is just one of many parallels in their bodies of work, with both writer-directors foregrounding an absurd brand of comedy and self-consciously lyrical dialogue. In *Henry Fool*, the poet character is told he has "an innate sense of the musicality of language", a trait Hartley is no doubt aware of in relation to his own scripts. Jarmusch openly praises poetry, often incorporating poems in his films, while both draw attention to the material properties of language through the use of foreign language, accents and verbal repetition. Berrettini also makes allusions to Yasujirō Ozu and D.W. Griffiths, and the latter is one of few other directors whose performance style has been considered book-worthy (see Roberta E. Pearson's *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films*; University of California Press, 1992). It therefore seems likely that further analysis of Hartley's influences would prove illuminating.

What these two books (and the general lack of Hartley scholarship until now) suggest, is that despite making consistently experimental work, Hartley has slipped under the film studies radar. Writing on Indiewood has become common, but Hartley's work does not fit comfortably within such a framework. He is instead a prime example of the fall-out from Hollywood beginning "to cannibalise the potential indie market", something that makes attempts to understand his experimental approach all the more important (Rawle: 256). Berrettini's strong introductory text is particularly suited to readers who are less familiar with his work. Rawle's book builds on its content, since he looks at Hartley's short films and features in considerably more detail, as well as contributing a rare auteur-focused monograph to film performance studies. As Berrettini notes, at least four major retrospectives of Hartley's work have taken place in Europe between 1992 and 2010. Hartley's contribution to art cinema has not gone unnoticed outside academia, therefore, but in-depth critical analysis has been slower to materialise. From this perspective, two simultaneous and equally readable publications can only be a positive sign.

## ***Hunting the Dark Knight: Twenty-First Century Batman***

**By Will Brooker**

London: I.B. Taurus, 2012. ISBN: 9781848852808. 265 pp. £12.99 (pbk)

## ***The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader***

**Edited by Christoph Lindner**

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. ISBN: 978071908095, 344 pp. £14.99 (pbk)

### **A Review by Matthew Freeman, University of Nottingham**

"You have a nasty habit of surviving," beams Kamal Khan, the villain in *Octopussy* (John Glen, 1983). It is this enjoyably meta-textual piece of dialogue, aimed at Roger Moore's Bond, that, Christopher Lindner suggests, "sums up the message delivered by the essays" in his updated second edition of *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader* (10). "Love him or loathe him," Lindner continues, "James Bond is here to stay. Alongside Sherlock Holmes, Mickey Mouse, and Superman, he remains one of the most famous fictional characters and firmly established cultural icons in the world" (ibid). So too, for that matter, is Batman, a figure of comparable cultural status that is the subject of investigation in Will Brooker's similarly themed *Hunting the Dark Knight: Twenty-First Century Batman*.

Yet while Lindner's edited collection seeks primarily to explore *why* "James Bond – in all his many formations and incarnations – has proved so popular for so long," Brooker's book on Batman instead serves to uncover *how* the character remains such a popular cultural icon in the contemporary context. While the former seeks to uncover what James Bond reveals about "Western culture's fears and anxieties," (2) tapping into theoretical perspectives as wide-ranging as structuralism, Marxism, feminism, post-colonialism and psychoanalysis, the latter taps into salient questions concerning authorship, adaptation, and franchizing. But beyond their respective objects of study – both Brooker's book and Lindner's collection exploring particular cultural icons that have dominated a multitude of media forms throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries – there is also a significant overlap between the studies in terms of critical approach and research methodology. While *The James Bond Phenomenon* promises to "consider the James Bond novels and films in relation to their historical, political, and social contexts," (2) evaluating such texts along with the rise of 007 video gaming, *Hunting the Dark Knight* somewhat comparably, approaches Batman as a web-like network of cross-media iterations – the character's varied and often contradictory

interpretations throughout his history collectively shaping our understanding of this popular superhero. In other words, both studies accentuate the role of multiplicity in the cultural formation of fictional icons.

Evaluating the thematic links between these studies thus provides for a useful insight into this theme of cultural icons along with the myriad ways in which their construction is affected by the intertwining influences of industrial, cultural, authorial, and consumer factors. Perhaps the most explicit link between the publications of Brooker's text and Lindner's expanded collection – or at least the one most foregrounded by their marketing – is their timing. Lindner's collection, as noted, is a second edition, published in the wake of the Daniel Craig-starring Bond films, thus working to provide the collection with what its back-cover blurb aptly cites as a "hot topic." Similarly, Brooker's own back cover synopsis announces: "Publishing to coincide with Christopher Nolan's third Batman movie, *The Dark Knight Rises* in July 2012, Will Brooker's new book explores Batman's twenty-first century incarnations."

Indeed, such twenty-first century incarnations have witnessed both the *Batman* and the *James Bond* movie franchises being re-appropriated according to the industry conception of the reboot. This era of the movie reboot signals the attempt on the part of a studio or franchise owner to begin anew, to establish a separate narrative continuity that altogether disregards former iterations of an intellectual property. The term has provided an array of new opportunities for scholarly investigations and serves as the critical justification for the publications of both Brooker's and Lindner's recent investigations. William Proctor has suggested in an article in this journal that "the strategy [with the reboot] is to nullify history and disconnect stagnant or failed product from a new, cinematic experiment" ('Regeneration and Rebirth: Anatomy of the Franchise Reboot', Issue 22, February 2012: 1). Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins* (2005), for instance, revived the *Batman* film franchise following the commercial and critical failure of *Batman & Robin* (Joel Schumacher, 1997), eschewing the commonly derided eccentricities of the latter film in favour of a grittier, back-to-basics approach to adapting the cinematic Dark Knight. In remarkably comparable circumstances, *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell, 2006) assumed the status of a Bond movie reboot, disassociating itself from the more fantastical *Die Another Day* (Lee Tamahori, 2002) and indeed the entire series up to that point by returning, as *Batman Begins* had done, to the origins of its central character. Both films prided themselves on emphasizing aesthetics of "realism" as if to provide a more grounded correction to earlier cinematic excesses. Yet one of the notable differences between these cases was that *Die Another Day*, unlike *Batman & Robin*, was a commercial success at the time of its theatrical release. Its subsequent repositioning as a perceived failure derives mostly from its canonical marginalisation by



audiences and the larger fan community, brought about at least in part by the dominance of the Craig sequence of Bonds. In other words, the dominance of the reboot practice in contemporary Hollywood points toward the compelling, if often unexplored, industrial relationship between fandom, producers, and the shaping of cultural icons – a complex, ever-shifting dynamic that Will Brooker situates at the core of *Hunting the Dark Knight*

Brooker is concerned to take a proactive stance in his engagement with the construction of Batman as a cultural figure, pledging to “examine how Batman’s meanings were locked down” before announcing “a breakout,” as the book aims, Brooker states, “to set Batman free.” (xv) Central to the book’s argument, Brooker writes, is “this notion of Batman as a palimpsest rather than a blank slate – always bearing the marks of other stories and incarnations, and impossible to completely wipe clean.” (56) Through the examination of Batman in relation to a number of critical paradigms – including, but certainly not limited to, questions of authorship, adaptation, convergence, transmediality, and modes of consumption – Brooker finds multiple ways of exploring the cultural memory of Batman, revealing the fluid, unstable manner by which our own understanding of the character shapes, and, in turn, is shaped by, the multiplicity that forms the foundations of a cultural icon.

Mapping out the complexity of an adaptation that was sourced not from a single text but rather from an array of intertextual content, Brooker does an excellent job of theorizing the unique processes by which a phenomenon such as Batman – whose numerous iterations and interpretations span both a multitude of authors and media forms – is retold and (re)adapted. He achieves this most pointedly through a consideration of *Batman Begins*, using the film as a case study for revealing the four-way relationship between the authorial agency of its director, comic books that served as its inspiration (Brooker’s examples of which are diverse yet carefully selected), the character’s former screen interpretations, and indeed the eventual shaping of the film’s identity as a complex and unique hybrid. In pointing out that *Batman Begins* “recycles from a wealth of existing material,” (50) Brooker argues that the film represents “one node in an interlinked network” (62) of both past and present:

Rather than wiping the slate clean, *Batman Begins* wrote on a page already indelibly marked with the traces of previous Batman films. Rather than a clean slate, ready for Nolan’s new project, the ‘Batman’ of 2005 was [...] already carrying the faint shapes of Burton’s Batman, Schumacher’s Batman, Miller’s Batman, O’Neil’s Batman and the countless others, back to Kane’s original of 1939. (106)

Thus the study explicitly reasserts the extent to which any “dark” or “gritty” variation on the Batman, such as director Christopher Nolan’s most recent cinematic interpretation, must simultaneously embody the character’s “lighter” interpretative roots, for “every new Batman story is always already an adaptation of existing elements and earlier stories, combined in a new order with a twist and a handful of innovations.” (66) The adapter, or “rebooter,” of a cultural icon, then – particularly a long-established character such as Batman, constructs “a selective collage of [...] sources,” with the mode of authorship at play here operating mostly, as Brooker provocatively suggests, as primarily “a form of editing.” (66)

Such theorizations concerning the myriad ways in which a transmediated character such as Batman proliferates across both popular culture and indeed academic discourses of adaptation and authorship also extends to a welcome analysis of *The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008). Whilst at times drawing too heavily on wide-ranging, theoretical texts such as Mikhail Bakhtin’s cultural study of carnival and, particularly, Jacques Derrida’s notion of deconstruction – most pointedly used in this context to explore a strategic reversal of categories for how we might understand the relation between multiple Batmen – Brooker’s latter chapters do provide a wonderfully coherent interpretation of both forgotten Batman texts and the successful Nolan film. In engaging further with the book’s themes of Batman as “a shifting spectrum” rather than “a clear binary opposition” between alternate iterations of the character – some light, some dark – Brooker offers a fascinating insight into how such complex amalgamations of meaning manifest in a single film such as *The Dark Knight* (179). The final chapter hereby deftly ties this film’s profound representations of doubles and “destabilised oppositions” to broader claims concerning the fragmented multiplicity of the Batman character and his multi-sited narrative world (184). It seems structurally significant, especially to Brooker’s earlier chapter on Batman as a source and figure of adaptation, that the medium of comics in itself so neatly accommodates multiple story universes, thriving on the re-interpretation of co-existent Batmen. The character, Brooker hints – in an argument that may well be extended to the cultural construction of almost any number of popular fictional icons and creations – operates principally on a practice of change and profound reinterpretation.

It is perhaps the thematic coherence of Brooker’s study, its fluency in drawing on an array of critical paradigms while pointing precisely to the role of “destabilis[ing] oppositions” as the central facet of the dark knight’s cultural construction, which provides *Hunting the Dark Knight* with its impressive scope. In a sense, its subtitle, *Twenty-First Century Batman* is significantly ironic, for Brooker’s work sophisticatedly affirms that a strictly twenty-first century Batman does not – and, moreover, *cannot* – truly exist. Any contemporary iteration of the character, that is to say, always feeds on the gathering of multiple, cross-period iterations,



each of which embody diverse, unique, and seemingly conflicting authorial styles. Batman, Brooker proposes, thereby “enter[s] a matrix of cross-platform product, and operate[s] in a dialogue between the other current incarnations, and all previous versions, even if they define themselves against an earlier tradition now judged to be aberrant.” (219) Indeed, the book itself offers a complex, detailed, and engagingly argued “reboot” to the prescribed critical assumption that the reboot is itself the re-beginning of a troubled franchise past. Brooker’s argument most pointedly underscores that in shaping our own collective understanding of a cultural icon such as Batman, there is always a longstanding correlation between a multitude of different historical periods and artistic sensibilities, all products of conflicting cultural and production contexts. A movie reboot such as *Batman Begins*, then, operates not in strict isolation from its respective former franchise entries, but rather in direct relation to them. Moreover, it is the reader, Brooker concludes, who “constructs and collages a Batman from all the pieces of the cultural mosaic” (ibid.).

Such a conclusion aptly feeds into Christoph Lindner’s *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*. Lindner’s collection of essays more explicitly argues for the construction of James Bond as a symbol of popular culture. Much like Brooker’s Batman study, this collection approaches the inevitably vast sources of Bond material – be it in the pages of novels, on screen, in video games, soundtracks, or other paratextual materials – as that which has been consistently reinterpreted, revised, revamped and re-energized according to particular cultural contexts. “It is the nature of any book on James Bond to be out of date almost as soon as it is published,” Lindner writes (vii). “The world of 007 shifts and changes so quickly that any attempt to stabilise our understanding of the Bond phenomenon is, by necessity, provisional – at least so long as 007 continues to thrive across the range of our popular media (and there is no end of that in sight)” (ibid).

Like Brooker’s study, then, Lindner’s collection similarly probes an historical exploration of a longstanding fictional icon through the prism of contemporary reinterpretations. Offering eight new chapters as well as reprinting the original eleven featured in the 2003 first edition, the justification for updating on account of recent transformations in the franchise itself thus serves once again as the underlying purpose of the book’s revisiting. Of these new contributions, perhaps the biggest surprise is the lack of dominant focus on the most recent Daniel Craig films – a lack that seems even more puzzling given the somewhat misleading use of Craig’s image on the book’s cover. However, in some ways framing itself as a re-reading of the Bond phenomenon in light of the Craig era – incorporating new chapters on issues of international politics in *Casino Royale* (Colleen M. Tremonte and Linda Racioppi) and the shifting political role of Bond outside of the Cold War context (Jim Leach) – in others ways the book uses the recent films’ more overt shifts in tonal and stylistic

direction as an opportunity to revisit previously overlooked aspects of the Bond output. These chapters include a heavy emphasis on questions of feminism: Elizabeth Ladenson's chapter on the character of *Goldfinger's* Pussy Galore, for instance.

When comparing the multi-cited methodological approach of Brooker's study, of particular note in Lindner's collection are chapters that serve to emphasise both boundaries and continuums between different eras of Bond history. Jim Leach's aforementioned contribution, for instance, entitled "'The world has changed': Bond in the 1990s – and beyond?", is particularly effective at exploring the extent to which a long-standing staple of popular culture such as James Bond must operate on a complex, often paradoxical principle of both change and replication in order to survive. In examining the use of homage and references to earlier Bond films in *GoldenEye* (Martin Campbell, 1995), Leach points towards the delicate balance between old and new when both consuming and analysing a fictional creation as enduring as Bond. *GoldenEye*, Leach argues, is "a photocopy of a collage of previous Bonds" – the film's "formula precedes its experience" (310) whilst acknowledging its own existence inside a "world [that] has changed" (302).

While much of the ideological readings underpinning the book's chapters provide generally interesting analyses, where the collection is perhaps most effective is in its retrospective reinterpretation of how the various films' production context must be distanced from any broad readings of the franchise's history as a whole and instead be re-scrutinised in direct relation to specific socio-political contexts. Claire Hines' chapter, for example, explores relations between the complex representation of the cinematic Bond and the character's multiple appearances in the pages of *Playboy* magazine, hereby revealing fascinating insights into how specific post-war influences dictated a particular Bond style in the mid-1950s that became integral to the continued construction of the character in different forms across multiple media. It is perhaps in Hines' chapter where the book's sporadic positioning between a multitude of disciplinary approaches – including literary, film, and cultural studies – works best, teasing out useful links between and across these disciplinary borders. Yet the book's diverse approach to the study of James Bond is simultaneously its most apparent flaw. A number of chapters, such as Ajay Gehlawat's "Kamasutra Bond-ing" and Toby Miller's "James Bond's penis" – while interesting and useful taken on their own terms – clash in critical tone with the more production-orientated chapters by scholars such as James Chapman and Janet Woollacott.

Such occasional incoherence between the many chapters of the book may have come as an inevitable consequence of what is admittedly fast becoming a crowded marketplace. There is certainly no shortage of

scholarly work on the subject of James Bond, and unlike Brooker's more coherent reformulation of the Batman icon against the backdrop of convergence culture, Lindner's volume struggles to locate an equivalent freshness. However, while there is little to match the same sense of critical ambition as that found in Brooker's work, the second edition of *The James Bond Phenomenon* does at least succeed in offering a diverse, comprehensive exploration of Britain's most famous fictional spy – prioritizing a broadness in its conceptual approach that should certainly please the character's fans as well as making an appropriate addition to the bookshelves of many popular culture scholars.

Taken together, these two books add insight into some of the problems faced by any work that seeks to study the nature of popular culture itself. Once again, the concept of the franchise reboot, which aims to draw aesthetic and narrative distinctions between different sets of texts despite them being based on the same intellectual property, speaks to a broader question raised by these books regarding the method by which popular culture is actually studied. With single fictional characters such as Batman and Bond appearing and reappearing across a wealth of media platforms over a number of decades – each iteration both distinct from and part of a larger franchise holding – what, exactly, is the object of study? This is a question that underpins and complicates the aims of both Brooker and Lindner. Ultimately, reading their respective approaches to the study of these two enduring figures highlights the importance of an all-encompassing, cross-media research strategy.

***Film and Female Consciousness: Irigaray, Cinema and Thinking Women***

**By Lucy Bolton**

Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. ISBN 9780230275690. 233 pp. £50.00 (hbk)

***Civilized Violence: Subjectivity, Gender and Popular Cinema.***

**By David Hansen-Miller**

Farnham: Ashgate, 2011. ISBN 9781409412588. 205 pp. £55.00 (hbk)

**A Review by Katherine Whitehurst, University of Stirling**

The two books under review here contemplate film's ability to reaffirm and restructure expected subject and gender roles. By looking at filmic representations of social norms and audience expectations, both Lucy Bolton and David Hansen-Miller seek to outline how a film produces a preferred reading that influences an interpretation of its own content both consciously and unconsciously. While Bolton's work specifically considers the changing representations of female consciousness within contemporary film, Hansen-Miller's book explores the naturalisation of filmic representations of violence within contemporary liberal democratic society. However, while primarily focusing on these separate areas of study, both books are concerned more broadly with theories of violence, subjectivity and gender. Also, although both authors consider topics that have been heavily studied, their books ask us to consider how gender and violence has evolved and changed within contemporary society, stepping away from studies that label all films as inherently sexist and all violence as corruptive.

Bolton begins her introduction by very briefly addressing the "objectification of women in mainstream Hollywood cinema" (1). She indicates that she will deviate from typical discussions of female objectification by considering "how certain recent films move away from the traditional positioning of female characters in dominant Anglo-American cinema [...] represent[ing] them in more inclusive and engaging ways" (1). Bolton's analysis compares *In the Cut* (Jane Campion, 2003), *Lost in Translation* (Sofia Coppola, 2003) and *Morvern Callar* (Lynne Ramay, 2002) to older examples like *Klute* (Alan J. Pakula, 1971), *The Seven Year Itch* (Billy Wilder, 1955), and *Marnie* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1964). Through this periodic comparison she highlights how the later films focus on the female protagonists' inner qualities rather than their external beauty – enabling female figures to take on roles beyond objects of

masculine desire.

Luce Irigaray's theoretical contemplation of femininity frames Bolton's reading of these contemporary films. Her first chapter does an excellent job of outlining Irigaray's theoretical material, though her later use of Irigaray's philosophy, while insightful, can at times be jarring. Rather than simply using Irigaray's work as a framework for her own evaluation, she repeatedly uses phrases such as "An Irigarayan reading" (84), "*Lost In Translation* answers Irigaray's call" (110) or "The Irigarayan strategies" (174). Because she outlines Irigaray's theory and indicates in her introduction and first chapter that she will be writing from an Irigarayan perspective, there remains little need to repeatedly bring our attention to the fact that Irigaray's work frames her analysis. Her intermittent reference to her Irigarayan reading makes it difficult for one to discern whether Bolton is, as she first indicates, evaluating the films at all times from an Irigarayan perspective or whether she is referencing her use of an Irigarayan analysis precisely to indicate that her study does not always follow Irigaray's framework. Either way, the book would have been strengthened by further clarification in this regard.

While Bolton's use of theory can at times be slightly unclear, she does define her own terms well, terms which can often be overladen with various philosophical implications. She also clearly outlines the organization of her book in her introduction, indicating how the book "stages several encounters: between contemporary cinema and films from past decades; between Irigarayan Philosophy and film analysis; and between cinematic thinking women and their audience" (7). By breaking the book up into main sections of analysis she provides her reader with a solid footing in her approach to a complex topic. Nevertheless, even with this knowledge, the book struggles to negotiate and detail all of the topics and points of discussion she establishes in her introduction.

Certainly, the book does have several moments of fantastic analysis. For example in Bolton's consideration of *In The Cut*, she asserts that the film works to align the audience with Frannie's (Meg Ryan) perspective, using "[...] time and space [...] to develop[...] Frannie's personality and thereby [involve] the spectator in her subjectivity" (88). Bolton's evaluation clearly details how the film successfully represents Frannie's unspoken consciousness (88). Another strong point within the book is found in her consideration of how *Lost in Translation* uses cosmetics as a means to reveal Charlotte's (Scarlett Johansson) resistance to artifice. Bolton explores how the camera situates the spectator so that the "spectator does not see, or stand in for, the reflection" but rather sees the character's "'actual' appearance" (120). Bolton's consideration of Charlotte's masquerade is also insightful, arguing that Charlottes experimentation with makeup "can be seen as an attempt to disguise the frustrating difficulties she is having in trying to find a way of expressing or

defining herself" (120). However, although these isolated moments of analysis are engrossing and fruitful, some of her chapters lack the organization required by the scale of her overall investigation.

But Bolton's comparison of these contemporary films with counterparts from the classical era does, in general, successfully emphasize how the representational mode in the former recasts the masculine gaze. Her detailing of the female characters as enigmas of a masculine imagination helps to highlight how, despite the high profile casting of Meg Ryan and Scarlett Johansson respectively, both *In The Cut* and *Lost in Translation* play with the past sexualization of women to re-craft the narrative existence of female characters as complex figures. For example, Bolton notes, "*The Seven Year Itch* draws upon both the safety and the glamorous sexuality offered by the Monroe star persona, plus the reassurance of some familiar conventions of the Hollywood romantic comedy, in order to explore the issue of masculinity in crisis in a sanitized, amusing and unthreatening form" (119). By contrast, while Johansson, like Monroe, has a star persona that centers around her beauty and sexual attractiveness, Bolton reveals how the opening scene, in which we see Johansson dressed in pink underwear and a grey jumper, contrasts with the Monroe figure by depicting a husband who is indifferent to Charlotte's sexuality and by presenting Charlotte as an intellectual female. As Bolton highlights, despite wearing little clothing "Charlotte, unlike *The Girl*, is not positioned as an irresistible displayed object of lustful male attention: on the contrary, her husband ignores the fact that she is semi-naked" (109). By showing how these films diverge, Bolton illustrates how cinema has developed and shifted beyond a flat representation of women to dynamic characters, whose internal development becomes central to the film's plot.

A particularly commendable aspect of Bolton's book is the way her analysis provides a platform and opens space for future readings and studies. In addition to identifying several unstudied films that undertake similar presentations of women, she also indicates that the twenty-first-century examples she has used have been directed by women, proposing that in future studies scholars may wish to identify male directors/writers who have undertaken similar approaches. By recognizing where her work leaves off and future studies could begin, she encourages the scholarly community to join her in her analysis, welcoming a continuation of the conversation she has begun.

David Hansen-Miller's *Civilized Violence: Subjectivity, Gender and Popular Cinema* contemplates why violent representations fundamentally appeal to audiences. Early on he states:

This book explains how popular cinema ceaselessly reasserts the significance of violence that is otherwise concealed and absorbed within the ordered worlds of the liberal democracies. It explains



that the appeal of cinema violence can be ascribed to the way in which particular narratives productively reinscribe violence in those arenas where it is being concealed and absorbed. (2011: 2)

In order to develop his explanation of how violence has been concealed and absorbed within contemporary media, Hansen-Miller turns to Michel Foucault to outline the historical origins of sovereign authority, power and violence, as well as to detail sovereign authorities' use of violence in the maintenance and performance of state power. His detailed examination of Foucault's *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, and his consideration of the spectacular pedagogy of power outlines the transition from sovereign power structures to modern means of civilizing social bodies. He suggests that the production of docile bodies by spectacular violence persists in modern modes of representation, stating,

[n]evertheless, that such punishments should become an embarrassment and fade from public view does not provide any reason to suppose that the demand for the spectacular pedagogy of power offered on the scaffold would also disappear. This book explains that such a pedagogy was taken up by modes of representation more capable of representing the growing complexity of social discipline and the similarly complex practice of violence, as well as the increasingly conflicted nature of subjectivity itself. (3)

This first chapter provides those with limited exposure to Foucault's work with a clear basis and understanding of his theoretical approach. Hansen-Miller also clearly outlines several related theories surrounding violence and modern subjectivity. However, as he admits at the outset, for those who are familiar with Foucault and theories of subjectivity, much of the chapter simply outlines past studies.

Having established this basis, and detailing the various other theoretical practices from which his work will stem, his following chapters provide a critical evaluation of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Rboert Wiene, 1919), *The Sheik* (George Melford, 1921), *Once Upon a Time in the West* (Sergio Leone, 1969) and *Deliverance* (John Boorman, 1972). Each chapter, though focused on the violence presented in the films, considers the varied ways violence is depicted and used as a means to negotiate a range of modern social anxieties. The chapter "Violence and Clinical Authority in 'The Aetiology of Hysteria' and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*" attempts to draw a parallel between "the evolution of Freudian psychoanalytic theory [...] and its rejection, [and] the evolution of *The Cabinet of Caligari*" (37). He suggests that by reading the progress of the two works alongside one another, we can identity "how violence becomes embedded within discourse, how subjects are differentially invested in violence, and how such an understanding can be lost in the first place"

(37). The chapter finds its strength in its close reading of the two individual texts. He defines the parameters of both well, while indicating where one can see an overlap in their respective arguments about violence and the use of violence and subjectivity to establish civil order. Nevertheless, the chapter struggles to indicate clearly the significance of this overlap. While at times he seems to be building towards some rather complex conclusions, he does not quite take his evaluation far enough to explicitly outline an overall argument. Indeed, this lack of clarity is apparent throughout his other chapters.

Though the claims he makes in his first chapter would be strengthened if more time was spent explaining how he intended to use his comparative evaluation to directly detail the function of violence in liberal democracies, in his second chapter, "Violence and the Passage from Responsibility to Desire in *The Sheik*," he does do a good job of showing how social anxieties and social trends influence the production of violent narratives. By considering the production of the book into a film, as well as the reviews surrounding both, he illustrates how the two mediums work in tandem to disseminate and naturalize the work's content as well as the violence inherent in the narrative. Because *The Sheik* is about gender performance and relationships, this chapter explores how violence is enacted on the female body and contemplates how the film presents the immigrant man as a potentially dangerous sexual figure. While elsewhere the book at times lacks clarity, this chapter is a high-point of incisiveness, as it analyses how the political climate surrounding female sexuality at the time of production influenced the film's content. He adds that

[t]his is not to suggest that the public sexuality of a generation was a statement of political radicalism, but to point out that the public discourse of sexuality was contested in ways that were anything but attenuate from the programmatic political ideals of the era. *The Sheik* signifies within this constellation of issues in a manner that is more than simply the production of this political saturation. (80)

The chapter then goes on to show how the film not only articulated the political and social anxieties surrounding the liberation of the female body, but how violence was used in the film in an attempt to address and actively engage with changing social perception of female sexuality.

Hansen-Miller's third chapter provides a reading of *Once Upon a Time in the West* that contemplates how the film "play[s] with the bio-political subject's fantasy, by turning it back on itself and implying that frontier subjects held a reciprocal desire for life in the urban industrial world" (111). This chapter finds its strength in Hansen-Miller's textual analysis of the film. He suggests that the film's use of violence is best understood by comparing the film with typical practices in the Western genre. As such, he provides a brief background on the genre at the beginning of the chapter, using the remaining space to provide an analysis of the film's



various characters, their roles, and their relationship to the industrialization and modernization of a western life particularly in regards to the building of a railway system. This chapter is well organized and well written. It is particularly interesting in its exploration of "Jill's thorough subjugation to the violent men of the lamented West" (129) and in his contemplation of how her character "passes into a more ambivalent and compromised position within industrial modernity" (129).

The fourth and final chapter considers the relationship of "perceived crises in modern codes of sexuality and gender" (6) to violence, control and power within *Deliverance*. Of all the chapters "*Deliverance* and its Uses: Subjectivity, Violence and Nervous Laughter" struggles the most in its ability to use theory to inform the evaluation and to use analysis of the text to support the author's main theoretical claims. For example, when considering the role of class issues within *Deliverance*, Hansen-Miller references two theorists, Carol Clover and Linda Ruth Williams. While he believes Clover's theorisation of "the historical construction of the civilized subject" (140) is an oversimplification "that is too quickly defined in terms of what pre-exists this formation of subjectivation" (140), and similarly critiques Williams' reading of the "profound distance from nature" embodied by the film's mountain men (140), he does not take the time to indicate why it is important to recognize the limitation of both scholars' arguments. Rather, he states briefly, "the mountain men represent a complete violation of nature as it is bio-politically defined" (140). Rather than indicating how the theoretical limitations of Clover's and Williams' work are confronted or complicated by his own reading, he simply indicates that he will return to the point later. The reader is left wondering what he is attempting to argue and how it will relate to an overall claim. Additionally, his use of the word bio-politically, which is used on numerous occasions throughout the book, is not given any specific or detailed explanation and, as such, further complicates our ability to infer his intended argument.

In Hansen-Miller's concluding chapter he returns to an evaluation of Joan Copjec's essay 'The Orthopsychic Subject,' which he makes reference to in his first chapter. He considers how the audience member "not only experiences dissonance with the screen image [but] also finds [him or herself] pushed in ways that are not always shared across the audience" (161). Though the concluding chapter is informative in its descriptions of gendered, pervasive violence and the audiences' engagement with film, it would have been of better use at the beginning of the book. The rich and informative content would have helped to clarify Hansen-Miller's intellectual intentions and refined the more subtle aspects of his argument. In fact, the conclusion offers the first purposeful definition of some of the terms the author uses throughout the book, which would have helped his reader identify the development of his overall argument.

## Book Reviews

Though both these books at times struggle to indicate clearly how and what they intend to argue, they do for the most part provide insightful critical analysis of the films they review. I particularly enjoyed Bolton's comparison between old and new representations of women in film, and she has provided a platform for further studies to review and consider the ways in which film impacts on notions of femininity and female subjectivity. Both books open up useful conversations about film's role in contemporary society, and through both their strengths and weaknesses, signal a space for future research into the evolution of that role.

## ***New Takes in Film-Philosophy***

**Edited by Havi Carel and Greg Tuck**

Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. ISBN 9780230250291. 259 pp. £19.99 (pbk)

## ***Deleuze and Cinema: The Film Concepts***

**By Felicity Colman**

Oxford and New York: Berg, 2011. ISBN: 9781847880536. 280 pp. £17.99 (pbk)

## ***Deleuze and World Cinemas***

**By David Martin-Jones**

London: Continuum, 2011. ISBN 9780826436429. 270 pp. £19.99 (pbk)

## **A Review by Sergey Toymontsev, Rutgers University**

The three books under review here testify to the rapidly growing corpus of the newly emergent field of film-philosophy, an interdisciplinary conjunction of philosophical research and film studies. Two of them, written by Felicity Colman and David Martin-Jones, the leading scholars in the field, deal exclusively with Gilles Deleuze's philosophy of cinema and its application to culturally and historically diverse cinematic contexts, while *New Takes in Film-Philosophy* offers a collection of fourteen essays on various aspects of this interdisciplinary relation.

Given that most of the contributors to *New Takes in Film-Philosophy* are on the editorial board of *Film-Philosophy*, a journal which specializes in a predominantly Continental take on film, it should not be surprising that almost all the authors approach film from various European intellectual perspectives. Therefore, unlike the dominant tradition of objective textual analysis in film studies, which reduces the object of study "to a thing placed under a pre-existing and fully-developed philosophical gaze," this volume strives to "offer more equality between the terms" (2). The collection is presented in three thematic parts. Part I discusses methodological issues of the film-philosophy conjunction. Part II establishes the interdisciplinary relation between film-philosophy and other media. Part III provides close philosophical readings of individual films or film-makers.

The first of these opens with Thomas Wartenberg's typology of the four main positions staked out in the debate over the possibility of cinematic philosophy: the *extreme anti-cinematic philosophy* position that downgrades film to the role of pedagogical illustration or heuristic interest for philosophers; the *extreme pro-cinematic philosophy* position that

promotes film as another medium for doing philosophy; the *moderate anti-cinematic* position that concedes that sometimes films can present a counterexample to a philosophical thesis; and the *moderate pro-cinematic philosophy* position (which Wartenberg supports) that argues that films can do philosophy by illustrating philosophical theory and presenting actual philosophical thought experiments via avant-garde films. A more positive evaluation of the philosophical potential of cinema is proposed by Richard Sinnerbrink's essay. By advocating a "romanticist" approach in the film-philosophy debate, he criticizes the philosophical disenfranchisement of cinema and argues for the possibility of a mutually transformative relationship between both. Despite being somewhat sketchy and schematic, the first two chapters serve as a helpful introduction to the philosophical study of film by providing a panoramic overview and a clear-cut classification of existing approaches in the field.

Andrew Klevan's essay focuses on Stanley Cavell's hermeneutic sensibility as a critic and a viewer. The essay demonstrates how the root of Cavell's interpretative method lies primarily in his perceptive observation of the most ordinary yet significant details and moments in a film which would, in turn, determine the trajectory of his investigation. As such, Klevan argues, it is comparable more to the analyst's free association technique rather than the psychoanalyst's authoritative interpretation (54-55). For Klevan, Cavell's hermeneutics necessarily begins with his deeply intimate engagement with film, that is his ability to be overwhelmed with a certain moment or a fragment, to be stopped and fully occupied by it to the extent of constantly returning to it. In this regard, Cavell's personal involvement with film counters Kant's theory of aesthetic disinterestedness. For Cavell, then, film interpretation is not about passing a critical judgment on it or "excavating more meaning, but appreciating it and finding the words to praise it" (61). Although written in the format of fragmentary "notes," Klevan's essay seems to mirror Cavell's impressionistic style itself and thus admirably succeeds in capturing the essence of his philosophical film criticism.

John Mullarkey advocates a "non-philosophical" approach to film inspired by the work of François Laruelle's. For Mullarkey, most readings in continental film-philosophy reductively render film as pre-texts for illustrating a favored philosophical model. To counter this tendency, he calls for a democratically open and egalitarian engagement with film which prioritizes film's capacity to philosophize on its own "without eliminating its sensory dimensions." (89) In its emphasis on the affective dimension of cinematic thinking, Mullarkey's non-philosophy of film, however, does not reject theory altogether but instead proposes "*montage thinking*" (97) – a pluralist use of multiple theories which, taken together, would adequately express the "Real" of film. Mullarkey's tone throughout seems defensive, and one may conclude that this chapter was primarily written as a rebuttal of numerous criticisms aimed at the

extreme radicalism of his approach. Some such criticisms do seem reasonable enough, not least the worry expressed by Sinnerbrink elsewhere and discussed by Mullarkey here about whether “this non-philosophy of film is not simply another overweening theoretical paradigm” (93).

Part II opens with Steven Mulhall’s essay on computer-generated reality. He takes the case of Timur Bekmambetov’s *Wanted* (2008), in which the superhuman capacities of the assassins in the mysterious ‘Fraternity’ are captured by digital image. The hyper-reality of the assassins, however, proves to be no more than a fantasy of having reality under control, which is parallel to how digital visual technology actually works: it makes physically impossible superpowers perceivable yet masters only the appearance of reality rather the physical reality itself. In this regard, the film’s “digitally achieved hyperbolic realism” presents “a certain loss of faith in the real world” (113). Taking a broader view of roughly the same theme, the chapter by Amy Coplan and Derek Matravers, presented in the form of a dialogue, offers a debate over the role of non-cognitive affect in film and literature. Coplan argues that “film narratives are typically better at eliciting non-cognitive affect than literary narratives” (125) because cinematic affects are not mediated by imagination but are experienced “as a result of film’s direct sensory engagement” (120), “bypassing the cerebral cortex” (121). As Matravers responds, literature is equally able to shock the reader, although it does so via different cognitive processing. His example is a passage from Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* depicting a sudden outburst of the heroine’s emotions, which is particularly shocking in the context of Austen’s generally emotionless narration. It is rather unclear how Matravers’ argument about the literature’s capacity to produce non-cognitive affects counters Coplan’s position: the former seems only to complement and reaffirm the latter. Both would agree that film and literary narratives elicit non-cognitive affects, whereas literature usually requires cognitive mediation for this.

Part III demonstrates the hermeneutic potential of film-philosophy in action by gathering a number of close readings of films and directors. Vivian Sobchak focuses on Derek Jarman’s *Blue* (1993), providing a pedagogical commentary on her students’ phenomenological interpretation of the film. Based on this, she argues for the primacy of embodiment to the cinematic experience and its irreducibility to predetermined cognitive schemata. Andrew McGettigan, meanwhile, discusses ethical aspects Michael Haneke’s formalist aesthetics of screen violence in his two versions of *Funny Games* (1997, 2007). The volume concludes with Havi Carel’s essay on the materialist aesthetics of grief and mourning in Shinya Tsukamoto’s *Vital* (2004) in which the haptic engagement with the dead body becomes a source of metaphysical insight.

The editors are at pains to make clear in the introduction that the lack of agreement among the book's given approaches "contributes to the area's richness" (3). The aim of the collection, they continue, "is to open up, rather than close down, debate and to allow readers to make up their own judgments on which of these approaches seem the most suitable for their purposes" (ibid.). Such a disclaimer against providing a more systematic and organized account of philosophical perspectives on film may not only be dictated by the editors' courteous concern for the reader's open-mindedness. As they admit from the very beginning, it is difficult to define what exactly "film-philosophy" is. Is it "a type of philosophical sub-discipline" or "a new way of doing 'film studies'" (1)? The volume demonstrates that it is necessarily both, but the question still remains what criteria we shall use to measure the effectiveness of a given philosophical approach to film. This is probably why the "takes" presented in the volume are characterized as "new." As a field, film-philosophy is new indeed, but its celebrated novelty unavoidably figures as an excuse for the editors' inability to organize their approaches into a more coherent framework.

The monographs by Felicity Colman and David Martin-Jones could similarly be classified as "takes in film-philosophy." Yet, unlike the collection discussed above, Deleuzian film theory has been developing for over twenty years by now and has already produced an impressive number of scholarly interpretations, including earlier contributions from the same authors. Their impact is therefore more open to critical judgment.

Felicity Colman's *Deleuze and Cinema: The Film Concepts* provides a step-by-step exegetic exposition of Deleuze's *Cinema* volumes, organized in a dictionary format. Characterizing Deleuze's approach to cinema as "taxonomic," the author in turn offers her "own taxonomy of Gilles Deleuze's books as a system for engaging with screen-based forms" (5). For Colman, the Deleuzian "cine-system" is dynamic and essentially open as it includes all kinds of screen-based media: commercial and experimental films, video, television, computer games, and so forth. In each of fourteen chapters, she explores one of the key concepts of the two cinema books "in approximately the order that Deleuze presents them" (ibid): cine-system, movement, frame, montage, perception, affect, action, etc. Each concept is presented through a tripartite structure of analysis that first provides the definition of a certain concept, then elaborates upon how Deleuze uses the concept and concludes with a section on its manifestation within film texts themselves. Each chapter also opens with a film example that illustrates the relevant concept in action.

Colman's introductory guidebook is ostensibly designed for undergraduate students previously unfamiliar with Deleuze's oeuvre. Given this, the author does not pursue a single interpretative position throughout the



text but rather provides a general overview of various influences, themes and motifs commonly associated with Deleuze's film-philosophy. These include his Bergsonian background which liberates cinematic movement and time from humanistic shackles; his indebtedness to Spinoza and Nietzsche in his prioritization of the body as the key agent of thought in film; the significance of Charles Peirce's pragmatic semiotics that displaces the representational model of the screen; and the ethical and political implications of Deleuze's cinematic ontology. This list of topics covered is certainly not exhaustive and the range of Colman's survey is impressively vast. Given that one of the author's objectives is to demonstrate how Deleuze's "taxonomic approach" (196) works as "an open-system for thinking through and analysing any form of screen-generated images" (199), Colman appears to care more for quantity rather than quality of discussed material.

Despite Colman's laudable intentions to provide a newcomer in Deleuze's philosophy of cinema with a "theoretical springboard for all types of enquiry" (6) that would accommodate *all* types of media as well as a "reader's biases" (ibid.), her exegetic style does present a considerable challenge for the reader regardless of his or her level of expertise in Deleuze's studies. For an uninitiated reader, Colman's theoretical prose may appear too dense, just as it is not always clear how her lengthy, ekphrastic passages on the film examples directly illustrate the philosophical concept under discussion. Furthermore, most of her references to other aspects of Deleuze's oeuvre are not sufficiently developed and thus remain unexplained loose ends. For the experienced student of Deleuze, Colman's heavily descriptive presentation of the material could helpfully serve as an efficient memory refresher at best and, at worst, might seem like a self-indulgent stream of loosely connected Deleuzian concepts that have already become stale clichés in the English-speaking humanities today. Colman situates her study among other introductory works on Deleuze's *Cinema* books, such as those by D. N. Rodowick, Ronald Bogue and Patricia Pisters. Yet it is not immediately clear how her contribution, while richly informative, advances our *understanding* of Deleuze's *Cinema* volumes in the context of a rapidly developing field. Colman's glossary-like taxonomy of *Cinema*'s concepts is certainly first of its kind and it does follow Deleuze's own disclaimer that his study is *not* a history of cinema but "a taxonomy, an attempt at the classification of images and signs" (13). The taxonomic rhetoric, however, may not be the best way of organizing *Cinema*'s concepts: by slavishly adopting the same order of Deleuze's "classification," Colman's approach only reiterates the complexities of his argumentations without fully clarifying them. She does compile a great number of concepts in her study yet often she seems reluctant to explain the "new logic" of their compilation to which she refers at several points through the book. Furthermore, for Colman it is Deleuze himself who fails to provide a more explicit account of the principles which underlie his taxonomy. As she

suggests, "Although he hints at what this 'new logic' might be, Deleuze stays with his main taxonomic project" (145). By keeping *Cinema's* project strictly within taxonomic confines, Colman thus renders most of Deleuze's arguments as descriptive enumerations of extravagant concepts and declamatory generalizations ("The function of thought is political. *With our thoughts we make the world!*" (190; emphasis in original)).

Unlike Colman's generic introductory guidebook, David Martin-Jones's *Deleuze and World Cinemas* offers a highly original interpretation of Deleuze's cinema books which stands a solid chance at succeeding as one of the dominant approaches in Deleuzian film studies as it provides a powerful reconsideration of Deleuze's "film concepts" in national and historical contexts of non-Western cinemas. One of the major stakes of Martin-Jones's argument is that Deleuze's cine-system, as a "product of Western philosophical canon" (11), unavoidably universalizes cinema as some ahistorical totality by confining it to predominantly European and American cinematic traditions arbitrarily divided into two major image types around the turning point of World War Two. Precisely because "contemporary cinema continues to develop," Martin-Jones argues, "the Eurocentric division between movement- and time-image must be continually rethought in various contexts worldwide" (15-6). By deterritorializing Deleuze's *Cinema* books, Martin-Jones thus presents himself as "a-Deleuzian", in the sense that he neither promotes nor dismisses Deleuze's legacy but is rather "keen to constructively critique his ideas in order to increase their applicability and relevance" (10). Even though he positions himself at the interdisciplinary crossroad of Film Studies and Deleuze Studies, through his persistent demonstrations of how "Othered films can 'talk back' to" Deleuze's "Eurocentric conclusions" (8), it becomes evident that Martin-Jones' "creative re-interpretation" (9) of Deleuze's film-philosophy stems primarily from Film Studies rather than philosophy. As he makes clear, his "contextualizing approach is more typical of Film Studies" since he engages Deleuze's ideas with those of other scholars "working on cinema rather than philosophy" (9).

In chapter one Martin-Jones critiques Deleuze's dismissal of early silent cinema which, he says, is due to an "over-reliance on Bergson's philosophy" (64). Prior to the movement-image produced by the four montage schools explored in *Cinema 1*, Martin-Jones argues, there was a different type of movement-image, an "attraction-image" based on spectacle (or montage without editing) and exemplified by Georges Méliès's trick films. Furthermore, the "attraction-image," discovered and elaborated by the silent cinema scholar Tom Gunning, was not fully replaced by the montage-based action-image propagated by Hollywood westerns but survived in Italian "spaghetti westerns." As Martin-Jones demonstrates, the modern transnationally oriented attraction-image of "spaghetti westerns" characterized by the lack of national ideology, perpetually cycling narrative and the characters' disconnection from the



milieu, provides a subtle critique of the US imperialist ideology during the Cold War.

Chapter 2 focuses on Deleuze's notion of the child-seer derived from the post-war Italian neorealism and its applicability to such typical Argentine melodrama as *Kamchatka* (Marcelo Piñeyro, 2002) where the same figure is used to explore the visual experience of the country's authoritarian past. For Martin-Jones, in each case the role of the child-seer is different. In neorealism the child is confronted with the present that has lost its past, whereas in contemporary South American films it becomes a passive medium to "observe again a layer of the past that resonates with the present" (81). By rendering the (previously excluded) Argentine history visible to the international audience, the "Hollywoodish" *Kamchatka's* child-seer not only restores the country's national whole but also provides a critical commentary on the US neoliberal intrusion into South America.

In chapter three Martin-Jones employs Deleuze's concept of the fold to explore the representation of the traumatic experience of South Korea's compressed modernity in such melodramas as *Calla* (Hae-sung Song, 1999) and *Donggam* (Jeong-kwon Kim, 2000) as well as the action blockbuster *2009: Lost Memories* (Si-myung Lee, 2002). Even though the chosen films ostensibly operate within the mainstream logic of the movement-image, they nevertheless strategically incorporate "cerebral components" of the time-image – such as black screen, white screen and irrational editing – in order to *enfold* some traumatic event in their time-travel narratives. By tracing the formal tension between the disruptive force of this event, which may change the course of history, and the diegetic control of the movement-image that stands for a unified national whole, Martin-Jones extrapolates the films' aesthetics of temporality into a larger memory politics regarding the sacrifices made during the country's rapid economic modernization.

In chapters four and five Martin-Jones discusses Deleuze's concepts of "action-image" and "any-space-whatever" in relation to the representation of the transformation of urban space under globalization in Jackie Chan's *Police Story* (1985) and Michael Mann's *Heat* (1995) and *Collateral* (2004). In Deleuze's *Cinema* books any-space-whatever stands for a pure affective potentiality of space divorced from an "action-oriented sensory-motor continuum" (135). With reference to Laura U. Marks, Mark Shiel and Marc Augé, Martin-Jones argues that such emptied or abstract cinematic spaces could similarly be expressive of the fragmented and anonymous non-places of globalization serving for the deterritorialized flows of people and trade, such as Hong Kong's shanty town and shopping mall in *Police Story* or Los Angeles's highways, airports and nightclubs in Michael Mann's blockbusters. This section appears to be the most "a-Deleuzian" since Martin-Jones's reading of globalized landscapes relies

primarily on the works of neo-Marxist urbanists, such as Edward Soja and David Harvey.

The book concludes with Martin-Jones' discussion of Bollywood cinema, which "muddies any clear distinction between movement- and time-image" (206). Unlike the histories of European and American cinema divided into the classic movement-image and modern time-image, popular Indian cinema from the silent era to modern times consistently blends these two categories by systematic narrative interruptions and celebrations of spectacle. Such an aesthetic could be compared to the dream-like movement of the world in Hollywood musicals described in Deleuze's *Cinema 2*, yet for Martin-Jones Bollywood's *conventional* sensory-motor discontinuity testifies to a wholly different aesthetic tradition (dubbed as "*masala*-image") based on Indian cosmology (the *dharmic* whole), which perpetually alternates the cyclical model of time (tradition) with evolutionary progression (modernity).

However strong and appealing Martin-Jones' contextualist revision of Deleuze might appear, the very logic of his argument raises a few concerns. On the one hand, he criticizes Deleuze for his "over-reliance on Bergsonian philosophy" that results in his "often ahistorical analysis of films" (9). On the other, Deleuze's Bergsonian division of cinema into movement- and time-image is said to be "*based on [...] a Eurocentric emphasis on the Second World War as defining moment of rupture*" (emphasis added, 16). It is therefore unclear where exactly Deleuze, according to Martin-Jones, derives his conceptual framework from: either from Bergsonian philosophy, which would make him an *ahistorical* philosopher of cinema, or from European/American cinema, which would make him a Eurocentric *historian* of cinema. Because the internal relation between Deleuze's metaphysics and a history of cinema is never clarified, Deleuze takes the blame for being both. To resolve the question whether the infamous rupture between movement- and time-image is of metaphysical or historical nature, one would need to extend the discussion of the philosophical background of Deleuze's cine-system into his neo-Kantian theory of the transcendent use (or genesis) of the faculties, which is steadily employed in all of his readings of other arts, and is indeed in turn taken up by such scholars as Dinko Zabunyan, Jean-Michel Pamarot and Joe Hughes. Martin-Jones, however, strategically shuns any further investigation of the philosophical underpinnings of the *Cinema* books. Instead, he critiques Deleuze for overdoing philosophy at the expense of the contextual specificity of analyzed films. Therefore, to "save Deleuze's work on cinema" (7) for our future applications, he suggests, we should contextually expand his cine-system both historically and geographically. The problem with such rhetoric about "saving Deleuze" is that by contextualizing his "film concepts" cinematically Martin-Jones definitively decontextualizes them philosophically. All of the concepts he borrows from Deleuze are discussed only in terms of their

critical reconsideration in order to be later assimilated into other (fashionable) frameworks of cultural/film analysis, such as globalization and postcolonial studies, urban studies, diaspora studies and gender studies. Indeed, had Martin-Jones never mentioned anything from Deleuze's oeuvre and relied exclusively on cultural studies methodologies at which he seems to be more comfortable, he would still have written a great book on world cinema.

***The British Film Institute, the Government and Film Culture, 1933-2000***

**edited by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin**

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012. xvi + 331 pp. ISBN 9780719079085. £65.00 (hbk)

***J. Edgar Hoover Goes to the Movies: The FBI and the Origins of Hollywood's Cold War***

**by John Sbardellati**

Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2012. viii + 256 pp. ISBN 9780801450082. £17.50 (hbk)

***The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television***

**by Tricia Jenkins**

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012. 167 pp. ISBN 9780292728615. £38.00 (hbk)

**A Review by Elaine Lennon, Dublin Institute of Technology.**

Exposing of the role of any state-funded agency or cultural institution in a country's film production is a major element in the consideration of the interplay of cinema and nation, as well as being an instructive lesson in what Althusser called the operations of the ideological state apparatus. This selection of three new volumes offers a good representation of the manifold interactions that take place in the production and reception of cinema and television that has involved the active engagement of such agencies in the interests of producing ideology in digestible formats.

Firstly, the wide-ranging 15-essay collection edited by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and Christophe Dupin (who also author many of the chapters), is the product of a laborious and multi-faceted task undertaken under the sponsorship of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, dealing with everything from the Institute's origins, primarily by educationists who wanted to complement the work of Film Societies and offer practical aid to teachers; through the complicated operations and inter-organisational battles that characterised its rise; and the emergence of its house periodical, *Sight & Sound*; to the confused mass of factors which led to both the creation and early demise of the much-lamented Museum of the Moving Image. En route, the complex political machinations and interference which led to the present day situation are covered without the edge of journalistic bias that has inevitably obscured the facts of the

current government's demolition job on the UK Film Council (under which the BFI was subsumed for a period).

Each essay commences with a presentation of one aspect of the Institute and then proceeds to offer generally cogent analysis, offering extensive references to the voluminous records (although some of the numerous AGM minutes are mysteriously unavailable). We learn from Nowell-Smith's introductory chapters that the BFI was the result of efforts made in the education sector from the 1920s but, as he goes on to discuss in the second, its real importance became significant in the wake of World War Two when the demands of cultural production gathered momentum and the important job of synchronising mechanisms of production, distribution, exhibition, education and archiving could be seen to be handled by one government institution. The establishment of the National Film Theatre and development of regional distribution are some of the knottier histories untangled here, with an enlightening chapter by Dupin detailing the bitter disputes between archivist Ernst Lindgren and the charismatic, arrogant Henri Langlois of the Cinémathèque Française, played out via the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF). The complexities of establishing the BFI in the regions is dealt with in great depth in a chapter by Melanie Selfe, who exposes the small-mindedness and raging politics attached to notions of location and culture vis à vis film. In fact, a clear if selective view of the complex controversies that have characterised the Institute's history is this book's main achievement. The problems posed to the BFI by the film industry took decades to untangle, while the mere mention of the word 'culture' had successive governments in knots while dozens of BFI denizens sought to establish the equivalent of personal fiefdoms, carving up departmental responsibilities at the expense of the greater good. Two major figures dominate the history laid out in this collection: Denis Forman (who has written a valuable foreword to the collection) and Anthony Smith (covered by another chapter by Nowell-Smith), both of whom sought, 30 years apart, to bring some kind of order to the madness amidst occasionally catastrophic indifference, streamlining an enormous set of problematic departments and foiling management politicking.

Perhaps the most glaring omission in this set of accounts is a separate essay dedicated to BFI Publishing, now sold off, which Nowell-Smith has written about elsewhere. The centrality of the BFI as a cultural mechanism is the driver of this collection yet the individual essays, which amount to a fairly exhaustive variety, are nevertheless not brought together by the editorial chapters in a way that might emphasise the common threads and concerns, or draw out their contemporary resonance.

A more sinister interpretation of the role that government agencies can play in the manipulation of cinematic output is evident in John

Sbardellati's book on the FBI's relentless machinations against Hollywood from the very earliest Red Scare days at the end of World War One and particularly the shape it took during and after World War Two and in the period 1942-1958. The single author is here able to trace a much clearer line from those early days, raising coherent arguments about the function of the FBI and locating it within a theoretical framework which links its actions with those of other wings of government. Primarily, the author contends that the legacy of the agency's red-baiting is not merely an adjunct of Hoover's moral precepts, but a motif in the fundamental cultural shift that also caused the birth of the Production Code as well as the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, an inside job on the part of the industry. The House Committee on Unamerican Activities also comes under questioning, mainly because of its entrapment politics, which caused havoc with so many careers, but also because several of the studio moguls like Jack Warner were simply too wily and concerned with the value of their output's receipts to give Hoover more than the time of day. They played along, but only so far, even when a film like *Mission to Moscow* (Curtiz, 1943) was reflective of the government's ever-changing wartime mood. The Red Scare came into proper existence in the Spring of 1946, principally following the uncovering of a spy ring in Canada (which, incidentally, led to John Grierson, a major architect of the BFI, not being able to work there or in the US). Ever pragmatic, the studios sacrificed personnel who could be afforded, and the censorship was so minuscule as to be ultimately meaningless, while the agents themselves were too narrow-minded to realise that many writers simply did their jobs uncredited, whether they were ostensibly communist or not. But while highlighting these imperfections, Sbardellati is careful not to downplay the effects of the bureau's actions in this period. While the censorship was hardly noticeable, the campaign to which the studios were subjected was lengthy campaign, throughout which, of course, files were created on huge numbers of personnel and film content, even if they occasionally missed their targets (such as the large numbers of left-wingers who used aliases on several scripts that the FBI supposedly examined). The post-war hysteria created any number of casualties, ideological and otherwise, and the anti-New Dealers were all but forgotten with the zeal of the witch-hunt. Meanwhile, some producers got caught up in a wave of film productions that linked communists with criminality, one of the more notorious being *Big Jim McLain* (Edward Ludwig, 1951), starring John Wayne, a leading alumnus of the Motion Pictures Association. The motivation behind the campaign was always ideological; but its political thrust came from the production of concrete evidence, accumulated through a steady supply of information provided by hardliners like the mother of Ginger Rogers and various aspiring politicians who saw soft targets everywhere they looked.



Sbardellati's account is both detailed and humorous, highlighting the flaws of a bureaucratic movement which often seemed to miss its aim yet left massive collateral damage in its wake. At the same time it ignored the complete failure of outwardly communist productions, *Salt of the Earth* (Herbert J. Biberman, 1954) being the most obvious and saddest of them all. The author also does an especially brilliant job in excavating the actions of activists like Martin Dies who was cross-examining stars like Humphrey Bogart in 1940. What comes across most clearly is how the purge effectively linked all kinds of alleged perversions with anti-Americanism, the family being seen to be the last bastion of stalwart patriotism against Reds under the bed, the Mafia, homosexuality and, apparently any expression of one's dissatisfaction with the bank manager.

Oddly, there is little mention of the cinematic portrayal of the FBI itself, despite many studios' self-preserving actions (especially the Warners with their *G Men* (William Keighley, 1935), an early and profitable attempt at appeasement which the FBI ultimately used for self-promotion) in depicting the agency positively from the mid-1930s onwards. The author's tactic is to focus on social problem films, which, he suggests, was the genre most affected by the agency's actions, while the portrayal of bankers was the key issue for the FBI's investigations, a blindsiding obsession which frequently resulted in misunderstandings of laughable proportions.

If the FBI had the market in self-promotion cornered from the 1930s, the Central Intelligence Agency, formed in 1947, entered the game very late indeed. The role of the CIA in the cultural production of the United States has long formed a spectral presence in film writings and this is the central focus of Tricia Jenkins' new study. *The CIA in Hollywood* traces the evolution of the agency and its currently formidable influence in contemporary film and TV production. Jenkins' key point is that the CIA is found actively whitewashing its role through sympathetic depictions in those productions in which it lends its 'support'. Her main contention, robustly contested elsewhere, is that this play on ethics is a breach of the First Amendment. The framework for her argument is established through six chapters in which she examines the historic representations of the agency (in five categories since the 1960s). Its appearance in film dates from the 1960s; but the Aldrich Ames scandal in 1994 gave rise to a more intensive oversight, leading as it did to the establishment of a public relations office and the decision to actively co-opt Hollywood in the production of positive images of the agency. This system continues today in a variety of productions both for the big and small screen in which damage control is countered by careful selectivity and limitation of access. This history, Jenkins asserts, shows the agency to be a model of secret influence, that routinely violates both ethics and the law.

In Jenkins' stalwart efforts to uncover the true nature of the agency's self-promotion she attempts to find evidence relating to Chase Brandon's tenure as entertainment liaison (1995-2008). What she shows is that everything had been discussed in telephone calls and personal meetings. There is no written evidence whatsoever corresponding to any of the numerous productions which cultivated the agency's interests over the previous decade and a half. Brandon's successor, Paul Barry, has been equally slippery and well connected in the business. Barry has since retired. Therefore Jenkins interviewed scores of officials, agents, industry liaisons, producers, operatives and historians in an attempt to seek the truth behind such TV shows as *In the Company of Spies*, *The Agency*, *24* and the cult show *Alias*, whose star, Jennifer Garner, performed in a recruiting video for the agency that was used at college fairs based on information relating to the series' presumed demographics.

The structure of Jenkins' work is straightforward and impressive: she condenses her intentions succinctly in her introduction and at the beginning of each chapter asks key questions aimed at disallowing CIA stereotypes, such as rogue agents and assassins, access, psychological warfare, and politics, before going on to uncover the reasons for their existence. She thus systematically deflates presumed foreknowledge with a demonstration of the facts, showing the evolution in the portrayal of Government agents to become ever more sympathetic. Prising open the lid on a government front built on disinformation cannot have been an easy task and Jenkins is the first author to tackle such a pressing problem at an academic level in a book-length study. Her work on the influence wielded by the agency during the pre-production phases of film and TV projects is vital reading. Most fascinating is her account of how their presence on the set of *The Recruit* (Roger Donaldson, 2003) was allegedly to provide *disinformation* for the researchers. The latest example of the government-entertainment complex's efforts in the post-9/11 world is the Golden Globe winner, *Argo* (Affleck, 2012), a project of which Jenkins was made aware during its pre-production, and a project which pleased both the agency and Hollywood in its remarkable (and mostly) true) tale of American Embassy workers being smuggled out of Iran during the 1979 hostage crisis on the pretext of being crew on a non-existent sci-fi film. The director was Ben Affleck, star of *The Sum of All Fears* (Alden Robinson, 2002) in which he portrayed fictional CIA hero Jack Ryan in the only part of the franchise that received full agency co-operation. The real-life operative behind the fake film in *Argo*, Tony Mendez, a former Senior Intelligence Operative and longtime Hollywood figure post-retirement (the kind Jenkins states the CIA fears as much as it does its own rogue agents) was one of the presenters onstage at the Golden Globes; while *Argo's* producer Grant Heslov paid explicit thanks to 'our country's foreign services' and 'our clandestine services' in award acceptance speeches. A film which makes both filmmakers and CIA operatives its heroes is

obviously vastly pleasing to a formerly antithetical set of cultural political operations. Diplomacy has never been so political.

It is unfortunate that the award-winning *Zero Dark Thirty* (Bigelow, 2012), which came under fire for its allegedly fence-sitting presentation of torture, was presumably not in production when Jenkins was collating her evidence, while a rogue CIA agent languishes in a US jail for having mentioned the phenomenon to a journalist. Also, the fate of Wikileaks informant Bradley Manning under the direct orders of Barack Obama, further reflects Jenkins general complaint that the CIA has never had it so good while civil liberties are everywhere in abeyance. Jenkins' remarkably lucid account of the developments in the US entertainment industry that has given rise to these recent events – in and outside Hollywood's fictional worlds – is simultaneously deeply worrying and a brilliant academic achievement.

What these three books explore is the role of Government agencies in the manufacture and collation of cultural propaganda in the world of TV and film production, at home and abroad, both at times of war and peace. They share a concern for ideological formations at the demonstrable expense of the public good. They also show in different ways that at the heart of every cultural or political institution is a never-ending supply of hardline bureaucrats content to man their own foxholes above and beyond the bigger, logical, picture – bringing into question, as it were, the kind of agency performed by agencies. These volumes constitute a valuable addition to the paucity of documentary evidence available about the measures taken by governments in the English-speaking world to construct, obstruct and control all sorts of media-produced knowledge for the wider public's edification.

### ***Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer***

**By Shaun Kimber**

Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. ISBN 9780230297982. xvi +148pp. £12.99 (pbk)

### ***Film and Video Censorship in Modern Britain***

**By Julian Petley**

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. ISBN 9780748625390. vi + 232pp. £24.99 (pbk)

## A review by Karen Oughton, Regent's University, London

Both these books provide historical information on film censorship and classification and, through the use of examples, develop useful context for that central topic. The primary difference between the two is that Shaun Kimber's focuses on the subject in relation to film on an international (although primarily US and UK) basis, while Julian Petley focuses on UK censorship itself with reference to case studies. Both ultimately argue in favour of liberalisation of censorship laws.

Petley's *Film and Video Censorship in Modern Britain* gives the reader a rather painstaking account of British attitudes towards, and legislative control of, its subject. Its scope includes astounding detail on the 1980s and 1990s 'video nasties' moral panics, not to mention references to pornography and other related areas. Petley's particular aim, as he states, is to situate the issue of censorship not only within its legal framework, but also within its socio-political context, and he does this with masterful aplomb. Vast swathes of the work are taken up by detailed analysis of personal letters, newspaper reports, parliamentary bills and interviews with British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) personnel. The book is presented in four sections representing the time from the birth of VHS in the late 1970s and before the Video Recordings Act (VRA) of 1984 to the repeal and revival of that legislation in amended form in 2009. This is compiled in historical order, making situating the constantly changing environment it describes far easier than it otherwise could have been.

As Petley states, a sizeable amount of his material has been published before within the academic, trade and mainstream press. He has, nevertheless, developed and updated most of the content considerably and is also able to give readers a real sense of what it was like to be at the centre of the furore in his journalistic capacity. He does this not only in terms of the issues explored, but pertinently also in terms of the personalities who constructed the relevant policies and politics. This extends to Petley's recounting of his own experiences, gained in snatches of first-person account which are invaluable. Fascinating excerpts include Westminster Council's concern that David Cronenberg's *Crash* (1996) was 'sexually degrading' (118) leading them to ban the film, with Council leader John Bull allegedly complaining that, "Sex took place with all these callipers on" (119), a telling indication of the dual prejudice towards both sex and disability that resonated in their repulsion. Indeed, in presenting such material in impressive quantity, Petley achieves his goal of illustrating how the censors' apparent feelings of moral superiority are a major undercurrent of their legislation.

The main strength of Petley's book is how incredibly dense it is in terms of information. It also pays apt regard to other important works, notably those of Martin Barker and Geoffrey Robertson, though it is confident in developing those arguments where necessary. It is particularly impressive when dealing with the semantic arguments that riddle the VRA's notions of 'harm' and how that body attempts to control it. Credit must also be given to him for representing sometime opponents (boogiemen of gore geeks everywhere) such as James Ferman not only with (albeit grudging) professional respect, but a notional understanding and warmth, preventing the issue from becoming boo-hiss

political reductionism that would potentially have made the book an easier sell to certain audiences.

*Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* is a similarly useful book, although perhaps not strictly as successful as Petley's. It is part of the Controversies series, incidentally edited by Petley with Stevie Simkin. In this work, the first book-length treatment of John McNaughton's 1986 film, Kimber delivers both the behind-the-scenes information beloved by film fans, and a cultural and textual analysis of the piece, with specific focus on the extraordinary way it was censored by the BBFC. The book is written with obvious love for the film, shown particularly by some excitingly-paced passages detailing the construction of the film and why it was produced and distributed in the way it was.

The area in which Kimber's book comes into its own is its discussion of the three tableaux it argues are central to the film: 'The Exterminator', showing the murder of a prostitute (Mary Demas); 'Let's Go Shopping', which involves the demise of a fence (Ray Atherton); and 'Home Invasion', in which a family are tortured and killed. In each, Kimber breaks the filmic devices down into fragments of fascination. This enables him to argue conclusively as to the film makers' sheer ingenuity and to establish the film's proper place within the canon of great affective films. What is more, he manages to interweave an analysis of how these frameworks interact with *Henry's* cultural and indeed legislative reception. It is a great shame indeed that, as Kimber details, the BBFC refused him access to its files on the classification case surrounding the film on the basis of a temporal technicality of a matter of months. It certainly does not reflect well on the BBFC, considering the academic nature of this monograph. One senses he would have had a field day with the material.

Both books utilise appropriate and often fascinating evidence to state their cases. It is, however, clear that they make political assumptions that arguably require a little further justification. Both state, either by inference or directly, that liberalisation of the censorship legislation they discuss is de facto the correct response for film and for society in general. Readers of the books who are fans of the films discussed will no doubt agree, but must acknowledge that this view may not be unanimous. A more complex perception among society at large is suggested when Petley states that 42 per cent of audiences in a BBFC public consultation did not think the violence guidelines were strict enough, although they were not the 'natural audience' for the films (180).

As much as we may all, (as Petley does) hold moral panics instigated by the press as "populist antics" to be dismissed with "contempt" (114), ignoring a sample from a country in which the highest-selling newspapers reflect these views seems a little dismissive, and is further weakened when Petley accuses Labour Party members who disagreed with his views of 'cultural philistinism' (33). While this is evidently a campaigning journalist's (very effective) rhetoric, it feels out of context in an academic work and would benefit from added reflexive explanation. Petley does present alternative arguments, such as by quoting BBFC Director James Ferman's views that government cannot disregard "inarticulate" public concerns (66), but he sometimes seems to disregard this notion himself, which seems slightly inconsistent when calling for UK legislation

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to be brought in line with “comparable democratic countries” (211) in his final page.

Furthermore, while Petley’s use of legislative evidence is flawless and a pleasure to read, he occasionally states alternative perspectives without critically them. For instance, he states: “there is absolutely no onus on those who dispute the existence of this supposed link [between film violence and actual violence] to prove that it *does not* exist, any more than there is on those who do not believe in flying saucers to *disprove* their existence” (24). Equating social cognitive theory to the ‘crank’ subject of extra terrestrials seems a little overzealous, and one feels the alternative argument – what existing studies have and have not found – could have been given more investigation even though the cases at the centre of the ‘video nasties’ furore may well have been a concoction of Fleet Street and the courts.

Regardless, Petley ends his historical account at the end of the book by providing his case for classification. He presents a detailed analysis of legal policy (what is to be done) and legal procedure (the process through which it is accomplished). In doing so he shows expert knowledge not only of the process of law but of how it is actioned on a daily basis including all of the human error, subjectivity and oversight that can affect it. Also, His detailing of the cases of distributors Nigel Wingrove’s Purgatory Films and Blue Underground’s Carl Daft make for fascinating reading. Indeed, in terms of qualitative and quantitative analysis and sheer variety, Petley compiles an irresistibly convincing critique of the law and the censors that have hitherto imposed it.

Kimber’s book, on the other hand, is far less based on critique, with two thirds of it representing incredibly interesting historical report. Where we do see the author’s own analysis, one would like to see Kimber go a little further. For example, when he states that, “In films it is often seen as ideologically and morally legitimate for bad men to kill each other” (102), it would perhaps have been valuable to discuss the notion of legitimacy of murder in relation to Henry (Michael Rooker) as a character within the specific milieu of the film. Other parts of his work are highly subjective, for example his assertions that the fence is a filmically legitimate target for violence due initially to our lack of “prior knowledge” (95) about him proceeds to detail what the character’s presentation reveals we do know. Similarly, the reading of the film throughout the book is often open to question despite Kimber’s commanding, authoritative tone and ease with technical exemplification (such as cinematography). Nevertheless, notwithstanding its limited length, this timely introductory book is a great starting point for further study.

Kimber’s greatest strength is in describing the views of others. He uses Annette Hill’s work on audience studies particularly well in this regard, and gives appropriate acknowledgement to perspectives other than his own, such as Jeffrey Sconce’s assertion that the film is intended for expert audiences. In doing so, and giving these views respectful treatment, Kimber gives his work academic validity and a sense of proper investigation, if his wording occasionally lacks precision. Where the book excels however, is in reassembling the varied reactions generated by the film. He deserves much credit for acknowledging (in often minute detail), the productive frameworks of the film industry in creating the text as cultural phenomenon. That he gives equal precedence to critics in the



high brow and popular press as well as to the 'average Joe' – consumer critics as represented on the Internet Movie Database – shows a refreshing understanding of how the reality of the industry is changing and, as a document of that, this book is compelling.

Cult film fans and those who find case studies more useful than abstract argumentation will no doubt be sated by extremely interesting examples in both books in terms of how they relate and compare. Kimber's book, of course, is in itself a case study, but it comes into its own in the final third where it focuses on the home invasion sequence and discusses the relationship between text and affect, using Hill to superb effect to illustrate the effects of the viewing process. The only slight shame is that it lacks more detailed information regarding the fictionalisation process – Henry and his accomplice Otis being loosely based on the lives of serial killers Henry Lee Lucas and Ottis Toole. While fictionalisation is discussed, it is most intriguing for what was left out, particularly as Kimber focuses on the notion of the "masculine dispositions" (119) without reference to the fact that Toole has been stated as having a history of transvestism.

For himself, Petley illustrates his argument through many case studies of films from the periods he recounts, particularly *The Last House on the Left* (Wes Craven, 1972), *Child's Play 3* (Jack Bender, 1991), which was once thought linked to the murder of James Bulger, and *Crash*. As with Bull's comment about the latter, all Petley's examples are particularly revealing in terms of how those involved in the censorship process demonstrably made decisions with recourse to their own moral judgements, rather than an attempt to adhere to communally composed and ratified standards. Genre fans may be little disappointed at the absence of some of the more famous films, and it would have been useful to incorporate some stills to illustrate Petley's argument, but these are small qualms in an already lengthy book.

The main bone of contention for both books is their potential audience. Petley is an excellent writer. His points are erudite, concise and manage to convey his argument with humour and superbly chosen metaphors; it is something of a crime in this reader's eyes that his work is not more widely known to the general public. However, detail and style do not always walk hand in hand. Although this is probably more an editorial issue, the book itself appears slightly mis-marketed. Petley presents a highly stirring call to arms to amend laws he has so succinctly shown as wanting, yet the book's title and back cover (featuring open questions such as "How does film and video censorship operate in Britain?") suggest it is will be far more like an objective beginner's text book in style. This is not the case: it is a whirlwind of names, terms, dates and legislation that could prove daunting to those unfamiliar to the subject. (The addition of a glossary may have benefitted readers uninitiated in the censorship debate.)

Similar issues affect Kimber's work. While the book is written in a accessible yet detailed style, it is sometimes structurally awkward. The same remarks about the film's content are made repeatedly in the first half of the book, with only minor reasons given for revisiting them. Furthermore, there are occasions where points are not cohesively argued. The material is present, but often we are met with an assertion that is not fully explained until a page or so later when an example appears in relation to what seems a slightly different point; on a

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number of occasions Kimber assumes that the reader knows about the legislation but will return several paragraphs later to define it. This can make the book a little confusing at times.

In spite of these issues, both books are fascinating additions to the genre shelf. Petley's work is an absolute gold mine of information that, because of its scope, is equally relevant to students of law, government and politics, media culture, journalism and, of course, film. It would benefit the field immensely if Petley were to release another version of this work containing further detail, perhaps such as full transcripts of his interviews and correspondence. However, as a standalone piece of historical work, this book is a truly remarkable achievement.

Similarly, Kimber's book adds greatly to the subject in terms of information pertaining to a complex and often underappreciated work. That it also acknowledges the role of the changing industry in the production, sale and cultural impact of film, rather than simply focusing on a textual analysis, is to be applauded. *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* is at times a slightly confusing account, but it should help to promote understanding of similarly auteurist yet uncompromising titles for filmmakers and legislators to come. It is a very interesting introduction to the study of censorship, and will hopefully pave the way for the examination of more such titles in the future.

***Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen***

**By Kathleen Rowe Karlyn**

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011. ISBN 9780292737549. 322 pp. £20.00 (pbk)

***African American Actresses: The Struggle for Visibility, 1900-1960***

**By Charlene Regester**

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. ISBN 9780253221926. 368 pp. £21.99 (pbk)

***Unsettling Sights: The Fourth World on Film***

**By Corinn Columpar**

Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010. ISBN 9780809329625. 272 pp. £31.50 (pbk)

**A review by Mantra Roy, University of Washington**

The authors of these books engage with three specific historical trajectories, all related to the politics of representation and self-perception. Kathleen Rowe Karlyn expresses concern over the misrepresentation of mother-daughter relationships portrayed in Hollywood films and TV series in the light of intergenerational feminisms. Charlene Regester examines the lives and careers of nine African American actresses in pre-Civil Rights Hollywood and exposes the forces of invisibility, racial and sexual stereotyping, passing, and attempted resistance. Finally, Corinn Columpar bears witness to the Fourth World, the Aboriginal peoples, and their negotiation with Eurocentric portrayals of their identities in films from USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as their attempts to control their representation on celluloid. From their respective perspectives on gender, race, and ethnicity, read together, the three texts form a insightful narrative of the (mis)representation of identities and the ensuing critical negotiations.

In *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers*, Kathleen Rowe Karlyn engages with the representation of mothers – and, more innovatively, of their absence – in recent American films and television series. She identifies the complex position of mothers and maternal figures in young girls' narratives in the context of Girl Power and Girl World consumerism through the late 1990s into the late 2000s. The introduction charts the different waves of feminism in the United States and their tenets, including the rise of Girl Power and postfeminism, and includes a section

on motherhood, mothers and daughters and their representation in Western literature and cinema, thereby offering an extremely informative section to media students interested in feminism and motherhood.

In "Postfeminism and the Third Wave" Karlyn critiques postfeminism in the context of Girl Power. She argues that in *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997) teenager Rose's rejection of her mother during a moment of crisis (the shipwreck) offers a message that is detrimental to the relationship between young girls and their mothers in real life. Karlyn critiques the film's presentation of Rose's mother's limitations under patriarchy as problematic, especially because Third Wave feminism and Girl Power conceive popular culture as a site of empowerment and the teenager's rejection of a mother figure in this mainstream film suggests a problematic acceptance of that patriarchy-imposed vilification of the mother, disguised as a story about the daughter's rebellion.

In the second chapter, 'Trouble in Paradise' Karlyn examines tales of incest that marginalize mother-figures and focuses on the dubious relationship between adult or middle-aged fathers or father-figures, and young girls or nymphets. Karlyn examines how popular culture often holds absent, ambitious or ineffective mothers and dutiful wives culpable for incestuous relationships between father-figures and young girls and observes that a "collusive" mother is first blamed and then punished (67). In subsequent chapters, Karlyn notes that mothers are increasingly stereotyped as monstrous or ineffectual. She also demonstrates how Second and Third Wave thoughts clash and collide in films like *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, 1995) in which the lead young girls ultimately conform to patriarchy. In 'Final Girls and Epic Fantasies: Remaking the World' Karlyn focuses on the horror genre that mythologizes Girl Culture and Girl Power. The chapter illustrates how, in the first three *Scream* films (Wes Craven, 1996-2000), Third Wave feminist ideals prevail in the context of the "Final Girl", a physically powerful teenage girl who harbors righteous rage and has weak father figures and absent or demonized mother-figures. Karlyn suggests that erasure of mother-figures is misunderstood as a key feature of Third Wave feminism, at least as depicted in these films which otherwise celebrate several tenets of the movement.

Karlyn devotes her next chapter to the career of Reese Witherspoon, whom she regards as a Third Wave postfeminist and argues that Witherspoon demonstrates through her films how smart young girls, with or without Girl Power, can be a force to reckon with. While unruliness, postfeminism, and lack of vulnerability have defined Witherspoon's characters, Karlyn argues that the actor's more recent characters in films like *Walk the Line* (James Mangold, 2004) turn toward unrepentant motherhood. Thus, Karlyn traces the evolution of a strong woman/mother on screen from the image of Girl Power that Witherspoon subtly debunked in *Legally Blonde* (Robert Luketic, 2001).

The next chapter 'Teen-Girl Melodrama' is concerned with mother-daughter relations in TV series such as *My So-Called Life* (Winnie Holzman, 1994-1995) and examines those relations in the contexts of alcoholism, homelessness and financial constraints, demonstrating how the texts offer no easy postfeminist utopia. At this point in the book, Karlyn's skepticism of Third Wave Girl Power is clear and she emphasizes the need for bonding with mothers as a response to feminism's anxieties about mother-daughter relations. This skepticism deepens in the following chapter, 'Girls of Color', where Karlyn suggests that the cultural phenomenon of Girl Power matters less to girls from ethnic minorities than do issues of race, ethnicity, and family. This seems problematic because the pressure to assimilate into mainstream American culture has always complicated minority groups' relationship with it and this need not be a charge leveled specifically at the Third Wave. Karlyn also never comments on the historical struggles with *self*-perception that most minority groups have encountered, something which is central to Charlene Regester's book reviewed below. Karlyn sees feminism's success too simplistically in narratives which, for example, pit young female ethnic minority basketball players against tradition-bound gender roles (*Love and Basketball* [Gina Prince-Bythewood, 2000]). This is Karlyn's weakest chapter because she does not address the complicated relationship between mainstream Girl Power culture and minority groups.

By the time Karlyn comes to the last chapter, 'The Motherline and a Wicked Powerful Feminism' she seems to have found a solution to the inter-generational gap between Second Wave feminists and postfeminists of the Third Wave: mother-daughter bonding, biological or otherwise. Karlyn argues that a healthy relationship between mothers and daughters leads young girls to become confident, strong, and successful women. She examines *Antonia's Line* (Marleen Gorris, 1995) as an example in which multi-generational unruly women of a matriarchal family thrive on a strong bonding between generations of daughters. She concludes the book with a call for a powerful wicked feminism embraced by strong women deemed unruly by social structures.

*Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers* is an important contribution to the field of feminist media studies because Karlyn locates the multiple tensions between feminism and postfeminism in the matrix of Girl Power, globalization, class warfare, economic meltdown, broken families, unstable youth, and addictions. She also identifies a strong nurturing bond between mother and daughter as a locus of sustenance for contemporary feminism. But the book's main weakness remains its failure to develop a sufficient and convincing theorization of the ethnic minority perspective in the context of Girl Power and consumerism.

While *Unruly Girls, Unrepentant Mothers* bears witness to the need for strong mother-daughter relationships in contemporary feminism through

a broad cultural and media studies perspective, in *African American Actresses: The Struggle for Visibility, 1900-1960*, Charlene Regester is much more historically focused in uncovering the struggle for visibility of nine African American actresses in pre-Civil Rights Hollywood. Locating the actresses' lives and careers in the nexus of sexuality, demeaning roles, rampant discrimination, segregation, stereotyping, the white male gaze, and white appropriation of black actresses' identities, Regester intricately outlines a discourse of black stardom. In her introduction Regester clarifies her choice of actresses: they were the most popular and prolific African American stars in mainstream Hollywood from the silent era to the 1960s. Drawing on critical race studies, from W. E. B. DuBois to Hortense Spillers, through nine separate chapters, Regester examines these black actresses' lives as they became commodified in terms of their race and gender.

In the first chapter Regester discusses the racist politics of the time via Madame Sul-te-Wan's appearance in *Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, 1915), and her subservient, native islander role in (*King Kong* [Merian Cooper, 1933]). From the outset she draws out the invisibility inscribed on black actresses like Wan whose work was not even mentioned in most reports. But while Wan's darker skin color was utilized as a trope of evil and subordination, the mulatto identity of Nina Mae McKinney, the focus of Regester's second chapter, found herself an object of white male desire following her most famous role in *Hallelujah* (King Vidor, 1929). Regester argues that McKinney employed her sexuality as a major selling point, which enraged the black press.

The third chapter focuses on Louise Beavers and Regester notes the ambivalences black actresses encountered in their search for satisfying careers at the cost of doing stereotypical, subservient roles. Regester makes an important argument when she asserts that Beavers' most famous role as Delilah, a single mother and housemaid in a white single mother's household in *Imitation of Life* (John M. Stahl, 1934) demonstrates that her subservience was a survival strategy in 1930s' America. Gradually, we meet politically active actresses who accepted less respectable roles on screen only to resist them in their real lives. For example, Fredi Washington, who denied her black identity and masqueraded as white in her role as Peola in *Imitation of Life*, moved to Europe in active resistance to Hollywood that offered little to a black woman. Through a study of the conflict between her (white) body and her social being (her black identity), Regester comments more generally on the contentious race question in America in 1930s-40s.

However, Hattie McDaniel, the first African American actress to win an Oscar, for her role as Mammy in *Gone With the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939), lived a life in which her on-screen subservience merged with her off-screen diffidence. Regester underscores her history with the negative impact of the black press that often highlighted McDaniel's personal life's



problems as weaknesses. Regester then moves to Lena Horne and identifies the subtle racial politics played by Hollywood when it prioritized lighter-skinned mulatto actresses like Horne over darker African American actresses. As a commodified mulatto entertainer, Horne was the first black actress to sign a major contract with MGM studios. Regester notes that Horne's physical presence made her suitable as neither a white nor a black identity, which allowed for several offers of roles but problematized her personal image in the press. Regester thus highlights the contradictions of being a successful mulatto actress of the time: though she was hypersexualized and constructed for white spectators, Horne was able to refuse maids' roles.

By contrast Hazel Scott, a child prodigy pianist, was more or less limited to roles playing herself – a black jazz artist – showing how limiting the system was to these actresses' potential, simplistically exploiting their racial and sexual otherness. In her personal life, Scott became active politically through the 1960s when she refused to perform for segregated audiences and decided to wear her hair in a natural style. Regester thus showcases an extraordinary black performer who publicly resisted her marginalization both on and off-screen.

In the eighth chapter, Regester explores the life and career of Ethel Waters who received mammy-maid roles and found herself pitted against the sexy image of Lena Horne. Their clash, observes Regester, is testimony to the way Hollywood exploited black actresses by commodifying one's sexuality (Horne) and denigrating another for the lack of it (Waters). Finally Regester turns to Dorothy Dandridge, Hollywood's "dark star" (286) with a tormented life. Beautiful and appearing alongside a white male co-star, Dandridge's body became a site for white spectators' racial and sexual fantasies. Regester comments on how Dandridge was exploited by the studios when her sexual desirability was pitted against her racial undesirability. Regester's important contribution in this chapter is her critique of Hollywood's tendency to exploit black male and female sexuality by pitting Dandridge's hypersexualization against an emasculated Belafonte on screen.

A major tribute to nine talented black actresses and their complicated negotiations with white mainstream entertainment industry before Civil Rights, *African American Actresses* is an invaluable asset for students of ethnicity and race in Hollywood. Not only does Regester bring the early twentieth century American racial scene alive by detailing the politics that informed choices and roles of African American women actors, she also contributes richly to studies of stardom as refracted by the socio-cultural and political status of black people and women in America.

Delving deeper into the politics of representation and the critical act of bearing witness, Corinn Columpar offers a related discussion of Aboriginal identity and the construction of 'primitiveness' in *Unsettling Sights: The Fourth World on Film*. The book usefully introduces concepts of the Fourth World, transnational cinema, and the politics of defining primitiveness vis-à-vis white and Eurocentric identities, all being well covered in the opening chapter "The Cinema of Aboriginality as Transnational Phenomenon." Referring to postcolonial theorists like Homi K. Bhabha and cinema theorists like Hamid Naficy, she locates Aboriginal identity and its representation within transnational cinema by emphasizing the relationship – crucial to the medium – between location and identity. This is an important contribution because experiences of deterritorialization and destabilization have informed Aboriginal identities in USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the four settler societies Columpar examines.

Columpar argues for a more nuanced definition of the Fourth World and Indigeneity; according to her, the crucial ties between blood, memory, land, and indigenous identity cannot be ignored. But she is careful to observe that her work respects the necessarily local identity of any Aboriginal group while contextualizing their representation in a transnational context. Columpar also highlights the genre of "contact narratives" (21-22) and explores the genre's recent flexibility in films made in the above-mentioned countries. Her two main tasks in the book are as follows: the first part critically examines how notions of racial and gender difference are problematized by films set in the contact period when colonial Europeans were first discovering aboriginal groups; the second part examines films about the contemporary identity issues of Aboriginals and are directed by Aboriginals themselves.

Columpar begins Part I, "Making Contact, Producing Difference", with the distinction between contact narratives produced in the decolonization period from their predecessors: boundaries are negotiated in different ways. Consequently, she argues, contemporary filmmakers "indigenize – or primitivize [...] the origins of the nation" while their predecessors were insensitive to casting, accents, and racial inclusion (33). Columpar compares and contrasts the reception of two films on Native Americans, Hollywood's *Dances with the Wolves* (Kevin Costner, 1990) and Quebec's *Black Robe* (Bruce Beresford, 1991), and concludes that while Euro-American critics discussed the romanticism in the films, Native American critics focused on the anachronisms and minor roles offered to Native American actors. Columpar thus emphasizes the error of omission committed by both sets of critics.

In her second chapter, she chooses several films that demonstrate the articulation of an "Aboriginal subjectivity" that produces both a "speaking [...] subject and a spectator capable of seriously listening" (78). But in her discussion of *Utu* (Geoff Murphy, 1983), Columpar demonstrates how the international shorter version of the film represents Te Wheke more as an

outlaw than the former loyalist he once was, thus disempowering his story. She concludes the chapter with the discussion of two documentary shorts that mobilise a counter-history by focusing on the actors who played Australian Aboriginal cinematic icons, Rosalie Kunothe-Monks and Tom E. Lewis. Shifting between "reaction" and "reflection," Columpar claims, such documentaries offer "transformative potential" in portraying gender and racial identities (110).

Part II "Mapping the Fourth World" begins with an argument against the relativist's implication that contact narratives are irrelevant and the inscription of Aboriginal cultures as "vanishing race(s)" (111). Columpar posits films like *Beneath Clouds* (Ivan Sen, 2002) that engage with contemporary social forces which relativize the legacy of colonial history and locate daily negotiations of "dual national allegiances and competing cultural influences," as well as interrogating the very notion of 'home' (117). In "Land Claims: Dramas of Deterritorialization" Columpar compares two films, *Powwow Highway* (Jonathan Wacks, 1989) and *Smoke Signals* (Chris Eyre, 1998) to argue that Indigenous films written, directed, and co-produced by Native Americans (like the latter) allow for contemporary and relevant representations of identity and home. *Smoke Signals*, the screenplay for which was written by Sherman Alexie, addresses questions of ethnicity and generation and offers a more nuanced view of reservation life.

Columpar draws our attention to urban centers as new contact zones with potential for both struggle and possibility. *Once Were Warriors* (Lee Tamahori, 1994), made in New Zealand, raised awareness about domestic violence among Maori in urban centers and earned critical acclaim among Maori viewers and critics. Instead of representing static and stereotypical images of reservation-bound Indigeneity these films, as Columpar demonstrates project dynamic images of young Native Americans who assume agency and battle social limitations, including in the home-space, in mainstream America.

In the last chapter, Columpar examines self-reflexive films that engage with "aesthetic and political (self-)representation" by foregrounding issues of "(split) enunciation" (155) and "cultural differentiation" (157). Through *beDevil* (Tracey Moffatt, 1993) Columpar locates multivocality and non-Western storytelling strategies as appropriate cinematic aesthetics to represent the complex Australian Aboriginal identity. In the last film she analyzes, *The Business of Fancydancing* (2002), the directorial debut of Sherman Alexie. Columpar stresses the split in enunciation as she explicates how the viewer is positioned differently vis-à-vis the text through multiple rhetorical strategies, thereby bearing witness to the process through which such transformation occurs among people who have been otherwise reduced to "static images and entrenched stereotypes" (179-180).

## Book Reviews

*Unsettling Sights* is a rich resource for students interested in Aboriginal cinema and Aboriginal representation in cinema. While Columpar successfully critiques stereotypical representation of Indigenous peoples in cinemas of four countries, her most important contribution is the detailed analysis of Aboriginal films made by Aboriginal directors, actors, and producers that contextualize contemporary Indigenous lives in terms of their liminal but fluid identities, within and without reservations. Her explanation of the self-reflexivity involved in these films' examination of the communities' own problems, as well as her awareness of their relationship with the historical colonial context, is exemplary and fascinating.

Indeed, all these three texts can be read as contact narratives involving contestation, liminality, hybridity, and transformative potential. They respectively tackle the cross-generational contact between Second and Third Wave Feminist concerns about mothers and daughters; the contact between African American actresses and white Hollywood before Civil Rights; and the contact between mainstream representation of Indigenous peoples and their *self*-representation. *Unruly Girls*, *Unrepentant Mothers* and *Unsettling Sights* critique the politics of representations and suggest ways to rectify stereotypical misrepresentations by analyzing notable films, TV series, and documentaries. By contrast, the purpose of *African American Actresses* is limited to more straightforward description of nine African American actresses' lives and their struggles for visibility and respect during a time when racial discrimination was the norm of American life. However, all three texts focus on the complex issues of identity and the struggles of marginalized groups in asserting and affirming their complex identities as they negotiate with mainstream points of view. Students interested in identity politics and representation of racial and gender minorities will find each of these books very useful.

***Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732-1933***

**By Erik Butler**

Suffolk: Camden House, 2010. ISBN 9781571134325. 238 pp. £40.00 (hbk)

***Stephen King on the Small Screen***

**By Mark Browning**

Bristol: Intellect, 2011. ISBN 9781841504124. 190 pp. £16.00 (pbk)

***John Carpenter***

**By Michelle Le Blanc and Colin Odell**

Harpenden, Herts: Kamera Books, 2011. ISBN 9781842433386. 16 color ill. 160 pp. £12.99 (pbk)

**A review by Alissa Burger, State University New York, Delhi**

This trio of books addresses subjects in the horror genre that are at once both classic and contemporary. The vampire is enjoying a revived, if somewhat contentious, popularity within book series like Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga (Little Brown and Company, 2005-8) and Charlaine Harris's Sookie Stackhouse novels (Ace Books, 2001-13) as well as films and television series such as the subsequent *Twilight* adaptations (various directors, 2008-12), *True Blood* (HBO, 2008- ) and *Vampire Diaries* (CW, 2009- ). Stephen King's works continue to shoot up the best-seller lists upon publication, with new film and television adaptations constantly in the works, such as last summer's TV series adaptation of his mammoth novel *Under the Dome* (CBS, 2013- ). Finally, John Carpenter's films continue to inspire horror writers and filmmakers today, with remakes of his most well-known films, such as Rob Zombie's 2007 restaging of *Halloween* (1978), still familiar movie theatre fare. In an ever-evolving genre, these three books provide insightful perspectives on these respective subjects, as well as positioning them within larger historical and genre contexts, and pointing toward multiple possibilities for future scholarship.

In the opening pages of *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732-1933*, Erik Butler explains that "[b]y means of site-specific, comparative analysis, the work at hand seeks to account for the logic underlying the vampire's many and conflicting forms" (vii). With this narrowly-focused approach, Butler proceeds to explore a series of six representational moments, from folklore to *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922). This approach underscores the changeable nature of the vampire as chameleonic, constantly adapting to

best infiltrate the unique historical moments and sociocultural contexts in which the figure appears, reoccurs, and resurfaces. The focus on specific artifacts—ranging from folk legend to editorials and autobiography, in addition to literature and film—provides a detailed and well-contextualized snapshot of individual appearances of the vampire. While this approach disallows what could have been an instructive, more comprehensive engagement with the vampire figure in contemporary literature, film, and popular culture, Butler's introduction and conclusion work toward this end and the book serves as a productive point of departure for future scholarship.

Next, in his follow up to *his Stephen King on the Big Screen* (Intellect, 2009), Mark Browning sets out to consider adaptations of King's work on television, from miniseries and made-for-TV movies to more extensive series like *Kingdom Hospital* (Craig R. Baxley, 2004) and *Nightmares and Dreamscapes* (various directors, 2006). Browning begins by laying the framework for considering television as a unique medium, one in which genre is a central concern. As he argues in his introduction, "many of the adaptations [of King's work] represent a coming together of certain generic elements, such as horror and science fiction (a particularly-contested term), television for mass audiences, and Stephen King [...]. Add further elements in the horror sub-genres, such as 'stalk and slash,' and it is possible to partly see why there has been a scarcity of critical work on these works" (8). Beyond picking through this complicated textual corpus, Browning also provides useful context throughout the book, drawing connections between King adaptations and their cinematic predecessors which may have influenced filmmakers and King himself.

Finally, like both Butler and Browning's books, Le Blanc and Odell's *John Carpenter* maintains a very specific focus. Carpenter is best known for his work within specific film genres, such as horror, action-adventure, and science fiction, and anticipating potential criticism of these "pulp" or "popular" genres, Le Blanc and Odell open their book with a chapter defining Carpenter as an "American auteur" (11). As this book will likely catch the attention of Carpenter fans as well as film scholars, the authors provide a helpful and accessible definition of the auteur; as they argue, though Carpenter's films span multiple genres, "there is an overriding vision, a consistency to Carpenter's work that rewards repeat viewing and presents a single unifying worldview. He is an auteur" (11). While Le Blanc and Odell go on to incorporate more specialized definitions, including that first introduced by *Cahiers du Cinéma* (12), the authors' readable tone and presentation of the material make this a book that both film critics and Carpenter fans can enjoy. In addition, the authors' tone continually reminds readers that while they are expert film critics, they are also enthusiastic fans of Carpenter's work, an approach which infuses the book with great energy, excitement and readability.



To compare the structure of these three books, each has its own unique, thematic organization. Butler's consideration follows lines of geography and historical chronology, dividing his book into three main parts: first is "The Rise of the Vampire"; second, "England and France"; and third, "Germany," with each part consisting of two chapters. With the first part Butler traces the birth of the vampire figure to the folklore of Serbian hajduks or "peasant soldiers" (27), who were witnessed staking and burning dead bodies based on the belief that these particular dead had returned from the grave to prey upon the living, coming into the village at night and attacking their victims, who died shortly thereafter. However, as Butler points out, the development of the vampire figure at this particular moment was inspired not only by culturally-specific folklore, but also its contentious struggles over national boundaries and identity. As Butler writes, "[t]he first time the word 'vampire' entered historical record [...] it designated a site of uncertainty where languages and cultures met in mutual incomprehension" (27), with a linguistic collision of Latin and German within the context of the "cultural dynamics of the Central European Counter-Reformation" (28). The second chapter in Part I, "Vampires and Satire in the Enlightenment and Romanticism," explores how the vampire became a figure of derision, employed by individual authors as a means of critique, "especially concerning political and social affairs" (53). This first section makes valuable use of some original sources not in English, which Butler presents along with his translation of the passages.

Part II, "England and France," begins by outlining the development of the Romantic, psychologically invested vampire, shifting from tensions of race to those of class with the rise of the bourgeoisie. As Butler explains, the Romantic vampire is first articulated with John Polidori's 1819 story *The Vampyre*, in which the manipulative and reserved upper-crust villain Lord Ruthven kills his victim Aubrey by leading him into dissolution and madness, rather than through a direct and murderous physical attack. Butler identifies the through-line of the vampire discourse situated in the belief that "a society without clear demarcations of status breeds lawlessness and terror" (96). In chapter four, Butler turns to Dracula, literature's most notorious vampire. In exploring Bram Stoker's novel, Butler explores the role of writing within the novel, from Jonathan Harker's diary to the vast library at the castle through which Dracula educates himself about England, and Mina's shorthand notes that, through meticulous recording and "data transmission" (120), pave the way for Dracula's destruction. As Butler argues, "[t]he fact that his campaign of terror unfolds in the realm of graphic reproduction [...] makes it very difficult to authenticate the real cause of the vampire epidemic" (117). Because it is through written works that identity is constructed, business is conducted, and national boundaries are crossed, the intersecting narratives and characters echo the pervasive and infectious power of the vampire.

Finally, Part III, "Germany," shifts to autobiography and Weimar film. Chapter five, "Vampirism, the Writing Cure, and Realpolitik" presents a close examination of Daniel Paul Schreber's autobiographical writing, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, which he wrote while in an asylum. This chapter's connection to the vampire trope is the most metaphorical of the six: Schreber did not believe himself to be a vampire or the victim of a vampire per se, but implicated by bad blood (136) and subjected to what Butler refers to as "vampiric invasion" (139) by a deity or supernatural being that devours his energy and subjects his body to an "uninterrupted influx" (Schreber quoted, 136) of what he refers to alternately as "rays" or "nerves" (Schreber quoted, 139). Butler shifts from metaphors of the vampire back to more direct representations of the figure itself with chapter six, which examines several well-known works of Weimar cinema, including *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Wiene, 1920) and *Nosferatu*. This specific historical moment proved fertile for the figure of the vampire, Butler argues, because "the vampire embodies the political tensions of the short-lived Weimar Republic, as well as longer standing troubles that contributed to both its creation and its destruction" (152).

Taking a broader thematic approach in his *Stephen King on the Small Screen*, Browning organizes his studies of individual adaptations into thematically-grouped chapters: "Vampires", "Stalk and Slash?", "Monsters vs Aliens", "Sometimes They Come Back", "Apocalypse Now", and "Tales of the Unexpected". The rationale underlying specific films' inclusion in particular themes is clear in some of the chapters—for example, "Stalk and Slash?" covers all films within the *Children of the Corn* series and "Apocalypse Now" focuses on stories in which society is threatened on either a large or small scale, such as in the mini-series *The Stand* (Mick Garris, 1994) and *Storm of the Century* (Craig R. Baxley, 1999). But at other times the choices seem quite arbitrary. For example, Browning includes *It* (Tommy Lee Wallace, 1990) in his chapter on vampires, with the argument that "it provides a useful 'control' by which to compare the different versions of 'Salem's Lot (Tobe Hooper, 1979; Mikael Salomon, 2004) and *The Night Flier* (Mark Pavia, 1997) respectively" (17). However, aside from a brief discussion of the fact that the villainous clown Pennywise "appropriates a number of features of the quintessential cinematic vampire" (19), such as recurrent evil, sharp teeth, and the fact that he "problematizes borders" (55), this connection remains underdeveloped. In his own conclusion, Browning essentially refutes his own framing of Pennywise as a vampire figure: "although there are some vampiric features [...] he appears in daylight, preys primarily on children, and is as much linked to the underground troll/bogeyman figures as used in traditional stories as a moral lesson not to talk to strangers (he lures children with corny jokes and balloons) as with contemporary paranoia about paedophiles" (176). Given the permeability of Pennywise's position as a vampire figure, acknowledged by the author himself, it would seem to make more structural sense to include *It* in the chapter on "Monsters

vs Aliens” rather than trying to force the evil clown into the mold of the vampire figure. Another organizational choice that doesn’t quite hold up is Browning’s inclusion of *Needful Things* (Fraser Clark Heston, 1993) in his chapter on “Monsters vs Aliens”. Given the fact that villain Leland Gaunt is clearly a demon or devil personified rather than by definition a monster, *Needful Things* may well have been more productively explored within the discourse of “Apocalypse Now”, alongside the microcosmic destruction of community found in *Storm of the Century* and *Desperation* (Mick Garris, 2006).

Finally, Le Blanc and Odell’s *John Carpenter* begins by examining some key themes that remain consistent throughout the director’s career, including self-reflexive genre hybridity (14); the development of flawed heroes with “no universal redemptive solution” (ibid); the challenging of gender roles from the deconstruction of “commonly held ideals about male machismo” (15) to “women [who] are usually treated as equals in Carpenter’s films” (ibid); unwinnable situations (ibid); and the struggle of “the individual against the horde, or the individual against authority—sometimes both” (16). This initial chapter also establishes the multiplicity of roles Carpenter often assumes in his films, frequently contributing writing or music, as well as directing. The second chapter, “Attention, Incoming Communication,” provides a brief biography of Carpenter, including some discussion of filmmakers who influenced him, such as Howard Hawks, John Huston, Alfred Hitchcock, and Roger Corman (27). This chapter concludes with a close reading of *Dark Star* (1974), Carpenter’s directorial debut and a film that developed out of a student project. This chapter also models the methodological approach that Le Blanc and Odell continue throughout the book, exploring specific films—in this case, Stanley Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1963) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)—from which Carpenter drew influence, in addition to the exploring the continued significance of the cinematic elements of Carpenter’s own film, creating a productive and engaging through-line that contextualizes Carpenter’s work rather than examining it as a fixed, ahistorical entity. The discussion of *Dark Star* also establishes a useful formatting approach that Le Blanc and Odell continue to employ throughout: at the start of each film treatment, a brief credits rundown is provided, including director, producer, writer, editor, music, cast, and other information relevant to the close reading and analysis which follows.

After these introductory chapters, Le Blanc and Odell take a similar thematic approach to that employed by Browning, though here in John Carpenter, the director’s films are addressed chronologically over the entirety of the book. The chapter titles and groupings remain predominantly thematic within this larger chronological framework, which at times results in a sense of dissonance. For example, some of the films discussed in chapter three, titled “The Shape of Terror,” are *Assault on*

*Precinct 13* (1976), *Someone's Watching Me!* (1978), *Halloween* (1978), *The Fog* (1979), and *Escape from New York* (1981), all of which fit well both chronologically and thematically, either as directly affiliated or through hybrid affiliation with the terror or suspense genre. However, midway through this chapter, the reader finds Le Blanc and Odell's analysis of Carpenter's *Elvis* (1979), which is more easily classified as biopic than "terror." In addition, the chapters are of dramatically disparate lengths; chapter five, "Back to Basics", is less than ten pages long, while the following chapter, "'He Who Has the Gold Makes the Rules,'" runs to more than forty pages, close to a quarter of the book's total length. However, despite this sometimes disorienting structure, the close readings of individual films within each chapter remain consistently engaging and readable.

These three books are each aimed at a very different level of original insight, with Butler's work on vampires posited as a innovatively comprised scholarly history, whereas the book on King serves almost exclusively as a guide to individual films and series. Meanwhile John Carpenter achieves both rigour and an accessible tone due to the authors' clear dual engagement as academics and fans.

One of the greatest contributions of Butler's work to scholarship surrounding the figure of the vampire is his identification of its essentially modern nature, traceable to the eighteenth century, pointing out that while embodiments of the undead have proliferated in various societies for hundreds of years, "[t]he first written records that speak of a creature by the name of 'vampire' are less than three hundred years old, and the first literary and artistic depictions of the monster are younger still" (4-5). Butler's pinpointing of this culturally-embedded origin illuminates the many ways in which the vampire is always a direct and rich sign of its times. While Butler focuses the bulk of his work on the variability of the vampire in unique historical and cultural moments, he does devote a portion of the introduction to outlining the consistent qualities of the vampire: its liminal position between life and death, its *modus operandi* of "expropriating and redistributing energy" (11), its ability to break down the boundary between the living and dead in their victims, and its destruction of "boundaries of space and time [...] [through which] it seeks to spread terror actively" (*ibid.*). Using these constants that define the vampire, Butler moves on to examine specific representations of the vampire, both literal and metaphorical, in six historically specific moments, productively engaging with the larger context of vampire discourse, both classic and contemporary.

In contrast, Browning's *Stephen King on the Small Screen* is quite ineffective in engaging with the larger conversation of King scholarship, both in terms of his literary works and their film adaptations. In addition to his occasionally inexplicable thematic groupings, another puzzling element of organization in Browning's work is his inclusion of theatrical

release films, such as *Thinner* (Tom Holland, 1996) and *The Mist* (Frank Darabont, 2007), along with “small screen” adaptations, a choice which is especially odd given the emphasis on television as a unique cultural medium in the introduction. In addition, Browning’s lack of discussion of the Mick Garris miniseries version of *The Shining* (1997) within the context of the “small screen” perspective developed here is a serious oversight. Admittedly, Browning addressed this film in his previous work, *Stephen King on the Big Screen*, though this treatment was in direct comparison to Kubrick’s *The Shining* (1980); an extended address of the Garris miniseries here would have given Browning the opportunity to productively consider the unique nature of the miniseries, such as the extended character development a longer running time allows rather than the high vs. low culture discourse that generally structures comparisons of Kubrick and Garris’s works. The opportunity passes unseized here, though Browning at times refers to the Garris miniseries in passing connection to other films, such as *The Night Flier* (54), *Needful Things* (87), *Kingdom Hospital* (121), and the *Nightmares and Dreamscapes* episode “The Road Virus Heads North” (Sergio Mimica-Gezzan, 2006) (163).

In addition, the book is disrupted by several factual errors: Browning says of *Salem’s Lot* that Dr. Jimmy Cody’s “death, falling through a purposely-cut staircase onto a spinning saw in the cellar of the Marsten House, is in the novel” (42), which is not the case: in King’s original Cody dies at Eva’s boarding house, falling into the cellar to be impaled by knives set facing point-up – a missed opportunity to explore how the important revision which occurs between novel and film adaptation might impact on his subject. The reader is also likely to be distracted by a wide range of technical errors, both in the text itself – punctuation mistakes, syntactically incorrect or incomplete sentences – and formatting, as partway through the book paragraph indenting slips into sporadic usage. He also misspells the names of key figures, at one point referring to *Salem’s Lot* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974) director Tobe Hooper as “Hopper” (31), and at one point misnames King’s 2008 collection *Just After Sunset* as *Just Before Sunset* (180).

However, what is most disappointing, given the book’s subject matter, is the degree to which Browning seems to actively dislike King’s work. His conclusion turns specifically to issues of authorship and what Browning sees as an artistically bleak future for King and adaptations of the author’s work, where Browning criticizes King for failing to pick up the new genre conventions of the vampire and zombie story, as King chooses instead to stick with classic incarnations (175-177). After nearly two hundred pages of summary and analysis of King’s small screen work, Browning comes to the anticlimactic conclusion that because “[m]any of the adaptations for television operate so firmly within generic boundaries, that the results are often quite forgettable” (177) and that “[a]s was



noted in *Stephen King on the Big Screen*, the closer King's involvement, the weaker the end product seems to be" (178). Browning's assessment of King's work as a whole is equally dire, as he argues that King's recent work, such as *Full Dark, No Stars* (2010), "suggests an eddying backwards creatively" (179), "a lack of creative inspiration or a tendency to recycle derivative plots" (ibid), and "a growing sense of narrative atrophy" (180). However, these claims are countered by King's prolific publishing and continued expansion into alternative means of publishing, such as e-reader exclusive works such as *UR* (2009), e-reader and audiobook exclusives *Mile 81* (2012) and *A Face in the Crowd* (with Stuart O'Nan, 2012), and his involvement with graphic novels, including *American Vampire, Volume I* (Scott Snyder, 2011) and *Road Rage* (with Joe Hill and illustrated by Raffa Garres), the latter of which is a graphic novel adaptation of King and Hill's short story "Throttle". Browning's assessment of King's work as inferior and inconsequential may well lead the reader to wonder why he has written not just one, but two books on King and the adaptations his work continues to inspire.

This is far from the case with Le Blanc and Odell, whose open admission to being fans as well as scholars of Carpenter result in an animated and engaged discussion of the director's work. This fandom does not diminish their critical reading of his films, however, and Le Blanc and Odell provide multifaceted considerations of Carpenter's films. Take, for example, their treatment of *The Fog*, the film from which the book draws its cover art. The authors begin by situating it within the larger genre tradition by telling the reader that *The Fog* "ignores most of the prevailing genre themes of the time, eschewing the gratuitous nature of most of its contemporaries, preferring to look to older films such as Jacques Tourneur's *Curse of the Cat People* (1942) and *Night of the Demon* (1957) or the Val Lewton-produced *Ghost Ship* (1943)" (49). Le Blanc and Odell here provide a useful context for the film, highlighting both the elements which made it unique for its time period—understated creepiness in a market flooded by guts and gore—and its connections to its cinematic horror predecessors. Le Blanc and Odell continue to develop their critical reading by discussing the *mise-en-scène* and atmosphere Carpenter creates in the film (50-51) and the use of sound and music, which was also scored by Carpenter (51-52), coming to the conclusion that in spite of the film's "sudden and unsatisfactory close," *The Fog* is "fundamentally an enjoyably spooky chiller" (51).

Le Blanc and Odell also come to the defence of some of Carpenter's lesser known or more critically derided works. As they write of *Big Trouble in Little China* (1986), "[i]n retrospect, it is easy to see why [...] [it] did such mediocre business upon its original release; it was just too far ahead of its time" (74), before launching into an analysis of the film's most notable features, such as its genre hybridity and the unique position of Kurt Russell's Jack Burton as a flawed and largely ineffective hero, whose



"attempts at chivalry are not only ineffectual, but misguided and potentially dangerous, too" (75). *Prince of Darkness* (1987), they argue, is a flawed but "brave stab at cerebral horror" (83). *In the Mouth of Madness* (1994) presented a stylized Lovecraftian world of horrific monsters and employed a unique cinematic approach, including a complex flashback structure, "a barrage of images" reflecting "chaos and madness" (102), disorienting camera angles, and the thematic use of repetition. However, Le Blanc and Odell argue, while it "proved to be an interesting project, an attempt at a different kind of horror with an intelligent edge [...] lacklustre distribution meant that it wasn't successful enough to start any trends and it remains an interesting curio" (103). Le Blanc and Odell take the same comprehensive approach found earlier in the book in examining these oft-dismissed films, providing a critical perspective on their cinematic techniques and achievements, as well as their influences and connection to other Carpenter works, that a less enthusiastic or less comprehensive author might have neglected.

Horror is a genre that continues to mutate and adapt to meet the shifting expectations of contemporary audiences, as well as reviving and reinventing classic themes and forms. Each of these books is concerned with that ever-changing popular culture context, both in making their own unique arguments and raising dynamic possibilities for future scholarship. In *Metamorphoses of the Vampire*, Butler devotes his conclusion to contextualizing his considerations within the larger discourse and outlining trends in the contemporary vampire figure, including the pathetic vampire (178), the vampire as a humorous or derided figure (178-179), and the young vampire (182-183), as well as arguing that aliens (185-186) and zombies (186-187) can be read as ongoing metaphors for the vampire and its power. While the focus on the metaphor of the vampire late in the book at times seems to run counter to Butler's self-identified aim of addressing specifically-defined vampires within fixed historical contexts, this approach does engage with new perspectives in analysing the vampire figure and could well give direction to potential future scholarship.

Despite its noted flaws, in his *Stephen King on the Small Screen*, Browning effectively demonstrates the unique nature of the television format and its medium-specific engagement with genre and the limitations posed by an overly strict adherence to prescriptive genre formats. The television miniseries remains a critically unappreciated format and Browning's early chapters lay out a usable framework for exploring them, not just in terms of King's work, but those adapted from other literary sources as well.

Finally, Le Blanc and Odell's final chapter, "The More Things Change, The More They Stay The Same: The Legacy", provides an overview of remakes of Carpenter's films, including *The Fog* (Rupert Wainwright,

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2005), *Assault on Precinct 13* (Jean-François Richet, 2005), *Halloween* (Rob Zombie, 2007), and *Halloween 2* (Rob Zombie, 2009), wrapping up their book by bringing its through-line into contemporary popular culture. While much time and space has been given throughout the book to those who have influenced Carpenter, this conclusion shows us the other side: contemporary filmmakers who have been influenced by Carpenter and the director's—or rather, auteur's—lasting impact on Hollywood film. As these three books demonstrate, horror film scholarship is alive and well—or undead and well, as the case may be. With approaches ranging from Browning's general overview of TV adaptation to LeBlanc and Odell's comprehensive single-director study and Butler's detail oriented consideration of specific vampire figures, these three books are valuable contributions to the critical conversation and will undoubtedly inspire future scholarship.

***Bollywood: Gods, Glamour and Gossip*****By Kush Varia**

New York: Wallflower Press, 2013. ISBN 9781906660154. vii+126 pp. £14.00 (pbk)

***Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*****By Tejaswini Gamti**

Abingdon: Routledge, 2013. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. ISBN 9780415583886. xi + 269 pp. £17.99 (pbk)

**A Review by Laya Maheshwari, St. Xavier's College, Mumbai**

In recent years, Bollywood has witnessed a drastic and deep-rooted change, both in the nature of its internal functioning and in its external perception. This transformation has been instigated by numerous stimuli. In 2001, Bollywood was accorded "industry" status by the Indian government leading to a reformation in the way the field functioned, with corporate financiers picking up the mantle of furnishing money – a task hitherto dominated by informal transactions, occasionally with notorious mafia links. As banks and financial institutions were granted permission to enter the industry, global conglomerates like Walt Disney, Warner Bros. and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox made inroads into production. They set up their own studios and made links with existing domestic production houses, bringing their international sensibilities to a culture that had until then been fiercely nationalistic. With the advent of globalisation, Indian culture and society underwent a change in itself, gradually becoming accepting and even desirous of cultural products – such as television shows and movies – from other parts of the world, thus increasing an inclination to see content with diverse influences and archetypes. Conversely, Indian cinema began reaching a wider audience than before, with not just higher box office earnings worldwide but also conspicuous presence in prestigious international film festivals. Factors such as (but not limited to) these have led to an increased global interest in a cinema that was often classified as imitative or kitschy, and a growing sense of the legitimacy of Bollywood as a field worthy of study. Concomitant with this is a rise in the literature available on the subject, with a number of books covering a myriad objects in Bollywood, from all-encompassing overviews of the industry to in-depth analyses of elements like genre, music and setting.

The books reviewed here are both welcome, then, meant as they are as textbooks for the study of Bollywood cinema, serving to guide the uninitiated through the history of the industry, its defining characteristics, its use of elemental cinematic effects like genre and setting and iconic films produced by it over the years. Both tread similar territory but with

varying outlooks, resulting in markedly different reading experiences. Kush Varia's approach in *Bollywood: Gods, Glamour and Gossip* is more personal, whimsical and sometimes haphazard. His analysis veers broadly on certain occasions while delving meticulously into some topics that one may find unworthy of such attention, nevertheless maintaining a narrative flair throughout. Gamti's analysis, on the other hand, is more even-handed and organized, leading to a comprehensive picture of a complex industry.

Varia's book contains five chapters, along with an introduction and conclusion. The introduction contains a succinct explanation of the terms "Bollywood", "Hindi cinema" and "Indian cinema", convincingly setting out how the three are not interchangeable. Varia deftly navigates the murkiness surrounding the linguistic, geographical and sociological implications of each term and helps one understand the intricacies of the universe one is about to probe:

Efforts to define Bollywood have included 'popular Indian cinema' or 'Hindi cinema'. The term 'Indian cinema' is difficult to apply because India has so many cinematic traditions which all deserve to be differentiated from one other and awarded their own legitimacy, definitions and study. Equally, it is difficult to define Bollywood as Hindi cinema as there are many types of cinema produced in Hindi both in and outside of Mumbai, the city previously known as Bombay, giving the 'B' to Bollywood.  
(4)

The first chapter, titled "History and Industry", attempts to chart the evolution of Indian cinema – and its development towards the contemporary dominance of Bollywood – over the course of the twentieth century. The description of the alterations wrought by various generational changes often remains at a superficial level here though and the lack of depth in the coverage leaves one's understanding of that history unsatisfactory. The analysis of the industry is affected by the same problem, a lack of both incisiveness and space resulting in the author glossing over major, environment-changing events like the granting of "industry" status to Bollywood (dispensed with in a paragraph on page 26). Moreover, Varia incorrectly dates this event to 1998, when in fact the laws pertaining to recognition of Bollywood as an industry were put in place in 2001. There are also no mentions of essential spheres of the Indian film industry, such as the nature of contractual arrangements between producers and distributors. This pattern continues so that the work as a whole undermines its status as a textbook by cutting corners in the quantity of issues it addresses and the depth of analysis it allots each.

Each chapter in the book is divided into several sections. For example, the first chapter – on history – is divided into different eras, with each era being covered under a different section. Each section usually contains a

case study at the end, in which Varia compares two films. The choice of titles for such comparisons is apparently arbitrary, turning to two titles released in that era – but not explaining their specific relevance. On some occasions these case studies are insightful and perceptive, such as the comparison between *A Throw of Dice* (Franz Osten, 1929) and *Dr Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani* (V. Shantaram, 1945) which adroitly highlights the “tension between creating a cinema with national relevance and one which would appeal to international audiences” (12). However, in multiple cases the choice of titles leaves one baffled and elicits a feeling of manipulation with regard to the point being made. For example, there is a comparison between *Bobby* (Raj Kapoor, 1973) and *Mr India* (Shekhar Kapur, 1987) at the end of the section on the 1970s and 1980s (21) which feels like it conveys a lopsided picture, because of the significant difference between the release years of the two films and their diverse genres.

The second chapter, titled “Narrative and Genres”, begins by explaining the differences in structure and progression of a narrative in Bollywood as compared to Western cinema. Several important narrative trends, such as the “lost and found” template (32) are not given the weight they deserve, especially in light of the idiosyncrasies of Bollywood they reveal. The “lost and found” trend, while following the Shakespearean pattern of siblings being separated at birth, is used by Bollywood filmmakers extensively to depict the extremes of Indian society and contrast between opulence and poverty, lawfulness and criminality et al. Filmmakers have often used such stories to drive home the paramount role of family, society and morals in an individual’s life. Varia does not delve into this at all.

However, he elucidates the use of language in Bollywood very well, explaining the place and importance of Urdu, for example. His coverage on English, though expertly navigating through its evolution over the ages, falls down in terms of an accurate and up-to-date depiction of Bollywood today. The scenario it describes as commonplace today is almost obsolete. Varia’s analysis of the use of dream sequences in Bollywood films (41) is excellent; the manner in which he draws inferences about the hinting of the sex act, visualization of the female body and the necessity for such conservativeness in Indian society is commendable. He articulates on the Islamicate film extensively (47), perhaps at the cost of some other more relevant genres, especially since the Islamicate film has now almost vanished from Bollywood – another fact Varia omits.

The third chapter, “Characters and Morality”, is extremely assured in its coverage of the tropes and templates Bollywood employs when it comes to the people in its stories. Varia usefully elaborates on the two grand Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, and their portrayal of individuals (59). He posits that the sketching of individuals in these tales

directly inspired characters of Bollywood and makes a convincing argument for the same. His writing on gay, lesbian and transgender characters in Bollywood is valuable and impeccably researched (70).

The next chapter, "Settings and Style", continues the adept unpacking of Bollywood's intricacies with penetrative explanations of locations commonly seen in Bollywood films, and what they signify. For a reader new to Bollywood cinema, reading this section would be a delight as it describes comprehensively the connotations, positive and negative, of settings as mundane as a courtroom and a hospital. Again though, a valid complaint would be the lack of recent examples. For example, Varia states "bourgeois homes have become increasingly ostentatious" and then proceeds to cite as examples *Hum Aapke Hain Koun...!* (Sooraj R. Barjatya, 1994) and *Devdas* (Sanjay Leela Bhansali, 2002). However, this is the only drawback to an otherwise brilliantly incisive chapter, which goes on to explain how clothing and appearance are of paramount importance in Bollywood and are often used as shorthand to convey a character's personality and role in the story.

Over chapters three and four, Varia tackles the prickly issue of sex in Bollywood. His scholarly analysis spans from the depiction of characters like heroines (63) and vamps (68), the use of settings like a remote and isolated log cabin (81) to the sexual implications of clothing (88). His careful decoding of Bollywood stereotypes and the logic behind them is masterful. This is by far the best part of the book.

Chapter five, "Stars and Audiences", takes a look at the demigod status enjoyed by actors belonging to Bollywood. In this, Varia examines the relationship these stars share with their fans. The chapter looks comprehensively at live shows performed by Indian stars, and their success among the Indian diaspora. Since actors in India do not sing the songs in their films, mouthing the lyrics while dancing, the notion of wanting to see a similar performance live may be perplexing to a reader alien to Bollywood and its whimsies, but Varia explains it confidently (105). This chapter also returns to Varia's insightful explanation of Bollywood's impact on gay and lesbian culture, showing how a genre like the courtesan film could serve as the unlikeliest parallel to the problems faced by homosexuals (106).

The book features eye-opening analysis and intelligent discussion on numerous issues, as listed above, but simultaneously it cannot be denied that it is too haphazard and whimsical to serve as an authoritative guide to Bollywood cinema. The five chapters feel less like interlocking parts of a cohesive whole and more like five distinct essays. This is underlined by the repetition of certain points, such as the paragraph on the legendary disrobing of Draupadi in page 94, without reference to its already having been discussed on page 59. Lacking various topics of discussion that should be expected from any academic introduction to Bollywood cinema



for study, Varia's book is more like a good read for any person who is a Bollywood fanatic and wants to explore the industry's place in Indian society and the rationale behind its idiosyncrasies.

Tejaswini Gamti's *Bollywood* also contains five chapters. In the introduction she, like Varia, provides an explanation of how "Bollywood" is not congruent with "Indian cinema" (3), underscoring the prevalence of this confusion in popular discourse. Bollywood is based in Mumbai, the capital of Maharashtra, which is a Marathi-speaking state. This creates a problem as Bollywood's output is primarily in Hindi and thus the industry does not fall under the ambit of state protection. Gamti traverses this controversial topic with sensitivity and her survey of the scene is exemplary scholarship (25).

In a section in this chapter, titled "Hindi Filmmaking in Post-independence India", Gamti suggests four periods into which the history might be categorised, "which correspond to four key moments that have shaped the social and political context of life in independent India" (27). The very notion of compartmentalizing six decades of artistic output into four blocks is reductive beyond measure. Gamti pre-empts this with a disclaimer, stating, "Readers should be aware, however, that such trends do not preclude other type of films from being made" (27). However, her analysis of the four eras is too broad and one-dimensional, as if sculpted to suit her central thesis, and her later admission that some themes flow between one era and another (45) renders the segregation almost pointless. The chapter concludes by catching up with the contemporary situation, and its explanation of the metamorphosis of Bollywood with the advent of multiplexes and industry status returns the book to Gamti's usual lucid and erudite analysis (55).

The second chapter, "The Production and Distribution of Popular Hindi Cinema", delves into jagged terrain that is nonetheless essential to understanding Bollywood. The hierarchy of the industry, and the relationship between producers and distributors, is intrinsic to a balanced comprehension of the production process in Bollywood, a fact Gamti understands. Her description of this arrangement is informative and easy to follow (72). The defining characteristic of Bollywood for the layman today is the dominance of song-and-dance routines in it, which is in fact just one whimsy in a multi-dimensional creative ecology. Gamti pours light over many of these dimensions; her impression of the mechanics of Bollywood include several intriguing and insightful idiosyncrasies, such as her description of the "mahurat", a date and time considered auspicious by astrologers to start a new venture (78), or her clarification of the real purpose of "running around the trees" (96), an act common to many Bollywood protagonists even if to the derision of audiences unfamiliar with the style. Gamti's writing in these pages is helpfully unbiased, often amusing but always profound.

This chapter contains a section titled “Remakes and Adaptations”, a feature considered one of the biggest vices of Bollywood. Gamti shakes off the stereotypes and comes up with a surprising, but sound, defence of the tendency of Indian filmmakers to remake American films and reveals how the actual scenario is not akin to – but more complicated than – initial impressions (90). The third chapter, “Narrative Style, Important Themes, and Key Conflicts” (103), suffers from a problem that plagued Varia’s writings on the same topic. The classifications drawn by Gamti seem to be stretched thin. Moreover, the examples she picks, like Varia’s have the aura of arbitrariness to them. There is an overwhelming sense of a narrative being crafted by the author and titles being handpicked to underline her point. The tendency of a reader to doubt the veracity of Gamti’s theories is not alleviated by her proclivity to rely on anecdotes, even where hard data might drive the point home more forcefully. For example, to prove the popularity of *Mother India* (Mehboob Khan, 1957), Gamti only writes a paragraph describing the unexpected cult fanbase the movie developed in a town in Nigeria, with no empirical data elsewhere to substantiate her statement (120). In addition, even with the broad umbrellas of the topics picked the end of the chapter leaves the reader with the notion that a comprehensive picture has not been presented.

In the fourth chapter, “Genre and Hindi Cinema”, Gamti tackles a common complaint levelled at Bollywood – the conspicuous absence of distinct genres – and refutes it skilfully, arguing that genre “is a relational rather than absolute concept” (138). Her insight into the issue and her defence of Bollywood is fresh, stirring and emphatic. Her prose in the case studies, such as *Sholay* (Ramesh Sippy, 1975), is enthralling and completely subsumed this reader (144). The fifth chapter, “Contemporary Hindi Filmmakers’ Reflections and Perspectives”, comprises excerpts of various interviews, e-mails and public statements by prominent personalities in Bollywood, such as writers, actors and directors. These excerpts reveal little that is new but instead subtly underscore Gamti’s own claims in the preceding pages. Some passages, such as Govind Nihalani’s exposé on how Indian directors still enjoy more autonomy than their American counterparts, including privileges like “final cut” (180), are brilliant.

The book concludes with lists of “Significant Films of Popular Hindi Cinema” and “Significant Filmmakers of the Hindi Film Industry” that, by the nature of their topics, are not comprehensive but merely samples. However, films like *Dabangg* (Anubhav Singh Kashyap, 2010), *Ghajini* (A.R. Murugadoss, 2008) or *3 Idiots* (Rajkumar Hirani, 2010) are important because they were among the first to earn 1 billion Rupees at the box office, and thus set a template for numerous big budget films that have followed. The absence of all of them from Gamti’s list is unsatisfactory. The list of filmmakers also fails to find space for highly feted and successful directors like Rajkumar Hirani or Mani Ratnam.

Gamti's book is a praiseworthy effort. It is by far one of the best books available on the cinema of Bollywood, a subject that has revealed itself to possess many more layers and detail as scholarship has developed. It is not devoid of flaws, such as its occasional preference for grandstanding arguments over meticulous analysis, but that does not nullify the numerous commendable facets its pages contain, usefully and entertainingly extending this evermore complex focus of study. Indeed, both these books leave the reader with the impression that the topic remains worthy of such analysis. Reading them together made for a convincing argument that Bollywood is not just a vast field worthy of scholarly exploration, but an insightful pathway to understand the country and society that originated it.

## ***The Queer Art of Failure***

**By Judith Halberstam**

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011. ISBN 9780822350453. x + 211 pp. £14.29 (pbk)

## ***InterMedia in South Asia: The Fourth Screen***

**Edited by Rajinder Dudrah, Sangita Gopal, Amit S. Rai and Anustup Basu**

London and New York: Routledge, 2012. ISBN 9780415698184. v + 121 pp. £80.00 (hbk)

## ***The New Media Nation: Indigenous Peoples and Global Communication***

**By Valerie Alia**

New York and Oxford: Bergahn Books, 2012, ISBN 9780857456069. xx + 270 pp. £19.50 (pbk)

### **A Review by Rohit K Dasgupta, University of the Arts London**

These three books point to the challenge posed to scholars by contemporary media to innovate new and nuanced ways of examining their ever-changing contours. The first book under consideration is perhaps the most inventive in this light. Judith Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* is a path-breaking work concerned with finding alternative modes of understanding 'success' in a heteronormative capitalist society. From this aspect she proposes the concept of low theory, which is a form of 'theoretical knowledge that works on many levels at once [...] revels in the detours, twists and turns through knowing and confusion' (15). Queer politics in the United States has an established narrative with a trajectory marked by AIDS activism, feminist movements and more recently grounding against family and kinship. In this book Halberstam moves away from such established orders which predetermine the focus of politics and instead works through several aspects of popular culture to explore queer history and activism.

My archive is not labour history or subaltern movements. Instead I want to look for low theory and counter-knowledge in the realm of popular culture and in relation to queer lives, gender and sexuality (19).

Halberstam does this by turning to 'silly archives of animated films' (ibid) such as *Finding Nemo* (Andrew Stanton, 2003), *Chicken Run* (Peter Lord, 2000), *Toy Story* (John Lasseter, 1995), and others, as well as 'male stupidity films' (58) such as *Sideways* (Alexander Payne, 2004) and *Dude*

*Where's My Car?* (Danny Leiner, 2000). What might seem an ineffective intellectual exercise opens up an interesting debate as to how these films allow radical queer readings. For instance Halberstam clearly places collectivism over individualism. In her analysis of *Chicken Run*, which is about a group of chickens, planning to escape the confines of their current lives which revolve around 'producing eggs for the Tweedys or not producing eggs and ending up on the chopping block' (32), Halberstam argues that the only escape possible is through rejecting individualistic solutions in favour of collective action (which involved flying out and pulling together to power the plan to escape).

Similarly the author also picks up on the sticky subject of non-heterosexual parenting and the queer voice. She argues that films such as *The March of the Penguins* (Luc Jacquet, 2005) have been instrumental in carrying forward a normative discourse. The film, focusing on a penguin family, firmly places it within the 'normal spectacle' of heterosexual reproduction, family love and such like, completely overlooking non-heteronormative behaviours and collectivity (outside the family unit) which exists in such communities. According to Halberstam, one of the reasons for the success of these animated and documentary films is their reliance on collectivity – working towards a fairer society – which makes it so appealing to the young children; which in turn provides a critique of neoliberal values in contemporary society.

In the second chapter, aptly titled 'Dude Where's my Phallus?', Halberstam firmly cements herself as a leading commentator and cultural critic. She begins by questioning the concept of stupidity and what it means. According to her, stupidity means different things in relation to different subject positions. While for (white) men it can signify a new mode of domination which is often forgiven 'because it cannot be recognised' (55), for women of all ethnicities it symbolises their status as 'castrated' and 'impaired' (54). As a case in point, Halberstam argues that 'dumb' films like *Dude, Where's my Car?* in reality present far more elaborate understandings of the relations between male stupidity, social power, race, gender and so on than their 'intelligent' counterparts. Looking beyond the misogynist visual narrative of the film (where the protagonists are threatened by a male to female transsexual, chased by large breasted female aliens and so on), the author critically notes that the film exploits the potential of its mise-en-scene by positing forgetting and memory as tropes through which lessons can be learnt about the white male body, gender flexibility, sexual openness and the politics of capital.

Halberstam, like some of her predecessors, has critiqued activists who are led by their minority agendas but often disregard other related issues. Taking an intersectional focus, Halberstam foregrounds her arguments on queer activism and politics within the backdrop of class, gender and race

issues. She has further argued that while queer scholars have complained of and worked to excavate a history that is hidden from the public, they have also been instrumental in repressing certain narratives, a case in point being the link between homosexuality and fascism. Halberstam says that while queer scholarship is quick to comment on the role of Nazis in gay persecution, what queer scholars shy away from is discussing the participation of queer men within the Nazi regime. This according to Halberstam raises questions 'about relations between sex and politics, the erotics of history and the ethics of complicity' (148). By discussing such links, Halberstam is aware of being called a 'traitor', 'traitorous to a politically pure history of homosexuality' (171). The book acknowledges that queerness offers as much a normative marker of success as it does of failure, as a way of life. By repeatedly turning to the archive of 'silly' films (186), Halberstam locates alternatives to the 'pure' queer narrative and suggests unexpected transformative encounters with texts outside the queer canon. Failure thus becomes one of the many ways in which queer people can articulate their acceptance and being.

The second book under review here takes a similarly intersectional approach, although towards the study of very difference subject. *InterMedia in South Asia* discusses how people within South Asia are engaging with subaltern forms of new media (including pirating, peer-to-peer channels and hacking) to make sense of their self and experiences within the backdrop of their region. The book was first published as a special issue of the journal *South Asian Popular Culture* (edited by K. Moti Gokulsing and Rajinder Dudrah). The editors begin with a short introduction where they explain how globalisation is marked by intensive media conditions (rates of flow, density of information' (1)) that have transformed the very nature of pleasure and consumption across capitalist and non-capitalist economies. The essays in this volume provide ways in which these media flows can take place within the South Asian context.

Madhavi Mallapragada in the first chapter examines a new age assemblage between Hindu ritualism, digital capitalism and new media consumption. By examining the online homepages of temples (mostly in the North America) she demonstrates the emergence of 'desktop deity culture' (6) which is constituted through the practice of virtual *darshan*, online rituals and performing a virtual form of Hinduism. According to her, 'Hindu temple sites through their practice of virtual Hinduism invoke the idea of linkages and intertextuality' (15) problematising the category of cultural hybridity.

Pooja Rangan's insightful chapter on the other hand studies a burgeoning area of film studies – film festivals. According to Rangan, studying Indian film festivals presents a curious problem: the overabundance of ephemera and archival materials that can potentially generate valuable scholarship but are also 'archival behemoths' (19). The last twenty years has been crucial for film festivals in India. There have been a number of regional



film festivals that have sprung up across major towns and cities. With the hegemony of Bollywood (Indian popular cinema) as a dominant area for scholarship and public consumption, other areas of film studies (notably the documentary, short film features and festivals) have been neglected in the Indian context. (Although Moti Gokulsing and Wimal Dissanayake's forthcoming book, *Routledge Handbook of Indian Cinemas* (Routledge, 2013) might provide some remedy in that direction.) Rangan's own focus is the 'failed' Ahmedabad International Film Festival of 2009. While she draws on the history of film festival organisation in India (which has a glorious forty year past), she has also provided a map of its changing contours. AIFF is the latest to join the bandwagon along with other festivals such as Mocha, Shamiana, and others. Her argument about the dismal nature of film financing and distribution within the independent film sector in India (with some help provided by the Magic Lantern Foundation) and most independent film makers having to rely on foreign film festivals for distribution is a serious point to be engaged with to keep building conversation, debate and participation for this 'alternative mode of film practice' (25). The chapter usefully follows her arguments with an extended interview with the programming director of the AIFF, although this could have been incorporated within Rangan's discussion in a much more creative way.

The standout chapter in the volume is Ani Maitra's 'Confessions of the (ethnic) narcissist: Intermedia in diaspora'. The author examines the political implications of 'ethnic narcissism' (38) through an analysis of Harjant Gill's provocative short feature *Milind Soman Made me Gay* (2007). He draws upon Rey Chow's work to chart the connection between the (ethnic minority) writer's autobiographical narrative and theories of narcissism, reconfiguring Chow's observations about immigrant writing within the context of Gill's film. In a similar fashion to Halberstam's work, Maitra attempts to read and push for those categories that remain outside the film's immediate frame of representation – namely ethnicity, class and gender, which he then brings within the context of queer diasporic cultural production. He concludes that Gill's work can be read as an intermedia performance whose reading is shaped by the spectators. In a similar parallel to Halberstam's thesis on memory and forgetting, Maitra adds, that in this film 'time is not retrospective but declarative [...] creating an intermedial zone of exchange, of reception and further production' (53).

The further chapters by Murthy, Basu and Jain explore other aspects of the media flow, culture, value and politics within South Asia. Dudrah's chapter on ZEE TV, a non-terrestrial, transnational television channel catering to diasporic South Asian viewers is a fascinating account of representation, community formation and modes of identity created for South Asians within a (largely) white European mediascape. However, as Dudrah also critically points out, many of the programmes are catered

towards the middle and high income South Asians, thus obfuscating those viewers who do not necessarily identify or 'possess similar cultural competencies' (64). He concludes by arguing for the possibilities that ZEE TV might offer in engaging with different social and political identities.

This is a timely book that engages very convincingly with new forms of media production within South Asia. However the steep price tag for such a slim volume might keep many readers away from what is an important work within this area. The next book by Valerie Alia, takes up several of the discussions started in the collection edited by Dudrah et al. Alia's *The New Media Nation* was first published in 2010, and this edition was published as a part of Bergahn Book's Anthropology of Media Series last year. This is perhaps the most accessible of these three books. The tone of the book is quite colloquial and journalistic, and despite its academic arguments Alia employs a clear and engaging writing style throughout.

The book focuses on indigenous media and ethics of reporting on indigenous people. While Alia's primary area of interest is the Arctic, she has also presented studies from Australia and New Zealand. Continuing the debate on power and imperialism exhibited by the countries of the West (to which both Halberstam and Dudrah's books alluded) Alia is critical at the failure of the (once) colonial powers which still exert influence and control over indigenous media. In the very first chapter she catalogues the range of indigenous media that is available within North America, Australia and New Zealand which ranged from high sophisticated forms to low-tech appropriations. Here she introduces the concept of the Fourth Nation, which she describes as being linked to the 'vision of an international organisation of indigenous peoples' (12). According to Alia, indigenous media is not just something that fills a void. They in fact 'do not just fill the airwaves, they carry new worldviews in sometimes unexpected ways' (4).

Alia also examines some of the problems attached with terms used for indigenous people. While she is happy to make frequent use of a word like 'native', she is open about the fact such terminology is often taken as offensive for Native Americans living in the USA but is used quite unproblematically in Canada. Another area of contention that she points out is the frequent use of the tropes of conquest and colonisation when talking about indigenous people in the media. While the Western media has made a career out of stories of indigenous societies they have also essentially marginalised them within the media. According to Alia, these journalists go in to the 'field' for a few days, reporting on a few chance encounters and using them to represent the entire society or region. Alia's criticism of this view is based in her own practice; despite undergoing fieldwork in the Arctic for over twenty years, she still considers herself as only a beginner. This work does allow for a rich interrogation of the various ways in which that society can attempt to recapture the cultural

and creative spaces which have been taken from them by mainstream media, thus making the book's approach truly global.

The three books under review here make some insightful arguments on the changing nature of visual culture and the various ways in which they can be studied. One can draw parallels between the low theory propounded by Halberstam in the *Queer Art of Failure* and Alia's call for an independent indigenous media within the Western mainstream mediascape. Some of these issues are also reflected within the *InterMedia* collection, where the media flows between the diaspora and nation are examined, problematising the boundaries between authenticity and inauthenticity. All three books ably illustrate and underline the need to create new modes of analysis with an intersectional lens. The selling point that unites them is a devotedly interdisciplinary contribution. Halberstam for instance makes a contribution to not only popular culture and queer studies but also to areas of film studies and critical theory. Similarly Dudrah et al and Alia's books stretch across media studies, anthropology and area/minority studies. While Halberstam and Alia have produced the more accessible of the three and would easily appeal to readers beyond the academy, Dudrah et al's book would be more suitable for an scholar working on South Asia from one of a range of perspectives. Taken together, none of these three books disappoint and I would recommend them highly.

***Reforming Hollywood: How American Protestants Fought for Freedom at the Movies***

**By William D. Romanowski**

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780195387841. 25 illustrations, xv + 336 pp. £18.99 (hbk)

***Celluloid Sermons: The Emergence of the Christian Film Industry, 1930-1986***

**By Terry Lindvall and Andrew Quicke**

New York: New York University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780814753248. 23 illustrations, xv + 28 pp. £23.99 (hbk)

**A review by Hannah Graves, University of Warwick**

In July 2013, the evangelical actor, writer and producer Kirk Cameron accused Facebook and YouTube of censoring the trailer for his forthcoming documentary and live-stream event *Unstoppable* (Darren Doane, 2013). In a direct address to the camera, the trailer shows Cameron promising audiences that his film will reaffirm their faith by explaining why a benevolent God permits evil. Both websites had labelled the trailer as unsafe and abusive spam and Cameron, a former child star whose adult work has wholly been informed by his born-again faith, was keen to highlight the presumed discriminatory practice of the internet titans. The alleged censorship of *Unstoppable* was revealed to be largely a misunderstanding, albeit a politicised one. After protests by Cameron's Facebook followers, the content and the ability to link to it were restored across the two websites. Nevertheless, this brief controversy is merely a new media manifestation of the enduring tensions between Christians and the entertainment industry. Hollywood has long been suspicious of the advisability and profitability of making the screen a pulpit and Christians have long worried about secular control of such an influential medium. Still, they have often found themselves in bed together, mutually using and manipulating each other to their own distinct ends.

Terry Lindvall and Andrew Quicke's *Celluloid Sermons* and William D. Romanowski's *Reforming Hollywood* offer detailed histories of the strategies that North American Christians have used to engage with film as an art form and an industry across the twentieth century. Broadly, Christians have devised three responses to Hollywood: boycott, influence, or imitate. Yet, as both these books show, the multi-denominational faith has never shown a uniform approach or much agreement on how to best pursue these strategies. Through rich archival research, both texts outline the cast of Christian characters who rushed to understand, control and participate in the development of film, a medium that ultimately and

ironically assisted in the erosion of the Church's dominance over American life.

*Reforming Hollywood* offers a new angle on the familiar history of Hollywood's censorship. Historians of early cinema have explored how Protestants and progressives alike sought to reform the film industry, most recently Lee Grieveson in *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early Twentieth-Century America* (University of California Press, 2004). Yet, with the advent of the Production Code Administration (PCA) in 1934 helmed by Catholic layman Joseph I. Breen and the formation of the Legion of Decency, historians have tended to prioritise Catholic influence on Hollywood's censorship and ignore subsequent Protestant-Hollywood relations. Usefully then, Romanowski chronologically charts Protestant reform efforts through the work of institutional bodies and campaigns in the *Christian Century*, *The Churchman* and the *Christian Herald*. The text is roughly separated into three parts: the first recounts familiar debates about film regulation before the advent of the PCA; the second looks at Protestant-Hollywood relationships across the mid-century; and the third recaps the state of these relations after the introduction of an age-based rating system.

Beyond filling a gap in the literature, Romanowski's work provides an alternative narrative to the presumption that all Christians were "bluenose censors" (5) with scissors poised and ready. He offers two terms for the divergent approach of liberal and conservative Christians: "pietiest" and "structural" impulses (9). Catholics and conservative Protestants tended towards a pietiest interpretation of regulation, believing the core concern was the elimination of negative and imitable behaviours on screen. Conversely, the more liberal structural impulse saw an overhaul of the industry's organisation and market orientation as key to its improvement. Notwithstanding certain factions and exceptions, Protestants favoured the latter approach and hoped to compel the industry into self-regulation. However, there is no hero worship here; Romanowski rightly identifies the anti-Semitism that undergirded Protestant attacks on Hollywood's commercialism. Furthermore, he identifies the paternalism inherent in the assumption of a right to national moral guardianship.

*Reforming Hollywood* provides ample evidence that broad ecumenical organisations such as the Federal Council of Churches (FCC), the Protestant Film Commission (PFC) and its later incarnation the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches (BFC) "typically favoured persuasion and voluntary regulation, which were seen as being in accord with individual freedom and responsibility" (10), key tenants of their faith. They recognised the limits of legal censorship and the difficulty of establishing consensus; they worried about film's

influence on youth but did not want to see the medium limited to the aptitude of children. Rather, Protestants sought to find and debate the best means to create conditions for the industry to develop artistic and corporate responsibility. As Romanowski argues, Protestants wanted it all: “social control and individual freedom, progress and traditional moral purity, corporate profits and the common good” (5). The contradictions inherent in many of these demands meant that they were left on the sidelines during the heyday of Hollywood’s self-regulation.

The opening chapters of *Reforming Hollywood* will be familiar to film historians conversant with the period. The early hope of Protestants that Presbyterian Will H. Hays would assist in their particular vision for reform when he was appointed president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America in 1922 turned out to be unfounded. Publicity and profit motivated, Hays was frustrated with trying to achieve consensus, clear guidelines and cooperation among Protestants. Hays collaborated with Catholics instead, who were more comfortable with centralised moral authority and less concerned with industrial reorganisation.

However, the second part of *Reforming Hollywood* offers readers a refreshing twist on a familiar backdrop through Romanowski’s pioneering archival research into the PFC, later the BFC. Established in 1945, it offered separate consultation and review branches designed to assist producers and audiences. Romanowski shows how Protestants campaigned for film education and appreciation classes; promoted the production of quality films of artistic significance; and advised on the depiction of Protestant religion and clergy on screen through brief case studies. Protestants continued to campaign for legislation to control Hollywood’s monopolistic practices, in particular believing block booking enabled morally and artistically dubious filmmaking catered towards metropolitan audiences. Yet, *Reforming Hollywood* reveals that there were internal divisions that developed between liberal East Coast and conservative West Coast offices. Romanowski discusses the divergent institutional and journalistic responses to controversial films like *Night of the Hunter* (Charles Laughton, 1955) and *The Pawnbroker* (Sidney Lumet, 1964). Ultimately though, liberal attitudes towards film content, the divestiture of studios’ theatre chains and the introduction of age-based ratings gave the Protestants’ campaign for structural reform a sequence of long-delayed – and unacknowledged – victories.

*Reforming Hollywood* is richly researched and painstakingly footnoted. Figures detailing the changing religious demographics of the nation and cinema attendance are helpfully scattered throughout. There is a range of different threads to this narrative and a useful cast list assists readers in their navigation of multiple organisations. It is clearly and compellingly written and certainly of interest to students and academics looking to enrich their understanding of film censorship, intersections between



religion and entertainment and the wider debates about the uses and purpose of film itself.

Elements of *Reforming Hollywood* leave the reader wanting more. The account of the adoption of age-based ratings could be fleshed out. Also, the final chapter on the commodification of 'Christian' as a brand is captivating and astute but frustratingly short. There is much more to be said about the transformed goals of Protestants and the rise of evangelicalism in the media since the 1980s, purely because it runs counter to so much of the history Romanowski has previously detailed. More evidence on studio deployment of Christians in promotional strategies for prestige message filmmaking, such as special clergy screenings, would also have been welcome. Yet, Romanowski's greatest oversight is that he fails to fully address the other way Christians dealt with concerns over Hollywood's filmmaking: namely, direct participation. Very little is written about the Christian film industry, which was partially cultivated by the organisations he discusses. While it is a separate history, much more could be said within *Reforming Hollywood* about this parallel trend.

Filling this very gap, Lindvall and Quicke's *Celluloid Sermons* is a history of the Christian film industry that undertakes the gargantuan task of outlining its unique production, distribution and exhibition practices. Detailing different key contributors, it provides a loosely chronological look at the development of this breakaway cottage industry from the 1930s through to the 1980s. The authors set themselves the rather difficult and, arguably, unfulfilled goal of considering "whether the church's commitment to filmmaking accelerated its mission of evangelism, religious education, and social justice or if it detoured the church into areas in which it had no expertise or prospects of success" (xii). While the dominant presence of Christian media today may stand as evidence of success, *Celluloid Sermons'* appeal is in its previously uncharted catalogue of this surprisingly vibrant and varied cottage industry rather than any great analysis of its impact.

*Celluloid Sermons* clearly follows on from Lindvall's previous offering, *Sanctuary Cinema: Origins of the Christian Film Industry* (New York University Press, 2011). However, a recap of early cinema ensures this work stands alone. Some brief contextual information on censorship history addresses Catholic-Hollywood relations and filmmaker Carlos Baptista, who produced Christian films in the 1940s and co-designed a portable projector for the church market, is a Catholic presence that speaks to the broader use of the label 'Christian' in the book's subtitle. However, like *Reforming Hollywood*, this is predominantly a history of Protestant agency in the development of a substantial 16mm market by and for Christians. It reveals Christians as forward thinking and resourceful creatives, who were excited about the potential of the

medium. A quote from the pioneering Episcopal Reverend James K. Fredrich, who started producing religious films in 1939, captures the excitement over film's inherent possibilities: "the motion-picture camera, like the printing press, is a gift from God. We can use it for God's purpose" (35).

Like Romanowski, Lindvall and Quicke discuss an overwhelming array of characters and forsake any detailed textual analysis. Readers of *Celluloid Sermons* will encounter a parade of earnest clergy and laymen who took to the road compelled to spread the Gospel. It can be difficult to orient oneself in this unfamiliar industry. Decidedly non-commercial across most of this period, exhibition was in churches rather than cinemas; films were exhibited on 16mm not 35mm; and success was measured in terms of conversions rather than box-office receipts, reviews or awards. End of chapter summaries and a timeline are used to try and keep things clear, although the overlap between chapters – which detail different auteurs, religious approaches and production companies alongside distribution networks – means everything stays fairly muddy. The effect is that one gains a snapshot of a fascinating sub-section of the industry rather than any great detail on particular participants.

Several unexpected characters make a lasting impression and take the book's account beyond the familiar world of preacher Billy Graham's phenomenally successful World Wide Pictures. For example we learn of Irwin Moon, a pastor in Los Angeles in the 1930s, who delivered experimental sermons that incorporated "electronic, photographic, stroboscopic, and sonic devices to demonstrate the kinship of the Christian faith and true science" (46). He was instrumental in the foundation of the Moody Institute of Science in 1945 and launched a series of religious scientific films that would be produced for both the religious and secular educational markets. Equally unexpected are exploitation filmmakers Ron and June Ormond. A near death experience led them to become born-again Christians. Committed to filmmaking, they "decided to transform their exploitative blood fests into spiritual lessons" (179), like *The Burning Hell* (Ron Ormond, 1974) in which a motorcyclist is decapitated when he fails to heed a preacher's warning.

Lindvall and Quicke cover the range of films that were exhibited on the Christian circuit: from biblical stories and message films of the mid-century through to the 1980s apocalyptic narratives that came out of March IV Pictures, influencing mainstream productions like *End of Days* (Peter Hayms, 1999). But narrative film was eclipsed for a time by the popularity of Focus on the Family founder James Dobson's talking-head series of practical instruction and pop psychology. Dobson's films led to a decline in narrative-driven films in the last days of the 16mm market and this became known as the "Dobson effect". Churches "wanted higher production values but were unwilling to pay higher rental fees" (185) and the talking-head film was cheaper to produce. Faced with the parallel

threats of television and the home video market, the 16mm circuit collapsed. To hint towards the shift that occurred in films for the North American market, Lindvall and Quicke include a chapter on the more experimental Christian auteurs, like Fred Carpenter and Jim Robinson, who emerged out of film schools in the 1980s. Their filmmaking points towards the professionalization of the industry, a thread that will, no doubt, be continued in another volume.

A 16mm market continued outside of the United States, however. Films reporting on foreign missions for American audiences had existed from the start of the industry, but Christians began to use film as a tool for their missions overseas. Lindvall and Quicke dance around the various complex issues involved with international conversion and its invariably colonialist implications: unlike domestic exhibition, this is an instance where the distribution of Christian film was not preaching to the choir. They discuss the making of the alleged "most seen film in the world" (192), *The Jesus Film* (Peter Sykes and John Krisch, 1979), and its translation into more than one thousand languages (a project author Quicke was involved with). They also recount the success of an Indian Telugu-language life of Jesus *Karunamayudu* (A. Bhimsingh, 1978), alleged to have resulted in seven million conversions (199). A criminally short paragraph on the Hindu backlash to *Karunamayudu's* exhibition in India evades any serious consideration about the effect of film and its use as a force of conversion or social change in anything like the complex detail that the subject demands.

Lindvall and Quicke have done some ground-breaking research into the Christian industry, but the novelty of the research cannot compensate for some serious omissions. Unlike Romanowki, Lindvall and Quicke generously sidestep the question of anti-Semitism and avoid rigorously outlining the moral and political complexities of using film in missions where audiences are unaccustomed to the medium or its presentation in their language. Also, the organisation of material feels disorderly at times. Distinctions between denominational approaches to filmmaking are not as deftly handled as they could be. Finally, given the vast array of niche and unfamiliar films documented, the absence of any filmography is unfortunate.

Both *Celluloid Sermons* and *Reforming Hollywood* are expansive, but not exhaustive, accounts of the ways Christians have responded to Hollywood. They are both accessible and enjoyable texts of interest to researchers, although Romanowki might find a readership beyond academia. Both texts provide a solid background and are arguably best read together although to do so brings into relief the limitations of each. When reading *Reforming Hollywood* and *Celluloid Sermons*, one longs for the connections to be drawn out in more detail through to the present day where "Christian" refers to both a market and a brand. Lindvall and

## Book Reviews

Quicke promise another instalment, with the winking closing line that the present-day industry is “the next part of the story” (218). However, Romanowski seems better poised to analyse that shift. Ultimately, his book *Reforming Hollywood* is the more sensitive text, aware as it is of the intricate complexities and conflicting motivations at play when faith and mass media collide.

## ***Shadow of a Mouse: Performance, Belief, and World-Making in Animation***

**by Donald Crafton**

Berkeley: California University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780520261044. 433 pages. £24.95 (pbk)

## ***The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation.***

**by Thomas Lamarre**

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. ISBN 9780816651559. 424 pp. £18.50 (pbk)

### **A review by Daniel Knipe, University of the West of England**

The history of film and moving image studies is broad, yet if we were to identify a consistent theme it would be this; it has been the photograph, again and again, which is claimed to be cinema's ontological substrate. This has resulted in the equation of 'cinema' with 'film' leaving little room for a sustained reflection upon animation, which has either been pushed to the margins of 'serious' scholarship or simply disregarded. However, since the advent of digital photography, computerised editing and CGI techniques and their rapid growth in popularity throughout the 1980s and 90s, film theory, particularly that of Anglo-American origin, has begun to reflect upon the mutating nature of its object. This has cleared a space for serious and sustained reflection upon animation, and the two books under review here mark divergent yet equally significant attempts to demarcate areas within this space.

Donald Crafton mainly focuses on American animations of the 1930s and 40s in an attempt to convince us that, in its production, exhibition and reception, art-form should be conceptualised as a performance. Crafton reformulates the meaning of performance away from a sender-receiver model, advocating instead a complex web of mutually enacting participants comprising a "galaxy of relationships" (18). Applied to animation this galaxy becomes the 'tooniverse', a space of artistry, suspension of disbelief, and performance which is "coanimated by the filmmakers and viewers" (22). Crafton spends some time delineating two areas for mapping animation performance: *in* animation and *of* animation are his theoretical categories. Performance *in* animation conceptualises the animation as it is screened and the antics which go on within its world. Performance *of* animation "refers to the whole contextual process from inception to its open end" (18).

Embedded within the idea of performance *in* animation lies Crafton's first argument, which entails convincing us that cartoon characters should be

conceived as performers. Crafton's account is persuasive, accomplished through the argument that real is not equivalent to material and liveness is not equivalent to being alive but is constituted, in a somewhat Kantian turn, by the way in which the creatures and characters of animation are perceived. The result of this, Crafton argues, is that we can do away with the indexical relationship between image and object. Any 'performer' appearing onscreen, whether it be a person, puppet, or toon, "have equal ontological status" (77). Thus, he is able to create a more productive bond between live action cinema and animation by showing that their divergence is "a matter of emphasis, not essence" (95). However, a weakness lies in his theorisation of the viewer's performance, and a detailed exploration of how the viewer psychologically invests in animation is lacking. We are offered a brief account along familiar lines of the presence of the unfolding film (*in* animation) and the absence of the constructing of the film (*of* animation), which combine to ensure the viewer holds two contradictory views together simultaneously, that is, the animation is happening here and now yet it has also already happened (51-2). This depends on the indistinct notion of the audience relating to the screen as "permeable" (82, 311), otherwise described as a "porous membrane" (49), terms which remain unsubstantiated. One cannot help but feel this concept has been rushed over in order to explain why it is that animation can and does hold the affective power of an audience. As this is a somewhat divisive issue within current theories of spectatorship (one need look no further than the acrimonious encounter between cognitive psychology and psychoanalysis to explain viewers' investment in fiction) it could do with fleshing out, even through a cursory acknowledgement of these broader arguments within film theory.

The second section provides a historical account of the varied processes which enabled animation to develop in particular ways, beginning with the inspiration offered to animators by popular entertainment. Within this discussion, Crafton pays particular attention to Vaudeville and the impact it had upon animation of the 1920s and 30s, allowing the latter to re-perform popular acts within familiar settings. Indeed, Crafton sees the roots of animation as lying in Vaudeville, stating that "[i]f Hollywood cartoons have a soul, it is vaudeville" (101). His argument provides a concrete historical account as to the ways in which cartoon performances borrow from older forms of popular entertainment, and further cements the link between *in* animation (cartoon characters performing well known stage acts) and *of* animation (creators playing off well known acts and re-performing them through their own specialised medium). This argument is substantiated through numerous examples, which give significant depth to the theoretical claims.

Crafton proceeds to give a stimulating account of the way in which technological, artistic and idealistic development combined to necessitate a more complex space in order to facilitate increasingly complex



performances. The thrust here focuses on the way in which producers, especially Walt Disney, sought to create a more naturalistic, unified, and ultimately realistic world akin to that produced by live-action cinema. Crafton identifies 1937 as the year in which "it is no longer meaningful to speak of the shots foreground and background, since now the entire scene is camera space, a common modulated performance environment that incorporates the actor" (191-2). This quest for realism is important as it marks a new approach to animating images which produce a novel aesthetic. Earlier transformative and figurative modes of animating bodies were rejected through the desire to create realistic bodies which possess a consistent set of properties: "According to the Disney rule, once a character's body was shown - rubbery, watery, humanlike - its substance was irreducible" (209).

This focus grounds Crafton's subsequent analysis of two divergent modes of animation performance: figurative and embodied, roughly correlating to slapstick/expressionism and depth of character/realism. Crafton refuses a simplistic dualism, stating that the change is neither progressive nor regressive but "may only be different" (211). He leaves the philosophical and aesthetic ramifications of the changes described somewhat dangling, opting instead for a more historically driven account for the "motivation for the changes" (150). The great strength of this emphasis on motivation is the grounding of stylistic and aesthetic changes within increased technical efficiency, Disney's drive for moral and narrative depth in his animated works, and the artistic influence of several key figures. The most notable of these is Donald Graham, the man responsible for training Disney's animators in the early 1930s, whom Crafton pin-points as a pivotal technical influence in training animators to produce more realistic bodies. The whole argument is convincingly formulated, littered with relevant examples and drawing from an impressive range of sources. However, once again a significant question arises: if this change in animation style is engendered through a reciprocal relationship with the need to provide increasingly complex emotional, narrative and embodied performance, then how does this affect the galaxy of relationships pertaining to the changes undergone by the viewer as "co-animator"?

The third section situates animation within the political and social context of the 1930s, specifically focussing on the economic depression and Roosevelt's New Deal. Crafton's goal here is to complicate accounts of viewing cartoons as a simple escapism from the social landscape, asking instead what 'instrumental' (ideological) functions they fulfil and how we should understand their consequences. He finds a "performative ambivalence" between, on the one hand, escapism and laughter for laughter's sake, and, on the other, deeper ideological or moral messages (217). It seems that the purpose of this chapter is to legitimate animation as containing a progressive or at least a worthwhile social function, which

Crafton finds in the phenomena of mass-laughter understood as a meaningful performance, ritual or “quasi-religious experience” (251). The final chapter provides an expansion of the otherwise strict focus on pre-world war two animations, showing a continued fascination with figures consuming themselves and one another, moving from the animated shorts of 1910 to the more contemporary works of Jan Svankmajer and forward into interactive animation.

Crafton’s emphasis on historical context combined with a vast range of sources build a convincing picture of animation practices in the period under investigation. He shows a brevity and depth of knowledge through the numerous analyses of animations, which often resist interpretive flourishes in favour of descriptive prose. Although this tendency toward description presents the danger of becoming a little dry, the way in which Crafton embeds them within his over-arching concept of performativity provides a balance between empirical-historical research, lucid examples and theoretical persuasiveness. The novelty of introducing performance studies into animation theory could find support from, and equally lend itself to, works in post-humanist performativity, such as that proposed by Karen Barad (see her 2003 article on ‘Posthumanist Performativity’), and is an area which is currently on the radar within certain areas of film theory.

Thomas Lamarre offers a radically different methodological approach for theorising animation. He refuses to give any precedent in terms of cultural or instrumental factors to explain Japanese animation, which is the exclusive focus of the work, instead looking at the technology utilised to create moving images and the resultant ‘force’ these images exert. Lamarre also refuses to give precedence to the art of animation, preferring to ground his work in the concept of an “animetic machine” (xxvi), a concept derived from the work of Félix Guattari. The animetic machine is a sort of material-spiritual ensemble which is localised within the technical apparatus of the animation stand. In Lamarre’s discussion of the animation stand, he states that it is capable of generating “a field of material orientations by channelling the force of the moving image in specific ways” (25). This should not be associated with the ‘apparatus theory’ of the 1970s because the animetic machine does not imply a technological determinism which would foreclose in advance the potential of the moving image (33-4). The animetic machine is also broader than the apparatus and, much like Crafton’s ‘tooniverse’, encompasses heterogeneous elements such as the hand drawing, celluloid sheets, lighting and cameras, as well as the viewer’s perception and fan activity.

It is the quest to understand the specific ways in which the animetic machine “thinks” technology (xxx) that sets the book on a journey of close analysis and dense theoretical and philosophical speculation. Lamarre finds that the force channelled through the animetic machine is found, first and foremost, in the way in which images are composited;

therefore, movement between and across layers becomes pivotal (18). This is the defining feature of one tendency of the moving image dubbed "animetism", which is contrasted with "cinematism", terms borrowed from Paul Virilio (5-6). While cinematism derives its force from a movement into depth, animetism does so through a movement between layers. These designations are not to be confused with animation and cinema, but are tendencies *within* the moving image which both offer a "different sense of motion and a different sense of orientation in the world" (37). One way in which this is emphasised is through a discussion of open compositing, seen as a potential of the animetic movement between heterogeneous layers as opposed to closed compositing which creates a single unified space.

Lamarre develops these ideas through detailed analyses of animations, beginning with those of Hayo Miyazaki. Complemented by a reading of Martin Heidegger, Lamarre deftly explores Miyazaki's animations by considering diverse areas such as open compositing, narrative, the creation of non-streamlined flying machines, and the role of gender. Lamarre argues that Miyazaki attempts to produce "other worldviews" through his animations (42), with a particular emphasis on the possibility of a "freer or truer relation to technology" (77). This is, he argues, always grounded in the force of the moving image itself, thus focusing on "the question of a technological condition that effects perception and thought" (92). Through the refusal to bracket the question of how we use technology within broader cultural paradigms, Lamarre produces an argument reminiscent of Bernard Stiegler, whereby technology is given a constitutive role in shaping human events and is always already intertwined with human thought and action.

The second section furthers this theme by linking post-structuralism and the waning of any grand narrative or absolute frame of reference with another potential of animetism, "the tendency of flat compositing" (128), which refers to flattening the distinction between background and foreground. Lamarre argues that this form of flattening promotes the removal of any absolute frame of reference in favour of relativism or, as he puts it, a "*technologized dehierarchialization*" (118). Alongside a detailed analysis of *Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water* (1989-90, Gainax Studios), Lamarre offers a fascinating discussion of 'otaku', a term which "refers to a set of practices related to the reception of anime, games, manga and related media" (109). His exploration of otaku culture offers theoretical heft that complements Crafton's conception of the co-performance enacted by those who imbibe animation, described by Lamarre as a "cooperator in the production and promotion of the expanding world" (185).

The complexity and depth of Lamarre's thought cannot be fully explored here. However, it is worth pointing out one of the most continually

striking aspects of his work, which is his devout resistance to subsuming animation within broader cultural or theoretical frameworks. Lamarre always treats the animated works with as much care and attention as the numerous philosophical ideas expounded throughout. This produces a sense that animation is not merely important because it can illuminate certain broader issues, but that it really does produce a specific type of thought. This sense is significantly helped by Lamarre's writing style, which itself becomes a concrete expression of animetic thought by encompassing multiple sliding planes of reference without foreclosing their possibilities. The continued impression one gets is that the animations Lamarre dwells upon are never utilised as vehicles to propel abstract theoretical notions and are never treated merely as textual objects. Instead, the works are earnestly treated as partners in thought, and their movements are always capable of taking us to unforeseen intellectual places.

An example of this is found in the final section of the book which introduces the theory of psychoanalysis. Throughout his analysis of the manga series *Chobits* (CLAMP, 2001) and its television counterpart (Asaka Morio, 2002) Lamarre flatly refuses to employ a string of psychoanalytic *clichés* by asking "[t]o what extent is the logic of gender internal to anime" (266), and providing a densely woven thread of attentive analysis combined with terse reasoning to provide an answer. The result curtails the all too common trope of reducing the complexity of the work to external (in this instance psychoanalytical) concepts such as desire, fetishism and lack, and that ultimately "there are other ways of thinking modernity and subjectivity than Cartesianism or Lacanianism" (298). These "other ways" are convincingly articulated throughout as stemming from the force of the moving image, realised through the heterogeneous ensemble of elements folded into the animetic machine.

Lamarre draws from a diverse range of philosophers, technology theorists, and animation producers. The combination of these sources enables the production of a highly complex and highly innovative meditation on the importance of animation. By achieving this, Lamarre has provided an important contribution to recent debates in the interdisciplinary study of film philosophy, which has recently been concerned with how it is that film itself 'thinks'. An important question that we should ask is whether Lamarre avoids the sort of determinism and essentialist thinking he bemoans in apparatus theory, as at points he does seem to slip into this mode of thinking. This is especially apparent in his self declared "emphasis on the essence of animation, on the animetic machine" (134). A question with which the reader is left is whether the concept of the machine can escape essentialist thinking while simultaneously being declared as the essence of animation.

Despite the differing methodologies utilised by Lamarre and Crafton, alongside the contrasting focus upon very different traditions of

animation, the two books contain fascinating areas of overlap. Crafton's discussion concerning the differing functions of performance sought in animated figures, and the stylistic and formal changes which were necessary to enact these performances, enters into an interesting dialogue with Lamarre's contrast between the animetic and cinematic tendencies of the moving image. Furthermore, Lamarre engages deeply with some of the aesthetic questions Crafton leaves hanging, most notably in the former's conviction that new modes or powers of thought, new ways of thinking through our technological condition, can be opened up through the force of moving images themselves.

Both books will be of immense value to undergraduate and postgraduate students interested in animation studies, and would also provide suitable core readings for a much larger debate within film theory; namely, that over the relationship between cinema as 'naturalistic' and cinema as 'expressionistic', and the various permeations of this divide, which are re-directed in these works through animation in terms of embodied/figurative performances for Crafton and Lamarre's discussion of full and limited animation (64-76). Both authors conceptualise a fascinating new direction for this debate through a detailed consideration of the ways in which animation has always been prone to these same divergent tendencies and has dealt with them in different ways. This poses a significant and timely problem for a waning fable of film theory which places photography at the centre of film, and film at the centre of cinema. Both works succeed in opening the boundaries between live action film and animation, and offer rich resources for anyone seeking to do likewise. Lamarre's text, in addition, is essential reading for those interested in the intersection between animation, philosophy and technology, as it offers a powerful demonstration of how meditation on these areas can mutually inform and reform one another.

If performance includes the producers, the consumers, and the events as they unfold onscreen, we should surely append to this the performance of the theorist whose task it is to answer the questions raised by the galaxy of relationships which continually animate – breathe life into – one another. Viewed in this way, the theorist's role is not restricted to providing an analytically detached or objective document surveying a causal string of events. Instead, their job is to present innovative and creative concepts, develop imaginative analyses, and to open up areas for further discussion and debate. Crafton and Lamarre offer stellar performances in an area of moving image studies that will surely continue to grow in importance.

***Broken Mirrors/Broken Minds: The Dark Dreams of Dario Argento*****By Maitland McDonagh**

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. ISBN: 9780816656073. 83 bw illustrations, xxvii + 293pp. £17.00 (pbk)

***The New Neapolitan Cinema*****By Alex Marlow-Mann**

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780748668779. 14 bw illustrations, xiii + 242pp. £22.99 (pbk)

***Radical Frontiers in the Spaghetti Western: Politics, Violence and Popular Italian Cinema*****By Austin Fisher**

London: I.B. Tauris, 2011. ISBN 9781848855786. 8 bw illustrations, 320pp. £59.50 (hbk)

**A review by Joseph North, Durham University**

These three books critically engage with Italian films and film-makers who remain on the margins of the established critical canon. Austin Fisher's *Radical Frontiers in the Spaghetti Western* examines Spaghetti Westerns which functioned as political allegories, reflecting on the North-South divide and Cold War politics in Italian society. Alex Marlow-Mann's *The New Neapolitan Cinema* analyses the work of directors from Naples in the late 1980s and 90s, whose films challenged traditional perceptions of the city. Finally, the expanded edition of Maitland McDonagh's *Broken Mirrors/Broken Minds* adds an extra introduction addressing Dario Argento's most recent work to a study which deals primarily with his most successful thrillers and horror films of the seventies and eighties. All three books are the first major publications by their authors and they all attempt, with varying degrees of success, to rehabilitate frequently overlooked directors and films, contextualising them within the politics and representational traditions of their cinematic genres and exploring their connections to Italian society.

*Broken Mirrors/Broken Minds* is an auteur study Argento's work. Implicitly, McDonagh's argument is that Argento's best films are works of art worthy of serious consideration, but the book also explores Argento's creative processes in a wider sense; tracing his influences, collaborators and side-projects. In the first of the two introductions, the author also frankly criticises the director's recent and most problematic releases, such as the "sadly unconvincing" (xxiv) *Mother of Tears* (2007). However the



bulk of the argumentation is devoted to eleven films made between 1970 and 1993, including well-known works such as *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (1970), *Cat O' Nine Tails* (1971), *Deep Red* (1975) and *Suspiria* (1977). Forthright and enthusiastic, McDonagh makes a convincing if occasionally inconsistent argument for Argento's best films to be worthy of deep critical study, highlighting the layers of meaning they contain and their rich intertextual allusions. However, at times, McDonagh's chapters explore Argento's nightmarish imagination rather than its filmic products and the analysis suffers from an excess of tangential comparisons to other (usually more widely-renowned) directors and authors. For example, the twenty-nine pages on *Suspiria* and *Inferno* (1980) include lengthy references to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, H. P. Lovecraft, V. Propp's *Morphology of the Folklore*, Hans Christian Anderson's *The Little Mermaid*, G.K. Chesterton's *Father Brown* and Thomas De Quincey's *Suspiria de Profundis*, as well as spending seven pages discussing Argento's collaborations with writer George A. Romero on his horror films. While some of these comparisons are illuminating, the synopses and deep analysis of the two films occupy less than half the chapter and the critical analysis is surprisingly brief.

The structure of *Broken Mirrors/Broken Minds* is notably more confused than the other two works under review here and, while this does not have a huge adverse impact on McDonagh's analysis of Argento's main films, it can become irritating. The new introductory chapter to the book explains the author's interest in Argento and non-mainstream cinema before quickly considering the director's recent work (1993-2009), which has generally disappointed critics, fans and the author herself. The second introductory chapter, which introduced the 1991 edition, lays out the author's interest in Argento's films made prior to that date, which are then considered chronologically in the following chapters. The decision to dash through Argento's problematic recent work and not to expand and integrate such analysis into the main text is understandable in an auteur study focused on his greatest movies, but it does harm the analysis of the director at certain points. For example, while *Suspiria* and *Inferno* are considered together as parts of the Mother of Tears trilogy, the final part, the widely disappointing *Mother of Tears*, is not. One feels that the purpose of this 'expanded edition' should have been to give greater consideration to the director's recent output, even though it would compromise the author's vision of Argento's film-making genius and necessitate a reworking of the original text. As it is, the structure and some unmodified sentences (the book still maintains that "[s]ince 1970, he's written [...] and directed 11 films" (3) and says "the third film – tentatively referred to as *Mother of Tears*" is "yet to be made" (131)) provide occasional annoyance.

However, when McDonagh's analysis is at its best, such as for *Deep Red*, her readings of the film are tightly argued and insightful. Overall, the

analysis is quite strong and the best chapters capture the vividly coloured, crazed world of Argento's films, making a persuasive argument for the director's better work being worthy of serious study. The wealth of black and white illustrations also effectively support the analysis and, given the primacy of visuals over plotting in Argento's work, they are very helpful to those unfamiliar with the director's oeuvre or who haven't seen his films recently. A 1986 interview and a handy updated filmography complete this slightly disorganised but nevertheless useful volume.

One feels that *Broken Mirrors/Broken Minds* would have benefited from the type of methodical structure that is employed in *The New Neapolitan Cinema*. Here Marlow-Mann asks if there is, in fact, a local film industry in Naples, how its products differ from traditional cinematic representations of the city and whether the films produced by Neapolitans over the past twenty years, such as *Vito and the Others* (Antonio Capuano, 1991), *Death of a Neapolitan Mathematician* (Mario Martone, 1992) and *Libera* (Pappi Corsicato, 1993), share similar thematic, political and stylistic concerns. As well as having a very clear purpose, Alex Marlow-Mann's argumentation is well balanced: it is neither overly concise nor unnecessarily detailed. Part of the credit for this must go to the editors of the Traditions in World Cinema series for the clarity and structure they require of their writers. Nonetheless, Marlow-Mann's exploration of the traditional cinematic and artistic representations of Naples, against which he contrasts the films produced over the last twenty years, is especially strong and takes in both the socio-cultural differences between the texts of the older 'Neapolitan Formula', typified by rosy melodramas and comedies, and the New Neapolitan Cinema (NNC), as well as the different audiences they address, with the latter having a greater focus on art-house and international audiences. Marlow-Mann's exploration of common themes uniting the NNC, such as social alienation, organised crime, familial breakdown and immigration, and their interactions with contemporary politics and the city's traditional narrative and dramatic forms is especially strong.

The analysis in *Radical Frontiers in the Spaghetti Western* is denser in its style and more detailed than the other two works, but Austin Fisher's argument is still made effectively and the book is very readable. Essentially, Fisher's thesis is that a sub-group of films within the Spaghetti Western genre were heavily politicised and filled the American Western template with radical meaning, which would in turn have some influence on American film-makers when the Spaghettis were exported. While Fisher gives a broad overview of the Western in both America and Italy, his focus is on relatively neglected films by directors like Sergio Sollima, Damiano Damiani and Sergio Corbucci, rather than Sergio Leone's canonical Dollars Trilogy. The Italian Westerns examined in depth include *Quien Sabe?* (Damiano Damiani, 1966), *La Resa dei Conti* (Sergio Sollima, 1967), *Il Grande Silenzio* (Sergio Corbucci, 1968) and *Vamos a*

*matar, compañeros* (Sergio Corbucci, 1970), Fisher effectively splits them into two groups: the Repressive State Apparatus films, which uncover Fascist-like tyranny and corruption behind law enforcers and apparently civilized society; and the Insurgency plots, which show the clash of cultures between America and Mexico and subvert the traditional Western form, offering allegorical commentary on the Southern Question, Left-wing revolutions, and American Cold-War hegemony. His definition of these two variants of the Italian Western against previously proposed schemas advocated by Christopher Frayling and others is persuasive. Fisher's argumentation successfully navigates several difficult issues, such as the sheer breadth of the genre, the process of inter-cultural exchange between the United States and Italy and the lack of coherent political ideologies espoused by some Spaghetti Western films, which often concentrate on entertainment and fun rather than making a fully developed political statement. Fisher's successful exploration of these areas makes for fascinating reading for anyone interested in popular film genres and politics.

Marlow-Mann and Fisher both adopt a similar, well-communicated thematic organisation. Both authors seek to define the socio-political and cinematic contexts against which they contrast their group of films, including Italian society and the conventional representations of their respective genres, before moving into thematic analysis of the films themselves, their political concerns and links to other films and cultural products. Finally, they both examine the influence their chosen selection of films had on wider cinema, although Fisher's consideration of the Spaghetti's influence on American directors from Sam Peckinpah to Quentin Tarantino is considerably broader in scope than Marlow-Mann's brief consideration of the influence of Neapolitan film-makers on the depiction of Naples in Matteo Garrone's prize-winning *Gomorra* (2008). Ultimately, both authors have a structural clarity which McDonagh lacks, making them much more approachable reads.

All three authors draw on a comprehensive corpus of sources and data, including reviews, critical commentaries, interviews and box office takings, but the primary focus of each is firmly on deep consideration of the films themselves. Fisher, for example, examines a corpus of American and British reviews of Spaghetti Westerns for the reviewers' mentions of violence, using this to supplement his account of the reception of the controversial Spaghetti Westerns in Italy and abroad. The removal of the moral justification of violence, a key ingredient in the Classic American Western, and its replacement with political subtexts is a key part of Fishers' thesis. McDonagh's and Marlow-Mann's books, meanwhile, both make good use of interviews with directors, and adopt cautious approaches towards their ambiguous statements. Most successful is Marlow-Mann's grounding of his discussion in a thorough exploration of film production, distribution and exhibition in Italy, which is based on rigorous

statistical analysis of Neapolitan films of all kinds and their box-office takings in Milan and Naples. This detailed analysis of contemporary Italian cinema in the cinematic marketplace is very well-done and worth the book's purchase price alone. Also, a useful map of the areas of Naples and Campania used in filming accompanies the numerous appendices of box office takings and audience shares.

Adding to the sense that they might make good companion texts, *The New Neapolitan Cinema* and *Radical Frontiers in the Spaghetti Western* both deal with a common theme: the socio-political position of the South in post-War Italy and its cinematic representation. *The New Neapolitan Cinema* is tightly focused on the portrayal of Naples and the exploration of the Southern Question, whereas *Radical Frontiers* has a broader political-geographical scope. The latter begins by exploring the connections between the archetypal American Western, the Italian film industry and Italian society in the post-war period, exploring the legacy of Economic Miracle, the Christian Democrat-Communist political division and the 'Southern Question'. After this contextual introductory chapter, Austin Fisher then deepens his comparison of the symbolic parallels between the American West and the Italian South from 1800 onwards, explaining the othering of South/West and their position on the colonial frontier, before moving in to analyse films and directors in greater depth. His key point is that the violence of the traditional Western, which occurs in order to advance civilization and uphold the moral order, is inscribed with a new meaning, which partly encompasses the Southern Question and the notions of Cold War colonialism.

Marlow-Mann's study has the Southern Question at its very heart, but is similarly focused on the interactions between two cinemas and their respective depictions of the South. *The New Neapolitan Cinema* explores the differences between the 'Neapolitan Formula' films made by national production companies from Rome in the period 1945-1968 and the films produced in recent years by those working and living in Naples itself. The first chapter highlights the overall economic situation of Neapolitan cinema in the twentieth century, contrasting the industrial production and mass cinema-going of the post-war period with the modern film business, in which small, partly state-financed Italian films often struggle to win a wide distribution. The second chapter analyses the 'Neapolitan Formula' of post-war films, characterised by folklore, panoramic views, monuments, crowded inner-city areas and plots which resolved the tensions created by the 'Southern Question.' Marlow-Mann then analyses the topics explored by the New Neapolitan Cinema and how they relate to the films and the city's topography, in particular contrasting the optimistic, welcoming vision of the city proposed by Antonio Bassolino during his years as the city's mayor (1993-2000) and the alienation and criminality encountered in the city's brutal urban hinterland. The links between Neapolitan topography and isolation are analysed with real vigour. His final chapter

draws parallels between the latest cinematic representations of Naples made by the Italian film industry, arguing that *Gomorra*, with its focus on the bleak, criminal-controlled suburb of Scampia, shows the influence that the NNC has exerted on the national film industry. For Marlow-Mann, engagement with the Southern Question, on some level, is a defining feature of the NNC's political discourse, whereas the scope of Fisher's argument about the politicised Spaghetti Western is more wide-ranging, taking in political revolution, Leftist political struggles and American Imperialism, as well as Italy's domestic political problems.

While the New Neapolitan Cinema has attracted extended critical interest from the outset, both the Spaghetti Western and the horror-thrillers of Argento suffered from initial critical neglect. Indeed, Marlow-Mann uses the fact that the rosy, formulaic cinematic representations of Naples were generally more popular at the box office than the bleaker output of the New Neapolitan Cinema to drive his criticism, successfully demonstrating that recent film-maker's visual freshness and rejection of tired cinematic stereotypes gave their work aesthetic appeal and political edge. Therefore, another common theme between Fisher and McDonagh's work is the exploration of genres that remained on the edge of acceptability in the sixties and seventies, and were critically sidelined as a result. McDonagh's exploration takes the form of personal reminiscence: before the coming of the DVD and the internet, European horror-thrillers existed only in specialised theatrical circuits in the United States. Fisher's exploration of the popular spectators of the Spaghetti Westerns successfully explores their cultural, political and cinematic horizons from a variety of useful perspectives and his understanding of the Spaghetti Western fanbase is an enriching constant throughout the book.

While Neapolitan cinema has attracted numerous academic studies and histories, notably dealing with the silent period, great actor-comedians and the city's representation in various media, The New Neapolitan Cinema has yet to attract widespread scholarly re-evaluation. To my knowledge, the only other critical work on these films is Roberta Tabanelli's Italian-language *I "pori" di Napoli: Il cinema di Mario Martone, Antonio Capuano e Pappi Corsicato* (Ravenna: Longo Angelo, 2011), which is focussed on the three directors' rebellions against the commonplace representations of Napoli, rather than analysing the 'movement' as a whole. As well as being especially welcomed by English-speakers, then, Marlow-Mann's straightforward yet scholarly analysis of the NNC will appeal to anyone with an interest in Neapolitan culture or Italian cinema as well as scholars. Additionally, this book would appeal to anyone with an interest in regional cinemas because Marlow-Mann's exploration of this topic is particularly strong. As the author acknowledges, the success of *Gomorra* will hopefully stimulate a greater interest in the NNC.

## Book Reviews

Unlike the comparatively sparse writing on recent Neapolitan cinema, the Spaghetti Western and Dario Argento have been the subjects of a good number of introductory works and lavishly illustrated volumes in recent years, but rigorous critical treatment has been somewhat thinner on the ground. Most books on the Spaghetti Western either examine the most salient films of the genre or analyse Sergio Leone's career. As far as I know, there are no books available that are similar to Fisher's work and I would contend that, with its efficient structure and authoritative command of an unusual topic, it would be vital reading for anyone seeking to learn more about the Spaghetti Western, Italy's genre cinema (*i filoni*) and Italian political film-making. Unlike the brief introductory monographs or large filmographies that are already available, which generally focus on the genre's most popular hits, *Radical Frontiers* offers well-argued analysis of an overlooked group of Italo-Westerns and makes an impressive argument for them to be given greater consideration. Fisher's discussion of the Spaghetti Western as socio-political expression also makes it interesting for a wider Italianist audience. As *Broken Mirrors/Broken Minds* is critical writing in a more informal style with strong personal opinions, it lacks the academic rigour and polish of Fisher or Marlow-Mann, but its strength is in its enthusiastic and accessible analysis of Argento's best work, which will appeal to casual and academic readers alike. McDonagh's chapters generate interesting ideas for Argento fans and newcomers, as well as being accessible and enjoyable reading for undergraduates. Indeed, all three of these works have filtered into my own teaching on Italian cinema, as they provide fascinating coverage of films which, although they lie outside the critical canon, are worthy of consideration by future generations of Italian film scholars.



## **Mike Leigh**

**By Sean O'Sullivan**

Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011. ISBN 9780252078194. 18 illustrations, x + 184 pp. £14.99 (pbk)

## ***Discomfort and Joy: The Cinema of Bill Forsyth***

**By Jonathan Murray**

Pieterlen: Peter Lang, 2011. ISBN 9783039113910. 4 illustrations, x + 270 pp. £35.00 (pbk)

### **A review by Marcus Smith, Open University**

These two short but detailed works on Mike Leigh and Bill Forsyth offer contrasting but similarly positive re-assessments of the films of these British directors and their approaches to filmmaking. On the one hand, Sean O'Sullivan suggests something different from the conventional critical wisdom that is often written about Leigh's films. O'Sullivan suggests that Leigh's films are not the simple slices of working and middle class social realism as they are often described by reviewers. Rather, he emphasizes how Leigh makes films with style and respect for cinematic method. For O'Sullivan, a Mike Leigh film is a carefully constructed work employing several recurring and distinctive techniques, which he and his team have developed and perfected over the course of his career so far. O'Sullivan attempts to identify the three main elements which Leigh employs in his method of filmmaking and illustrate the deployment and development of these elements through a thorough analysis of five key pairs of films from his early work through to the 2000s.

Jonathan Murray's book, meanwhile, is equally ambitious, as it attempts to restore Forsyth's reputation as an important British film director. Murray pursues this aim through a detailed analysis of Forsyth's entire cinematic output, suggesting, in a similar manner to O'Sullivan, that Forsyth's cinematic method is again not properly critically appreciated. Murray analyses the work of Forsyth both from a contextual perspective and a formal theoretical perspective as he presents his historical development as a filmmaker. Murray considers all of Forsyth's feature films from *That Sinking Feeling* (1979) to his last major release *Gregory's Two Girls* (1998).

Both authors clearly want to enhance the respective reputations of these two key British filmmakers. Both are also much concerned with the detailed analysis of the films involved in order to illustrate that the perceived excellence and popularity in the work of both filmmakers is not fully appreciated. In the case of Leigh, O'Sullivan suggests that this is because scholars and critics do not acknowledge his mainstream

filmmaking methods. With Forsyth, Murray suggests that the prevailing view of him as the successful Scottish director who made four very acclaimed and popular 'Scottish' films and then disappeared to virtual obscurity in Hollywood does not provide a fair picture. Murray suggests that Forsyth has cinematic concerns and methods that extend beyond this perceived Scottishness.

While O'Sullivan breaks good ground in arguing for an appreciation of Leigh outside of the social realist mode for which he is well-known, Murray has a little more work to do in his reassessment of Forsyth. The latter has become rather a forgotten British filmmaker, having moved to the USA to make movies from the late 1980s and not having made a significant feature film since 1998. Murray's book is – amongst other things – an attempt to bring Forsyth's work back into the critical consciousness of the cinema audience. Murray seeks to demonstrate that, despite his break to America, Forsyth has developed as a filmmaker throughout his career and that this development represents not only a statement of how modern Scottishness can be expressed in the cinema, but also evidence that Forsyth's films, taken together, provide a deeper commentary on the human condition than has been credited. The book is not entirely successful in this ambition with the later films, but Murray does at least demonstrate the value of a critical reassessment of Forsyth's first five films.

Both books make strong textual analysis of a large number of films. In the case of Murray this is the entire collection of Forsyth's eight feature films whereas O'Sullivan takes a selection of eleven of Leigh's works, starting with the short film *The Short and Curlies* (1987) up to his latest film *Another Year* (2010). Murray's book can really be taken in two parts, in-keeping with Forsyth's career. First, Murray provides a detailed analysis of Forsyth's first four 'Scottish' films. *That Sinking Feeling* (1979) is the comic tale of a group of young unemployed Glaswegian teenagers who decide to rob a local aluminium sink factory, which, Murray suggests, is a landmark film as it (re)launched the indigenous Scottish film industry in the late 1970s. Murray suggests that *That Sinking Feeling* presents the rejection of the quaint tourist documentaries like Forsyth's own *Islands of the West* (1972) or *The Duna Bull* (Laurence Henson, 1971), which represented Scottish filmmaking up to this point.

There are at least three elements of Forsyth's work on *That Sinking Feeling* that Murray identifies as crucial to understanding his quality as a filmmaker. Firstly, he is preoccupied with the idea that human existence is a fundamentally isolated condition. Secondly, Forsyth demonstrates an exceptional comic sensibility, "one capable of crystallizing the terms of troubling emotional and social phenomena even as it seems, superficially at least, to circumvent these" (17). Thirdly, Forsyth's Scottish films validate their own Scottishness through a more modern, realistic representation of Scotland.

Forsyth's next film was *Gregory's Girl* (1981), the central plotline of which is a teenager's pursuit of the girl who has replaced him in the school football team. This is the Forsyth film that is probably the most fondly remembered and features high in the BFI's list of best-loved British movies of the twentieth century. Murray suggests that the film is only superficially comical, like the later works, and at the core of the film is a "comic interrogation of gender identity and anxiety" (45). Indeed, Murray suggests that it is the universality of the comic values and the unconventional models of cinematic narrative that show the distinctiveness and artistry of Forsyth at work in this film. Murray also provides a detailed close reading of the film that points out the underlying use of imagery and narrative devices from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

For Murray, the thematic development of the isolation and anxiety of the individual, the slightly dark comic and unconventional narratives, and a tendency towards fairytale or mythic tropes defines a Forsyth film, and Murray goes on to further explore and evidence these elements in his later works. They are clearly evident in *Local Hero* (1983) and in *Comfort and Joy* (1985). Both films see their main male protagonists on existential journeys, from the urban US environment into rural Scotland in the former, and from the radio industry into the surreal world of ice cream wars in Glasgow in the latter. Both films, although presenting plenty of visual representations of Scotland, have grander themes linked to the human condition rather than anything specific about the location. As in O'Sullivan's revision of Leigh, this is somewhat at odds with the conventional wisdom of contemporary reviews which often described these works as likeable but quirky romantic comedies.

Many film critics and viewers are aware that Leigh does not work from scripts but employs a strict improvisational method in preparing and deploying his actors in a film. These are known as the 'five rules' which relate to the motivations of the characters; their credibility; improvisation being treated as a real event; and the lack of any foreknowledge on one actor's part of the motivation of another's character. O'Sullivan writes that knowledge of these rules suggests to reviewers that Leigh is concerned with a realistic approach, yet, when questioned, Leigh himself talks of the heightened reality that his improvisations provide.

O'Sullivan actually goes further and suggests that the three following narrative and stylistic elements can be understood to define Leigh's works more accurately: "the unbroken" shot (15), the "side-by-side" (16) and the "centaur" (17). For O'Sullivan it is these filmic constructs that make Leigh's work special and their exploration forms the backbone of the book. On first consideration they do not seem that unusual; indeed they sound rather similar to the use of long takes and the framing of characters on the screen. Of course, most of O'Sullivan's book is an exposition on how Leigh makes a unique use of these techniques to

articulate a depth or a heightened reality that both despoils the idea of realism in his films and illustrates a clear understanding of the techniques of cinema. A few examples will provide an idea of O'Sullivan's general point.

Firstly, the unbroken shot is essentially (and O'Sullivan borrows from David Bordwell on this), a long take that articulates the difference between a director watching something and a director staging something. Leigh, O'Sullivan tells us, likes using such shots at the beginning and end of films and the key point about Leigh's use of such shots is that they do not draw attention to themselves, they simply happen. O'Sullivan cites examples of this such as the long unbroken shot in *Secrets and Lies* (1996) when Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste) tells Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn) that she is her daughter. This is an 8-minute shot with the two characters facing us but talking to each other. Hortense the black woman in a black top on the left and her birth mother, a white woman dressed in a white top on the right.

This same scene provides O'Sullivan with an example of the second of Leigh's cinematic tropes, the side-by-side scene. Leigh uses this device to contrast his characters. In *Meantime* (1978) it is the two brothers who sit side-by-side in the bedroom, one favoured, one not, although both in the same predicament of unemployment and feeling hopeless about their lives. Another instance is given from *Four Days in July* (1984), a film set in the Ulster troubles, there is a long closing scene where the main female characters have just given birth; one a Catholic the other Protestant. The framing of the scene suggests they are in the same situation but the long take and dwindling intercourse between them heightens the feeling of separation. While on the face of it, this seems to be an attempt to heighten the realism, O'Sullivan asserts that it is in fact a very cinematic technique, aimed at heightening the emotional tension of the situation and the differences between the characters, the very opposite of what a work of cinema verité would do. Incidentally, Murray suggests a similar device features in Forsyth's most successful artistic movie *Housekeeping* (1987), an adaptation of Marilynne Robinson's book about an inadequate stand-in mother of two orphaned children. Undermined by the residents of the town they move to, and threatened with having the girls removed from her, she burns the family home and runs off with the older of the girls. The closing scene of the movie is a long single take that watches the two women walk off down the railway track and slowly disappear into the distance, into uncertainty but into escape, from the town, from the residents, from the narrative, and from us the audience.

The third trope in O'Sullivan's account of Leigh's style is described as the "centaur". This is similar to the unbroken shot, the difference being that this would normally be more than one shot but the action is compressed into one. Often a centaur shot will show one part of one character's body and a different part of another's both squeezed into the same shot.

O'Sullivan cites a number of key examples from Leigh's films to show how the centaur is used to either illustrate disconnection between characters – as between Johnny (David Thewlis) and nearly everyone he meets in *Naked* (1993) – or connection – as in *Happy-Go-Lucky* (2008) where Poppy (Sally Hawkins) the flighty heroine and her sullen driving instructor, Scott (Eddie Marsden) are connected through their positioning throughout the driving lesson sequences.

O'Sullivan's pairing of films throughout is a slightly unusual approach. As mentioned, the book does not cover all of Leigh's films but only those that are representative of Leigh's formal development and improvement as a filmmaker throughout his career, irrespective of commercial success. The book provides well-observed and carefully described examples of the three main tropes in Leigh's films. In a short volume this is a surprisingly innovative contribution and I would expect film scholars to develop many of the ideas in this work.

Murray is also enterprising within a relatively short volume. I am less inclined to feel that Forsyth's later works, those after *Housekeeping* are worthy of the lengthy chapters devoted to them, as they do not advance the central argument about Forsyth's continued development as a filmmaker. It is certainly fair to suggest that Forsyth did develop in Hollywood but was not afforded suitable opportunities beyond *Housekeeping*. But I would like to see Murray engage in more detailed consideration of this period, as much as I would like to see Forsyth make another major feature film. By contrast, O'Sullivan's work provides the reader with a full and clear method for understanding the development of Leigh as a filmmaker. Throughout this short book O'Sullivan seeks to develop the numerous and complex tropes that dominate the films. So not only does this volume provide us with an even better understanding of the quality of Leigh's filmmaking but provides a solid and promising grounding for work on Leigh in the future.

***Lindsay Anderson: Cinema Authorship*****By John Izod, Karl Magee, Kathryn Hannan and Isabelle Gourdin-Sanguaord**

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780719083389. 22 illustrations, xii + 334 pp. £70.00 (hbk)

***The Cinema of Michael Winterbottom*****By Deborah Allison**

Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books/Rowman and Littlefield, 2013. ISBN 9780739125847. xi + 224 pp. £19.95 (pbk)

**A review by Martin Stollery, independent scholar, UK.**

*Lindsay Anderson: Cinema Authorship* is, among other things, a good advertisement for the filmmaker's archive located at the University of Stirling. It is nicely illustrated with stills from this source, from a young Anderson in military uniform during the Second World War, to an older man looking frail next to uncomfortable pop stars George Michael and Andrew Ridgeley during the shooting of the suppressed *If You Were There* (*Wham! in China*) (1985). The book is one of the outcomes of an extended research project (another is an [online catalogue of the archive's holdings](#)). It is the first book on Anderson to make extensive use of the material, which spans a range of formats. There is a chapter on Anderson's private diaries, and most of the chapters on individual films demonstrate Anderson's close involvement in the publicity for and marketing of his work, an interest he first demonstrated in his own book, *Making a Film: The Story of Secret People* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1952). Given the influence of his late 1940s and 1950s writing on cinema, I would have also liked to learn more about Anderson's intellectual formation, from the holdings of "over 2,000 of his books (mainly relating to film and theatre) [...] many interestingly annotated by his fiery red pen" (xii). Perhaps this may come as a spin off article; the authors have already published several separate pieces that extend certain topics not covered in depth in the book, such as [fan letters to Anderson about Britannia Hospital](#) (1982). However, as its subtitle proclaims, the book is primarily about Anderson's cinema authorship, rather than his work as a film critic and theatre director.

One of the areas the personal diaries illuminate further is Anderson's sexuality. We learn about cautious forays into cottaging in Wakefield and Margate during the making of his early 1950s documentary films, and his masochistic homosexual fantasies involving Richard Harris, star of *This Sporting Life* (1963), the first feature film he directed. Previously, the primary source for this aspect of Anderson, one that differed from his public image as a domineeringly acerbic critic and filmmaker, was his



friend Gavin Lambert's memoir, *Mainly about Lindsay Anderson* (2000). Izod et al. extend this discussion into more academically orientated film analysis, for example by linking Anderson's narration of his sexuality in the diaries to the violent intensity and unspoken undercurrents of Harris and Rachel Roberts' performances as Frank Machin and Margaret Hammond in *This Sporting Life*. They take care to situate their interpretation as one that could only be produced within a particular context, by writers with access to the diaries, at a historical moment different to the one in which the film was first released. The book's psycho-biographical approach to authorship, then, is one that reflexively admits its provisionality, and the (academic) investments of those making it, rather than a straightforwardly queer reading celebrating the film's potential for yielding queer pleasures to some viewers.

Several chapters extend discussion of Anderson's authorship in another way, through close attention to production processes. Their main focus is the extent to which Anderson can be considered the primary author of the films he directed. Reliance upon material from his archive requires some careful handling within this context. There are times when Anderson's frequently negative perceptions of his collaborations need to be qualified, to achieve a more rounded view of events. Anderson's falling out with cinematographer Miroslav Ondříček on *O Lucky Man!* (1973), for example, arose from different approaches to shot composition and lighting. Izod et al. take care to emphasise the bias of Anderson's diary entries concerning this conflict. Nevertheless, the issue concerning the shooting style of the films Anderson worked on with Ondříček – *The White Bus* (1966) and *If...* (1968) as well as *O Lucky Man!* – could have been explored further, from more perspectives than solely that of Anderson. Yet as a general principle the authors take the complexities thrown up by collaboration in film production seriously. The fact that Anderson often carped about his collaborators or wished they could, from his perspective, do better, is tacit acknowledgement of how crucial they can be to the success of a film.

A significant development within debates about film authorship over the last fifteen years has been the exploration of multiple and collaborative authorship, by writers informed by analytic philosophy, such as C Paul Sellors and Christy Mag Uidhir. *Lindsay Anderson* indirectly reflects this in the consideration it gives, for example, to the musician Alan Price as one of the authors of *O Lucky Man!*. The book covers all the major Anderson films, but unlike more traditional auteurist studies of directors' careers, it also devotes chapters to projects, such as the film *In Celebration* (1974), and the American mini-series *Glory! Glory!* (1988), where Anderson could be considered not to be the primary author. *In Celebration* is a relatively 'faithful' adaptation or 'transfer' of David Storey's play, which Anderson had previously directed at the Royal Court Theatre in 1969. The authors of this book view the film version as effectively "served by Anderson, but not authored by him" (171-2). On *Glory! Glory!* producer Bonny Dore

contributed significantly to initiating and shaping this satire on televangelism, to conform to the "broad generic conventions that the [American] Pay TV audience would accept" (277). Attribution of authorship tended to be differently weighted on opposite sides of the Atlantic. American reviewers gave a fair amount of coverage to Dore's input, and her past experience of working for a televangelist, whereas British reviewers linked *Glory! Glory!* more exclusively to Anderson's previous satirical films.

By the time *Glory! Glory!* was broadcast on British television (in August 1990), discussion of his status as a film author, by Anderson and others, had been going on for more than thirty years. British reviewers therefore followed well-established precedents when they framed the mini-series in these terms. On the other hand, Michael Winterbottom, who worked briefly with Anderson during the 1980s, has only much more recently become a candidate for consecration as an auteur. Winterbottom has been noted for his prolific output as a director since the 1990s, but academic interest has only consolidated over the last few years, with the publication in quick succession of Brian McFarlane's and Deane Williams' 2009 book on his work (Manchester University Press), Damon Smith's 2010 collection of interviews with him (University Press of Mississippi), and now Deborah Allison's *The Cinema of Michael Winterbottom* for Lexington Books' 'Genre Film Auteurs' series. Winterbottom has been less insistent than Anderson in promoting himself as an auteur, preferring instead to cite Ingmar Bergman as the model of a filmmaker who was prepared to take on diverse new challenges rather than continually direct variations of the same film. Of course, directors disclaiming auteur status have never deterred academic and intellectual film critics from making this claim on their behalf; Anderson's book *About John Ford* (1981) is one of the classic examples of this. In Winterbottom's case his disclaimers, plus the accumulation of directing credits on such a large and apparently diverse corpus of films, challenges academics to find connecting lines that run through them.

Allison's book seeks to tease out the relationship between eight films directed by Winterbottom and eight corresponding genres or film cycles: *Butterfly Kiss* (1995) and the road movie; *Jude* (1996) and the heritage film; *Welcome to Sarajevo* (1997) and the war film; *Wonderland* (1999) and social realist drama; *The Claim* (2000) and the Western; *Code 46* (2003) and science fiction; *The Road to Guantanamo* (co-director Mat Whitecross, 2006) and docudrama; *The Killer Inside Me* (2010) and neo-noir. Other genres and cycles could have been selected: *24 Hour Party People* (2002) (considered by some commentators to be the best film Winterbottom has yet directed) and *The Look of Love* (2013) both arguably serve as biopics, while *9 Songs* (2004) (considered by some to be the worst) can be seen as a late entry in the turn of the century cycle of art-house porn that includes precursors such as *Romance* (Catherine

Breillat, 1999) and *Intimacy* (Patrice Chereau, 2001). Moreover, some of Allison's selections could plausibly be characterised as belonging simultaneously to different genres or cycles: *Butterfly Kiss* could be read as a serial killer film (and easily regarded, I would argue, as a British version of *Kalifornia* (Dominic Sena, 1993) and *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994)); or *Wonderland* as a 'London' film somewhere between *London* (Patrick Keiller, 1994) and *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999). Putting the structure of the book to one side, however, the substance of Allison's discussions is enriched by her alertness to the possibility of individual films being open to more than one generic categorisation.

Genre and authorship are key words that invoke layers of connotation derived from common usage and years of academic debate. Allison is very clear at the outset that "this is not a book about genre" and that she wants to avoid "becoming bogged down in such debates" (xi). One corollary of this is an occasional tendency to drift towards widespread assumptions, such as the inferiority of genre films compared to 'authored' ones. Consequently, the parameters Allison sets out for her discussion of *Jude*, for example, entail a straightforward and potentially reductive binary opposition – the "emergence of Winterbottom's unique qualities as a filmmaker" is related to "the extent to which [the film] departs from generic convention" (23). In fact, Allison's detailed analysis of *Jude* is more nuanced than this suggests; she situates the film as part of Winterbottom's emerging oeuvre, and as part of a mid-1990s "advance guard of wider changes within the [heritage] genre" (32), alongside films such as *The Wings of the Dove* (Iain Softley, 1997) and *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1997). Specific discussions of individual films in *The Cinema of Michael Winterbottom* often exceed the general parameters Allison briefly sets out for them. Although the wish not to get 'bogged down' in more abstract debates is understandable, the book might have benefited from succinctly considering at the outset arguments about the always historically mutable conventions of film genres and cycles. It could have explicitly assessed the propositions that attributions of genre, and of authorship, are at least partly ascribed rather than inherent characteristics, and that the hierarchies of value associated with these ascriptions need to be argued for, rather than assumed.

One of the things that Allison's book, and indeed the concept of a 'Genre Film Auteurs' book series, brings into clearer focus, is the need for broader discussion of the relationship between perceptions of genre and authorship throughout film history. Some perceived auteurs, such as John Ford, have been seen as integral to developments within the genre with which they are most closely associated. Conversely, the idea that some auteurs challenge, subvert or deviate from the conventions of the genre(s) within which they work has been prevalent since at least the 1950s; this can lead to a tendency to assume that genre is a fixed, inflexible category. Some auteurs have been perceived as subversive of a

particular genre, such as Douglas Sirk in melodrama, whereas others are seen as ranging across different genres; Robert Altman and Quentin Tarantino have been categorised by some commentators as working with genre in a similar manner to Allison's account of Winterbottom. Allison writes that Winterbottom brings "fresh qualities to each genre he explores, while each genre brings fresh qualities to his work" (190); but if this consideration was pursued systematically, across different areas of film history, without immediately privileging the auteur side of the equation, more subtle shadings would emerge. To take one example, Allison cites *Alphaville* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1965), *Fahrenheit 451* (Francois Truffaut, 1966) and *THX 1138* (George Lucas, 1970) as films that relate to each other, explore "similar territory" (121), and are relevant precursors to *Code 46*. This suggests that European auteur film and genre are not mutually exclusive categories. Instead, they can be seen, to some extent, as developing in reciprocal relationships with each other. A further, similarly unexplored issue in Winterbottom's case would be the ways in which genre operates within British film culture, and how Hollywood and international genres are refracted within this context.

Books devoted to auteurs unavoidably raise questions of value, which for reasons to do with the history of cinema studies as an academic field, remain a sticky issue. Why is a particular auteur worth researching and writing about? This is taken as self-evident in *Lindsay Anderson*, no doubt because there is such a long tradition of broadly auteurist writing about the book's subject. Yet there is sometimes merit in going back to basics. Izod et al. conclude that their version of Anderson is of a "distinctive cinematic author" whose work mixes, or alternates between, "tenderness towards humanity" and a "satirical perspective" (306). A question that remains open is how well he does this. They imply, with support from archival material, that Anderson's sexuality, and the dynamics of the relationships that he had with key collaborators such as David Sherwin, Malcolm McDowell, and Jocelyn Herbert, infuse the films where he is the primary author with distinctive and valuable qualities. They argue, for example, that the quality of *This Sporting Life* is partly derived from "Anderson's cathexis (that is, investment of emotional energy)" (77). Ideally this deductive reasoning, starting from extrinsic evidence, could have been followed through with more precise stylistic analysis of the films themselves, based upon explicitly stated aesthetic criteria, to further strengthen the case. *Lindsay Anderson* provocatively opens with a quotation from Alexander Walker's book *Hollywood England: The British Film Industry in the Sixties* (Orion, 1974): "Where in the period under review does one find the British equivalent of Bergman, of Forman, or Rohmer, or Antonioni, or Truffaut, or even Godard? The answer is, nowhere." Anderson's caustic annotation in his copy of Walker's book is "Thanks!" (1). If part of this book's aim is to support Anderson's belief that he belongs within this pantheon of post-war European auteurs, then even the reflexive and contingent stance they adopt would benefit from

more focused aesthetic argument as to why, and how high, he ranks among these presumed masters of cinema.

Winterbottom's status as an auteur cannot yet be taken for granted, and therefore requires Allison to make more of a case for it (although it is notable that she does not refer to McFarlane and Williams' book as the first extended academic work to do so). Without access to a Winterbottom archive, Allison makes her case primarily on stylistic and thematic grounds. She describes Winterbottom's style in terms of a documentary-realist base: location shooting, improvisation and non-professional actors, as well as "handheld camerawork and natural lighting to capture the spontaneity of performances and their real-world backdrops" (190). Beyond this, the many characteristics she perceives and values in Winterbottom's work include: "complex, conflicted, and often surprising characters" (69); a concern with "the difficulties of traversing the void between one human being and another" (8); a "melancholy beauty" (28) in the representation of landscapes and urban spaces, allied to "the idea that personal identity and life choices may be greatly influenced by one's surroundings" (125); a "frequent recourse to provoking shock or discomfort" (191), most controversially in the representation of male violence against women in *The Killer Inside Me*; "stylistic mutation between (and often within) scenes [that] is sometimes fluid and sometimes sudden, but invariably commands attention" (190); and a tendency, especially in *24 Hour Party People*, *A Cock and Bull Story* (2005) and *The Trip* (2010), to "'playfully and self-reflexively [send] up the conflicts between 'truth' and 'representation'" (191).

It would be wrong to suggest that the stylistic techniques and sometimes attention-grabbing, or viewer-challenging, tactics associated with art cinema operate in the same way as genre conventions. The festivals into which Winterbottom's films have been entered encourage diversity and innovation as much as received definitions of stylistic and thematic 'quality'. Yet it is worth noting that Allison's list of what is valuable in Winterbottom's work does not include anything, in broad terms, that has not already been done in 1950s and 1960s European art cinema or more recently by post-'New Hollywood' auteur film making. Allison recognises this, but does not explore its implications. My intention in emphasising this point is not to denigrate auteurs in general or Winterbottom in particular; it is simply to restate, given that concepts of film authorship are frequently enmeshed with notions of unique, original, individual genius, that perceived signs of authorial expression do not have to mean a complete departure from convention and tradition. Winterbottom's work, produced by a highly talented filmmaker who has repeatedly stressed the importance of collaboration – and who, according to McFarlane and Williams, has eschewed the "bourgeois, liberal romantic idea of the creator" as an "ultimate perversion" (quoted in McFarlane and



Williams, *Michael Winterbottom*, 12) – constitutes a good example through which to explore this general point.

*The Cinema of Michael Winterbottom* is not a production study, so is not the place for a definitive explanation of questions such as how Winterbottom has managed to be so prolific when the majority of his film projects have had limited commercial success, and sometimes a mixed critical reception. One answer to this must be Winterbottom's long-term collaboration with producer Andrew Eaton; this kind of sustained working relationship with a producer eluded Anderson, perhaps because he was temperamentally unsuited to enter into one. Allison does signal the importance of collaborators such as Eaton to Winterbottom's career, and the input of other key figures such as scriptwriter Frank Cottrell Boyce. Her chapter on *The Road to Guantanamo*, which Winterbottom co-directed with Mat Whitecross, is relevant in this respect, because her astute discussion of the film's relationship to docudrama, and its deployment of documentary rhetoric, makes fewer links to Winterbottom's abiding themes and styles than is the case in her chapters on the other films. In every chapter, however, Allison advances reasonably substantive aesthetic arguments to support her validation of Winterbottom's work. She places *Wonderland*, for example, with its lyrical use of colour-saturated time lapse cinematography, on the more experimental end of the spectrum of social realist conventions, closer to films directed by Lynne Ramsay and Pawel Pawlikowski than to those directed by Ken Loach. She praises *Wonderland* for the way "these sequences, so skilfully deployed, sit well between the documentary-realist scenes, taking nothing away from them", connecting individual experience to the "inexorable vibe of the city", and illuminating "a territory in which wonder and darkness collide" (77, 78). *Wonderland* is valued here in organicist aesthetic terms: form and theme, part and whole, and different stylistic registers are seen as intimately and harmoniously related. Readers can agree or disagree with the specific case Allison makes for *Wonderland*, or her other selected films, and accept or reject the aesthetic values upon which these cases rest. Their merit is that they offer, as does the book in general, well observed and reasoned arguments with which to engage. In the final analysis, *Lindsay Anderson* will be of use to readers interested in debates about authorship, but does not clinch the argument about why Anderson might still matter to us. *The Cinema of Michael Winterbottom* is more traditional in terms of methodology, but more eloquent and explicit on the question of value.

### ***A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas***



## **Edited by Anikó Imre**

Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. ISBN 9781444337259. 525 pp. £110.00 (hbk)

## ***European Cinema and Intertextuality: History, Memory and Politics***

**By Ewa Mazierska**

Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. ISBN 9780230579545. 304 pp. £ 55.00 (hbk)

## ***European Cinema in Motion: Migrant and Diasporic Film in Contemporary Europe***

**Edited by Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg**

Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. ISBN 9780230278981. 321 pp. £62.00 (hbk)

## **A review by Andrea Virginás, Sapientia University, Romania**

The corpus of films and industry practices that one may suppose to constitute "European cinema", variously present in each of these titles, serve a double purpose: films and practices are objects of analysis in their own right, but more importantly, they also function as objects in and of the history of this continent. In the latter capacity, films and filmmaking offer access points for conceptualizing, representing and understanding phenomena such as the Iron Curtain and its breakdown, as is discussed in Anikó Imre's *Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*; or History signaled by events such as the Holocaust, the Second World War and Hitler, 1970s terrorism, 1980s Polish Martial Law, and 1990s communism/post-communism, all touched upon in Ewa Mazierska's *European Cinema and Intertextuality*; finally, in *European Cinema in Motion* several authors address Europe's narratives of migration and the creation and solidification of diasporic communities primarily in the affluent Western Europe in a post-colonial and post-communist context. Reading these books provides one with a rare opportunity to survey a wide panorama of such twentieth century European films that traditionally have not been included in mainstream film histories.

However, it is the outset that one must clarify how these volumes approach the definition of "film" as an audiovisual medium – unfortunately missing an opportunity to address the broad issues of defining it in the digitized and mobile present context. Documentaries and animation do not constitute the main focus in any of the books, though when present they throw up innovative results (such as Marsha Kinder's

analysis of Péter Forgács's *El perro negro* in the *Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*, or Mazierska's contrasting of the Hitler of documentaries to the Hitler of fiction films). Films covered in the three volumes are mainly fictional features: widely distributed (though moderate by global comparisons) box-office successes such as *Downfall* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2004) or *Bend It Like Beckham* (Gurinder Chadha, 2002) are less frequently examined than auteur cinema (films by Jean-Luc Godard, Atom Egoyan, Fatih Akin, Roman Polanski, and so on), smaller-circuit festival films (like *A Little Bit of Freedom*, Yüksel Yavuz, 2003), and art-films and genre attempts influenced by the Iron Curtain, such as *12.08 East of Bucharest* (Corneliu Porumboiu, 2006) or *The Silent Star* (1960, Kurt Maetzig).

This underrepresentation of "cinema" compared to "film" (as Mazierska refers to the "box-office formulaic mainstream/not-for-profit innovative art-film" dichotomy) is clearly a consequence of the specific historical-social realities to which the various volumes are anchored. The traumas of World War Two, the Iron Curtain, and post-war migration are all capable of generating such socio-historical distances that cannot easily be covered in big-budget movies open for collective practices of empathy and large-scale effect. The overall argument implied by several of the close readings of migration films found in these books, especially *European Cinema in Motion* is that low-budget, personal films are more 'suitable' for representing such experiences of distances. Also, historical turmoils (especially collective ones) usually cause the falling apart of existing filmmaking industries (and several lucid case studies relating to this are presented in *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*), thus filmmakers cannot take for granted their former audiences and possibilities of distribution. However, strictly in terms of budget, the impossibility of accessing "cinema" and being confined to "film" (both on the part of the filmmakers and their academic interpreters), might be seen as a sign of how the entrance to the contemporary market of moving images is sanctioned for those in less powerful positions.

What is strangely missing from the overall picture in these three books is the deep technological change that film as an audiovisual medium underwent during the last 25 years: the resultant impression is that digitization seems to have left European film as an entity unmarked. Though the influence of television is repeatedly pointed out (especially by Mazierska), and archival footage also emerges as a medium in its own right, the digital turn is acknowledged only in occasional remarks. Imre illustrates the profound changes to the media industries in Eastern Europe by contrasting the quality television series and videogame franchise *The Borgias/Assassin's Creed*, produced in Hungary (2011- ) with István Szabó's 1985 film *Colonel Redl*. For Imre, the comparison affirms that, "Between 1985 and 2011, the emphasis has clearly shifted from nurturing national cinema cultures to globalizing national film industries within the

region" (2). This insight, favouring discourses of globalization over questions such as the analogue-digital turn, resonates with Mazierska's approach, whereby she makes only a passing note of how "[t]he shifts from time to space and from history to spatial discourses are explained by such factors as the proliferation of new media, especially the Internet, which allows easy access to many distant sites at once" (Mazierska, 8). The absence of "digital questions" strengthens the impression that European cinema exists solely on celluloid filmic strips, as DVD releases and online streaming, not to mention cheap and widely available digital video and mobile production equipment remain generally overlooked. Of course, these aspects are much more important than these books would suggest: contemporary diasporas and migrant communities are highly dependent on the digital sphere, and those European films of the past that are not digitally available might face oblivion without recourse to the digital.

*A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas* is arranged in four parts: 'New Theoretical and Critical Frameworks', 'Historical and Spatial Redefinitions', 'Aesthetic (Re)visions', and 'Industries and Institutions'. With several studies that could be grouped under more than one of the headings, the internal coherence of the respective parts remains weak. At the same time, these titles show that the volume avoids the usual arrangement according to national cinemas in Eastern Europe, clearly favouring problem and method-oriented approaches instead. This choice leads to an overall "trans-national" perspective emerging, with a stated goal of the editor being "to peek behind the metaphorical curtain. [...] As several contributions elaborate here for the first time, Socialist film cultures were much less isolated and insular than earlier accounts would have us believe" (5).

Thus, although the volume is explicitly founded on the East-West divide, the Eastern Europe of this *Companion* is larger than the well-known (post-)communist bloc. Geographical, political-ideological or film poetical borderlands such as Turkey (in Melis Behil's chapter "East is East? New Turkish Cinema and Eastern Europe"), Italy (in Francesco Pitassio's study of "Italian Leftist Culture and Czechoslovak Cinema, 1945-1968"), Spain (in Marsha Kinder's "*El perro negro*: Transnational Readings of Database Documentaries from Spain"), or the United Kingdom (Bjørn Sørenssen's look at "The Polish Black Series Documentary and the British Free Cinema Movement") are usefully part of the picture. In this context, even more interesting is the effort of retroactive observation of the transnational aspects of films produced in the Soviet Union satellite states prior to the fall of communism. Seemingly, film production in the Baltic states easily lends itself to such a lens (as attested to by "National Space, (Trans)National Cinema: Estonian Film in the 1960s", by Eva Näripea, and "A Comparative Study: Rein Raamat's *Big Tõll* and Priit Pärn's *Luncheon on the Grass*", by Andreas Trossek) thanks to the professional influence of

the Moscow Film Academy and Estonia's "Westernized" character, among other factors. Also, film genre studies ("Eastern European Historical Epics" by Nikolina Dobрева, or "Slovenian Cinema in a World Context" by Meta Mazaj and Shekar Deshpande) result in similar, retroactively transnationalized perspectives. The book also provides several production and career histories, such as Stefan Soldovieri's "Socialists in Outer Space: East German Film's Venusian Adventure", Ewa Mazierska's "International Co-productions as Productions of Heterotopias", or Michael Goddard's "The Impossible Polish New Wave and its Accursed Émigré Auteurs: Borowczyk, Polański, Skolimowski, and Żuławski". These chapters also prove that Eastern Bloc-Western World collaborations in film, though scarce and often due to emigration, nevertheless existed, and, even retroactively, influence may be attributed to them (such as Goddard's imagining of a Polish New Wave akin the French or the Czechoslovak based on formal, thematic characteristics of émigré auteurs).

Although more general, film industrial overviews of longer periods – excellent examples being Ioana Uricaru's "Follow the Money – Financing Contemporary Cinema in Romania" or Dorota Ostrowska's "An Alternative Model of Film Production: Film Units in Poland after World War Two – certainly outbalance close readings of films as texts in *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*, one may still encounter theoretically challenging interpretations of specific films. By such a gesture these films are positioned high in contemporary regional/national canons. But the book's best exemplification of its "first goal [...] to account for the sea-change that has transformed Eastern European cinema as a cultural, economic, institutional and political enterprise over the past 25 years" (4), are the chapters by Catherine Portuges and John Cunningham. Combining historical overview and close reading – indeed presenting the former *through* the latter – Portuges' "Jewish Identities and Generational Perspectives" takes its case studies from Hungarian cinema since the 1960s, while Cunningham's chapter gives the books a rare turn to documentary, again focusing on Hungary and its industrial decline.

However, while some admirable work is done here to transcend the perceived boundary between communist and postcommunist times (the 25 years covered by its essays overlapping with both), it ultimately only comes through with moderate success. This may well be an unavoidable result of the fact that films of the Eastern European region made during that time have often upheld such a boundary, either because film production halted in the tumultuous times of regime change or because filmmakers as "historians" have organized their material based on a fundamental division of the period in 1989-90. This means that most of the studies either stop their analysis somewhere near 1985, while others pick up the thread in the early 1990s. Indeed, historical discontinuity is further suggested by the emphasis of yet more dividing lines elsewhere, as with Bruce Williams's study of the "New Albanian Cinema", apparently

starting in 1998. In this, however, the volume also highlights the specificities and difficulties of a critically revised Eastern European cinema, since, as Imre says, "there is no better term [than Eastern Europe] that would allow for a profound understanding of the history of a divided but intertwined, two-tiered Europe" (7).

A more sustained and explicit construction of a story about the exact years of the post-communist transition – seen as an organically developing process rather than disconnected blocks of the "communist" and "post-communist" eras – is provided by Mazierska's own book-length study. Starting from the premise that historical knowledge is always already facilitated via the subjectivity of media apparatuses, Mazierska's book presents us with virtuoso applications of concepts drawn from memory and trauma studies to European film originating in the second half of the twentieth century. In the process, she makes use of a broad usage of the term "intertextuality", explaining in her introduction, "I will compare written texts, for example historical studies and biographies with cinematic texts, as well as older films with newer films, histories presented on screen with stories circulated in the media at the time they were made and, on occasion, my own memories" (16). As for the films chosen for analysis: "The majority of them refer not only to what happened, how and why, but also how it is remembered by somebody or reimagined on screen" (17).

Thanks to the author's perspective, informed by the main theoretical paradigm shifts in late twentieth century humanities in general, and discourses concerning historical knowledge, as well as cinematic histories in particular, *European Cinema and Intertextuality* is at once engaging and wide-ranging reading, which is, moreover, written with a genial prose style that doesn't restrain from simple formulations or, indeed, personal commentary, when the complex (historical) phenomena and their cinematic recreations might otherwise leave the reader lost. Mazierska's book gives an especially rich example of the combination of major theoretical models and important social and historical processes, giving a fascinating view of their interaction with the medium of film and the institution of cinema. Thus we get not only comparative analysis of Egoyan and Godard, but also trauma theory, not only Hitler in Hirschbige's or Sokurov's film, but also Hitler biography, not only a close reading of *Good Bye Lenin!* (2003, Wolfgang Becker), but also an in-depth look at theories of nostalgia.

The third volume under review may be considered as effective proof of Imre's insistence that the category of "Eastern European cinema" remains useful in the third millennium as an important conceptual tool because it acknowledges "the two-tiered nature of Europe", even in the context of the European Union project. In the volume edited by Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg "Eastern European cinema", in the sense used by



Imre, is only explicitly covered in two chapters ("Migration and Cinematic Processes in Post-Cold War Europe" by Dina Iordanova, and "Nostalgic Journeys in Post-Soviet Cinema: Towards a Lost Home?" by Birgit Beumers), while the other nine are devoted to such giant "Western European" cinematic formations as German, French, British, and four other established national cinemas that could be grouped as Mediterranean (Spanish, Italian, Greek, Turkish). This unbalance is in spite of the editors' explicit intention to "purposely [cut] across the East-West divide that is so deeply ingrained in most approaches to European cinema, even in the 2000s". However, one can sense the "two-tiered nature" of Europe even in the patterns into which migrations have been structured and according to which diasporas have been coming into being; or, as the editors state "migrant and diasporic cinema as we conceptualise it did not really come into existence as an identifiable critical mass of films until second-generation diasporic film-makers gained access to film production roughly simultaneously in Britain, France and Germany in the 1980s" (4).

One of the most important arguments made in the volume's introduction, and echoed in several of the more focused studies is that "migrant and diasporic film-makers have not only enriched and revitalised European cinema but also brought about what we conceptualise as the World Cinema turn in European cinema" (5). Therefore the volume turns out to be not only a powerful realignment of the contemporary European cinema canon towards World cinema, it also presents us with detailed discussions of important critical categories (from *cinéma de métissage* to "diasporic optic" (13), most eminently discussed in Berghahn and Sternberg's "Locating Migrant and Diasporic Cinema"). This lends the book an extraordinary richness, not only in the breadth of films and filmmakers analyzed (linking Europe to the Caribbean, Africa and elsewhere), but also a delightful diversity of theoretical sources employed throughout. Such variety attests to the viability of the field known as World cinema, and especially to the dynamic and ever-expanding legacy of post-World War Two filmmakers with cultural identities originating outside Europe.

The studies in the volume *European Cinema in Motion* may be grouped in two categories, depending on their analytical perspectives: whether on the filmic medium and cinematic industries, or wider cultural studies and cultural industries more generally. In the first category we may include the several chapters on the practical conditions experienced in state and transnational frameworks by migrant and diasporic communities in contemporary Europe. These include the previously mentioned chapter by Dina Iordanova, a well-argued plea for post-colonial interpretative frameworks; Anne Jäckel's extremely useful overview of "State and Other Funding for Migrant, Diasporic and World Cinemas in Europe"; and Gareth Jones's "Future Imperfect: Some Onward Perspectives on Migrant and



Diasporic Film Practice", which offers valuable insider knowledge on state-of-the-art financing and support.

Filmic sound, genre and metacinematic questions are also examined via analysis of films by migrant or diasporic filmmakers who have some relation to Europe, further deepening the analysis of the filmic medium in canons other than the dominant white and Western European. These topics are covered in three well-documented, innovative chapters that might have far-reaching consequences for conceptualizing melodrama in the context of Europe (Deniz Göktürk's "Sound Bridges: Transnational Mobility as Ironic Melodrama"), the youth film (Bergahn's own chapter "Coming of Age in 'the Hood': The Diasporic Youth Film and Questions of Genre"), and metacinematic films (Sternberg's "Migration, Diaspora, and Metacinematic Reflection").

Several other chapters would be worthy of mention for which there is not space enough here. Some examine the relation between migrant or diasporic cinema and the cultural and social spheres at large, mainly taking up issues of cultural mixing resulting in hybridity and transculturation. Also, interpretations founded on the gendered and embodied identities of filmmakers and/or their characters also form an important group in the volume, with Carrie Tarr's "Gendering Diaspora: The Work of Diasporic Women Film-Makers in Western Europe" succeeding in presenting historically specific gender formations as simultaneously operational in the filmmakers' lives and the textures of their films.

All three of these books prove to be more or less dense reads. In each, names of directors, cinema historical events, and theoretical concepts appear as threads around which the many arguments are woven, whether in Imre's collection on a geographical region's cinema, Mazierska's theoretical (though sometimes personal) account of history as film, or Berghahn and Sternberg's volume about migration and its cinematic view. The keywords 'European cinema' and 'post-World War Two', which these books broadly have in common, inevitably open onto such further issues as historical change manifested through several (traumatized) generations, geographical movement around the continent, a persisting East/West divide, cultural hybridization in and by cinema, various national new waves modelled on the Nouvelle Vague, not to mention definitions of such sticky concepts as mainstream and genre.

One might conclude that twenty-first century critical consensus is emerging concerning developments in post World War Two European cinema. In this narrative the history of Germany plays a central role in/for the European filmic imaginary, while France appears as an intermediary, a broker of artistic templates, but also the chief founding body for European coproductions (with the EU network programmes overtaking to a degree).

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Furthermore, postcommunist national filmmaking industries are still deemed unevenly integrated with industries west of the Iron Curtain – and this in spite of the idea that European cinema is unified also because it envisages itself as an environment open towards its political/geographical peripheries and neighbours.

With all of the reviewed volumes attempting critical, canonical and/or historical re-interpretations, the reader is by default introduced to accepted notions of Eastern European cinema, diasporic cinema, or European history and cinema. Thus all of the volumes should be accessible to a general interest readership, though to different degrees. *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas* requires a fairly deep knowledge of the region's historically specific cultural and filmic features, and also familiarity with contemporary humanities-influenced film interpretation, thus it could be recommended to those already possessing some undergraduate training and further specific interest in the field. *European Cinema in Motion*, by virtue of its more reader-friendly features (a final cumulative filmography, shorter chapters – of which several practical and industry-oriented – and a general topic already known to many from news headlines) might offer easier entrance. The most coherent of the three (admittedly helped by the fact that it comes from a single author), *European Cinema and Intertextuality* paradoxically seems to need truly dedicated readers, with equal interest (if not training) in (Eastern) European Cinema and post World War Two European history.

## ***Existentialism and Social Engagement in the Films of Michael Mann***

**By Vincent M. Gaine**

Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. ISBN: 9780230301054. ix + 251pp. £52.25 (hbk)

## ***Maximum Movies–Pulp Fictions: Film Culture and the Worlds of Samuel Fuller, Mickey Spillane, and Jim Thompson***

**By Peter Stanfield**

New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2011. ISBN: 9780813550626. xiii + 227pp. £21.38 (pbk)

### **A review by Michael Ahmed, University of East Anglia**

The examination of the work of filmmakers throws up a wide range of different methodologies for the scholar to use. The approaches taken by both Vincent M. Gaine in his analysis of Michael Mann and Peter Stanfield in his book on Samuel Fuller, Mickey Spillane, and Jim Thompson offer testament to the fact that the careful selection of the right methodology can provide hitherto undiscovered insights into a body of work. Both these books put forward arguments that not only offer a new appreciation of their respective subjects, but also give instructive examples of how different methodological frameworks can be used.

Gaine's book exhaustively examines the work of the American director Michael Mann. The author's approach is perhaps the more conventional of the two under review here, in terms of traditional work on auteurship, whereby the author makes use of David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's 'theory of authorship [that] identifies directors who create a body of work that is consistent, distinctive and even profound as auteurs' (13). In this respect, Gaine argues, Mann 'can be regarded as an auteur' (13). Establishing Mann's credentials as an auteur is essential to Gaine's central thesis then, and chapter one is primarily concerned with an analysis and discussion of that claim. In order to strengthen his argument, Gaine makes use of several specific criteria – "textual analysis, the production process, and the marketing and reception of films" (13) – to demonstrate how responsibility can be assigned to Mann as the author of his work. With this established, Gaine ends the chapter by concluding that 'Michael Mann's oeuvre has been recognised by fans and critics alike as delivering distinctive and consistent work, and his high levels of control [over the production of his films] have facilitated his ability to do so, ensuring that his preoccupations receive the necessary expression' (27). In coming to this conclusion, Gaine argues,

all of Mann's films dramatise existential philosophy, exploring the protagonists' worldviews and the issues raised by these views. The films dramatise the philosophy through what I shall define as the protagonists' *existential guiding ethic*, which is a personally decided code of conduct applied by the protagonists to their social roles within the world of the film. (1; emphasis in the original)

In order to confirm this thesis, Gaine takes the reader through an exhaustive, film-by-film, analysis of Mann's work, giving individual chapters to each production from *Thief* (1981) to *Ali* (2001), with a brief reference to *Public Enemies* (2009) in the final chapter.

In a clearly argued introductory chapter that seeks to clarify the definition of existentialism, Gaine points out that, 'Existential philosophy is a term given to a collection of works that deal with the individual who decides upon the meaning of existence and then lives according to those decisions' (3). In order to link existentialism to Mann's films, Gaine argues that 'fundamental to existentialism is the notion of personal responsibility, not only for one's actions but also for the meaning of such actions and the overall meaning of one's existence' (3). According to Gaine, Mann's trademark character type, referred to by the author as the Mann Man, is represented by "determined protagonists who maintain commitment to their particular personal beliefs, and in doing so drive the narrative and inflect the world of the film" (2). In establishing the groundwork for the existential philosophy by which Mann's characters live their lives, as well as the conflict such a lifestyle has with what Gaine refers to as social engagement ('the activities of mutual advantage and cooperation' (37)), the author demonstrates, through close reading of the texts, how this argument applies to Mann's films.

The quality and coherence of Gaine's central thesis therefore rests on his analysis of Mann's films. Making this more complicated is the fact that Mann's films are not confined to one specific genre; for example, *Thief*, *Manhunter* (1986), and *Heat* (1995) are crime films, *The Keep* (1983) is a horror film, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) is based on the historical novel by James Fenimore Cooper, and *Ali* is based on the life story of the boxer Muhammad Ali. Locating authorial patterns within such disparate material is not easy. Nonetheless, as Gaine points out, 'Mann's creative choices suggest conscious decisions to express certain themes' (24), and throughout his analysis the author clearly establishes a convincing image of the struggle embodied in Mann's Man between existential philosophy and social engagement. While this central theme may be obscure to the general reader, Gaine succeeds in making a potentially abstract subject engaging. Furthermore, the reader does not have to be familiar with Mann's films in order to appreciate the argument Gaine makes. Nonetheless, any scholars of Mann's *oeuvre* will appreciate the author's attempt to engage with Mann's films on a philosophical level, as well as

his use of a wide range of existing material on the filmmaker. This is emphasised by Gaine's engagement with the standard work of philosophers such as Heidegger, Nietzsche and Sartre, as well as broader work on film and philosophy, for example, Murray Smith and Thomas E. Wartenberg's edited collection *Thinking Through Cinema: Film as Philosophy* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), and Mary E. Leitch's *Philosophy Through Film* (Routledge, 2002).

The main problem faced by this eclectic approach is whether the reader is willing to accept Gaine's primary thesis, a question that is difficult to overcome because existential philosophy is, of course, not for everyone. Nevertheless, whether the reader agrees or disagrees with the author's method, the book is a solid and useful analysis of Mann's work, and not only contributes to the existing scholarship on Mann valuably, but also offers a useful composite methodological framework for analysing the work of other directors.

While the films of Michael Mann have gained artistic credibility within the critical establishment, the films about which Stanfield writes constitute an area of filmmaking characterised by "regulated production with built-in obsolescence, streamlined by convention with interchangeable parts, ensured maximum impact, with a surfeit of attractions to maintain maximum interest, maximum excitement today, along with the promise of more of the same tomorrow" (4). The book, as Stanfield notes in his introduction, is "about film culture and the movies that critics have variously labeled pulp, punk, trash, termite, and noir, [and] tells the story of how critics and scholars reinvented film culture and, for a short while, put American pulp movies of the 1950s center stage" (4-5).

Drawing on a range of primary source material, including contemporary newspaper articles and reviews, Stanfield demonstrates how previously disregarded films like the tough crime film *Kiss Me Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1955), the lurid psychological melodrama *Shock Corridor* (Samuel Fuller, 1963), the horror film *I Walked with a Zombie* (Jacques Tourneur, 1943), and the western *Terror in a Texas Town* (Joseph H. Lewis, 1958), were reappraised by critics like Pauline Kael, Lawrence Alloway, and Raymond Durgnat, as well as scholars like Paddy Whannel, Jim Kitses, Colin McArthur, and Alan Lovell. Stanfield argues that "these critics and scholars were working within and against critical traditions that managed and maintained a cultural hierarchy that assigned commercial arts to the lowest rung on the arts ladder" (5), as he outlines the attempt throughout the 1950s and 1960s to re-establish mass-produced culture as a form worthy of study. Important to this project, Stanfield notes, is understanding the "historically shifting terrain that explains differences in taste along class lines mapped out on a loosely constructed hierarchical tripartite frame of highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow" (5), and it is this

struggle, and the blurring of these distinctions, with which the author is concerned in his analysis throughout the book.

Unlike Gaine's book, which concentrates on the work of one filmmaker's career in chronological order, Stanfield's analysis takes a different approach. Chapter one is an introductory chapter that "examines the shift from critical to theoretical perspectives on American pulp movies" (8), and discusses how the work of several critics from the 1950s to the 1970s, like Alloway and Manny Farber, sought to reposition popular film genres, such as crime and science fiction, into a wider historical context of change within the arts as a whole. Embracing pop art, the underground, and the *avant-garde*, films like Fuller's *Pickup on South Street* (1953) or Don Siegal's *The Lineup* (1958), represented insights into changes in American society and culture, and therefore could (or should) not be easily ignored.

After establishing this critical framework, Stanfield shifts on to an examination of "the boom in pulp magazine publishing in the 1920s, through the downturn in the 1930s and into the 1940s" (8). He traces "the shifting meanings in the use of pulp as first a term of disdain before becoming a marker of distinction" (9) in the critical reception of the crime novels of the authors Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Mickey Spillane. Analysing the critical reception in America and Britain, and to some extent France, Stanfield demonstrates how this popular culture began to be taken seriously – he also avoids potential problems regarding different definitions of popular culture by noting that "its meaning is still in flux" (72). This chapter offers a useful and thorough historical analysis of the shifts and changes in critical theory that took place during the post-war period. Using the pulp fiction of the 1920s as a starting point, and examining titles such as *Spicy Western Stories*, *Black Mask*, *Dime Mystery Magazine*, and others Stanfield notes how pulp "made the long journey from being a noun for organic matter to becoming a term of disdain, before becoming a marker of distinction against which the quotidian and mediocre can better be recognized" (44). Shifting away from earlier arguments that examined the critical work of *Cahiers du cinéma* and the re-evaluation of American popular culture through movies, Stanfield's analysis includes original research on the development of the American pulps. Stanfield also notes how the later critically regarded work of Hammett and Chandler – with tough private detective novels featuring the characters Sam Spade, the Continental Op, and Philip Marlowe respectively – "gave a belated respectability to the pulps" (51). Nonetheless, the growth of "girly and lowbrow magazines" (60) in the 1950s, and the commercial success of Mickey Spillane's hardboiled crime novels featuring the brutal private detective Mike Hammer (as many cultural commentators and critics noted) was an indication "of the cultural malaise facing the country" (58). Stanfield thus highlights the tension that



existed between highbrow respectability and lowbrow commercial success.

He goes on to explore this tension more fully in chapter three, by examining the debates following the release of the movie adaptation of Spillane's novel *Kiss Me Deadly*. Stanfield draws on the favourable reception of Robert Aldrich's film version among critics such as Francois Truffaut and Claude Chabrol in *Cahiers du cinéma*. As Stanfield points out, Truffaut's comparison between *Kiss Me Deadly* and Jean Cocteau's surrealist *Le Sang d'un poète* (1932), made a legitimating connection between "art house and grind house" (79). Nevertheless, Stanfield argues that although the "filmmakers were engaged in the commercial exploitation of Mike Hammer" (77) – the private detective hero of the book – the sex and violence of Spillane's creation, although refined by the final script, still led to American critics to condemn the movie. Stanfield's analysis demonstrates how shifts in this critical perception, reflecting broader changes in taste and cultural distinctions, led to the film version of *Kiss Me Deadly's* acceptance into the American Library of Congress collection as a work of art.

In chapter four Stanfield examines the career of the American director Samuel Fuller, placing the critical and scholarly reception of the filmmaker within the context of his wider career. This not only includes Fuller's films, but also his pulp novels of the 1970s, his wartime experiences, and his work in newspapers, and demonstrates how Fuller's career, which was initially ignored by American film critics, became part of a larger debate on film cultures in the UK. Stanfield argues that Fuller's films were used by both the cinephilia left and the right as a "totem" (124). In particular, he fascinatingly points out that the political concerns of the British film critics, who were asking "how can you love the attractions of commercial cinema and at the same time hate the repressive forces of capitalism that produced those films?" (124-125), found in Fuller's films a suggestion "of living with that contradiction" (125).

Finally, in chapter six Stanfield notes how pulp and neo-noir have become legitimized within popular culture. The mid-1980s adaptations of the pulp novels of Jim Thompson deliberately echoed the earlier films of Aldrich and Fuller. However the tension between highbrow and lowbrow, Stanfield points out, have shifted significantly in favour of popular culture. In this respect, indeed, the films of Michael Mann can be viewed as part of this shift. Mann's crime films, as Gaine notes in his book, are frequently referred to as containing the generic elements of *noir*; nonetheless, Mann's films retain the critical, academic and artistic credibility only now retrospectively given to the work to which Stanfield refers.

In terms of potential readership, Gaine's book is more likely to appeal to the serious academic or film scholar. Nevertheless, despite the density of

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the argument, the author's approach is always readable. Stanfield's book is arguably more populist in terms of subject matter; nonetheless this does not mean the author's scholarship is anything other than thorough and methodical. Taken together these books demonstrate the range of scholarly methodologies that can be used to unpack and analyse the works of mainstream and less 'valued' cinema, both offering equally valuable and mutually complementary insights into the creative practices and intellectual reception of popular filmmaking.

***Not Hollywood: Independent Film at the Twilight of the American Dream***

**By Sherry B. Ortner**

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013. ISBN 9780822354260. 3 illustrations, vi + 331pp. £16.99 (pbk)

***Indie, Inc.: Miramax and the Transformation of Hollywood in the 1990s***

**By Alisa Perren**

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012. ISBN 9780292729124. 26 illustrations, x + 308pp. £42.00 (hbk)

***Hollywood's Indies: Classics Divisions, Specialty Labels and the American Film Market***

**By Yannis Tzioumakis**

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780748640126. vi + 234pp. £60.00 (hbk)

**A review by Steven Rawle, York St John University**

The field of American independent cinema has been well served by academic publishing in the past decade or so. These three new entries to the corpus of writing on America's 'alternative' cinema come at a time when independent cinema in the US is seemingly at a crossroads: technology is shifting the ways in which films are funded, produced and distributed; Hollywood has closed most of its specialty wings; the home video market has flat-lined; and American cable television programming has, arguably, eaten into the prestige niche audience that had become the target for films outside of the mainstream. This might suggest that this is a good time to look at the history of independent cinema's boom, its institutionalisation within Hollywood and the key figures and companies involved in the boom and bust of the indie generation.

This is a climate well covered by Ortner, Perren and Tzioumakis, who each chart, from different angles, both the explosion of independent cinema and its subsequent retreat from mainstream cinemas. Examining the uncertainty of independent cinema following the 2007 financial collapse and the subsequent 'shakedown' of Hollywood's indie wings, Ortner argues that the outlook is hopeful for independent cinema in whatever form it takes. Tzioumakis and Perren are less optimistic, both charting the unsustainable growth of the indiewood sector that led to the burst of the bubble and the beginning of a new era for Hollywood's business practices. Usefully, Perren pitches her book not as one about independent cinema

*per se*, although this is necessarily a focus given her subject is Miramax, but one that explores how Hollywood changed in relation to the indie cinema revolution, particularly in how mid-level films were shunted from studio to specialty production. Each of the three texts makes an important contribution to how we understand the grey area of independent cinema. As they both follow approaches to media industry studies, *Hollywood's Indies* and *Indie, Inc.* are complementary. Although Tzioumakis doesn't include a chapter on Miramax, Harvey and Bob Weinstein's company is a key player in his story of the inception, expansion and closure of a number of key independent companies, as all of them in some way revolve around the orbit of the Weinsteins' venture. The company threads in as such, his book and Perren's read well together, with similar methodologies and with interlinked histories. Ortner's book on the other hand takes a significantly different tack.

Ortner is an anthropologist and *Not Hollywood* is her first book on cinema. The book blends methods of ethnography, anthropology, sociology and media and cultural studies. Taking a lead from Clifford Geertz' cultural anthropology and John Thornton Caldwell's recent work on the study of production cultures, she blends observation on film sets, participation in film festivals, field notes from filmmaker Q & A sessions and interviews (her own and those already in print), stating that she "treat[s] them as texts to be taken apart in order to understand the language, the discourse, and the modes of self-expression of the world of independent film [which] represents another way to get 'inside' a cultural world" (27). These "modes of self-expression" are located in "public culture", as defined by Arjun Appadurai and Carol Beckenridge as "a zone of cultural debate" and ultimately of "cultural critique" (7). This is Ortner's critical position on independent cinema, as it enacts – in the discourse of filmmakers or in the *stories* of the films themselves – a critique of a dominant cultural formation. The discourse of cultural critique runs throughout the book, with a number of core themes: darkness, the immigrant experience, paedophilia, the experience of white women in new class formations, and the explicit politicisation of recent documentaries. Ortner adopts the conventional position of Hollywood as hegemonic, and sometimes the work engages with a broader spectrum of films than just those in the independent sector, as in chapter two, which uses *Slacker* (Richard Linklater, 1991), *Reality Bites* (Ben Stiller, 1994), *Office Space* (Mike Judge, 1999) and *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) to demonstrate how a range of films have adopted attitudes to work (versus slacking) and to neoliberal capitalism as a key defining issue of Generation X filmmakers. Although Ortner points out that these films range from micro-budget (*Slacker*), low-budget studio work (*Reality Bites* and *Office Space*) to big budget studio 'indie' (*Fight Club*), the discussion ranges beyond the limits of films strictly made outside the studio system. Indeed, as all three of these books testify strict classifications in this area can often be difficult to assess.

In chapter one, Ortner uses a definition from Bob Rosen, a founder board member of the Independent Features Project (and former UCLA professor), to classify the discourse of independence. Attempting to determine what defined independent film, the IFP suggested “risk-taking in content and style”, a “personal vision”, “non-Hollywood finance” and a “valuation of art over money” (32). Ortner uses this definition to show how these principles shape the public culture and its discourses in independent cinema, in its films and the “public representation” at festivals, in print and online. These value-driven judgements are largely independent of financial considerations, as Ortner points out in chapter three, in agreement with key figures on the indie wood movement, Geoff Gilmore and James Schamus, that “the commercial motives behind the opening of the specialty divisions do not necessarily negate the artistic and idealistic motives (and achievements) of the independent filmmakers who work within them” (97-8). Perren and Tzioumakis also use value- or quality-driven determinations to classify independent cinema, although their books largely position quality as it is defined as a market-driven value, one used to position films for niche audiences. Interestingly, Perren shows in the case of Miramax that this became tangled up in the mid-level prestige cinema of Hollywood, at a remove from the aesthetic risk-taking and personal visions of independent cinema as defined by Ortner.

*Not Hollywood* alternates its chapters between those on the public discourses of independent value and production, with chapters on the concept of independence articulated by practitioners and in spaces such as festivals; on the notion of “the scene” as a classed structure; on the value generated by producers; and on the on-set relationships between above- and below-the-line practitioners. The alternate chapters examine a sample of films (some of which are independently produced, some are products of studios and specialty wings) as they engage with the ramifications of neoliberal capitalism, the changing class structures of American society and, as the title of the book suggests, the end of the American dream. Ortner roots the struggles in the lack of hope for Generation Xers and their standing as the first generation since the Great Depression to be less successful than their parents. While the analysis of the films is generally on the level of narrative discourse – independent of the films’ stylistic tropes – the sociological context and analysis is highly impressive. Although the themes of Generation X have been explored before in works looking at this sector of cinema, most recently in Claire Perkins’ *American Smart Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), Ortner’s analysis is marked by strong sociological research and a nuanced reading of how the “darkness”, moral ambiguity, growing focus on non-ethnic class structures and the explicit politicisation of the new documentary movement makes a strong contribution to our understanding of how the core themes of the independent, “indie” or indie wood scenes are engaged in critique (even on an unconscious level, as Ortner notes that many filmmakers are keen to distance themselves

from politics or history lessons, mainly for commercial purposes). The focus on documentary is also one that hasn't strongly been seen in many works on independent cinema, which have tended to focus on narrative features and the distinctions that separate them from those of Hollywood. Ortner's impressive sociological focus also extends to film production cultures. In particular, the coverage of investors and producers marks this out from many books on independent cinema, which often focus solely on *auteurs*, or on executives and film companies (as is the case in both Tzioumakis and Perren).

Chapter three looks at the emergence of the indie film "scene", the production companies, film schools, organizations and festivals that contribute to the shape of what is understood as independent cinema. However, this chapter also examines how the reshaped financial and class structures in the US under neoliberal capitalism have shaped the "new breed of investors" (145) in the form of the Professional Managerial Class. In the late 1990s, a series of economic bubbles shaped a new entrepreneur with high levels of social and cultural capital and also with a progressive political outlook in keeping with the spirit of independent cinema. Although Ortner's history of independent cinema is here fairly truncated, skimming through the formation of key festivals, New York and Los Angeles scenes, and the importance of film schools and *Filmmaker* magazine, the shift in thinking toward class and social and culture values generated by investors and producers is a valuable move in the field of independent film studies. Like the investors, Ortner argues that producers have a high level of educational capital: she finds that 100 per cent of producers have completed a BA degree, and many have higher qualifications, often from prestigious institutions (151). She also reflects on the growing number of female producers since the 1970s, insightfully observing how discourse about their behaviours can often code them as feminine or motherly, caring and nurturing a project. This allows for an excellent account of how value is formed by and for independent cinema via the producers who drive the productions into the marketplace. The sociological-ethnographic focus on production in the book amounts to an excellent contribution to the understanding of the process of production in the sector, rather than simply its products. Ortner's book is also highly readable and engaging, and will provide an excellent text for anyone who teaches undergraduates in either practice- or theory-based production studies.

As mentioned above, since Miramax is a key player in Tzioumakis's book, but too big to form a focus in the context of his scope, reading Perren's work alongside it is especially useful in plugging the gap. Both texts adopt approaches that are becoming common in the growing area of media industry studies. For Perren, this approach

blends political economy's critical approach with cultural studies' concern with the power struggles that occur over the



value of and meanings within specific texts. Media industry studies' call for historical specificity and its emphasis on empirical research make it a productive means through which to conduct an analysis of Miramax. (5)

For Tzioumakis (when talking about Perren's approach in an earlier article on *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (Joel Zwick, 2002)), "the jury is still out" on how a such a field of studies would be received as a discipline, but it "nevertheless opens the way to carrying out research on particular media organisations and subjects that, until recently, could have been methodologically questionable" (17). As both note, the difficulties of such studies of Hollywood industry organisations is that the primary sources are often closed and inaccessible (in her book, Ortnner states that she did intend a study of Hollywood itself until she found access to be impossible), consequently leading both to turn to an assortment of secondary texts, including trade and industry analysis journals, the popular press, specialised magazines, as well as (in the case of Tzioumakis) interviews with key personnel only to verify the veracity of such information. Neither is an 'insider' exposé, then, although both examine the processes and practices of the business of 'independent cinema' in its various forms.

Tzioumakis's book examines a number of companies that emerged in American cinema as distributors and producers from the 1980s onwards. The book begins in 1980 with the formation of United Artists Classics, a body initially set up to distribute MGM's substantial catalogue. This first section, entitled "Independent" looks at some of the earliest companies who began initially in distribution of studio classics, then the acquisition and distribution of art-house European cinema before branching into the acquisition of American-produced arthouse fare. As he did in his earlier book *American Independent Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), Tzioumakis helps expand the understanding of this sector beyond some of the major players and beyond understanding the political discourse of the texts of American independent films. Indeed the book (and Perren's) helps further the understanding of American independent *cinema* as not simply those products of American filmmakers (as many were products of transnational capital), but also world cinema, particularly from Italy and Britain, the production and distribution of genre films, and reissues. Just as the earlier book placed Orion into the frame of independent cinema (although many of their products, such as *RoboCop* (Paul Verhoeven, 1987) didn't fit the anti-Hollywood aesthetic understood as central to the independent spirit), so this book does for United Artists Classics, Triumph Films, Universal Classics, Twentieth Century Fox International Classics and Orion's classics subsidiary. Each chapter includes a case study of a key film as "representative" (16) of each of the divisions.

Like both Ortner and Perren, Tzioumakis ends his book with “the great studio pullback of 08-09” (216). He argues that the independent sector, as he alternatively terms the niche or speciality sector (although the final section is titled “Indiewood”), collapsed amid a “box office slump, overproduction, increased competition, the cluttered release schedule, the huge rise in production and marketing costs, and the increasing excursion of specialty labels into studio release methods” (217), prompting a number of organisations, such as Time Warner, to summarily close their specialty wings. With the acquisitions market becoming a victim of its own success in inflated bidding wars (although the qualified success of *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (Behn Zeitlin, 2012) does suggest there is still the place for the prestige acquisition, but that breakout crossover hits are very few and far between), studios competing with their own blockbusters for screen space and the DVD market slowing down, as well as the global financial crisis, signalled an end to a prosperous era.

Tzioumakis shows productively that the growth of the speciality sector benefitted strongly from Hollywood marketing strategies, such as stardom, auteurism and genre. He concludes that the sector’s downfall came about due to unsustainable growth, risky ventures into big budget production and shifts in focus away from platform releasing and niche marketing. This works despite some problematic judgements concerning why some divisions were mis-managed and why others prospered, such as when he argues that “Fine Line could have been competitive if it had had firm direction” (103), a speculation that doesn’t fit the analytical thread of the book. Subsequently, the major hero in the book emerges as Sony Pictures Classics, risen from the ashes of Orion Classics, with their focus on US and European acquisitions and conservative risk management.

Perren’s book follows the growth of the indie sector in Hollywood and how this transformed not just the business of “Indie, Inc.” but of Hollywood itself. However, in so doing, Perren looks beyond her central focus on Miramax to important sectors of the growing indie-branded scene, such as Sundance, and other production companies, like Castle Rock, and distribution and production companies, such as October and Gramercy. This breadth doesn’t prevent the book from making a thorough analysis of Miramax, from the breakout success of *sex, lies and videotape* (Steven Soderbergh) in 1989 to the Oscar success of *Shakespeare in Love* in 1999. Perren argues that Miramax’s initial success was built on judicious acquisitions of US and European cinema, and a number of financial deals, including one with British bank Midland Montagu, helped Miramax kick off the beginning of the 1990s boom. Perren argues that Miramax’s development through this period was made possible by key marketing successes, such as the quality prestige of *sex, lies and videotape* and the Hollywood nostalgia of *Cinema Paradiso* (Guiseppe Tornatore, 1990), but that the company’s reputation, and subsequent sale to Disney, was built

on the success of British cinema. Through a connection with Palace Pictures, Miramax acquired a number of British films, such as *Scandal* (Michael Caton-Jones, 1989) and *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992). Perren contends that the latter was the film that set the Miramax mould: salacious marketing and sensationalism, playing up the film's controversial content (which she later contends was paradoxically pitched against the company's downplaying of controversy in *Kids* (Larry Clark, 1995) and the numerous ratings battles the Weinsteins pursued as a means of marketing their films). While prestige was a driver of quality in the Miramax brand, with later successes like *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993), Perren plays close attention to the company's Dimension genre brand. While Tzioumakis includes material on genre in his book, Perren has greater focus in her history of Miramax on the breadth of product developed by the company in its better funded days under Disney. Dimension, she argues, re-awakened the teen market, and developed franchise pictures, such as the *Scream* (1996-2011) and *Scary Movie* (2000-2013) series. (Notably, like the Dimension brand itself, both series have since followed the Weinsteins to their new venture, The Weinstein Company.)

The core argument of the book contends that by the mid-1990s, the film industry had differentiated into three distinct tiers: the Majors, producing blockbusters for mass audiences in mainstream genres; the Studio-based indies (as the term had become a form of branding), producing lower budget works for niche audiences, including teens and ethnic audiences; and the "true" independents ("true" presumably signalling their position outside the major conglomerates) like Strand and Cinepix, acquiring and releasing the micro-budget works that were limited to art-house exhibition. Miramax however, Perren argues, were heading into the territory of the mid-range picture (costing between \$25 and \$60 million to produce); that is, while the studios had shifted this production to their indie wings, lowering budgets in the process, but Miramax were heading the other way (154-159). In the end, Miramax "drove up costs for the entire industry, alienated Disney executives, and generated ample negative press" (225). As the bubble burst the space was filled, Perren alleges, by new indie companies such as Lions Gate.

Perren's book usefully demonstrates (as does Tzioumakis's) how Hollywood shifted its business practices in relation to the explosion of independent cinema. Once independent cinema became a viable form of investment, the sector became more lucrative, more competitive and in the end over-filled with product, as distribution companies moved more and more into riskier and riskier production (which for Perren's book is the mid-range "pariah"). Both books give us a stronger picture of the business practices and marketing strategies of the film industry. In many respects, the shift to media industry studies gives a stronger platform from which to explore the practice of industries like these. Terms like

## Book Reviews

independent, indie and indiewood are used throughout each of the three books here, and their application can often be problematic in their overlapping historical moments, in Perren's and Tzioumakis's histories the terms indie and indiewood tend to overlap. Each of the three books tends to emphasise the problematic discursive construction of independence, industrially, textually and historically. Together though they give a broader picture of the politics, social relationships within and the cultures surrounding what we understand as 'independent cinema'. Perren and Tzioumakis, in keeping with media industry studies at large, offer a deepened understanding of the business of independent cinema, particularly its back end of acquisitions and distribution and the risk inherent in production. Meanwhile Ortner's book makes a fascinating contribution to the messy sociocultural terrain of independent cinema and how we understand its place as public culture, from its investment to its production and its textual meanings in the ways it negotiates, critiques and makes sense of the neoliberal culture in which it has found itself over the past thirty years. Each of the three texts gives us productive new insights into American independent cinema and the contemporary Hollywood environment, and all look to developing avenues in film studies; the eventual forms these take should be highly anticipated.

***Black and Blue: The Bruising Passion of Camera Lucida, La Jetee, Sans Soleil and Hiroshima Mon Amour***

**By Carol Mavor**

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780822352716. 200 pp. £16.99 (pbk)

***Temporality and Film Analysis***

**By Matilda Mroz**

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. ISBN 9780748643462. 240 pp. £65.00 (hbk)

**A review by John A. Riley, independent scholar.**

Both of these books consider European art films in terms of their creation of a cinematic temporality distinct from the goal-oriented narratives exemplified by Hollywood filmmaking. In both cases three films are chosen for in-depth analysis. However, the similarities are superficial as both writers take very divergent stylistic and methodological approaches to their chosen material. While Carol Mavor's book takes an impressionistic, belletristic approach to the films she writes about, Matilda Mroz uses a much more conventional academic structure to apply ideas drawn from Bergson and phenomenology to her chosen material.

Carol Mavor's career-long research into French cultural giants Marcel Proust and Roland Barthes informs and inspires her reading of three key films from the Parisian left-bank movement, usually seen as the less playful, more intellectually committed branch of the nouvelle vague. *La Jetée* (1962), *Sans Soleil* (1983) and *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) are closely linked via personnel; Chris Marker made the first two, and the third was directed by Alain Resnais, who earlier collaborated with Marker on *Nuit et Brouillard* (1955), and, as Mavor informs us in an aside, Marker also worked on *Hiroshima Mon Amour* for a short time (104). As the three films discussed in the book come from the same close-knit intellectual milieu (and the theoretical framework, drawn from Proust and Roland Barthes, comes from a closely connected French intellectual tradition) one might expect a contextual background explaining the collective mindset and the social conditions that allowed these productions to come into being. Mavor is no fledgling scholar constructing a specific thesis, and this is a book relying on personal response, so such groundwork may not be necessary for some. Nonetheless, an understanding of what the left bank means to Mavor would have anchored what follows.

Instead, Mavor favours a more personal, reflective, free-ranging approach that is in keeping with Barthes and Proust, who supply the theoretical

framework that underpins *Black and Blue*. I mentioned the distinct temporality of the European arthouse tradition; Mavor's treatment of this is abstract, and presided over by Roland Barthes' late work, specifically his book *Camera Lucida* from which comes the notion of the punctum, the emotional bruise that can spring from some small frozen detail in a photograph. Though usually classed as a theorist, Barthes' career moved from the rigorous system of semiotics to personal, idiosyncratic works that combined autobiography, elegy and reflection and tested the very limits of academic conventions. Mavor follows suit; it is a style that is dense, allusive, sometimes playful, sometimes melancholic, as she broaches her personal memories. This style presents problems for those more used to an academic approach; undergraduates reaching for material on Marker or Resnais will be confounded, and scholars who insist on research being grounded in prior scholarship and coming to a clear conclusion will be unimpressed by Mavor's free-floating observations.

Alluding to the bruise of Barthes' punctum, Mavor keeps returning to the terms "black" and "blue", the brief introduction taking the form of a personal meditation on their significance. But if these are useful theoretical concepts or terms, they are never adequately defined or even elaborated on in any detail. The closest we get is halfway through the third of four chapters, when Mavor comments "The Artist [...] does not usually migrate between the beautiful (what I figure as a qualified blue) and the political (what I figure as a qualified black)" (88).

There follows a chapter on Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, which one might assume would lay out the theoretical basis for the film readings to come, but this does not happen. For those already familiar with Barthes' argument as laid out in the book, Mavor moves from a welter of Freudian birth images to a fascinating, sensitive and intricate reading of an often-neglected aspect of the book – its consideration of race. Mavor calls Barthes out on the "patronizing racism" (29) he employs in his reading of James Van der Zee's photographs. She then goes on to discuss the artists Kara Walker and Betye Saar and their art that comments upon and subverts such patronising, paternalistic attitudes while making striking use of black and blue imagery. *Camera Lucida*, Mavor surmises, is "a story of desire for the maternal that is nurtured by photographs whose very texture tells the story of the nourishment of race" (39).

The rest of the chapter is a rhapsody that takes in the photography of Carrie Mae Weems, Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* (Harvard University Press, 1992) and the film *A Patch of Blue* (Guy Green, 1965), among many others works. Although Barthes' racism (he calls the black people in the photograph naive, and uses the term "solacing mammy") is returned to, Mavor leaves this tension open-ended, only referring back to Barthes' groundbreaking semiotic analysis of the myth of a French empire embodied in a photograph of a black soldier saluting the tricolore.



The chapter on *La Jetée* gives an original reading of the film; Mavor understands it as a kind of fairy tale, along with Alice in Wonderland, Rip van Winkle and Sleeping Beauty. *La Jetée* is allusive, elusive and multivalent. Mavor's analysis drifts between details from the film (such as the protagonist's T-shirt, emblazoned with the Mexican wrestler and superhero El Santo, who Mavor sees, along with Marker's protagonist, as being emblematic of the "jet-man" from Barthes' eponymous essay) to other artists, from Lewis Carroll to Joseph Cornell. However, for such an open film, which deals with everything from nuclear war (thereby connecting it to *Hiroshima Mon Amour*) to ghosts and time travel, Mavor's chapter forgoes direct engagement with these themes in favour of free association. *La Jetée*'s succession of frozen images is ripe for an interpretation drawn from *Camera Lucida* but, slightly puzzlingly, the references to Barthes tend towards his other essays.

After *La Jetée*, Mavor turns to Marker's other well-known film *Sans Soleil*. Here the black leader that recurs throughout the film is read in terms of Mavor's "political" black. In this chapter, Mavor stays much closer to Marker's film, perhaps because, as she acknowledges, *Sans Soleil* is so packed full of imagery itself. She goes on to parse Marker's images of Japanese tourists on a ferry, his reflection on the art of "action cooking" (essentially a theatrical form of teppanyaki cookery) and – perhaps inevitably – Marker's dedication of a whole section of the film to his beloved *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958).

Mavor's use of the punctum develops into something intriguing in this chapter. She takes the pricking, cutting imagery employed by Barthes to describe the punctum and runs with it, finding a punctum in the cuts between what Marker calls in the film's narration his "perfect image of happiness" – the shot of three Icelandic children, the black leader and the next shot: a military aeroplane. Although Barthes exalted photography "in opposition to the cinema" (*Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage Books, 2000), p. 3), the potential of his theory of photography to enrich our understanding of cinema is immense and largely untapped, and Mavor makes some evocative suggestions of how to understand film through Barthes.

In this chapter, when Mavor does digress, the 'point' seems much clearer, as when she compares Marker to the film critic and painter Manny Farber, because both "have an eye for chewing on meaning-laden chance detail" and "foraging space" (97). There follows a stunningly written page-long paean to Farber's notion of "termite art" that celebrates being "tender and inquisitive when it comes to the small, the individualizing detail" (97). This interest partly explains Mavor's free-flowing style – a desire to range over small details, and to savour them. (In fact, turning back to the beginning of the book, one notices a dedication to Farber and his wife Patricia Patterson, who jointly authored pieces from 1966 onwards).

In the final chapter, Mavor's style and subject matter come together to create an essay that moves effortlessly between analysis of Resnais and Marguerite Duras's film *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, and the author's own personal memories of being moved by accounts of the tragedy. She starts with the chillingly almost-photographic side-effects of the explosion (burning clothing patterns onto victims, a man who was literally obliterated, leaving only his shadow cast outside the bank where he was waiting) before considering the paradoxical image of lush vegetation that emerged in Hiroshima soon after the atomic blast. Again, she muses on termite-like details and connections, speculating that the marble imagery in *Hiroshima Mon Amour* may have been inspired by Proust. Again, there's a range of intriguing references to other artists; Ruth Asawa, Karl Blossfeldt, Petr Štembera and others. However, in keeping with such a loosely constructed study, there is no conclusion.

Although readers looking for more concrete information about these films will likely be frustrated by Mavor's elliptical style, *Black and Blue* is a thought-provoking belletristic work. At times the style reaches the heights of Mavors' beloved Barthes and Farber. Also, many of the contemporary artists discussed will be unfamiliar to readers within film studies, and will no doubt provide additional ways of thinking and angles of inquiry. It's also worth noting that *Black and Blue* is beautifully presented, with ample screenshots taken from the films, and colour plates of the other artworks Mavor discusses.

In contrast to Mavor's free-flowing intellectual rhapsody, Mroz's *Temporality and Film Analysis* is academically rigorous in the traditional sense. In a compact introduction she outlines how a dominant trend in film analysis seems to see film as a sort of procession of static images; when broken down, that is exactly what traditional film is, but not at all how we experience it. Prior scholars, Mroz argues, have singled out particular images and analysed them almost as if they were paintings or still photographs. Mroz wants to shift the description away from analysis and interpretation of images and symbols, and towards the fact that film is experienced in time and movement. Drawing on Henri Bergson, and to a lesser extent Gilles Deleuze, Mroz wants to place the emphasis on resonance rather than the straightforward interpretation of meaning: that which is "indeterminate and mute, stubbornly material rather than strictly legible" (5).

An opening chapter fleshes out the different ways that time has been conceived in film theory. Mroz notes at the outset that the "inception of cinema in the 1890s coincided approximately with the emergence of new ways of thinking about time" (13), the temporal precision brought about by industrialisation being the dominant conception at this time. Mroz goes on to discuss the various theorists who have privileged specific moments against temporal flow: Walter Benjamin, who contrasted the contemplative spectation of a painting with the distraction of cinema's

temporal flow; Jean Epstein, who privileged moments of *photogenie*, the emotive power packed by certain images (usually close-ups of the human face); and the *Cahiers* critics of the 1950s and 60s who continued this trend, elevating it into cinephilia. On the other hand, there have been trends towards using Bergsonian ideas of duration, and ideas drawn from phenomenology, resulting in a conception of film experience and spectatorship based on sensation. In a short space of time, Mroz thus takes us through the various conceptions of temporality that film theorists have used. She does so, however, without losing any depth or clarity, despite the sheer amount of names and concepts mentioned.

This groundwork prepares us for Mroz's own temporal analysis of *L'Avventura* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1960), beginning with the film's hostile reception at the taste-making Cannes festival: "the viewing habits of some spectators had not quite caught up with the radical changes that cinema was undergoing" (49). Instead of 'decoding' the mise-en-scene, concentrating on Antonioni's explanatory statement about "the malaise of eros" or the preoccupations of 1960s popular-existentialism, or talking about Antonioni's flattened compositions, as many scholars do, Mroz argues that in the film "we are encouraged to consider depth compositionally and thematically, as an ungraspable space that Anna has disappeared into" (54). Throughout the chapter, we are encouraged to be attentive to a whole range of details that are often overlooked in dominant discourse surrounding this film, foregrounding "intimacy, fluidity, and affect" (84) in the process.

In some ways *Mirror* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1975), with its impassioned and elegiac mixture of the personal and the historical, is more suited to Mavor's rhapsodic style (indeed, *Mirror* and Barthes's *Camera Lucida* have a great deal in common). But Mroz takes Tarkovsky's ubiquitously cited notion of time-pressure – the idea that cinematic rhythm "is not determined by the length of the edited pieces, but by the pressure of the time that runs through them" (*Andrei Tarkovsky, Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema* trans. Kitty Hunter-Blair (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986) p. 117) – and, rather than merely deferring to Tarkovsky's own programmatic ideas about his films, fashions it into a way of understanding the heterogenous nature of temporality.

Many attempts have similarly been made to link Deleuze's temporal theory of film and Tarkovsky's work, with varying degrees of success. Mroz is comparatively successful in getting at what underpins Deleuze's idea of the time-image: the idea that cinema is a-signifying and a-syntactic. When Mroz describes how "*Mirror* emphasises that there is no actual 'space' of memory to which one can return; there are only heterogenous reflected and refracted images that circulate with one another" (101) she not only provides a succinct and useful definition of Deleuze's often impenetrable "crystal image" concept, but she also

provides one of the most plausible, nuanced explanations for *Mirror's* fragmented structure. To summarise the rest of this chapter, which brims with ideas, is a difficult task, but suffice it to say that this section constitutes some of the most original and thought-provoking work on Tarkovsky in recent years. The fact that it is unencumbered by received wisdom about the director and genuinely sensitive to the film's details (rather than the high-art, transcendental baggage Tarkovsky's films bring with them) only adds to this impression.

Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Decalogue* (1989) consists of ten hour-long films, made for television, on the theme of the ten commandments. Mroz is able to range over this sprawling masterpiece, dealing deftly with the films as if they were one, which in many ways they are. As Mroz comments: "Each of the ten episodes [...] can be seen to constitute their own unique duration, yet each also contains echoes, traces and foreshadowings of other episodes within the series" (138). Arising from this observation is Mroz's argument that meaning changes and evolves over duration, leading to a consideration of the gap between content and affect – how film can provoke us to sadness and still give us aesthetic pleasure at the same time. The book's brief conclusion is essentially a summary of Mroz's overall approach, but its brevity suggests an open-endedness; that there is more to be said, whether by Mroz or others, about her brand of temporal film analysis is indeed certain.

In conclusion, Mavor's book, although the work of a professor with a long and distinguished career, is less academic in terms of structure and argument, and is more of a poetic rhapsody on the theme of these three films, films which are indeed inspiring. *Temporality and Film Analysis*, on the other hand, is a clear, well-structured and well-argued analysis of three films, as well as being a kind of manifesto for a specific way of looking at film. Although Mavor's serpentine digressions can sometimes be frustrating for the academic reader, Mroz's aim of extolling the virtues of temporal analysis equally might benefit from the occasional digression, to widen the book's scope. Also, both books reviewed here stay firmly within the bounds of the European art film, while non-western cinema is fertile ground for explorations of new temporalities (the career of Apichatpong Weerasethakul would be one well-known example, while Shohei Imamura's film *Black Rain* (1989) gives a Japanese perspective on the Hiroshima bombing and its aftermath). That said, both books prove that, while the European art film may no longer be flourishing, there is still room for divergent and thought-provoking critical responses to that tradition.

***Scripting Hitchcock: Psycho, The Birds, and Marnie*****By Walter Raubicheck and Walter Srebnick**

Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011. ISBN 9780252078248. 12 b/w illustrations, xviii + 131pp. £15.99 (pbk)

***A Companion to Literature, Film and Adaptation*****Edited by Deborah Cartmell**

Malden, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. ISBN: 9781444334975. 13 b/w illustrations, xiii + 435pp. £120.00 (hbk)

**A review by J. E. Smyth, University of Warwick**

It is fair to say that most filmgoers will not have heard of Joseph Stefano, Evan Hunter, and Jay Presson Allen. Respectively, they wrote *Psycho* (1960), *The Birds* (1963), and *Marnie* (1964). Almost everyone has heard of the films' director, Alfred Hitchcock. Thanks to the tenacity of the auteur theory, fans, film students, and scholars (for whom Jay Presson Allen had an articulate contempt), screenwriters are often marginalized or ignored in film history. It is Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941), not Herman Mankiewicz's; John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) rather than Lamar Trotti's (or even – sacrilege – producer Darryl Zanuck's). Indeed, as Walter Raubicheck and Walter Srebnick point out in *Scripting Hitchcock*, whole books have been written about *Psycho*, *The Birds*, and *Marnie* without once mentioning the writers. Under the terms of traditional film studies, Hitchcock and 'collaboration' are not words one usually puts together. Yet in Raubicheck and Srebnick's *Scripting Hitchcock*, the image of these writers develops into a graceful and timely counterpoint to the version of Hitchcock set in place by auteur theory and its more popular advocates. But this book isn't positioned as a sharp, revisionist critique of auteur theory or a crusade for the writer's position in classical film scholarship. Instead, the book uncovers a relatively harmonious, professional set of writer-director collaborations based not only upon exhaustive interviews with Stefano, Hunter, and Allen, but also upon equally intensive archival research on the scripts' development, primarily at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Library in Los Angeles.

Hitchcock once explained, "I plan out a script very carefully", and this "understatement", as the authors put it, enabled their book's underlying claim that "the creation of the screenplay, and ultimately the shooting script, constituted the essence of the art of filmmaking for Hitchcock" (1). It is an interesting idea, but despite a few passing mentions of storyboarding and editing, they focus exclusively on the development of the script material. Without wider acknowledgement of Hitchcock's other



collaborative relationships on film productions (also amply supplied by archival evidence in Los Angeles), readers do get a sense that the script is the only game in town.

One of the distinguishing features of Raubichek and Srebnick's research is the extensive interviews they conducted with the writers; however, they are not quoted at length. This is a slight drawback in an otherwise fascinating book. The writers' voices are kept in tight rein, particularly in the opening chapter, so that the director retains his discursive preeminence. Hitchcock's master auteur status is not tarnished (they refer to the three films on which the book focuses as a 'triptych'), and it remains *Hitchcock's* film practice. Unlike most directors during the studio era who were assigned scripts already worked out by a writer or writers under a producer's supervision, Hitchcock was increasingly involved in the development of the screenplay from treatment to shooting script. Although he let his writers construct the dialog, the scripts' approach and structure were based upon close discussions with him occurring throughout production. He had, we are told, three tendencies following the completion of a first draft, "1) the removal of what he called 'no scene' scenes; 2) the addition of some strongly visual shots or the elaboration of a scene to provide increased insight into a character, usually without new dialog; 3) and the removal of dialog that did not add anything substantial to characterization" (56).

This isn't rocket science, though: it's merely what most Hollywood directors and producers did and continue to do – slash dialog and often irritate their writers as a result. But the authors, particularly in their fine analysis of *Psycho*, reveal that some suggestions for high-angle shots and close-ups were actually the work of the screenwriter; some parts were storyboarded; some were broken down shot-by-shot in the final script, some scenes were written but not shot. But behind all of this was a director who camera cut because the film was more or less ready to go in his mind. When the writer and director shared different conceptions of the material, as in Evan Hunter's work on *The Birds*, there were cuts and multiple drafts. A particularly intriguing detail, for example, is that Hunter felt that replacing his scripted final bird attack with Hitchcock's "non-ending" was an ineffective appeal to "arty audiences" (73). Perhaps by 1963 Hitchcock was starting to believe what *Cahiers du cinéma* printed about him and his films and less that "it was only a movie".

An underlying theme of Raubichek and Srebnick's book is the triptych's emphasis on female protagonists, agency, and transformation in an era popularly associated with repression and conformity (as the authors point out, the working-class edges of the original material were softened and Americanized). Perhaps surprisingly, Hitchcock's favorite writer of the three was the woman, Jay Presson Allen, who wasn't squeamish about writing in *Marnie's* 'rape' scene, and who, despite her relative inexperience as a screenwriter at the time (she went on to write *Cabaret*



(Bob Fosse, 1972)), advised on the editing of the film—a rarity for any screenwriter, then and now. Significantly, Raubicheck and Srebnick admit that they had to turn the tape recorder off for this screenwriter's comments, a tantalizing reflection of the perseverant history of censorship and self-censorship of Hollywood women.

This book was a delight to read. The research on production practices, the complexities of adaptation, and Hitchcock's unique collaboration with these three writers are all handled with insight. The authors had their work cut out for them, certainly. Hitchcock's papers do not contain the wealth of annotated scripts, production memos, and script and editing notes of other major film directors' collections. This book might have been one of the few scholarly works on Hollywood that Jay Presson Allen would have appreciated (Charles Barr's excellent *English Hitchcock* (Cameron Books, 1999) may also have made her list due to his attention to the director's relationships with writers). As Raubicheck and Srebnick reveal, *Marnie's* scriptwriter had a special dislike for theoretical writings about Hitchcock's work (particularly the psychoanalytic, feminist approaches in vogue in the 1970s and 1980s) and noted that these interpretations had no basis in fact or connection with Hitchcock's intentions. Likewise Evan Hunter resisted attempts to draw scholarly interpretations and deeper meanings from *The Birds*: his intent was simply to "scare the hell out of the audience" (116). That disconnect between filmmakers and film critics or scholars is one of the problems still facing film studies, even amidst the so-called historical turn (which a number of film theorists have dismissed as part of a general dumbing-down of the discipline and the humanities as a whole). Raubicheck and Srebnick's rigorous textual analysis, informed by the archive and other sources, may be the answer to the frequent polarization of practitioners and critics.

Studies of screenwriters in Hollywood aren't new. Tom Stempel certainly stands out as one of, if not *the*, major figure in keeping the work of the writer alive. But studies of individual screenwriters or alternate auteurs are being overshadowed by a growing field of adaptation studies. There is a major journal, several societies, and annual conferences covering the landscape and touching other fields in historical cinema, genre, literature, and a revamped auteur studies. Now, in a final academic seal of approval, there is a re-edited *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Literature, Film and Adaptation*. Deborah Cartmell is a prominent figure in this growing area, and has brought together twenty-three essays that engage various aspects of the 'adapted' film. Many of the writers insist that the field of adaptation studies has cast off its 'worthy' reputation for limiting its view to 'quality', boring prestige films about rich white people. Although Deborah Cartmell claims that, "Adaptation is, indeed, the art form of democracy" and that the collection "is concerned with the democratizing effect of adaptations from the beginnings of cinema to the current day, covering historical, ideological, economical, and different theoretical

approaches, ranging from canonical to popular literary and film texts within the ever-expanding mediasphere" (8), I was not quite as persuaded by the chapters that followed. The majority of the essays are focused on British literary adaptations, and while there is something on Harry Potter, Rambo, and the X-Men (the latter two franchises spearhead the collection's American literary representations), and two essays on *Atonement* (Joe Wright, 2007), the first thing I did when I received this book was to scan the table of contents for Jane Austen and William Shakespeare. They are definitely there, and while I'm not the curmudgeon Alec Guinness was in wishing that he might never again see another Jane Austen adaptation, it is disappointing that certain authors are generously represented, despite the more culturally egalitarian and cutting edge claims of the introduction.

Cartmell's introduction raises a number of anxieties about the 'field'. There is the well-known quote from Theodore Dreiser about the debauchery of literature by film adaptations and a nod to the Platonic suspiciousness of new media versus old. But I was especially struck by how often Cartmell tries to struggle away from adaptation's worthy, class-inflected, canonical roots. Certainly there is a sense that classical studies of adaptation are staged and fixed combats between literary and cinematic material, with the screenwriter always losing the cultural battle. Yet Cartmell does not overtly name names. There is a converse sense that film's potential may be compromised by over-literariness, but this is not linked with a similar trend in mainstream narrative film studies where the screenwriter is always marginalized as a film's author in favor of the director. The same subtexts, then, lurk behind both *Scripting Hitchcock* and *The Companion to Literature, Film and Adaptation*. Yet while Raubicheck and Srebnick really do bring new insight to questions of adaptation, authorship, and cinema, I do not feel these questions are grasped as clearly in this anthology, as excellent as many of the individual essays undoubtedly are.

But the approaches taken by several of the scholars featured in Cartmell's *Companion* have in large measure challenged the old idea that the adapted screen work is less culturally worthwhile or complex: there are essays on the adaptation of comic book figures and children's literature, which dominate so much of mainstream cinema. There are some insightful, elegant essays on individual films, particularly Christine Geraghty's work on *Atonement*, which engages the path-breaking work of Linda Hutcheon and the film's complex challenges to narration, objectivity, and history. Yvonne Griggs' approach to the same film is equally refreshing. Judith Buchanan provides a solid and scholarly appraisal of silent literary adaptations. Kamilla Elliott makes an interesting claim that images of writers in mainstream film "upend" Foucault's argument about the author as a linguistic function governing and limiting

meaning, and instead that “the figure of the author proliferates and redistributes meaning” (195).

But in comparing the anthology with Raubicheck and Srebnick’s more modest book, I was struck by the absence of concrete analysis of the screenwriter’s (or indeed any filmmaker’s) work. Although the book ends with a brief discussion by writer Diane Lake (who co-wrote the 2002 adaptation of Frida Kahlo’s biography, directed by Julie Taymor), her entry feels like an after-thought. The twenty-two essays before it do not actually result from archival research on script and production development (Jamie Sherry’s chapter on Orson Welles’s 1938 radio adaptation of *Heart of Darkness* uses James Naremore’s text from his 1978 *Magic World of Orson Welles*). Perhaps I am being too historically minded, but it seems to me that a volume about film adaptations of literature should discuss how filmmakers actually do it (Simone Murray’s essay does provide an interesting analysis from the perspective of producers at The Weinstein Company vis à vis *The Reader* (Stephen Daldry, 2009)). But the volume tends to ignore the connections between adaptation and history – as well as the slippage between popular and highbrow fiction, history and historical fiction, and women writers, readers, and audiences and the world of adaptation. It is well known that the main reading market in the US and Britain during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was female, and that many of the adaptations for the screen were identified as ‘women’s literature’ – particularly from the early sound era. There has been quite a lot done in this area, inside and out of the archive, so it is a conspicuous and disappointing blind spot here.

In looking at some of the essays in the collection, it becomes apparent that one of the main issues facing ‘adaptation studies’ is whether or not adaptation constitutes a genre. While Linda Hutcheon (not represented in this anthology) opened up the definition to include a postmodern, paratextual premise, Thomas Leitch tries to draw a line “between adaptations proper and improper” (89). Leitch doesn’t like the messiness that fails in “distinguishing adaptation from intertextuality in general” (88). But, as some of the other contributors point out, adaptation unavoidably relates to filmic engagements with, in Christine Geraghty’s words, “memoirs, biography, newspaper articles, and historical documents” (363). One contributor even claims that the biopic is an off-shoot of the adapted film genre. While the latter comment is debatable, it unconsciously brings the reader back to the problem adaptation studies has when dealing with mainstream cinema, and the high-toned literary emphasis of many of the contributions in this volume. The literary texts recreated on screen are largely period or historical films. Perhaps the question is not so much whether Austen is adapted yet again, but why Hollywood has had this need to return to the past. Perhaps the screen adaptation of literature isn’t so much a genre, but a resource for a larger

filmmaking interest in history films (as with Diane Lake's most famous work on *Frida*). And this suggestion relates to a certain extent with Hutcheon's wider work on postmodernism. In this era, films and screenwriters are key in inflecting our interpretation and in 'foregrounding' the construction of narrative, media, and ideology. This is what makes *Atonement* such an exciting film for not only adaptation studies, but studies of the historical film, gender and history, genre, narration, and memory studies.

Screenwriter Alvin Sargent, who won Academy Awards for his adapted screenplays for *Julia* (Fred Zinnemann, 1977) and *Ordinary People* (Robert Redford, 1980), remarked to me once that in Hollywood adapted material did not have the cachet of the original screenplay and that there was a general feeling that the work of the writer is measured in original contributions to the screen or to the literary world. Evan Hunter would have agreed, much preferring his original work *The Blackboard Jungle* to any of his scripts, including his celebrated adaptation of Daphne Du Maurier's *Birds*. But try and find an original script these days in an industry obsessed with media tie-ins and pre-sold markets. Writers with 'original' material are often told to go back and write the novel before re-approaching agents and producers with the script. In this context, Raubichek and Srebnick's book raises some interesting issues regarding originality, authorship, and adaptation that are long overdue in relation to Hitchcock. Few people read the Robert Bloch or Winston Graham novels unless they were aware of the connections with *Pyscho* and *Marnie*, while Hunter and Hitchcock changed the protagonist, setting, and events of Daphne du Maurier's short story about cold war Britain into a basically new narrative. As Raubichek and Srebnick contend, the script was of fundamental importance to Alfred Hitchcock. Given that film exists in an adapted world, these books are both testament to the fact that more work is needed focusing on the screenwriter. To this end, I hope, even the auteur theory can adapt.

## ***What Dreams Were Made Of: Movie Stars of the 1940s***

**Edited by Sean Griffin**

Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers U Press, 2011. ISBN 9780813549644. ix + 259pp. £21.95 (pbk)

## ***Hollywood Reborn: Movie Stars of the 1970s***

**Edited by James Morrison**

Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers U Press, 2010. ISBN 9780813547497. 252pp. £22.50 (pbk)

## ***Shining in Shadows: Movie Stars of the 2000s***

**Edited by Murray Pomerance**

Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers U Press, 2012. ISBN 9780813551487. 268pp. £22.50(pbk)

### **A review by Jude Warne, New York University**

A lot can happen in seven decades in Hollywood. With the Second World War fought and won, with the demise of the studio system and more personal power given to film stars, one would presume that the American movie-going experience might change radically and that it would get easier for stars to create work that speaks to the audiences of today. In many ways it has; but as these three books show in their collective impression, progress is not all sunshine and roses. The aim of Adrienne L. McClean's *Star Decades: American Culture/American Cinema* series, from which they are taken, is to contextualize the films and their stars produced during the chosen decade. This is done by compiling critical essays on a variety of related issues from an array of academics in the realm of film studies and American studies. The idea behind this method is that by holding a magnifying glass to a few movie stars of a certain time period, we are able to understand the movie industry of a particular moment and the evolution of the movie star as a figure. While limited, in that only ten or twelve essays are selected in each book, the collections are nevertheless well-designed. Perhaps the most readily approachable sections of each book at hand here are the introduction and conclusion sections. These sections ably put the reader in an appropriate mindset, allowing her to fully consider each decade as a whole before delving into more specific areas of inquiry. The individual essays, while well researched and executed, are drastically narrow in focus; thus, the ideal audience for these books would be the film studies academic and the intense and sociologically minded film fan.

## Book Reviews

The 1940s presented a unique time in history and in the world of film, demonstrating parallel issues in Hollywood and in the United States with fast-paced and continuous upheaval impacting on their identities. This particular essay collection focuses on ten individuals and sets who partook in maintaining positive morale during the era of World War Two: different genres addressed include service comedies, combat films and escapist musicals. Following the war, in the latter half of the decade, a number of entertainers were made to grow accustomed to new ideals and points of view becoming prevalent in American society. Overall the book gives a good account of how films made during and just after 1945 reflected the desires and doubts of a world at war. The performers featured in them allowed audiences to function vicariously through them, able to project glamorous and pain-free lives as exciting characters removed from the perils of war.

A running theme throughout *What Dreams Were Made Of* is the interaction between Hollywood's stars and the events of World War Two. During such troubled times, American moviegoers relied even more intensely on the enjoyable distraction and comfortable escape provided by the movies and their stars. Following the war, Hollywood also helped Americans become re-acclimated to regular life, and to better understand a new post-war world. As the introduction explains, "In various ways, the stars discussed in this volume negotiated the unstable, ever-shifting terrain of the 1940s and helped audiences do the same" (9). Film noir is of primary concern here, of course, and thus receives just attention in these essays.

The decade is presented to the reader as one split into two; the first half is associated with the Second World War, while the second is associated with the war's repercussions, the realization of the atomic bomb, and the beginning of the cold war period in America. This division is apparent in the timeline of Hollywood as well; the first half is depicted as tying up the classic 1930s Hollywood, while the second ushers us into the 1950s post-classic Hollywood. 1946 saw movie audience attendance reach an all-time high, yet 1948's Supreme Court ruling known as the Paramount Decision brought the well-oiled machine of Hollywood's studio system to an end and thus had to reorganize itself, as did its stars.

The book covers certain stars that had risen to popularity just before and during the war who failed to sustain their success in post-war America. The impending rise of television and up-and-coming television stars threatened the power and popularity of those on the big screen. Female stars, who had established dominant "Rosie the Riveter" roles during the war, were encouraged to resume their docile husband-doting selves once more (although we learn here of some that resisted this). Certain stars who had managed to maintain relevance via their personas from the 1930s through the 1940s, were at odds with the changing times and the impending 1950s. A new group of stars was also emerging toward the end



of the decade, which would go on to achieve success outside of the collapsing studio system. Stars of the 1940s entered the 1950s in three groups: those who still tried to maintain their careers established within the studio system, those who managed to establish careers outside of it, and those who attempted to make use of both spheres.

The essays present in-depth analyses of several figures that we might expect, such as Ingrid Bergman, Greer Garson and John Wayne, focusing on their on-screen personas and their relationship with the cultural and social issues resulting from World War Two. Robin Blaetz's essay on Bergman traces the actress' career through the 1940s, addressing her on-screen (and off-screen) projection of characteristics typical of the average American woman of the time. These were complicated by the fact that, as Blaetz argues, she was forever authentic, refusing to be affected by the scandal resulting from her affair with Roberto Rossellini. Her strength and honesty were inseparable from her on-screen characters, and though initially shocking and original, these qualities grew more prevalent in the women of post-war America. One can look at Bergman's career during this decade, then, and observe the slow liberation of the American woman amidst a raging war and the changed world that came after it. Edward Countryman's essay on John Wayne also traces a career of a Hollywood star's on- and off-screen persona during the 1940s. Through Wayne's roles in Westerns and wartime pictures, he built a now instantly identifiable American character; yet Countryman claims that this character was more complex than might be assumed. Wayne's early insecurities concerning his own abilities as an actor lead him to consciously create the John Wayne mannerisms, slanted walk, distinct drawling voice and all. His inability to serve in the war left him with an intense sense of ineptitude, yet he was able to serve after the real event through his on-screen characters in films such as *They Were Expendable* (John Ford, 1945).

James Morrison's installment in the series brings us into the 1970s by which point, as he explains, "the studio system was commonly regarded as dead, and conventional wisdom in some quarters viewed the star system as a casualty of its demise" (1). Equally, following the 1960s, Hollywood and its audiences may have been looking for a respite from the cultural revolution of the 1960s, only to find political scandals and another war. The studio system and their star-producing methods began to die out. Actors possessed newfound control over their own careers and were no longer tied to one studio through contractual obligations. This allowed them to speak directly to the troubles of the era, and so the movies that were released were often controversial and questioned society's status quo. Hollywood was resurrected into something entirely new, giving Morrison his title. Through his edited volume we see that the transition between the 1970s and 1980s Hollywood was a dramatic one, as it marks

an obvious end to and rejection of the traditional Old Hollywood of the 1930s.

The stars covered in the chapters of the book offer an interesting cross-section of a decade thirty years after the Second World War. Essays on Al Pacino, Faye Dunaway and Donald Sutherland provide in-depth examples that chart the changing structure of Hollywood. Joe Wlodarz' essay on Pacino places the actor's persona within the context of the changing times, explaining how he had trouble transitioning into the later 1970s and the 1980s when he could not cope with "the high-concept requirements of male stardom that marked the transition to the 80s" (80). The vulnerability that Pacino so well captured in his work, Wlodarz believes, helped to form a very particular brand, one that was connected to the national discontent felt in the early to mid-1970s, following the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War. Pacino rejected the familiar masculine star image and instead sought to challenge that by adding mystery and complexity, which the essay addresses by discussing two of his films, *Dog Day Afternoon* (Sidney Lumet, 1975) and *Cruising* (William Friedkin, 1980). In these films Pacino's characters are directly involved with homosexuality, and his convincing and natural performances lead audiences of the time to wonder how much of his true self was a part of these characters. Going hand in hand with the "macho hysteria" (81) of his role in *Scarface* (1983, Brian De Palma), Pacino's overall star image is a convoluted one. With the absence of the star-making studio system, Pacino's image remained un-tampered with and was left to speak for itself.

Further still from the classical Hollywood leading men of years gone by is Donald Sutherland, covered by Jean Walton's essay as it follows his trajectory through the 1970s. An 'anti-macho' actor, yet frequent portrayer of the heterosexual love interest in his films, Sutherland appealed to the newly liberated women of the 1970s as well as middle-class American men, who could relate to his character appeal rather than good looks. The essay closes with an analysis of Sutherland's final scene in *Ordinary People* (1980, Robert Redford), in which his character delivers a heartbreaking monologue to the wife he no longer loves. The calm restraint that Sutherland possesses here marks the end of what Walton calls "the time for the hysterical man" (225). Most intriguing is her observation that this performance coincided with the winding down of the political activism in which Sutherland was involved during the decade, as the revolution that began in the 1960s seemed to have been put on the backburner with the beginning of the 1980s.

The 2000s saw the fusing of new technologies with the entire movie experience, with the growing importance of both making and watching movies on computers. The film industry was drastically changing again, along with the USA itself, as it adapted to a post-9/11 world. The movie stars to emerge during this decade reflected the ambiguity of the time,

and were often a far cry from the typical leading men and women of the classic Hollywood era, as well as those of the edgy 1970s bringing the demise of the studio system. The ideas about what constituted a leading man or woman in film seemed to have completely disintegrated since the glamorous 1940s, challenging any fixed assumptions about what constituted mainstream appeal. This is stardom in the new millennium, and it seems to be, more or less, ubiquitous.

While Morrison's book offered a good range of subjects, the essays in Murray Pomerance's *Shining in Shadows* offer comparisons between relatively similar stars of the 2000s, such as Tina Fey and Jennifer Aniston, or Javier Bardem and Benicio Del Toro, as well as an analysis of that peculiarly twenty-first century versions of celebrity the A-list couple, here represented by 'Brangelina', as covered in Linda Ruth Williams' essay. Victoria E. Johnson's chapter about Fey and Aniston, subtitled "Girls with Glasses," traces the transition from their 1990s television stardom to their movie stardom of the 2000s. Johnson is largely concerned with the importance of the girl-next-door qualities of both stars to their worldwide popularity. With their fame originally developing on the small screen, Johnson points to Aniston's and Fey's "multi-mediated star presence," (69) something unique to the cross-platform stardom of the new millennium. While in previous decades television stars were potentially regarded as lower in star quality, the 2000s proved that successful television performers could carry their appeal with them into the land of film. With Aniston and Fey conquering both mediums, Johnson points to their "brand appeal" (69) and the resulting star power they achieve through this. Williams' essay on Brangelina, or Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, attempts to evaluate the success of a star power couple. She points to famous star couples of the past, like Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, who were at most known as Liz and Dick, and never known by any composite name. The one-word 'Brangelina', Williams argues, suggests the star power of other one-namers such as "Elvis" or the more recent "Britney," and she points to the fact that Brad and Angelina's combined star power better allows for a consistent credits list for both stars. Interestingly, according to Williams, Pitt excels when he can pull the force of stardom into his selected role, while Jolie does best when she manages to disguise hers. Pomerance's conclusion to the volume leaves us with food for thought regarding the next decade of movie stars. Due to the increasing use of smartphones, laptops, and on demand television, fewer and fewer people go to actual movie theatres to see their favorite stars on the big screen. Thus, stars must cope with directing their work more toward the smaller screen(s), becoming "cell phone and digital device compatible" (242). Pomerance seems wary of this, claiming that stars will increasingly rely on their distinguishing facial characteristics that resonate on a small screen, rather than their acting ability.

If we can take away anything from this book series, and in particular the three volumes under review here, it is that the evolution of the film star is intricately intertwined with the social and cultural shifts of the times. There is something oddly similar about each set of stars' issues from the three decades addressed here. While always important, always potentially powerful, and always forced to deal with the times in which they rose to prominence, movie stars have forever been tied to their movies and the system or environment in which they were produced. Stars may be talented, beautiful, controversial, and powerful; yet, they must owe a large chunk of their star power to the roles that made them famous. The essence of star power is a combination of false projection, the acting element, and the personal drama of the actor's real self, which for good or bad, gets pulled into his or her artistic work. What the *Star Decades* series does particularly well is provide in-depth looks at major film stars of each decade, that leave no stone unturned in terms of examining the chosen star's personal life at the time and the consequent shape of their work. These analyses are always tied back into the distinguishing characteristics of the historical context at hand. For after all, the majority of all artists are undeniably products of their time, and one cannot be considered without the other. These specific books will most likely be of use to those more serious readers who are interested in the intersection of popular culture and historical events and issues. Scholars in particular will appreciate these decade studies, as they successfully contextualize broad spans of years utilizing the narrowest of close analyses in their featured essays. The studies also bring us up to the present moment in the technologically-obsessed new millennium, which inspires us to keep the inquiry into star evolution relevant and ongoing.

### ***Coming Soon to A Festival Near You: Programming Film Festivals***

**Edited by Jeffrey Ruoff**

St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2012. ISBN: 9781908437020. 259 pp. £19.99 (pbk)

### ***Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism***

**Edited by Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin**

St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2012. ISBN: 9780956373052. 317 pp. £19.99 (pbk)

### **A review by Dorota Ostrowska, Birkbeck, University of London**

Both these books, coming from the growing Film Festival Studies collection produced by St Andrews' Centre for Film Studies, are labours of love that brim with great passion for the topic of film festivals. The

volumes include a number of original interventions which show how vibrant the film festival community is, how varied and rich in experience and ideas, and how much in need of a forum to share them. Both also offer significant space to interviews with film festival programmers, which validates this type of material anew as worthy of inclusion in academic books. Alongside testimonies penned by various film festival and industry practitioners, these interviews give a very particular flavour to the books by positioning the engagement with practitioners as a kind of foundation for any film festival research. The fact that many of contributors, especially those featured in *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism*, double up as film festival programmers and activists makes this bridging of research and practice all the more natural.

Ruoff's book sits in between the two genres of writing which came to characterise early literature on film festivals: on the one hand there are pieces of oral history, many of them in the form of interviews, which trace the practices of several film festival programmers; on the other hand there are academics drawing on a myriad of methodologies (film history, media and cultural studies, anthropology and ethnography), depending on their training and their particular interest, which are part and parcel of the varied mosaic forming the field of film festival studies. Ruoff's book tilts the balance slightly towards practitioners and away from academic voices, probably due to his own long-standing experience of film festivals, which guaranteed him direct access to some important figures on the circuit. With the insightful pieces by Richard Pena (of the New York Film Festival), Bill and Stella Pence (Telluride Film Festival), Mahen Bonetti (New York African Film Festival), and Marcin Gizycki and Sayoko Kinoshita on animation film festivals in Poland and Japan respectively, the book is without doubt an important contribution to the genre of film festival testimonials.

If we were to base our understanding of what programming means just on these largely autobiographical interventions we would come to a conclusion that to programme a festival is to undertake an often herculean and risky task. In his introduction Ruoff argues that programming "seeks to highlight the event status and the sense of community, face to face contact with the audience members, programmers and film-makers. [...] Programmers are barkers – circus ring-masters, if you will – that recall cinema's origins in fairgrounds" (2012: 3). Marijke de Valck's article, 'Finding Audiences for Films: Programming in Historical Perspective', sets the tone for the discussion of film programming in the volume and provides a framework within which the contributions of both practitioners and academics may be understood. Importantly, the article also serves as a linchpin between the two books under review here.

De Valck has been at the forefront of film festival scholarship and her piece shows her long-term aim of developing a sophisticated framework within which the multitude of film festivals may be studied. Here she suggests we employ a historical perspective to discuss what she refers to as “the art of festival programming” (25). The early years of film festivals were about programming along national lines where the selection of films was “outsourced” to national bodies (28). This first stage was followed by the “Age of Programmers” when film festivals became responsible for their own film selection and were consciously developing as spaces of “cultural intervention” and political participation (29-30). She argues that at this critical junction “the festival did more than screen films: it provided ample room for discussions, published lengthy documents about its programmes and involved a wide range of people – professionals, academics, cinephiles and political activists – in its event” (30). In the current period, she goes on, “film festivals are a widespread, global phenomenon, embedded in what we have come to know as the international film festival circuit”, where the festival film emerges as an independent genre (32). De Valck’s piece works particularly well if we take it one step further and think about the proposed periodisation not just historically but also in terms of broad categories: the nation, the political and the discursive, and the power of festivals and practitioners to foster films, film festivals, and film festival networks. The book offers discussions of programming national cinemas and shaping the notion of national cinemas through film festival practices. Toby Lee’s chapter evokes the nation and the city as operative concepts in relation to Greek film festivals while Gönül Donmez-Colin turns our attention to the use of film festivals to promote Turkish national cinema. The power of the specialised festival to generate debate and ultimately cultural change in the perception of certain types of films and communities is important in relation to both identity (see Skadi Loist’s chapter on ‘LGBT Film Festivals and Queer Programming Strategies’ as well as Bonetti’s) and genres like animation (see Gizycki and Kinoshita’s chapters). The power of festivals and industry practitioners as producers of films and film festival practices is explored historically by Sangjoon Lee in relation to Asia-Pacific Film Festival and by James Schamus who accounts for the costs to a producer of bringing a film to festival exhibition.

*Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism* focuses exclusively on the kind of film festivals analysed by de Valck. In the introductory piece to the volume Leshu Torchin points out that

the question of programming is always an important one for film festivals and it takes on particular dimensions when one considers their activist potential. [...] Representing marginalised communities, calling attention to political issues and ushering in underappreciated works and methods, are a few of the ways



that a film's content and a film festival come together in activist aims. (3)

It is thus through programming that film festivals reach the audiences, engage communities and encourage political debate. What is being emphasised throughout the volume is the impact that activist festivals have both on and off screen, and thus, as David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder put it in their chapter on independent disability cinema, "allow for radical self-reflection" on human rights and other political and social causes (89). The book also touches on the concluding turn of de Valck's argument where she wonders about the impact of new technologies on the culture and practices of film festivals nowadays. Co-editor Dina Jordanova develops this theme when she considers in her own chapter the role that digital disruption has had on the activist film festivals and emphasises the legitimising function of film festivals in relation to cyberactivism (22).

This is the fourth among the yearbooks published by St Andrew's, which has truly developed a genre of its own in the scholarship surrounding film festivals. As with all the yearbooks in the series, this one also consists of three parts: Contexts, Case Studies and Resources and as expected it is loaded with various materials. What is especially distinctive is that the contributions of the film festival professionals are marked by the same rigour and tone as those of the academics. This is most likely due to the kind of festivals discussed here; many of the activist film festivals are in fact run by academics and researchers or find support in the institutions of higher education.

Along with Torchin's piece on human trafficking and film festivals there are other writings in the Contexts section on the specific dynamics present in the network of activist film festivals. Loist develops further her argument outlined in Ruoff's book this time in the specific context of activism. She and her co-author Ger Zielinski identify a fascinating fissure between the institutionalised and commercialised LGBT/Q film festival circuit in the West and the pressure these film festivals still encounter elsewhere in the world where their appearance often amounts to a radical political gesture. These struggles are paralleled in some of the dynamics of the disability film festivals considered sensitively by Mitchell and Snyder. Amalia Córdova discusses the case of indigenous film festivals which programme films whose "look can be distinctive, as indigenous festivals often screen works developed in training workshops where the appearance has the rough feel of an exercise, as opposed to a more 'polished' aesthetic" (67). She also argues that "the reliance on others, and the commitment to sustainable filmmaking, leads to projects grounded in community accountability and infused with a community's pressures and interests" (67). Her argument harks back in interesting ways to the discussions about film festivals and the national in Ruoff's

book when she points out the complications inherent in “re-inscribing and curating indigenous films from within the perspective of national cinemas, from which they are strikingly absent” (65).

The case studies presented in the second part of the book are largely personal accounts by film festival practitioners and participants of various activist film festivals. What is striking is the sheer variety and extensive geographical range of the case studies considered, including Stefan Simanowitz and Isabel Santaolalla’s discussion of a festival in a refugee camp in the Sahara desert, Igor Blazevic’s account of the first human rights festival in Prague, and A. L. Georgekutty’s look at an eco film festival focussed on water resources in India.

The book concludes with the section on Resources, the contents of which are very diverse. On the one hand there are research resources on film festival and activism, which include interviews and a book review, and on the other the updated bibliography of film festival studies by Loist and de Valck (also available online at <http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org>). The fact that about a third of *Film Festival Yearbook 4: Film Festivals and Activism* is dedicated to the Resources section inevitably raises the question as to why these resources are not really commented on in any depth or critically explored in the volume itself. The reason seems to be, as with Ruoff’s book, the desire on the part of the editors to offer as much space as possible to the voices of those who organise festivals and often dedicate a large portion of their lives to them. This emphasis on oral history also tells us something about the archival practices surrounding film festivals, especially the ones which are run on a shoe-string by activists and enthusiasts of different kinds. What both these make clear is that if we do not gather the voices of those who make all different kinds of festivals happen we will have no way of researching, writing, thinking and teaching about film festivals. A large part of the cultural heritage associated with film festivals will then be lost and with them the memory and history of a very important aspect of contemporary culture. Both books are well packed and sometimes have the feeling of a breathless overview. But, as their appearance and that of the St Andrews expanding series as a whole make clear, time is short with so many divergent festival practices to document across the globe.