

# Art and Outrage: Provocation, Controversy and the Visual Arts

By John A. Walker

London: Pluto 1999. ISBN 0-7453-1354-X. 261pp., 51 illustrations. £14.99

## A review by Sue Roberts, Nottingham Trent University, UK

*Art and Outrage* is a reception history which documents controversial art works and people in the British art establishment and the way that they have been received by the public, the law and the media. It covers the period 1949-1997 in a total of thirty nine chapters and includes both visual and performance artists.

Walker himself is a member of the arts establishment, being a Reader in Art and Design History at Middlesex University, but claims to have some "residual philistinism" from his working class background and therefore to be able to present a new perspective on the by now entrenched antagonism of artists and the general public which has been fuelled by unsympathetic and sometimes even hysterical media coverage.

In his introduction, Walker gives the reader a number of contexts to bear in mind and reveals his own opinions on who the general public is (3), why the British are philistines (5), the role of the mass media as self-appointed representatives of the public taste (11), avant-gardism as the culture of the ruling elite (10), the human desire for shock which people indulge by reading bad news in newspapers but hypocritically won't allow artists to explore (17), and the fact that shocking art does not necessarily mean good art (19).

The book proper begins with Sir Alfred Munnings, the conservative "painter of horses" and well-known anti-Semite outraging radio listeners in 1949 with a drunken abusive tirade against Modern Art. The press took up his comments as something of a crusade and so set the stage for present day criticism of contemporary artists (25). The 1950's saw controversy over a monument to "The Unknown Political Prisoner" and the Abstract Expressionist art of Richard Green, while the 60's is represented by the artists of the "Destruction of Art Symposium" whose work used destruction as an artistic technique and the "indecent" drawings of art dealer Robert Frazer.

The 70's includes Carl Andre's firebricks, Womanpower Feminist Exhibition, Mary Kelly's Post-partum Part 1, and COUM Transmissions "Prostitution" show. The 80's saw performers sent to prison for wearing knitted costumes which represented naked bodies, a protester dying after setting fire to a rubber sculpture of Polaris, feminist attacks on degrading images of women in Leeds and J.S.G. Bloggs being arrested for copying English bank notes. It's interesting that the reaction to shocking art in this period of High-Tory rule is more extreme than ever before.

In the 90's people have been shocked by John Keane's Gulf War painting, Hirst's lamb, Harvey's Myra Hindley's portrait, Jamie Wagg's proposed installation showing security camera stills of James Bulger with his murderers and Anthony Kelly's gilded body parts. All these 90's works look at violent death and/or dismemberment of humans or animals, perhaps telling us as much about the artists' fears and preoccupations as it says about the outrage of the general public.

To summarise, while I think this is a useful reference and I acknowledge Walker's scholarship in meticulously recording responses to each work, allowing us to see the interfaces between various factions in British society, I nevertheless have a number of problems with this book.

Firstly, I am not happy with his dismissing of objections to shocking art on the grounds that everyone likes watching or reading unpleasant news and to object is to be hypocritical. This contradicts his previous point that being prepared is the most important factor in coping with shocking images; a fact that is borne out by most (not all ) people being able to cope with grim newspaper photographs which they have regular exposure to but not being happy with them in contemporary art which they have very little experience of or training in.

Secondly, many of the works in the book cover serious issues such as child abuse, rape, murder and display of human and animal remains and I feel someone who is claiming "writing concerned with the social and psychological impacts of art" (20) for himself should have done more than merely report the facts. Mentioning Freud once in the introduction and saying that Jamie Wagg played rough games as a child didn't quite cover the ground.

Finally, to give artists such an uncritical mandate is to privilege their intentionalism rather than to acknowledge the post-modern view that it is the audience who create the meanings of the work (and yes, I'm afraid that does include the "philistine British" public) interpreting it according to the specifics of their personal gender, race, historical and psychological circumstances. It's an unusual contemporary artist who hasn't at least a nodding acquaintance with this theory but they may still decide to risk or actively court publicity or anger because (as in so many cases in the book) an angry reaction may be part of what they want to do with the work. Still, it might have been interesting if Walker had looked at that a little more closely.

# The Art and Science of Screenwriting

By Philip Parker

Exeter: Intellect, (2nd edition), 1999. ISBN 1841500003. 219 pp. £14.95

## A review by Graeme Harper, University of Wales, Bangor, UK

Books about writing run the gauntlet of whether to concentrate on a "how to" approach or whether to opt for a more theoretical discourse. One book that makes it through this dangerous run unscathed is Margaret Mehring's *The Screenplay* (1990). A book that plumbs for the "how to" approach is Robert McKee's *Story* (1999).

Writers can gain from both approaches, but where the more theoretically informed book succeeds over the "how to" is in the region of transferability. When McKee says "you must not only respect but master your genre and its conventions" (McKee, 1999: 89) you know immediately that the writer eludes to prescriptions which, in themselves, are not likely to offer encouragement to the naturally generative nature of creativity. Theoretical information, on the other hand, which is essentially information presenting models rather than prescriptions, is far more able to provide transferability.

Where the theoretically generated book can fail to deliver is in the realm of commonsense exchange and voice. Theory can leave behind its modelling, metaphoric purpose and become a brand of self-perpetuating, self-important meta-theory. McKee's "how to" voice, on the other hand, is commonsensical and kindly. What he tells you seems wrought and wise. If he uses examples they are not too far removed from the reader's own experience. His voice is parental. There are warnings and clues given which seem genuinely empathetic.

The division of labour here is between the presentation of general models or metaphors, which are often associated with the primary work of science, and the passing on of experience gained through individual expression, which is largely seen to be the work of art. The division is false but still much believed in. In Philip Parker's *The Art & Science of Screenwriting* we find this two culture division thrust right up front.

Parker suggests his book is both "a solid theoretical framework for understanding how screenplays work in their totality" (3) and "a practical handbook on screenwriting" (3). The chapter "A Creative Matrix" is said to offer the theoretical framework and, if we are prepared to accept that plot and genre are the full extent of modelling available, then it does.

Of course, this is not true. There is no complete matrix here which can intersect structure and form, individual and holistic levels of interpretation (that is: between writer and audience), method and theory, or even prescription and transferability. Yet it would be wrong to say there is no attempt to provide one. For this attempt Parker should be heartily congratulated.

In attempting to promote his "Creative Matrix", the author identifies a paradox which *The Art and Science of Screenwriting* simply does not have the level of address to deal with. This

paradox is that an act of writing occurs as much beyond the page as on it. The act of inscribing on the page is not where it begins or where it ends, yet paradoxically it is how we, when reading, find it.

Writing, you might say, is "analogue" in its mechanics but "digital" in its consciousness. It is the product of what that great philosopher of creativity, Henri Bergson, once referred to as an "intuition". And he used this word not in its generic sense but in a specific way to refer to a progressive activity in which the instinct and the intelligence are reconciled, working together both at the simple ways-and-means level of art and science and at the ontological and epistemological level, the level of thoughts, ideas, reasons, desires and so on.

Parker wants his book to be introductory, approachable and industry-wise, but to have the respectability of offering a "science", of approaching the discourse of "high theory". He feels a need to "attempt to find some frameworks for sorting the mess and an understanding of why writing a great screenplay is so hard and yet so wonderful when it happens" (4). This is laudable; yet ultimately the reason for the book's shortcomings.

Where *The Art and Science of Screenwriting* falls down is that although it offers useful "how-to" information on such areas as "Revealing Plot and Form" and "The Rewrite", it is unable to surround this with the kinds of transferable "modelling" knowledge that can generate individual creative action. Ultimately, the "Creative Matrix" the author promotes is underdeveloped because it does not go beyond a notion of writing as simple inscription. This is unfortunate because, in scope and potential, *The Art and Science of Screenwriting* has a lot to offer. Parker's intention is genuine so it can only be hoped that his "Creative Matrix" develops further on the road to the next edition of this book. Here, however, a flawed but genuinely committed attempt.

# Gender, Ethnicity and Sexuality in Contemporary American Film

By Jude Davies and Carole R. Smith

Edinburgh, Keele University Press, 1998. ISBN 1 85331 174 X. vii + 156 pp. £12.95 (pbk)

## A review by George S. Larke, University of Sunderland, UK

As these are all popular subjects in Film and Cultural Studies at present, it is difficult not to be attracted to the title of this book. At the same time, however, the length is surprisingly short in comparison to the breadth of the title. The incompatibility of the task and the word length is the most obvious criticism to aim at the book. However, in view of this, it would have been useful for the writers to address this fact themselves early on. Instead, they foreground notions of identity politics and symbolic signification, plus the importance of multiple readings in the approach to visual analysis. The binding force behind the quite eclectic choice of films is the proposal that representations of men/women/blacks/whites in cinema work both as "naturalisations of more or less highly politicized identity and also continue to perform symbolic or transactional functions" (6). One of the book's strongest features is the way it utilises extratextual information to supplement its essentially visual analysis. Interviews with directors, stars, contemporary reviews, awards and box office ratings all lean towards the acceptance of cinema as a cultural event. This is coupled with an extremely engaging style and obvious fascination with the films. The concluding message seems to be that identity in popular American cinema is still underpinned by a need to identify an "other" by which "normality" can then be gauged and understood.

The reader may be left to assume that American cinema is still the same as it has always been. The reason for this is that the book is fairly contradictory. While it begins by wishing to move forward from an unquestioning acceptance of Roland Barthes "codification and culture", which is said to have influenced mainly "static" readings of films; e.g. Douglas Kellner's work on *Top Gun* and *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (6-7) there is a tendency to slip into fairly "static" readings themselves. This is mainly due to the reliance on stereotypes. The main focus is identified as films "articulating forms of identity in symbolic terms" (103). The reading of such films as *Glory* suggests that African-American ethnicity is portrayed through the stereotypes of the "young buck", the "Tom", the "simpleton" and the "house-nigger" (74-75). While this is shown to be a problematic element of the film, there is no offer of a significant alternative "ethnic" reading. This is perhaps because the book moves on to discuss the film as a masculine "rites of passage" film. Thus, it is not the reading of "stereotypes" that is problematised, but the politics of the film. The element that is missing here, and at other moments is an acknowledgement of the multifarious nature of cinema audiences; for example, how *does* the *Pretty Woman* narrative work if the audience does not accept the "fixed goodness of her femininity"? (11). Many preconceptions are uncovered as problems, but there is not enough time to pursue them satisfactorily. A more thorough examination of possible uses or rejection of stereotypes in cultural discourses would have opened up the readings to more possibilities. On a more positive note, the book's strongest topic is

masculinity. Accepting the white androcentric nature of Hollywood narratives, the book explores identity politics, ethnicity and sexuality through articulations of masculinity with depth and clarity. From Michael Douglas' portrayals of white, middle-class masculinity in crisis in *Basic Instinct*, *Falling Down* and *Disclosure*, through Denzil Washington's move from black stereotype (*Glory*) to American male stereotype (*Philadelphia*) to Tom Hanks' "unthreatening everyman" (*Forrest Gump*, *Philadelphia*), the book examines a common Hollywood thematic trait - the naturalizing or homogenizing of male identity as an antidote to all other conflicts or differences. It is on this topic that the book shows its true form and the writers show their ability to develop a multifarious approach to a well-worn problem. It is significant that when dealing with male homosexuality, the book deviates from its focus upon mainstream film and includes independent and avant garde films. This far outweighs the attention to feminist issues confined to *Go Fish* in the sexuality section and *Daughters of the Dust* in the ethnicity section. The book is obviously focused on questions of masculinity and would have been better if it had acknowledged so. The conclusion leaves us with the images of a multiculturalist, but still male, utopia envisioned in *Independence Day*. It doesn't offer a significant conclusion, but it does conclude the theme of male-bonding as a dominant pre-occupation in American identity politics. In conclusion, the book offers an overview of some of the most talked about popular films to feature problematic representations of gender, ethnicity and sexuality. It is a useful text, but it cannot be expected to, and does not, provide conclusive insights on all the topics in the title.

# The Magnificent Ambersons

By V. F. Perkins

London: BFI, 1999, ISBN 0-85170-373-9, 77 pp., 39 illustrations. £7.99

## A review by James Naremore, Indiana University, USA

Woodruff Place in Indianapolis, Indiana can't be found on a tourist map, but it would probably interest anyone who is familiar with Orson Welles's adaptation of Booth Tarkington's *The Magnificent Ambersons*. Tarkington once lived there, in a Queen-Anne style mansion graced with parquet floors, beveled glass, and hand-carved statuary. Nearby was the much grander James O. Woodruff house, designed by Laymon Jennings, which was one of the largest and most splendid dwellings in the Midwest. When Woodruff lost his fortune in the financial crisis of 1873, the inhabitants of Woodruff Place tried to protect themselves from urban sprawl by establishing the area as a suburb and then as a town. At one point, in a futile attempt to keep their aristocratic enclave separate from the growing city, they constructed a dry moat and a high wall, known to locals as the "spite wall." But by 1907, Indianapolis had become the world's fourth biggest manufacturer of automobiles and a crossroads of rail commerce; soon afterward, it swallowed Woodruff Place, which briefly became an artist's colony. During the 1930s, the Woodruff house was demolished, the other big houses were divided into apartments, and a woman's prison was built on adjacent land. Today, the area feels like a ghostly ruin. You can still see evidence of its past glory, in the form of a wide boulevard meant for horseless carriages and a grassy esplanade decorated with fountains, "European" statuary, and other varieties of nineteenth-century kitsch. Mostly, however, Woodruff Place is filled with ordinary houses in Bohemian disrepair.

I mention all this in order to point up the ironic fact that Welles's film, which is based at least indirectly on the history of Woodruff Place, suffered a roughly similar fate. As V. F. Perkins remarks in his superb BFI monograph, *The Magnificent Ambersons* is a "ruin" defaced by RKO's banal re-editing and revision--a movie about loss, but also, in a "cruel and arbitrary rhyme" (71), a lost film. Luckily, however, *Ambersons* has retained enough of its original form to enable us to view it also as what Perkins calls "one of cinema's glories--an incisive, moving, generous, and thrillingly accomplished work" (7). Given the remarkable quality of what remains, everything we know about the fifty crucial minutes we shall never see only adds to the nostalgia, melancholy, and tragedy that pervade the narrative.

Perkins correctly blames the partial loss of the film on RKO--not, as several commentators before him have done, on Welles. A faithful adaptation of *Ambersons* was never the sort of thing that could have become a box-office hit, and the studio's nervous attempt to revise it did nothing to enhance its appeal. It may be true, as Perkins observes, that Welles lacked "the popular touch"; but this provides no justification "for first employing him and then, when he has delivered the movie you commissioned and made you a masterpiece, destroying it rather than attempting to find whatever audience is available" (17). Editor Robert Wise's claim that the original version "wouldn't play" is a similarly poor justification, for some of the greatest movies of all time--*Rules of the Game*, *Madame de*, *Vertigo*--do not "play." In all these films, Perkins reminds us, "you need to free yourself from the standard expectation that the

characters are there to be liked or admired; but you find, if you allow yourself to dislike them, that you come to love them" (18).

Perkins doesn't attempt to reconstruct the lost footage, since that job has already been done in Robert Carringer's critical edition of the original continuity and in Jonathan Rosenbaum's indispensable appendix to *This is Orson Welles*. Instead, he offers a brilliant analysis of the surviving film, dividing his discussion into four parts--"Magnificence, Dew Bright Morning"; "Transition"; "Falling Apart"; and "Loss"--whose titles suggest the increasingly ruinous trajectory of both the story and the studio's interventions. As he has previously demonstrated in his classic *Film as Film* and in his numerous essays for *Movie*, Perkins is a master of close reading. Even so, I found myself wishing he had been able to write a slightly longer book than the BFI series allows. He spends almost five pages on the film's opening seconds (a captivating duet of spoken voice and music over darkness) and another twenty on its introductory montage, showing how Welles's "*phonogenic*"(20) narration transmutes Tarkington's ornate rhetoric into a mood of confidentiality and reminiscence. These pages offer a definitive appreciation of one of the most delightful sound/image constructions in movie history, and they continually make us aware of the central irony behind the montage, which is presented in a spirit of fun, but which shows clear evidence of pride, disappointment, loveless marriage, and spoiled childhood. As an inevitable result of the blow-by-blow commentary, however, Perkins must give some of the later scenes a relatively brief treatment, and he pays less attention to one or two of the performers than he admits he would have liked.

Still, I doubt that we shall ever have a more thorough and illuminating commentary on the inner workings of the released version of *Ambersons*. This is an eloquent, fine-grained analysis, bracingly different in style from the mixture of neo-formalism, ideological critique, and industrial history that typifies most contemporary film study. Throughout, Perkins lovingly evokes the texture of the film--as in his brief discussion of the snow-ride sequence, when he remarks that the setting has a "beguiling artificiality . . . not a cold that bites into you, but one that makes you appreciate the comfort of your furs" (47). He also has excellent things to say about the characters; for example, in pointing up the contrast between the two women who are described by the film's dialogue as the "divinely ridiculous" Isabel Amberson and the "ridiculous old" Fanny Minafer, he wisely observes that Isabel enjoys a "happy blindness," whereas Fanny "is the character for whom the gulf between public display and concealed feeling is widest and most tormenting" (50). Along similar lines, he is keenly aware of what the actors contribute to characterization. I was particularly struck by his sensitive description of the way Joseph Cotten employs an expressive object (a table spoon) during a speech at the Amberson dinner table, and by his forthright praise of Tim Holt, the most underrated actor in the ensemble, whose performance is "funny, as well as appalling, because the actor never steps outside the character's humorless conviction of rectitude and superiority"(60).

Perkins is aware that in its second half especially, *Ambersons* can't be discussed as a "coherent work"(53). Nevertheless, the later sections of the film afford him an unusually good opportunity to analyze Welles's long takes, showing how they are related to his "genius in editing" and to his rhetorical "tact" (54). Skillfully selecting frame-enlargements for illustration, Perkins describes a great variety of these shots, from mobile compositions that place special demands on the actors to stable images that are "holdingly, heart-breakingly quiet" (64). Because he is so well attuned to the way the film's meanings arise from its dramatic context, his commentary forms not only a powerful tribute to Welles but also a



valuable contribution to motion-picture aesthetics as a whole. Here and elsewhere, he is such a fine critic that the loss of the film's original ending becomes all the more painful to contemplate. At the close of his monograph, he speculates intelligently about the missing footage, hoping against hope that it might someday be recovered, to provide a "good happy ending" for cinephiles. I join him in such hope; but meanwhile I'm pleased to have his important discussion, which beautifully enhances the surviving film, making it seem fresh and new.

# **The Media In Britain: Current Debates And Developments**

By Jane Stokes and Anna Reading (eds.)

Houndmills and London: Macmillan Press, 1999. ISBN 0-312-22528-8. xxi + 316 pp. £47.50 (hbk), £15.99 (pbk)

## **A review by Rebecca Robinson, University of Glasgow, UK**

This attractively-presented book, dedicated to the writers' students, proposes the following goal: "Especially useful to people who are studying the media at undergraduate level, this book will offer something to think about to the uninitiated and the media specialist alike" (xx). Closing the introduction's first paragraph which enthuses about media studies with words like "exciting", "thrill" and "vitally important", the sentence encapsulates neatly the editors' aspirations and describes accurately the collection's strengths and weaknesses. Undergraduates will enjoy the range and brevity of the pieces and their user-friendly current statistics, but those who engage critically with the issues under discussion will be left pondering the editors' stance. Is it a teaching text which reflects contemporary pedagogical trends to offer a thorough grounding in media, or is it instead an attempt to offer fresh, lively research to produce something like an extended journal issue which, the editors hope, will stand the test of time? This collection does not sufficiently position itself, stretched as it is across conflicting planes, so that although it accomplishes these tasks in places, the three parts of the volume do not cohere in a satisfying manner.

The essays are collected into three sections: "The Structure of British Media Industries", "Regulation and Media Policy", and "Media Material: Content and Representation". Each has an introductory summary supplementing the introduction proper and each constituent chapter is subdivided into smaller microtopics listed in the contents. (In some papers the subdivisions are commonsense organisational signposts, but two seven-page chapters illustrate the inconsistency and perhaps the folly of the list presentation format when one essay contains six subsections and the other distinguishes only between the body of the argument and its references.) The first of the three sections breaks the British media into seven discrete but overlapping areas and positions contemporary debates within their historical contexts. This section will be invaluable to those students whose coursework perhaps focuses predominantly on film or advertising: the articles have depth and combine summaries of prior debates with discussion of current developments in an accessible style. Read together, these seven insightful pieces offer the new student a working knowledge of the interrelations of media in Britain, and Britain's place in the world. The second section comprises four pieces on regulation and policy and is similarly well-balanced and cohesive with analysis of both historical and recent political and legislative issues in broadcasting.

The third section, grouping together fourteen disparate articles, promises most and disappoints most. Its first few papers are grouped to offer examples of critical methods (positioned as semiotic or content or textual analysis), presumably to demonstrate these tools

to undergraduates, whereas its later articles explore diverse texts and "artefacts". The introduction to the analytical methods essays includes editors' comments such as: "Phenomenology is the study of the structure of the phenomena and is an important aspect of modern media studies" (189); other comments describe a later chapter as "follow[ing] in the *polemicist* tradition of Dwight McDonald in the U.S. and Richard Hoggart in Britain. It is an example of committed scholarship which characterizes much of the more critical tradition in our field" (italics in original; *ibid*). Neither statement offers illumination to the undergraduate, and the experienced reader might find the many examples of such commentary unnecessary or even irritating. The fourteen papers range considerably in style, content, method and, it must be said, datedness (hence, appropriateness). Although interesting and media-related, the chapters on a 1992 production of *An Inspector Calls* or a 1960 film, *Peeping Tom*, do not sit well in this book; had they been deleted and replaced by the article on the Holocaust museum in Belsen, the thematic connections of British identity would be more developed and the editors' argument for its inclusion - a "need to acknowledge that the category ['media'] has been too narrowly defined in the past" (185) - would be made more strongly. Positioning the two chapters which best make this case at the end of an over-long final section of the book strikes me as cosmetic footnoting (if you'll pardon the mixed metaphor) rather than addressing an important challenge definitively. Hopefully, this opportunity will be exploited more successfully in later editions.

Overall the book's weakness is its ambitiousness: too many goals and too disparate a target audience. There are also some odd omissions: there is a disproportionate under-discussion of radio (public radio and sports coverage in an era of satellite TV, radio and the music industry, hospital radio, talk radio) or media that serve non-dominant interests (speakers of Welsh, Urdu, or Gaelic, rural or isolated media producers or audiences). Also, perhaps time was against the editors' desire to be "current": while the layout is clear and attractive there are embarrassing typographical errors, and section introductions contain inconsistent formats. These reservations aside, I would recommend this book to undergraduates because the content and presentation are thorough and accessible, but the "media specialist" might find the mixture less satisfactory.

# Passionate Views: Film, Cognition and Emotion

By Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith (eds.)

Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-8018-6010-5 (hbk.); ISBN 0-8018-6011-3 (pbk.). 301pp. £41.50 (hbk.); £15.00 (pbk)

## A review by Sarah Cardwell, Royal Holloway College, University of London, UK

Whilst Film Theory struggles to survive under the dead weight of its historical dependence upon untenable psychoanalytic "theories" of the mind and related, deeply problematic, conceptualisations of ideological subject-positioning, some scholars forge ahead to build a fresh approach to films and their audiences which promises to revitalise Film Studies. Plantinga and Smith's book is an example of just such scholarship. The contributors to this volume focus on one of the key questions that has justifiably preoccupied previous generations of film theorists: how can one explain the source and nature of the emotional power of films? In doing so they raise three types of questions: those that have long been recognised as important to the field; those that arise from film texts themselves, yet have not been so far addressed; and those new questions that spring from the introduction into Film Studies of new material from the fields of cognitive psychology and philosophy.

Current orthodoxy characterises the viewer's often intense emotional engagement with films within the terms of an unconscious process of subject positioning explicable through psychoanalytic theory. The methodological and theoretical repercussions of this conceptualisation are significant; interpretation and theorising are stifled within a framework that restricts the possibilities for original work. The key feature distinguishing these collected essays is their rejection of the psychoanalytic/subject positioning approach in favour of a cognitive approach. The justification for this is rooted in real-life experiences of film viewing and actual examples from filmic texts.

"Our emotional engagement [with film] constitutes, in many instances, the most intense, vivid, and sought-after qualities available in the film experience." (Carroll, 24). Film-goers themselves frequently explain the affective power of films (and thus the appeal of cinema) in terms of their emotional responses to them: the way in which films elicit particular "moods", feelings or other responses, by encouraging "engagement" or "identification" with characters and/or narratives. Yet, as the editors of *Passionate Views* point out, psychoanalytic theories "lead theorists' attention away from the emotions." (Introduction, 13). In contrast, "cognitive philosophers and cognitive psychologists have focused their attention specifically on the study of emotions" (13); thus, a cognitive approach is an obvious choice when investigating film's affective power.

*Passionate Views* is divided into three sections: "I. Kinds of Films, Kinds of Emotions"; "II. Film Technique, Film Narrative, and Emotion"; and "III. Desire, Identification and Empathy". There are, however, continuities of style and approach across all three sections.

Every chapter is written in an accessible, careful and thoughtful style that is both unusual and refreshing within Film Studies. Care is taken to define the use of terms, acknowledge the limitations of particular theoretical approaches, and offer supporting textual and (sometimes) empirical evidence. Technical or subject-specific terms are used prudently, and the writers are careful to "merely push ... ordinary language in a direction towards which it already inclines, rather than stipulating ... brand-new concept[s]" through the use of commonly used words (Carroll, 22). Alternative views on topics raised are respectfully outlined and evaluated, and some writers even offer scientific experiential evidence in partial support of their theses. Most importantly of all, though, the writers included here openly engage with the work of others within the same field, to the extent that critique, even criticism, of other cognitive theorists' work is included even within the volume. Dirk Eitzen reveals inadequacies in David Bordwell and Carroll's conception of erotetic narrative, Berys Gaut responds critically to Noël Carroll's work on identification, and Carl Plantinga critiques Gaut's own delineation of empathy and sympathy. Plantinga, in turn, even states in a footnote to his chapter: "I argue[d] for the use of the term 'identification' in [a previous work] ... I now agree with [Murray] Smith and others that 'identification' is too confusing to be useful." (287). Overall, there is a sense of dialogue, teamwork and both personal and group endeavour to develop the best of the ideas raised by cognitive theorists.

In Section I, Carroll addresses genre, and the ways in which different genres are linked with particular emotions; this is not a new subject, but Carroll's clear-headed approach offers a detailed and complex analysis, and emphasises the important, often overlooked fact that "emotions require cognitions" (27). The value of the other three chapters in this section is in their introduction of material *new* to Film Studies, primarily from the realms of cognitive (and analytic) philosophy, raising new questions and offering new answers: Ed Tan and Nico Frijda explore sentiment(ality) in relation to film; Cynthia Freeland investigates the potential usefulness of Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime" to the interpretation of particular moments in film; Dirk Eitzen offers a bold argument for humour to be considered as an emotion, through the use of filmic examples.

Section II further develops an approach to film deriving from cognitive psychology. Whilst Jeff Smith and Susan Feagin focus on the very specific areas of film's use of music and "timing", the most striking chapter on filmic emotion is contributed by Greg Smith. Smith does not just "accept" a cognitive framework as a suitable starting point to discuss emotion in film; instead he stresses the need to choose appropriate models for understanding, warning that "[w]hile film cognitivism is in its early stages, we need to make sure that our basic conception of the emotion system does not needlessly limit our understanding of filmic emotions." (104) He therefore differentiates mood from emotion, arguing that a particular mood predisposes a person to a certain emotion, and that at the same time the perpetuation of a mood is dependent upon the recurrence of the emotion related with it. Smith goes on to offer a complex analysis of filmic "moods" and emotions, which suggest considerable openings for further textual analysis. Torben Grodal's chapter follows, raising salient issues relating to emotion and narrative, but lacking the precision that Smith exhibits, with the result that his contribution occasionally exhibits uncharacteristically sloppy or illogical thought.

Section III offers a thought-provoking conclusion to the book, in particular through Gregory Currie's and Murray Smith's contributions. Currie's chapter differentiates our narrative desires (the desire for a tragic tale, or a happy ending, for example) from our character desires (what we desire to happen to the characters in a film), and reveals how these two types of desire are often in conflict. Further, in a challenging conclusion linking our desires concerning fictions

with our desires concerning real life, he addresses the questions: "How might the experience of fiction change our desires outside the context of the fictions they present? How, in particular, might ... filmic fiction change the desires I have concerning real people and events?" (197)

This echoes Carroll's discussion of the "paradigm scenario", proposed in *Theorising the Moving Image* (1996), and both ideas have the potential to offer a politically aware alternative to pseudo-sociological talk of media effects and the more subtle, but conceptually awkward, tradition of ideological analysis so dominant in Film Studies. In a similar way, the most intriguing aspect of Murray Smith's chapter on perversity is the questions he raises about our problematic allegiance to immoral characters within films, and the possible reasons for and repercussions of this allegiance. These chapters should reassure doubting film scholars that to leave behind psychoanalysis is not necessarily to leave behind questions of social conditioning, morality, politics or ideology.

*Passionate Views* contains a plethora of ideas, approaches and conceptualisations new to Film Studies, and promises a fresh look at age-old questions and the posing of new ones. At a time of crisis in Film "Theory", this book reveals a new generation of film scholars who are beginning to build and reflect upon (and sometimes reject) the work of those who came before them. *Passionate Views* is not just a valuable contribution to its field; it is vital.

# **Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema 1930-1934**

By Thomas Doherty

New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-231-11095-2. xiii + 346 pp., illustrations. \$19.50 (pbk)

## **A review by Christofer Meissner, University of Kansas, USA**

Two schools of thought have emerged in recent years regarding the Production Code of the 1930s: the first a more traditional position which holds that films had distinctly different types of content in the period before the full implementation of the Production Code in 1934, the second a more revisionist position which holds that American film content was determined not by the level of laxity or enforcement of the Code but rather by the economic and social reasons behind the Code's very existence. Intriguingly, the latest book to deal with the Production Code, Thomas Doherty's *Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema 1930-1934*, falls firmly into the more traditional of these two positions.

Doherty's book treats the historical phenomenon that has come to be known as "pre-Code cinema," a rather amorphous body of American films made between 1930 and 1934 that by the traditional description treated content (sex, violence, political issues) that would become restricted after the creation of the Production Code Administration in mid-1934. In the very conception of his book and its subject, Doherty examines pre-Code cinema to a large degree by its traditional terms. He expands the purview of the subject, though, to include more types of films than even the traditional school of pre-Code thought has previously done. Sex (Doherty's "vice films"), violence (the classic gangster film), and political issues (what Doherty calls "preachment yarns") are featured, but so are diverse genres such as the expeditionary film (exemplified by the work of Frank Buck and Martin and Osa Johnson), the newsreel, and the horror film.

Doherty's conception of pre-Code cinema is not just constructed much more broadly than traditional accounts, it is also characterized in a fashion which accentuates its more bizarre features. "Pre-Code Hollywood" becomes a category which includes not only elements of sex and violence but nearly any kind of eccentric or offbeat content; additionally, the idea of pre-Code cinema becomes, at least in part, merely a matter of periodization in that classes of film are labelled "pre-Code" simply by virtue of having been prevalent in the early-1930s. Further, Doherty explicitly identifies pre-Code cinema as from another "universe." Stating that "the universe of pre-Code Hollywood operated under rules of its own" (3) and labelling pre-Code cinema as a "glimpse of an alternate film universe" (xi), Doherty clearly marks out a place for his subject which encourages a kind of freak-show contemplation.

This contemplation is lavished on an interesting variety of topics. Full chapters are devoted to the context of pre-Code cinema within classical Hollywood cinema generally, the background of the Great Depression and Hollywood's industrial response to it, the treatment of Depression-era leaders (especially Roosevelt and Hitler) in pre-Code cinema, the examination of newsreel form and content, and the development of verbal comedy during this period (exemplified by Mae West and the Marx Brothers). Less pertinent but still compelling tangents are taken to discuss the "newsreel presidency" of FDR, the treatment of Naziism in 1930s American cinema, and the capture of John Dillinger. Supplementing the general discussions of genres are a number of extended explications of pre-Code films such as *Cabin in the Cotton* (1932), *This Day and Age* (1933), *Heroes for Sale* (1933), *Wild Boys of the Road* (1933), *The Story of Temple Drake* (1933), *Baby Face* (1933), *Five Star Final* (1931), *Around the World with Douglas Fairbanks* (1931), *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), and *Massacre* (1934).

The biggest problem with *Pre-Code Hollywood* is that Doherty fails to engage with any of the other scholarship regarding the Production Code or pre-Code cinema. Led by Richard Maltby and Lea Jacobs, this work--which constitutes the second school of thought referred to earlier--is substantial and presents ideas considerably different from Doherty's. One of the tenets of Maltby's and Jacob's revisionist work on the Production Code is that the full implementation of the Code and the creation of the PCA in 1934 was not the cause of the changes in film content, but that the modifications of film content in this period were the result of ongoing adjustments in representational practices in sound cinema. By avoiding engagement with this body of scholarship, Doherty isolates his own treatment of pre-Code cinema and weakens his own conception of pre-Code cinema as a cinematic "universe" unto itself.

On average, though, *Pre-Code Hollywood* is an interesting treatment of a subject that, on the basis of the two schools of thought that have emerged, is bound to be historically contentious for some time to come. Doherty's book is strongest when it is discussing individual films and weakest in its failure to adequately connect the films to the ongoing historical debate over the category of pre-Code cinema. At the very least, Doherty's work adds another perspective to this debate about the Production Code and the films that were released in the period between 1930 and 1934.



# The Seventies Now: Culture as Surveillance

By Stephen Paul Miller

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-8223-2166-1. 414pp. 28

Photographs. \$59.95 (hbk); \$19.95 (pbk)

## A review by Ian Smith, University of Westminster, UK

North American culture and politics during the 1970s offers enough evidence of mystery, upheaval and conspiracy to make it an attractive area for both cultural critics and mass audience entertainment. It is therefore disappointing that Stephen Paul Miller's dense study of that period, *The Seventies Now: Culture as Surveillance*, fails to deliver a coherent analysis of the cinema, art, literature and politics of that period.

We are warned that this is not an authoritative overview of 1970s America, but a personal trawl through certain political and cultural events that could be seen to shape or reflect the period in which "surveillance and self-surveillance were dominant traits". He offers two Foucauldian analyses to sift through the events of the decade; the matrix of the discursive subject and the episteme. The former is used to analyse the role of the individual, the state apparatus, the presidency and the "spatial reality" that exists between them. As background to this, Miller produces epistemes in the form of four micro-periods, spanning the entire decade; pre-Watergate, Watergate, post-Watergate and pre-Reagan. These periods, whose beginning and end remain as vague as those offered by Foucault in his studies, are in turn contextualised in terms of both the 1960s and 1980s, emphasising the influence of the former on the 1970's and how the latter grew out of a period of deep mistrust of government and the official structures it oversaw.

Although his application of the four micro-periods to the cinema of the seventies is sometimes interesting, he appears to have scant regard for the medium. His analysis of certain films is baffling (*Jaws* as a good example of the conspiracy film), but in most cases his conclusions are vague and have been explored with more clarity and greater depth in other books (particularly Frederic Jameson and Robin Wood).

Miller also claims to offer an insight into the art and literature of that period. He looks at the cross-hatching works of Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol's celebrity and electric chair screens, both in terms of the country's increasingly vocal gay movement and their place in the American art scene. The works of Toni Morrison, Sam Shepard, Thomas Pynchon and Adrienne Rich are analysed in relation to the political upheavals of the whole decade, particularly the country's economic and race problems. However, as interesting as some of his observations are, Miller is unwilling to analyse these writers and artists on the merits of their own work. Instead, he chooses to look at their importance and relevance alongside the work of the poet (and cultural barometer) John Ashbery, and his epic poem "Self Portrait in a Convex Mirror". What remains are two sections which lose sight of the interesting ideas Miller set out to investigate, preferring to elevate Ashbery to the status of grand seer of seventies culture. As a result, the book's theoretical framework is mostly neglected, as Miller

presents an erratic analysis of Ashbery's poem and its significance as possibly the single most important cultural artefact of that period.

This is not to suggest that Miller's book has no redeeming features. Amongst the attempts to deify Ashbery is an excellent analysis of Warhol's work. In particular, Miller draws attention to both Warhol and Nixon's obsession with recording, as well as the impact Warhol's commodification of images had on the following decade, which saw brokers such as Jeff Koons and Julian Schnabel break into the New York art scene.

The final section is the most successful, and playful, in the book. It looks at three events in the political life of Richard Nixon, and subjects them to a detailed textual analysis. Both John Dean's "cancer on the presidency" comments that were captured on the Oval Office tapes, and Nixon's resignation speech, are seen as examples of the erosion of the barrier between public and private life. Nixon becomes the ultimate victim of his own obsession with surveillance and in turn, helps to destroy any illusion there was regarding the privacy of public office. Most remarkable of all is Miller's analysis of the famous missing eighteen minutes of tape. Adopting the strategy of John Cage's "4'33", Miller describes every hiss, blip and silence that can be heard on the tape of Nixon's incriminating Oval Office conversations, apparently erased by the President's personal secretary. Where his other analyses of seventies culture fail, Miller's description of the "accidental" sounds he hears on the tape presents the reader with a chilling account of a period in which even the surveyor was surveyed.

"The Seventies Now" is a great disappointment. It is a book which promises much, but delivers little in the way of insight. It is ironic that although Miller seems to place little emphasis on the importance of the cinema of that period, his fictional alter ego could quite easily be Harry Caul, the surveillance expert in Coppola's *The Conversation*. Both are aware that they are dealing with something of great importance, but with so many voices to deal with, they lose sight of their original aims.

# Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema

By Linda Mizejewski

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999. ISBN: 0822323036. x + 241pp. £30.25 (hbk) £11.95 (pbk)

## A review by Nadine Wills, Griffith University, Australia

The Glorified American Girl has been described with innumerable glowing adjectives. These "glorious specimens" and "damsels fair" were living monuments to new ideals of white heterosexual American identity in the first three decades of this century. Just as describing the Ziegfeld Girl lends itself to campy hyperbole, so does reviewing Linda Mizejewski's latest book *Ziegfeld Girl*. Feminist cultural studies has come a long way in the past couple of years and Mizejewski's book is an enticing example of what can be achieved.

To further place this book in context, Mizejewski's earlier book was *Divine Decadence: Fascism, Female Spectacle, and the Makings of Sally Bowles*. Since 1939, Christopher Isherwood's Sally Bowles character has reappeared in a number of different texts (the most obvious being Bob Fosse's *Cabaret*). Mizejewski argues that each time Sally Bowles was resurrected, she embodies the particular cultural issues and anxieties that are historically specific to the context of each text. Thus, Mizejewski covered the period from Weimar Germany to the Vietnam War. With a similar methodology, *Ziegfeld Girl* focuses more specifically on the period before World War II. However, there is an obvious continuity between the two books in that both are case studies of the way in which particular types of female performance tie into the creation of national identity. Both books contain comprehensive historical research to support the large scope of her hypotheses and despite this wide range of inquiry, *Ziegfeld Girl* is also well written and focused.

One of the most unique aspects of *Ziegfeld Girl* is the way Mizejewski constructs an argument for the glamorous veneer of the ideal American woman and the tension between concealment/revelation that adds to current debates about gender performativity. Mizejewski bases her discussion historically and also focuses in on a number of key figures central to these themes, including Ziegfeld's first star Anna Held the Parisian/Jewish chanteuse, Julian "The Handsomest Woman on the Stage is a Man" Eltinge, Busby Berkeley and model Dolores. Mizejewski ends with a comparison of Judy Garland and the Ziegfeld Girl. "Garland's famous uneasiness with stardom and glamour, the doubleness of her performance that has made her particularly beloved to gay male culture, has special resonance in the meanings of the Ziegfeld enterprise.... In contrast to dreamy Ziegfeld Girl gliding, Garland's performances make heterosexuality look difficult explaining why straight women, as well as gay men, would find Garland appealing as camp." (198-199) Mizejewski's discussion of concealment/revelation is not only focused on individuals but also on chorus girls in the areas of race (with an interesting section on coon-shouting), class, consumerist desire and filmic representation.

Mizejewski uses fashion to show how the Ziegfeld Girl straddled a period of turbulent change with a sugary coating of "bourgeois niceness" (87). Although there have been a number of recent books on the subject, fashion theory is still an underexplored area in relation to film studies. *Ziegfeld Girl* makes an interesting argument about the way in which fashion is used to authenticate and position the body. The excessive display of the Ziegfeld Girl is connected both to the avant-garde fashion industry and the conventional nationalist rhetoric of the Glorified American Girl. Mizejewski problematizes the whiteness of racialized pulchritude when she examines the tan/café au lait makeup that allowed certain Ziegfeld Girls to act out the "bad" sexuality that was otherwise taboo.

Musicals are popular again if not in the cinema then at least in academia. Mizejewski's work can be classified as part of the second wave of musical film genre theory (post Rick Altman and Jane Feuer). The last chapter of *Ziegfeld Girl*, "The Ziegfeld Girl and Hollywood Cinema", is the longest in the book which uses textual analysis to tie together the arguments Mizejewski set up in the earlier chapters. It contextualizes the Hollywood musical in the Ziegfeld Girl's history of display but also uses an auteurist (Ziegfeld and Berkeley), stardom (Marion Davies and Judy Garland) and genre motif (of the Ziegfeld Girl as "type") approach to position the Ziegfeld Girl as a racialized ideal of American femininity. There are particularly interesting case studies of *Whoopie!*, *Ziegfeld Girl* and *Footlight Parade*, and again fashion theory is central to Mizejewski's argument.

*Ziegfeld Girl* is accessible on a number of different levels. Linda Mizejewski's book addresses a broad spectrum including; film studies, American studies, history, cultural studies, fashion theory, race/ethnicity studies, women's/gender studies and sexuality studies. Within film studies Mizejewski contributes to discourses surrounding musical genre studies, spectacle, costume, star theory and film history. *Ziegfeld Girl* comes out of a growing tradition of books by scholars such as Robert C. Allen, Lewis Erenberg, Pamela Robertson, Richard Dyer and Lois Banner. Fine company indeed. While *Ziegfeld Girl* can be placed on many fancy lists it would be a mistake to allow glib contextualisation to obscure the unique style, methodology and body of theory that Mizejewski develops in *Ziegfeld Girl*.