Action/Spectacle Cinema: A Sight and Sound Reader

By José Arroyo (ed.
London: BFI, 2000: ISBN 0-85170-757-2, xvi + 272 pp., illustrations. £12.99 (pbk)
Screening Violence Edited by Stephen Prince

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London: The Athlone Press, 2000: ISBN 0-485-30095-8, viii + 275 pp., illustrations. £17.99 (pbk)

A review by Mark Gallagher, University of Oregon, USA

Amid the many missteps of the 2000 U.S. Presidential campaigns, both leading candidates tried to outdo each other in their condemnations of Hollywood studios marketing violence to the nation's impressionable children. Unwilling to be seen as soft-hearted pacifists, both candidates, of course, also endorsed gun ownership, increased military spending, and government-sponsored executions. Political issues surrounding media violence, though, operate in a particular moral domain, at a remove from social reality and its attendant human conflict. Fictional representations aside, violence remains an overwhelmingly visible and consequential component of human activity worldwide. Despite, or perhaps because of, the prevalence of real violence in human cultures, fictional treatments of violence and destructive spectacle raise thorny questions of industrial responsibility and social reception. Academics in many fields have had much to say on the subject.

Two new film studies anthologies offer a substantive overview of media representations of violence: *Screening Violence* deals specifically with film and television violence, and *Action/Spectacle Cinema* analyzes popular cinema's most consistently violent film metacategory, the contemporary Hollywood action film/thriller/blockbuster. *Screening Violence*, edited by Stephen Prince, offers a historical assessment of film violence beginning in the late 1960s, devoting much attention to the groundbreakingly violent *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) and *The Wild Bunch* (1969). Many of these analyses, from Prince and MPAA President Jack Valenti, among others, should be familiar to many film scholars, as most of the book's material has been published previously (indeed, one essay is simply a slightly condensed chapter from Prince's 1998 book *Savage Cinema*, a study of Sam Peckinpah's films). Editor Prince here locates the disparate contributors' perspectives within a specific thematic framework. Perhaps the collection's most useful feature is its assembly of diverse commentaries on violence, including not only film scholars such as Prince, Carol Clover, and Vivian Sobchack, but also Valenti, the Hollywood cinematographer John Bailey, and two sociological studies of violence.

In addition to its breadth of viewpoints, the book provides a strong historical context, though it sacrifices currency to do so. The inclusion of pieces written in the late 1960s Valenti's speech to a national commission on violence, and essays reprinted from *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Variety* offers readers a useful overview of contemporaneous responses to films of the era, but it does little to advance current understandings of film violence. Popular film, the industry that produces it, and the cultures that receive it, have changed significantly over the last three decades. The tone of moral outrage in some of the 1960s pieces, notably those from the late *Times* reviewer Bosley Crowther, attests to gradual shifts in critical tastes and public attitudes toward violent media. The essays grouped in a section labeled as "The Historical Context of Ultraviolence" raise awareness about the gulf between critical perceptions of past and present. Other pieces, in the book's "Aesthetics of Ultraviolence" section, show their age if applied to contemporary film texts. Sobchack's fine essay, which here appears with a new postscript, first appeared in 1974; Clover's contribution is a reprint of the 1987 *Representations* article that expanded into her influential 1992 book *Men, Women and Chainsaws*; and aside from Prince's own selections, the book reprints articles first published in the early- to mid-1990s. The book serves well as a historical collection or as a convenient compilation of disparate articles - it would make a versatile text for a college course on film violence - but it provides no new direction for those interested in the subject. Even the introduction, in which Prince incisively addresses questions of aesthetics and reception, itself repeats entire pages (albeit with slightly different prose) from the chapter on Peckinpah that appears later.

The sociology entries are vexing for those approaching film violence from a humanities perspective, studying films as specific texts that both construct and distill cultural tensions, rather than as links in a tidy causal chain of violent representations and responses. Attention to social-science data necessarily aids film scholars in understanding media reception, but methodological differences generally impede academic cross-pollination. While non-sociologists may hesitate to question the essays included here because of inexpertise with social-science methodology, a few concerns readily spring to mind. One of the pieces, originally published in 1984, cites previous studies as early as 1963, the present-day applicability of which seems questionable. Moreover, this study, by Leonard Berkowitz, resolutely ignores social causes for violent behavior, using "mass media" as the sole variable. Given the social unrest, wartime conditions, and economic malaise of much of the 1970s, a narrow focus on media violence that makes few distinctions between depictions of real or fictional, staged events yields inconclusive results. Again, trained sociologists may better assess the nuances of the experimental data Berkowitz compiles. More useful to the lay reader may be Richard Felson's thorough review of numerous sociological studies of media violence. Felson's essay, which first appeared in 1996, effectively critiques inconclusive studies and calls attention to methodological shortcomings. The utility of both essays depends partly on readers' willingness to examine approaches to the subject from outside traditional film studies disciplines. Interdisciplinary dialogue ultimately will broaden the thinking of those in disparate fields, but the sociological material sits uneasily in this volume.

Overall, *Screening Violence* fails to grapple effectively with the changes in the production and consumption of film and television violence in the 1980s and 1990s, during which time film has cycled from the paramilitary anguish of *First Blood* (1982) and *Rambo* (1985), to the ironic savagery of *Reservoir Dogs* (1991), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), and the *Scream* films, to the patriotic hyperbole of *Armageddon* and *Saving Private Ryan* (both 1998). U.S. television in the 1990s, meanwhile, simultaneously celebrated authoritarianism and chaos with cheaply packaged surveillance-video footage of police chases and drug busts. In a further conflation

of violence, cartoonish spectacle, and putative reality, U.S. cable networks' wrestling stars perform in crudely scripted and deliriously inauthentic bouts but gain legitimacy by "writing" best-selling autobiographies. Such recent trends make for a very different cultural climate than the historical one that *Screening Violence* scrutinizes. Prince's introductory essay presents convincing but brief arguments regarding "the social disconnect of many contemporary filmmakers" (33), a compelling idea to which the overall volume devotes scant attention. Prince's formal dissection of the aesthetics of violence in Peckinpah's films supplies an instructive vocabulary for critical viewing, but the increasing ubiquity of film bloodletting and destruction in the last two decades calls for a new critical approach. In Hollywood film, the twentieth century concluded with the hugely popular Zen arsenal on view in *The Matrix* (1999), a runway show of hyperviolence that makes the diagnostic tools proffered by *Screening Violence* appear somewhat obsolete.

The other volume under review supplies a helpful corrective to Prince's work. *Action/Spectacle Cinema* compiles *Sight and Sound* articles written throughout the 1990s, and it is to be lauded for its currency - its final entries date through July 1999, impressively defying the glacial pace of academic publishing. Editor José Arroyo adds new introductory material, including a succinct prefatory essay that defines the action/spectacle "mode" (his term, and a useful one) in terms of critical denigration (both in journalism and in the academy), the industrial climate of contemporary Hollywood (in a word, mergers), and the films' formal properties (he highlights the Steadicam and computer-generated effects; Dolby- and THX-equipped theatres might be added to this short list). The book then delves into sections on the so-called "Big Loud Action Movie," including thoughtful pieces from Larry Gross, who coined the phrase, and Richard Dyer; action heroes and directors; special-effects technology; neo-noir; 90s serial-killer films; and a "Critical Perspectives" section, its vague title denoting a series of smart but hazily-connected pieces from J. Hoberman, Yvonne Tasker, and others.

As a collection of already published material, the work sometimes struggles to maintain its coherence. It includes over thirty essays, most of them fairly short, and nearly as many reviews of individual film. Many pieces were written without specific attention to the "action/spectacle" meta-category Arroyo identifies, and consequently, they exhibit a disparity rather than a unity of tone. Such variances can constitute a strength of the work: the wide-ranging essays underscore the fluidity of popular cinema and the action mode, and they address the expanse of issues that films within this category raise, including questions of gender, class, film technology, spectatorship, and industry. At the same time, many of the concerns most pressing to film studies scholars appear almost incidentally, sparingly dispensed in essays often livelier than they are rigorous. Some readers will doubtless be frustrated by many contributors' departures from formal, academic film criticism. Still, the volume's frequent avoidance of film criticism's fairly specialized vocabulary will likely broaden its appeal.

Arroyo effectively contextualizes the selections, linking them to particular questions of representation, authority, and political economy. However, the nearly fifty pages of film reviews included serve largely to inform prospective viewers whether screening these films constitutes a worthy expenditure of time and money. While an archive of reviews can prove useful to scholars when no other published material exists on particular films, one might have preferred the substitution of additional critical material instead. In particular, the work lacks a global perspective Hollywood continues to produce "Big Loud Action Films" mostly for paying viewers outside the U.S., as such films earn far more money internationally than in

domestic release. (The book's efforts on this front, consisting of a "John Woo Interlude," focus largely on the Hong Kong director's transition to Hollywood filmmaking.) In a study of films produced by multinational corporations for worldwide audiences, a comprehensive, global perspective would illuminate the action/spectacle mode's many countenances.

These two collections contribute nicely to the body of film and cultural studies work on popular, fictional representations of violence and action. Read in tandem, the two provide a historical context and theoretical frameworks for spectacular cinema's diverse appeals, effects, and technical properties. As often occurs with anthologies, neither leaves readers with an entirely coherent set of positions or shaping perspectives, but they do provide diverse resources for those who would explore the subjects further.

The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema

By Daniel Bernardi (ed.)
New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1996. ISBN: 0-8135-2277-3 (hbk) 0-8135-2276-5 (pbk), 378 pp., 64 illustrations. £42.50 (hbk); £15:95 (pbk)

A review by Eithne Quinn, University of Central Lancashire, UK

Bernardi's edited collection, comprising fourteen essays on the complex racial dimensions of early American film, provides ample and varied evidence to support the book's opening quotation and overall contention that, despite an apparent dearth of critical attention, "race matters" (in both senses of Cornel West's phrase). Organized thematically, if rather loosely, into four sections - "Representation and Resistance(?)", "White Nationalism", "The Fear of Miscegenation", and "The Colonial Imagination" - the volume takes a richly historicized and often theoretically sophisticated approach to questions of racial formation, identity and representation. Not only does the book ambitiously depart from the custom of focusing on one specific racial group - so that coverage includes a consideration of African-American, Asian and Asian-American, Native American, and Euro-American film imagery and practice - but also it is impressively varied in terms of approach. To explore the shifting and intricate racial dynamics contributors turn to questions of exhibition, distribution, intertextuality, reception, and celebrity, as well as to the more frequently examined questions of narrative and genre, of misrepresentation and underrepresentation (what Stuart Hall has called the mere "relations of representation"). Uniting this diversity in case study and approach is the shared, uncontentious assumption that race was a central organizing principle in early cinema, and that, though non-essential and unstable, race constituted a powerful "symbol of cultural Otherness and social privilege" (3). Early films worked to establish and reproduce the racial regimes of cinematic representation that persist, at least vestigially, in contemporary Hollywood.

Many of the essays tell detailed and engaging stories about the individual encounters, discursive negotiations, and material constitution of race within the cinematic terrain. In the first section "Representation and Resistance(?)", Thomas Cripps explores the making of *The Birth of Race*, the 1918 film conceived as an African-American antidote to D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915). Stressing the "role of chance, accident, and contentiousness" (39) in the process of popular cultural production, and proposing an idea of "progress" as no more than "a form of change over time that chaotically blundered in fits and starts" (39), he explains how the initial progressive vision of this film was thwarted largely because of the advent of World War I: "the movie that had begun as apologist and defense counsel for African Americans drifted into a pre-*Lusitania* pacifism ... resorting to a rousing martial coda that celebrated the American entry into the war" (50). Emphasizing a sense of "agency" more than Cripps' story of "structures", Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence also examine early black American filmmaking: this time the "biographical legend" of Oscar Micheaux. Resonant of the self-publicizing, controversial strategies recently deployed by Spike Lee, Micheaux, the

authors argue, used his "self-constructed social identity, political point of view, and status as African American entrepreneur to create, promote, and shape the reception of his works" (58), including his 1920 *The Symbol of the Unconquered*, the focus of this chapter.

The motifs of interracial relationships in Micheaux's oeuvre are more thoroughly treated in the third section "The Fear of Miscegenation". First, Chon Noriega provides a comparative novel-to-film account of Griffith's popular but critically neglected 1910 *Ramona* (adapted from Helen Hunt Jackson's novel of 1884), periodizing shifts in the racialized debates about gender, class, and nation. Then Nick Browne provides an opera-to-film study of *Madame Butterfly* (1915), intriguingly historicized in terms of deteriorating US/Japanese relations. Finally, by contrast, Gina Marchetti provides a focused close reading of Sidney A. Franklin's *Forbidden City* (1918), drawing out the ambivalent sexual politics of its parallel stories of cross-racial affiliation. There are no contributions, however, on the large corpus of silent films about white inter-ethnic relations, an absence to which I will return shortly.

Roberta Pearson provides a highly engaging account of the representation of Native Americans in the silent Custer films, warning us away, in a manner resonant of Cripps, from the "teleological fallacy" of assuming that there was "a 'natural' movement toward more 'accurate', 'authentic', or 'balanced' representations, automatically valorizing more recent Custer films such as *Little Big Man* (Arthur Penn, 1970) over their silent predecessors" (295). In finding that early representations of racial Others were "by no means monolithically negative" (275), Pearson speaks for many of the contributors here who discover complex and often inconsistent portrayals of non-white protagonists.

In conspicuous ways, this collection represents part of the recent wave of scholarship focusing on *whiteness* as a racial category. Yet, for all the detailed investigations of race put forward, and for all Bernardi's introductory cautions and careful assertions about the mutable, hybrid, non-essential nature of racial identity in the introduction, the editor speaks with a surprising assurance about the dominant category of whiteness. In his brief opening remarks, Bernardi speaks of "the degree to which an individual or a group counts or doesn't count as 'white'" (4), "the white order" (6), the "white 'ideal'", "the machinations of American whiteness" (8), and "an unambiguous message about white supremacy" (9). Problematically, the notion of whiteness that emerges from this cluster of phrases seems rather vague, monolithic, and given. Furthermore, insofar as none of the contributors spend much time investigating representations of whiteness (whether as a problematic, ambiguous, changing, or ethnically diverse category) the volume unfortunately does not really attend to what Richard Dyer calls the "matter of whiteness" (the first essay by Clyde Taylor is perhaps the exception). Ironically, this lack of attention to white representation - and instead the tireless focus on images of other races in both white and non-white cultural production - inadvertently works to demonstrate the very point about racial binaries (white/not white) that this group of post-structural film historians are at pains to expose and (presumably) critique. In short, race tends to be elided with "non-white", just as gender, in a different context, came to stand problematically for "women". To be fair, Bernardi gestures towards the limitations of the volume's coverage when he characterizes it as only "an initial step in filling the gap in film studies on the enduring legacy of race and whiteness in U.S. cinema" (9), and rightly allows that "few 'contributors' address the workings of whiteness" (10). Nonetheless, one starts to suspect that the probably injudicious inclusion of "whiteness" in the volume's main title had more to do with its then-status as hot conceptual property than with its capacity to showcase the very considerable strengths of this collection.

British Cinema: Past and Present

By Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson (eds.)
London and New York: Routledge, 2000: ISBN 0-415-22061-0 (hbk) 0-415-22062-9 (pbk), xx + 385 pp., 80 illustrations, £15.99 (pbk), £50 (hbk)

A review by Jonathan Murray, University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK

To read this collection of essays is to be made aware that cinema is one of the few institutions in post-Thatcher, post-industrial Britain whose "nationalised" status a substantial body of opinion is actively willing to protect. As the editors note in their introduction, the one key debate developed around British but not American cinema in the Anglo-US academy is its relation to and reflection of questions of national identity. "The question of how we should conceptualise British cinema or what it means to talk about British cinema" (14) is the one which surfaces most regularly during this book.

Collected and expanded from papers originally presented at the *Cinema, Identity, History* conference held at the University of East Anglia in July 1998, this is perhaps the most expansive and ambitious collection yet published on British cinema. The book is ambitious in two senses. Firstly, in the chronological sweep of British cinema history and texts that it covers: essays range from John Ellis' piece on *Radio Parade of 1935* (1934) to Paul Dave's analysis of Patrick Keiller's *Robinson in Space* (1997). Secondly, the book attempts to cover as wide a span of disciplinary approaches to British cinema as possible, reflecting the diversity of methodologies employed in the field of study. Thus, essays are split into seven sections. Historical overviews of the development of British film criticism, and its specific engagement with the question of British cinema as national cinema are provided by Jeffrey Richards and Andrew Higson. Section two focuses on the circulation of British cinema internationally and its reception by non-British audiences with Sue Harper's case study of the American distribution of Korda's *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) and Marcia Landy and Pierre Sorlins' accounts of British cinema's reception by audiences in the United States and continental Europe respectively. Section three examines British cinema's symbiotic relations with other strands of British popular culture via case studies from John Ellis, Lawrence Napper and Jane Stokes interrogating aspects of popular cinema in the 1930s. Section four highlights questions of individual and institutional authorship, with re-evaluations of the careers of Betty Box and Roy Ward Baker by Justine Ashby and Peter Hutchings, Vincent Porter's study of the 1950s output of the Associated British Picture Corporation and Sue Harper's essay on the careers of key 1930s British screen actresses. Section five is concerned with questions of genre and industrial production cycles. James Chapman provides a revisionist overview of British cinema's propagandist function during World War Two, Leo Enticknap discusses the Rank Organisation's serial documentary short strand *This Modern Age*, and Adam Lowenstein and Moya Luckett provide essays on emblematic genre cycles and texts from 1960s British cinema, Lowenstein relating Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) to the social realist concerns of the British New Wave, Luckett discussing the "Swinging London" films in terms of their representations of female sexual and social mobility.

The last two sections of the collection focus more extensively on contemporary British cinema. These sections exhibit a general concern with questions of representation and textual analysis, the capacity of individual films to interrogate and reflect often fraught question of national identity and social landscape. Section six examines filmmakers whose work could, to a greater or lesser degree, be situated within a social realist paradigm: Ken Loach, Mike Leigh, Alan Clarke, but also the work of Danny Boyle (*Trainspotting*), Peter Cattaneo (*The Full Monty*) and Mark Herman (*Brassed Off*) among others. Central here is the common historical association noted by John Hill in his essay "From New Wave to 'Brit-Grit'" made within British cinema between realist aesthetic modes and the representation of previously socially-marginalised and under-represented groups within the national formation, most specifically the working classes. Hill's essay, and those of Claire Monk on representations of masculinity in 1990s "underclass" films and Julia Hallam's on the role of regional production initiatives in the economic re-structuring of post-industrial regions of the United Kingdom (and the analogous images of post-industrial reconstruction of economy and working-class masculinity found in films funded under these auspices) collectively focus on an increasingly prominent strand of British cinema which assesses the legacy of Thatcherism on Britain's industrial and working class communities.

The final section of the book interrogates and attempts to broaden the conceptual scope of another notion central to both production and critical discussion of British cinema in the 1980s and 1990s, that of "heritage". Amy Sargeant focuses on the familiar sense of the term as centred on adaptation of canonical literary texts, utilising notions of "quality" to circulate profitably in the international art-house market. She moves beyond traditional concerns in this area with textual analysis to demonstrate the extent to which both film and television heritage texts draw on other spheres of commercial production and marketing, notably tourism, heritage centres and theatrical and interior design, to create a convincing (and lucrative) aura of historical authenticity. Phil Powrie traces the outlines of what he calls an "alternative heritage" strand of British cinema, fostered since the 1980s by television-subsidised art cinema. "Alternative heritage" focuses on a version of the national past characterised by diverse regional location, usually non-rural and neither metropolitan nor southern English, working class community, and individual memory cleared coded as subjective construct. Powrie contrasts this to the kind of "bourgeois" (326) heritage discussed by Sargeant, arguing not only for a proliferation of national heritage(s), but for a model which problematises the function of heritage in predicating an unproblematically consensual nation of national identity firmly located and completed in a past historical moment. John Orr and Paul Dave adopt more conventional auteurist models to discuss the ways in which the films of Derek Jarman Peter Greenaway, and Patrick Keiller construct images of British/English national identity in their films.

There is no questioning the breadth of achievement and scholarship involved in the production of this volume. More problematic, however, might be the ways in which it approaches the question of "conceptualising" British cinema noted above. One of the merits of Jeffrey Richard's piece "Rethinking British Cinema" is its illustration of the pervasive historical role of intellectual and academic film criticism in prescribing preferred models of what, in the enduring absence of an industrially secure production base, British cinema should be aesthetically, socially and politically, and its consequent critical privileging of canonical texts and erasure of deviant ones. While, as the editors note, contributors to the volume often adopt a self-consciously "revisionist" (3) approach to British cinema history, such revisionism often seems as much concerned with reconstructing the assumptions of the critical academy, an internal debate, as with actually broadening the scope of films and

filmmakers under discussion. In this regard, the book sometimes betrays its origins as a set of conference papers, a somewhat rarefied discussion between academic peers, which may not always be as accessible for students of the subject as it might be.

This "internalist" approach proves problematic in the final two sections on contemporary British cinema, which one suspects will be those of widest interest to British cinema students. For example, Hill and Monk partially rework critical positions they adopt on contemporary British cinema elsewhere; it is not that the extension of such debate is unuseful, but it does tend to reiterate attention to texts and filmmakers who are already better served than others in terms of critical discussion. Alan Clarke merits much less space than Ken Loach in Hill's piece, Powrie discusses Terence Davies at far greater length than Gillies Mackinnon, while Orr can draw on a substantial body of extant literature on Greenaway and Jarman. It is not that questions of representation are not approached in a collectively thoughtful manner, but simply that the scope over which such questions can be asked is limited by the frequent focus on critically familiar films and filmmakers. Perhaps this in part explains some of the omissions which disappoint the editors, "the scarcity of scholarship discussing British cinema in terms of race, ethnicity and multi-culturalism" (15), to which might be added the lack of attention to British national cinema*s*, particularly those of Scotland and Wales, both at the conference and in the book. While this collection is a fine testament to the current vibrancy of academic study of British cinema, it suggests that much of this energy needs to be employed in the continued widening of the topic's perimeters, as well as the detailed reinterpretation and consolidation of its previous achievements.

A Chorus of Raspberries. British Film Comedy 1929-1939

By David Sutton
Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000: ISBN 0 85989 603 X, ix + 294pp., 20 illustrations, £40.00 (hbk)

A review by Alan Burton, De Montfort University, UK

The new history of British cinema, evident for around two decades now, has been concerned to challenge the critical orthodoxies of an historiography that has privileged realism and notions of quality derived from literature and theatre. The leading beneficiaries of the new approaches and concerns have been popular genres and stars, previously submerged in a "lost continent" of forgotten films. Historians have rushed headlong into archaeological and cartographic metaphors in their desire to excavate artefacts of popular film and to redraw the map of the national cinema. Prominent attention has been given to a "cinema of excess" with its potential for transgressive representational strategies, and found in such derided genres as melodrama. These films conflicted forcibly with the dominant intellectual film culture, one more supportive of documentary film and the social-realist aesthetic.

British film comedy in the 1930s has resided in this marginal critical space and has long been overdue for attention. Throughout the decade comedies formed the largest generic group in the national cinema, totalling about 600 productions. These were widely popular and thus represented a profitable and significant place in many studios' output. In a useful critical survey of British film culture the author assesses the neglect of the comedy film, but does not accept its easy dismissal in terms of its evident "excessive" qualities. Finding, on the contrary, both in retrospective analysis and in contemporary critical discourse, clear markers of realism and restraint that locate the films closer to the dominant critical paradigm than one might suspect.

One of the study's most valuable interventions is its theorising of British comedy. The object is to elucidate a "culture of laughter" and to situate film comedy as a "popular aesthetic", ideas drawn from Bakhtin and Bourdieu and which avoid "exclusive" and hierarchical generic modelling typical of traditional critics like Gerald Mast. Popular stars such as Gracie Fields and George Formby were clearly cross-generic performers and therefore it is necessary to "imagine comedy as in some sense polyglottal and multi-vocal, able to `speak' a number of generic languages and articulate diverse generic codes" (31). The centrality of comedian comedy in films of the 1930s, performers of the calibre of Will Hay, Jack Hulbert and Max Miller, also threatened the unified diegetic ideal of the classic realist text. The intertextual origins of the performers in music hall and revue, their consistent extra-fictional personas and their continual recourse to spectacle in terms of gags, comic business and song, work to destabilise the classical film. Consequently, the organisation and pleasures of the films needs to be explained partly in terms of the "cinema of attractions", a view of film derived from early cinema studies and which acknowledges "the episodic, the disruptive and the digressive" (46) in preference to continuity and narrative coherence.

Four clear types of British comedy film are identified, and these are, in the main, interrogated through their leading performers. The most significant are the working-class comedies led by such accomplished performers as Hay, Formby and the Crazy Gang. Here, the author posits intriguing ways in which the films display aspects of realism and Britishness, characteristics that were sometimes recognised by contemporaries and brought them unexpectedly close to official critical discourses. Also in this group are a number of popular comedians who are virtually unknown today. Leslie Fuller, Ernie Lotinga and Sydney Howard were all celebrated stage performers who brought their rare comedic skills to the early British sound film and thus made a vital contribution to the comedy film genre in its years of transition.

Middle-class comedy was the milieu of Hulbert, the Aldwych farces and Jack Buchanan. These sophisticated performers had greater potential for success in the American market, although this was rarely realised. A further category, female comedy, crossed class lines, with the "classy" Jesse Matthews exhibiting profoundly middle-class sensibilities, Gracie Fields a more working-class earthiness and Cicely Courtneidge a destabilising eccentricity regarding gender identity and conventions. Situation comedy was the preserve of film-makers and actors rather than comedy performers and the author considers the work of producers Alexander Korda and Michael Balcon and film director Anthony Asquith. Although a minor sub-genre in the 1930s, this approach with its more secure classical narrative method heralded the later celebrated ensemble films of Ealing and Rank that would to a considerable extent come to displace the comedian comedies in the postwar years.

A Chorus of Raspberries joins a growing library of works addressing Britain's popular cinema. Additionally, it adds to several important recent studies of the national cinema in the 1930s, making that decade one of the best surveyed of all periods. The study is lively, well informed and thoughtful, and does not fall into the trap of some critical treatments of comedy which, in their drive for analytical rigour, fail to appreciate the humour in their subject. The best compliment that can be paid to a work of excavation is that it instils in the reader an urgent desire to experience the films. I now appreciate that my British film education is incomplete until I have encountered Ernie Lotinga, Albert Burdon, Stanley Lupino and Asquith's *The Lucky Number* (1933).

Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde

By Joan Hawkins
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, ISBN: 0-8166-3414-9, 320pp. $15.96, (pbk)

A review by Matthew Hills, Cardiff University, Wales, UK

Joan Hawkins's study of "art-horror" focuses upon the historical intersections of "art" and "horror" discourses and audiences. Hawkins is thus not interested in creating or maintaining a general aesthetic theory of horror; the impetus behind this project lies instead in an interrogation of aesthetic criteria aimed at exposing the fragility of distinctions such as "high" versus "low" culture, or the "avant-garde" versus "horror" as a genre. Sections two and three of the book examine specific instances of "art-horror" and thus examines the ways in which horror and art-house or avant-garde cinemas overlap and interpenetrate. The resulting study is one which significantly addresses issues of generic mutability and shifts in cultural value (see especially chapter seven).

Hawkins begins her study by examining how the classifications of "paracinema" ultimately place "high" and "low" cinematic culture side by side. The key criterion of paracinematic culture is affect, and it is this "emphasis on affect which characterises paracinema as a low cinematic culture" (4). However, this linkage of affect with "low" cultural status is rapidly contested by Hawkins:

> High culture - even when it engages the body in the same way that low genres do - supposedly evokes a different kind of spectatorial pleasure and response than the one evoked by low genres.
>
> Supposedly. But that doesn't mean that it always does...Finally, it is not so clear that low genres seek *only* to titillate" (6).

From the very outset, then, Hawkins seeks to doubly challenge the equation of high culture with spectatorial detachment and that of low culture with its spectator's affective (bodily) immersion. "High" culture, Hawkins suggests, also carries an affective charge, while "low" culture cannot be reduced to its inscriptions on and across spectator's bodies, being also concerned with serious "content and purpose" (ibid). This is an important point, and one which appears to imply a challenge to the reification of "barbarous" and "pure" tastes which is (arguably) enacted by Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1984). However, Hawkins aligns her project with the work of Bourdieu (28) rather than considering the ways in which Bourdieu's separation of immersed and detached aesthetics replays the clean distinctions between "high" and "low" culture which *Cutting Edge* otherwise seeks to complicate.

Hawkins's early complication of models (and cultural values) of spectatorial affect and detached cognition is well-taken, and finds a counterpart in her dismissal of cinematic "gaze

theory" as opposed to televisual "glance theory". Hawkins notes that the "emphasis that glance theory places on the potential distractions of the domestic sphere becomes, then, simply another way of constructing the divide between high art and low culture." (40) Cinematic exhibition space is hence sacralised, but this surreptitious carrying of cultural value is also picked apart and rendered more dynamic and variable by Hawkins, particularly in relation to laser disc and paracinema video collectors. Such collectors do not necessarily "glance" at films when these are consumed within the home, and yet neither do they entirely homogeneously reverse the terms of the high/low cultural opposition (see p.44 and 49).

By contesting the oppositions of affect/cognition and gaze/glance, Hawkins sets up a strong starting point for her examinations of the political careers of specific films such as *Les yeux sans visage* (1959) and *Snuff* (1976), covered in chapters four and six respectively. However, if there is a problem here, then it lies in the fact that having destabilised the terms "high" and "low" culture, it becomes logically problematic to argue that such cultures intersect or interact without restoring the identities (ie. low = affective; high = detached/critical/cognitive) which have already been undermined.

Fortunately, the specific studies which Hawkins presents do not remain fixed at the level of merely illustrating how "high" and "low" cinematic cultures interact, or how specific films are caught up in discourses and exhibition sites linked to ascriptions of "high" and "low". Hawkins develops her central thesis by referring to the specific politics of aesthetics which are involved; skewering the "literalist" feminist readings of low horror, while high art's similar "attacks" on the female body are respected as "metaphorical" (195); examining the ways in which Georges Franju's World War II references are overwritten in the aestheticised response of *Cahiers* critics (84), and addressing how the avant-garde's emphasis on "the artist" serves to mask an exploitation of audience and "star-victim": "Affect here... is ignored in favour of... the intellectual and artistic function of the film." (135)

In short, *Cutting Edge* generally lives up to its title's razor-sharp connotations by slicing through the notions and values of separate and separable "high" and "low" cultures, thereby simultaneously unsettling the vanguardist connotations offered up by the "cutting edge" of the horrific avant-garde. By returning to affect and cognition, gaze and glance, body and culture, Hawkins muddies the waters of debate over cultural value in pursuit of greater clarity.

"Film Europe" and "Film America": Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange 1920-1939

By Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby (eds.)
Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999: ISBN 0859895467 (pbk); ISBN 0859895459 (hbk), 288 pages. £25.00 (pbk); £40.00 (hbk)

A review by Ronald W. Wilson, University of Kansas, USA

This edited collection of specially-commissioned essays concerns the efforts to establish a pan-European film co-operative movement in the interwar period and the reactions of the American film industry to maintain its hegemony against a potential rival. The result is that "Film Europe," as the movement was referred to, has essentially become a footnote in film history. As it is defined by the book's editors, Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby, "Film Europe ... meant the development of international co-productions, the use of international production teams and casts for otherwise nationally based productions and the exploitation of international settings, themes and storylines in films. At another level, it meant reciprocal distribution agreements between renters in different nation-states, and other efforts to rationalise distribution on a pan-European basis, in order to secure long-term collective market share by establishing all Europe as their domestic market." (3) The economic and political climate in Europe after 1933, however, led to the demise of any attempt at a pan-European film rival to "Film America," *a.k.a.* "Hollywood." The essays cover a wide-range of topics including the League of Nations involvement in the international film industry, the coming of sound and its effects on the European film community, the German and French film industries and their efforts to counter the influx of American film, and two case studies concerning individuals and their impact on international cinema. In addition, the volume also includes, as an addendum, primary documents which were previously inaccessible, in order to highlight as well as enlighten the individual essays. The primary aim of the book is to engage in a multinational perspective and to challenge those studies that view national cinemas in "splendid isolation."

The opening essay "Temporary Citizens", by Richard Maltby and Ruth Vasey, sets up the struggle between Film Europe and Film America in the years following World War I. The influence of the American cinema was a cause for concern for a Europe recovering from the ravages of war and trying to maintain a sense of cultural identity. The coming of sound further acerbated the problem of Film America's dominance in global trade. Kristin Thompson's essay, "The Rise and Fall of Film Europe", provides an historical overview of the attempts at pan-European film unity from 1923-1931. The primary goal of Film Europe, according to Thompson, was the creation of a larger base for production. The idea gained credence between the years 1924-1929, but was ultimately routed due primarily to the Depression, the coming of sound, and the political instability in Europe and the USSR. Thompson effectively discusses the industrial and political changes within three major film

industries within her essay: the Soviet Union, Germany, and France. Claiming that the Film Europe idea was not completely unsuccessful, the author sees its legacy in today's international film festivals, co-productions, and multi-national casts and crews, all of which originated in concepts conceived in the 1920s.

Two essays by the volume's editors, Richard Maltby and Andrew Higson, concern the politics of Film Europe within the League of Nations and the numerous International Filmof the 1920s. "Like the problems of world disarmament and the economic reconstruction of Europe," Maltby points out, " the motion picture problem required an international solution." (83) Maltby traces the League of Nations involvement in "the Americanisation of world cinema." Andrew Higson's essay discusses the numerous International Filmheld in Paris and Berlin in the 1920s during which the European film industries attempted to co-ordinate their activities. Higson claims thesesought "to establish a means of internal self-regulation and organisation, in order to combat the crushing competition from the American film industry and to establish more substantial profit margins." (118) Ultimately the conferences, as well as the idea of Film Europe failed to establish any long term effects, primarily because, as Higson notes, "the same debates were repeated at every conference, only to evaporate once the conference ended." (128)

Mike Walsh's essay on the distribution practices of United Artists in Europe provides the reader with an interesting case study of the activities of a single company, United Artists, and its attempts to establish itself in an overseas market. Direct distribution, rather than distribution through intermediaries, was the key to establishing a relationship with foreign exhibitors and countering governmental efforts to restrict foreign films.

Two essays discuss national film industries, Germany and France, in relation to the emergence of Film Europe in the mid-1920s. Thomas J. Saunders' "Germany and Film Europe" argues that Germany played a critical role in the emergence of Film Europe. After the war the German film industry established itself as a cultural phenomenon to be reckoned with on the international market. The idea of "Film Europe" proved beneficial to a national industry trying to move from isolation to inclusion in the international industry. This "inclusion" also meant, for Germany, becoming involved with Hollywood. The Ufa Agreement of 1925 between Paramount, Ufa, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer represented for some defeat in the struggle against "Film America." This hypocritical activity underlines the weakness of the concept of "Film Europe" as a whole. According to Saunders;

> For companies like Ufa which had partnerships with American firms, friendliness toward Hollywood had very concrete dimensions: they were not prepared to repudiate American liaisons in favour of either a vague European film community or specific, more limited agreements. (174)

Likewise, Jens Ulff-Moller's essay on the emerging American film hegemony in France reasons that restrictive amusement taxes helped in contributing to the ineffectiveness of establishing any unity against the tide of American films, which primarily due to block-booking accelerated the amount exhibited in French theatres.

Perhaps the most interesting essays in the volume pertain to the transitional period of the early 1930s and the advent of sound. Hollywood suddenly found that films were "no longer automatically exportable" due to the language barrier. MLVs (Multiple Language Versions) developed as a means of accommodating the most important European markets by producing

several versions of the same film in different languages and, in many cases, with different casts. MLVs were made during a brief period, 1929-1932, which corresponds to the transitional period of sound. By 1933 sound technology had become established enough that realism became more of a concern for filmmakers. MLVs eventually gave way to "dubbing" (which actually preceded it but was thought "unrealistic") primarily for economic reasons. Ginette Vincendeau's essay, "Hollywood Babel: The Coming of Sound and the Multiple-Language Version", is an excellent introduction to this little researched area in film history. Two essays by Martine Danan and Joseph Garncarz examine the use of multiple-language versions in France and Germany. These essays foreground Hollywood's concern for maintaining their presence in European markets by attempting to bridge the cultural divide with numerous versions of a particular film.

The final two essays examine the careers of E.A. Dupont and Anna May Wong as indicative of the cultural exchange or "internationalism" which "Film Europe" attempted to foster. Andrew Higson's essay, "Polyglot Films for an International Market: E.A. Dupont, the British Film Industry, and the Idea of a European Cinema, 1926-1930", looks at the film director's career in Britain as a key factor in their developing international markets. Tim Bergfelder's, "Negotiating Exoticism: Hollywood, Film Europe, and the Cultural Reception of Anna May Wong", focuses on the brief European career of the Chinese-American actress between 1924 and 1934, and how that career "fitted into the overall production strategies and cultural parameters of the Film Europe project." Both authors provide insightful case studies of the economic and cultural incentives for the development of internationalism as a European co-operative.

Higson and Maltby's work provides a much needed contribution to the limited scholarly work on film distribution history. Douglas Gomery has said that, "Distribution, sadly, is the least analysed part of the industry; there are no fascinating movies to consider, only dry, dull figures, both numerical and executive, defining and producing raw power." "*Film Europe*" *and* "*Film America*" presents a major addition to film scholarship and, hopefully, will instigate further research in this area of cinema studies.

Television, Globalization and Cultural Identities

By Chris Barker
Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999: ISBN 0-335-19954-2. xi + 195 pp., $25.95 (pbk)
Modernity and Postmodern Culture By Jim McGuigan

Modernity and Postmodern Culture

By Jim McGuigan

Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-335-19915-1, x + 177 pp., $25.95, (pbk)

A review by Herman Wasserman, Journalist and Independent Researcher, Cape Town, South Africa

Postmodern culture, the politics of poststructuralism and the influence of globalization on identity are topics that have received much critical attention and have given rise to complex debates. Whether in the field of cultural and media studies, (post)colonial discourse analysis or aesthetics, these discussions are often perceived as being extremely complicated, confusing or removed from everyday reality. These books by McGuigan and Barker attempt to bring these critical debates to bear on contemporary, daily experiences and should be welcomed for what one could call a practical sensibility. Indeed, as Stuart Allen puts it in his foreword to McGuigan (ix), the subject of postmodernism is no longer restricted to learned debates by intellectual elites: "(I)ts appearance in mass media discussions concerning topics as diverse as architecture, drama, fashion, literature, music or film has become almost a daily occurrence." The importance of debates on the cultural impact of television - the subject of Barker's book - is self-evident in the light of television being "an asset open to virtually everybody in modern industrialized societies and one which is increasing its visibility across the planet" (Barker, 3). Far from being esoterical issues, the themes explored in these books therefore have an everyday relevance.

However, to make these debates accessible without doing injustice to the intricate theoretic viewpoints, is no easy task. Although both these books are primarily aimed at a readership probably not yet acquainted with the sometimes vociferous and jargon-ridden academic discourse on the respective topics, they both also add their own insights to the continuing debate. While Barker focuses on giving a concise overview of a broad range of issues related to the central question of television and its influence on cultural identity, he does not claim neutrality. "(C)ultural studies and cultural politics is never a matter of neutral knowledge (…)" he states (171). His position seems to be that of an advocate for postmodernist diversity

when it comes to representation on television, in favour of an awareness of the fragmented nature of postcolonial identities and cultural hybridity and against essentialism (cf. 27-28). Nevertheless, Barker's emphasis is on applying theories of cultural identity (he draws in particular on the work of Stuart Hall) on television, "a leading resource for the construction of identity projects" (3). His discussion of different aspects of television and identity is augmented by a suggested list of titles for further reading at the end of every chapter. This, together with the end-of-chapter summaries and glossary, makes this book a very useful tool for classroom discussions.

McGuigan's book, although similarly an introduction, is slightly more complex and might not be as accessible for newcomers to the topic than that of Barker. Although he also gives an overview of the salient features of the debates surrounding modernity and postmodern culture, his thesis is more polemic and directed towards a contentious conclusion. McGuigan states his position already in his introduction as being that of a sceptic with regards to postmodern claims (2). He makes a distinction between postmodern*ism* and postmodern*ity*, the first referring to "philosophical ideas, mainly derived from poststructuralist theory, and cultural formations, especially associated with global popular culture" (2), the second to "societal or civilizational claims; and, quite specifically the argument that we are living through the transition from a modern to a postmodern period in history" (2). From this premise he goes on to argue that "there are more satisfactory ways of understanding social and cultural change than can be derived exclusively from postmodernist thought" (6). In the final chapter, on "reflexive modernity", McGuigan suggests that postmodernism "at its worst", "encourages an ironic detachment and nihilistic indifference when confronted with the complex problems of a rapidly changing world" (148). He advises a questioning attitude in this respect. According to him, the "finer values of the Enlightenment" present a better means of "remaining sane" in the current "crazy scene" (148) of global capitalism. Although striving towards a balanced account throughout and giving a fair hearing to different voices, McGuigan's conclusion comes close to a defense of modernity against the disillusions of postmodernism.

Although Barker and McGuigan are differently positioned as far as their allegiance to postmodernism is concerned, there are links between the topics they cover. Both discuss questions of representation: Barker devotes two chapters (2 and 3) to the construction and representation of race, nation and gender. McGuigan, in his chapter 3, entitled "Scrambled Images", examines what is seen by some as the "crisis of representation" (55) constituted by poststructuralist thought. He spends considerable time on Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, the refusal of postmodern epistemology to distinguish between representation and the "real". McGuigan apparently does not think much of Baudrillard's reasoning, considering Baudrillard's commentary on the Gulf War to be an adoption of "shock tactics because he believes this is the only way of being heard above the meaningless babble of postmodern culture" (60). McGuigan returns to Baudrillard in the conclusion of his book, in order to discount a statement of Baudrillard's as an amusing "quip" that "makes me think but not for long" (150). Offhanded comments such as this erode the credibility of McGuigan's argument in favour of critical reason.

In the discussion of media events such as the Gulf War, McGuigan and Barker also cover similar ground. Barker, in his discussion of cultural identities produced by mass electronic media, uses television programmes from countries as diverse as South Africa, the UK and China as examples, while paying curiously little attention to other forms of electronic means of global communication such as the Internet. For his critique of postmodernism, McGuigan

extends his reference to television to also include film (e.g. 75-76, 80-81), theme parks such as Disney (22 ff.), architecture (among others, the famous quotation of Charles Jencks on the Pruitt-Igoe scheme, 15) and literature (a novel by Steven Luke, 48). The way in which McGuigan manages to draw from diverse sources to support his argument, is one of the strengths of his book. As far as thematic similarities go, the question of identity also receives its fair share of discussion in both books. While it forms the central focus of Barker's work, McGuigan also contemplates the constructing and postmodern deconstructing of identity - gendered, racial and ethnic - in a separate chapter, under the title "Fractured Identities".

Because the books are first and foremost introductions to much larger debates, it would be easy to find fault on counts of oversimplifying. Barker's cursory analysis of the working of stereotypes (75), choosing rather to give practical examples, could therefore be understood in this light. One would even excuse his omission of the name of Homi Bhabha in his discussion of hybridity (70-74), taking into account the complexity of Bhabha's work which would probably be difficult to translate to a more accessible register. His hasty dismissal of essentialism, however, does not take into account the strategic necessity of essentialism in certain (postcolonial) contexts, as put forward by, among others, Gayatri Spivak. It might have appeared to him on his visit to South Africa that slogans such as the "African Renaissance" signal a rhetorical return to pre-colonial identities or a re-imagining of these essences to overcome the cultural damage of colonialism. Stuart Hall, to whom Barker often refers, has also pointed out that this essentialising moment of cultural reconstruction often exists alongside the moment of hybridity, the latter represented in the slogan *Simunye- we are one* on South African television that Barker recalls (4-9, 39, 171).

Although McGuigan's book is slightly more intricate, if only because of the detailed attention he gives to critical debates rather than only giving an overview of them, one would also be able to take him to task for oversimplifying on certain points. His reductive view of postmodernism becomes a problem because of the basis it forms for a large part of his argument. This is the case especially with regards to poststructuralist perspectives on language, as if the insistence upon the non-referentiality of language denies the existence of a "real world". Rather this should be seen as the idea that no reality is perceptible without language (in the broadest sense, as the ordering mechanism by which we make sense of the world). Even the "material conditions of existence" (29) that McGuigan suggests postmodern thought should be understood against, important as they might be, are imbedded in a network of texts. It is only through these processes of signification that material conditions have implications for, among other things, identity. The suggestion that postmodernism is necessarily caught up in language games ("reducing everything to the free play of discourse", 79) and indifferent to material injustices, exploitation and inequality is not a new accusation in debates of this kind, however McGuigan seems to ignore the subversive effects that poststructuralist thought has had. For instance, the work done in postcolonial criticism to undo hegemonic colonial representations of "race", representations which have had very "real" material effects.

This should not sound like a negative appraisal of both these books. Although they could be criticized from the point of view of the larger theoretical debates in the field of cultural studies, their strength lies in their accessibility. They are especially valuable in providing starting points to discussions, and make for interesting reading because of their use of a large variety of practical examples. Especially Barker provides a good, clear synopsis of the broad range of theories that form the background of his investigation into television. By connecting with daily realities in this way, these introductory works are sure to stimulate students to

further explore theories pertaining to media, culture and identity, as well as the way in which these theories impact upon their lives.

The Musical: A Concise History

By Kurt Ganzl
Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997; ISBN 1-55553-311-6, xv + 432pp., 49 illustrations, $50.00 (pbk)

A review by Ruth Doughty, University of Keele, UK

The Musical: A Concise History by Kurt Ganzl is a weighty and glossy addition to the ever-increasing canon of musical literature. Packed with striking black and white photographs and illustrations, the book escorts the reader on a journey through the development of the musical, commencing with *The Beggars Opera* (1728) and concluding with Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard* (1993). The musical works are dealt with in a chronological fashion, which enables its usage as a reference guide. The format of the book entails short historical passages interlinked with synopses of individual productions, which appear in bold to allow easy orientation. In addition to a short summary of the plot there is a list of characters and songs. At the conclusion of each chronological section, Ganzl includes a time line noting many of the important musicals, which he has been unable to discuss due to time constraints.

Kurt Ganzl, a native of New Zealand, has been described as an award-wining authority on the musical, which is hardly surprising as this is his eighth book concerning Musical Theatre to date. His previous works include *The British Musical Theatre*, *The Complete "Aspects of Love", Song and Dance* and *Ganzl's Book of Musical Theatre* which was a collaborative work with Andrew Lamb.

For readers who are familiar with Ganzl's previous work *The Musical: A Concise History* may be met with some disappointment. In contradiction to the title of the book, the first half of the volume is reserved for opera, operetta, burlesque, vaudeville and musical comedy. Despite its informative nature this really restricts the opportunity to discuss what most people consider to be the musical, dating from the emergence of such classics as *Desert Song* (1926) and *The Student Prince* (1924). As a consequence the latter half of the book seems rushed. In devoting a large amount of energy to the earlier forms of musical theatre, Ganzl has limited his scope for discussing the 1930s heyday of great musicals onwards to the contemporary scene.

In addition to the lack of modern material in the book, Ganzl has a tendency to overlook many important and popular musicals. In his introduction he attempts to justify this by stating that he is only going to discuss musicals which are based on successful books, this in turn means that he dismisses the importance of many musicals which received high acclaim at the cinema box office: *High Society* (1956), *Scrooge* (1970) and *Bugsy Malone* (1976). He also states that he is not going to concern himself with social issues i.e. feminism, sexuality and race issues which may appear within musical narratives. In choosing to omit these elements from his work Ganzl's text becomes rather superficial but as he states in his preface "Broad lines are broad lines, and that's what I'm drawing here" (xiii).

Unlike the collaborative work, *Ganzl's Book of the Musical Theatre* (1988), the synopses found in *The Musical: A Concise History* are not of the same calibre. In the earlier book, the plot summary is of greater use as it provides an outline of the narrative explaining the position of each song. The former work also omits the often irrelevant historical detail and therefore provides a better guide for the academic, in contrast to rudimentary romp through his more recent text. The book surprisingly includes sub-sections that are of particular interest to the genre, for example "The Rise of the Romantic" and "Operette". However, it is disgraceful that there is no section explaining the importance of Tin Pan Alley.

One of the most disappointing elements of this piece is the content of the individual musicals. Taking *Showboat* (1927) as an example, Ganzl claims "Something about it has earned it the right to be favored and fashionable over and above all its contemporaries in a modern musical-theatre world which largely overlooks the outstanding works of this most outstanding period of its existence." (191-192) Here Ganzl fails to recognise the importance of *Showboat* as a musical. This piece of theatre was responsible for changing the face of musicals as we know them today, but Ganzl prefers to focus on the obscure and dismiss the significance of social commentary.

In conclusion, *The Musical: A Concise History* is little more than a basic reference guide to the realm of musical theatre. It is informative and well presented but lacks substance and comprehension. For the serious reader Ganzl's earlier works are of more relevance, yet for the newcomer to the world of musicals it is worth a glance; only don't let the title deceive you.

Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment

By David Bordwell
Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 2000, ISBN: 0-674-00214-8, xii + 329 pp., 267 illustrations, £20.50 (pbk)
The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity Edited by Poshek Fu and David Desser

The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity

Edited by Poshek Fu and David Desser

Cambridge, New York and Oakleigh, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2000, ISBN: 0-521-77235-4, xi + 333 pp., 33 illustrations, £40.00 (hbk)

A review by Leon Hunt, Brunel University, UK

For the last two years, I have been teaching a "Hong Kong Cinema" module to undergraduates on a Film and TV Studies degree. Prior to (ironically enough) 1997, I'm not sure I could have constructed a suitably broad-ranging reading list, but that situation has rapidly changed. When I first wrote the module, Stephen Teo's *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimension* (BFI 1997) was identified as the "Essential Purchase" on my reading list; by the time I first taught it, Stokes and Hoover's less comprehensive but more accessible *City on Fire* (Verso 1999) had nudged it to one side, only to give way to Bordwell's seductive *Planet Hong Kong* the following year. This September, Bordwell will have to fight it out with Desser and Fu (ideally on ladders, *Once Upon a Time in China*-style), so for me, this review is a kind of preliminary skirmish.

"After you walk out of the best Hong Kong action movies you are charged up - you feel that you can do anything". You might be forgiven for thinking that this breathless testimony is a quote from one of the many fanzines devoted to HK cinema. But roll over Eisenstein and tell Ozu the news, can this really be arch-formalist David Bordwell succumbing to the kinetic pleasures of Jackie Chan and Tsui Hark? Bordwell was writing for the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF) in 1997, and his dazzling account of Hong Kong action's dynamics gave advance warning that *Planet Hong Kong* would showcase a Bordwell most of us hadn't seen before. Interestingly, that earlier essay began on a slightly defensive note, with Bordwell's riposte to one fan-oriented publication's dismissal of "pointy headed academics" writing about popular cinema. Bordwell packs some cultural/theoretical muscle - Hong Kong, we learn, does Eisenstein better than Eisenstein (244) - but it's primarily the western fanboy's "Hong Kong Cinema" that he is writing about. One of the subtexts of *Planet* seems to be that you need theory to "explain" HK cinema, but you need to be a fan to "get" it.

As Bordwell's title suggests, the book has both a specific and a more general topic - Hong Kong Cinema and Popular Entertainment, the latter determining his take on the former. Hong Kong cinema is not explored "as an expression of local society ... but as an example of how popular cinema can produce movies that are beautiful" (xi). *Planet Hong Kong* displays little interest in the "1997" readings that have dominated recent analysis. This gives the book an undeniable freshness - it sidesteps the reductiveness of some of those readings, and reminds us that many of the themes of Hong Kong cinema have as much to do with trends, cycles and formulas as an ongoing cultural dialogue. His Wong Kar-wai chapter, for example, is enjoyably revisionist as he argues that seeing "these lovelorn films as abstract allegories of Hong Kong's historical situation risks losing sight of Wong Kar-wai's naked appeal to our feelings about young romance" (280). But there's a problem here, too, in the way Bordwell largely colludes with the construction of Hong Kong cinema as eye-popping action, dazzling but essentially mindless - he even reproduces the familiar comparison with Silent Cinema (albeit Soviet as well as Hollywood). This is, after all, *Planet Hong Kong*, which tends to suggest an out-of-this-world exoticism.

Sight and Sound's recent review discerned a "crude pro-market and anti-intellectual polemic" in the book (February 2001, p.31). I don't think that's entirely fair. Celebrating the "popular" doesn't exclude other cultural forms, and it seems to me a legitimate argument that great films *are* made within aggressively commercial contexts (which, again, doesn't exclude other contexts). But while Bordwell is pretty candid, he's not consistently reflexive about his cultural positioning as rapt "outsider". He makes his most contentious claim in the preface when he seems to be suggesting that popular cinema is "universal" - "in our multicultural milieu, there are more commonalities than differences in human cultures" (xi). Hong Kong cinema's global, if subcultural, popularity *is* a remarkable phenomenon, but how does its "universality" sit with the way global culture tends to "flatten out" cultural difference? Bordwell acknowledges, after all, that most Hong Kong film critics would value few of the films he is writing about, just as western fan culture is not hugely interested in Ann Hui or Stanley Kwan. He provides a useful account of western Hong Kong fandom, but his empiricism prevents him from addressing the kinds of issues Jeffrey Sconce does about fans' cultural capital, or the implications of all this Asiaphilia.

These caveats aside, *Planet Hong Kong* is as impressive as it is enjoyable. His account of the industry is characteristically thorough, and his formal analysis as detailed as one would expect from someone who spends just a little too much time in front of an editing table. No one has explained more convincingly why these films affect us in the way they do. Beijing Opera meets hyper-Eisenstein in this sublime orchestration of rapid (constructive) editing, percussive rhythms and patterns of stasis and dynamic movement. This more than anything is Bordwell's great contribution to the study of Hong Kong cinema, and the reason why this is essential reading.

After the breathlessness of Bordwell, *The Cinema of Hong Kong* can't help but seem comparatively sober. But if the book gives the impression of covering an established area of study (rather than an exciting new one), it is no less impressive than *Planet Hong Kong* even if, I suspect, it will not have the same impact. The two books embody the dilemma of English-language work on Hong Kong cinema - stick with the "known", but not necessarily representative, or write about films many western readers will never see. Desser and Fu get the balance about right. If some of the film history is a little dry, Fu's essay on sixties Social Problem films makes one desperate to see Josephine Siao in *The Teddy Girls*. It's an impressive line-up of contributors, too - Bordwell (again), Desser, Stephen Teo, Sheldon Lu

and HK film critic Law Kar. The book includes some valuable reprints as well as new work, some from the HKIFF and seminal essays by Tony Williams and Jenny Lau. The HKIFF/HK Film Archive connection is significant. While Bordwell, too, is affiliated to the festival, this book is broader in scope than *Planet Hong Kong* and benefits from a range of Asian, American and Asian-American contributors to illuminate what the editors characterise as "a precarious state of flux, of crisis ... a cinema in search of an identity" (5).

The book's subtitle points to its structure. Part One, "History", includes Law Kar's account of the American involvement in HK cinema from its earliest years to the Second World War, while Teo revisits the achievements of the 1970s in a characteristically authoritative way. Desser explores a more specific phenomenon of the 70s - the brief, global "Kung fu craze". His starting point is May 1973, when *Fists of Fury/The Big Boss*, *Deep Thrust/Lady Whirlwind* and *Five Fingers of Death/King Boxer* were numbers one, two and three at the US Box Office. He examines the centrality of Warner Brothers in mediating the first "Hong Kong invasion", and locates the west's fascination with Asian Martial Arts within the context of America's ongoing "encounter with Asia". Desser is finally ambivalent about the cultural significance of the craze, given that its most immediate cinematic legacy in North America was "the rise of white male martial arts stars who, in a sense, co-opt the Asian martial arts", not infrequently within the battlefield of Vietnam (39). Fu, by contrast, excavates a less transnational cycle, the Cantonese dialect Social Problem "Youth" films of the sixties, whose cultural-historical context was anti-colonial riots and the "revolution of expectation" (74) created by the burgeoning consumer culture and the impact of westernized education. These films "allowed young audiences to desire and experience vicariously a fantastic world of dazzling modernity", but also subjected the audience to moralistic proselytizing (82). While this dual address seems common to Youth Problem films elsewhere, what's tantalising here is the impression that the attempt to represent the speed and glamour of modern Hong Kong in *The Teddy Girls* anticipates the more youthful, cosmopolitan Cantonese cinema of the eighties and nineties. This is doubly fascinating when one considers that the "parochial" Cantonese cinema was at the time losing ground to its glossy Mandarin counterpart.

Part Two, "Arts", might more accurately be titled "Auteurs", given that it comprises case studies of King Hu (Bordwell), John Woo, Michael Hui and Ann Hui. Jenny Lau's "Besides Fists and Blood" is not only an illuminating analysis of the Hui Brothers' comedy *Modern Security Guards/Security Unlimited*, but also makes explicit what is implicit in several other essays - namely, that it is simplistic and patronising to suggest both that Hong Kong Cinema did not address "Hong Kong" until the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 and that it only had "1997" on its mind *after*. The first essay in Part Three, "Identity", (by Fu again) argues that a "local" identity was being constructed in films made during the early part of World War Two, already "an ambivalent, hybrid identity" (201) positioned between nationalism and colonialism. "Identity" yields the most consistently engaging section of the book, with essays on urban space, nostalgia (which, contrary to Jameson, is seen as essential to HK's search for identity) and diaspora. The collection ends on an appropriate high point as Gina Marchetti gets to grips with the commodified global landscape of *Chungking Express*. Wong Kar-wai's films create problems for analysis - Marchetti finds *Chungking Express* "elusive and equivocal ... ", seemingly concerned with "1997" "while saying nothing directly about it" (311). Ackbar Abbas' theories of "Disappearance" bestow a solemnity on Wong's films that sits uneasily with their quirky neon glamour, but Bordwell perhaps sells them short in suggesting that they have about as much depth as Faye Wong's "California Dreamin" CD. Marchetti likens the film to Pop Art in the way that surfaces are rich in meaning. The characters obsess over tins of pineapple, dripping towels, cuddly toys, and romance is acted

out in a world of "markets, consumers, commodities, packaging, promotion and exchange" (289). Hong Kong, too, she points out, "circulates in global markets" (295) just as it circulates goods conceived elsewhere. The superficial becomes allegorical: the Garfield Faye buys for Tony Leung was "probably manufactured in China, designed by American or Japanese firms, bought and sold in entrepots like Hong Kong, and finally used by a cosmopolitan consumer" (303).

If *Planet Hong Kong* breaks (some) new ground, *The Cinema of Hong Kong* seems to consolidate a field of study while it excels in its breadth and scope. So, it looks like a John Woo-style Mexican Standoff rather than a clear victory - for anyone studying Hong Kong cinema, these are both important books and "Essential Purchases".

Satyajit Ray: In Search of the Modern

By Suranjan Ganguly
Lanham and London: Scarecrow Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8108-3769-2, 208pp. $ 35.00 (hbk)

A review by Subrata K. Mitra, University of Nottingham, UK

Few filmmakers can match the skill and authority with which Satyajit Ray depicts the rootlessness and inner contradictions of Indian modernity. One of the few internationally recognisable figures of Indian cinema, Ray received his first critical acclaim for *Pather Panchali*, a poetic and moving depiction of rural life in Bengal. In a career that began shortly after India's independence from British colonial rule and continued up to the late 1990s, Ray has focused on themes ranging between the depth of human feeling and compassion in the face of great adversity, the slow and unsure rise of the Indian middle class, consciousness and contradiction in the feminine identity, and above all the general sense of alienation of large sections of the educated urban middle classes of India. Ganguly's meticulously researched study of the master, beautifully illustrated with examples of the brilliant camerawork of Ray's films, will be of immense help to the reader in situating his complex cinematic characters in the cultural context to which they belong.

The six films analysed here carry the hallmarks of Ray's *genre* - clinical precision and unsentimental lucidity in the depiction of rural and urban scenes of Bengal - which are reminiscent of the style of Italian neo-realists. With his deep sense of empathy for the subject, Ganguly, a native of Bengal, like Ray himself, provides an analysis of both the cinematography as well as the social backdrop to Ray's *oeuvre*. The contrast between the stoic dignity and tender detachment of the *Apu Trilogy* and the enchantingly beautiful and haunting depiction of longing and unrequited love in *Charulata*, is effectively drawn. Ray's later films address problems of contemporary urban life in India but even here the camera focuses more on the inner turmoil of the personage, caught between tradition and modernity, rather than the merely sociological or documentary.

Ray first embarked on the theme of corrupted love and the tragic assertion of feminine sexual autonomy in the backdrop of India's traditional society in *Charulata*, based on a story of the Nobel prize winning author Tagore. This continued to be a part of Ray's analysis of great historical themes of famine, feudal decadence or urban conflict. His innate sense of humanity, as Ganguly correctly points out, continues to confound and frustrate his marxist critics. In Ray's films nobody is so completely flawed as to be utterly contemptible; nor is anybody such an epitome of virtue as to be above the common run of humanity. One finds this in *Home and the World*, another great Ray film which Ganguly mentions only *en passant*. It is also a good example of the innovations that Ray brought to Indian cinema. Thus, in *Home and the World*, rather like *Charulata*, one finds an excellent use of the frame-story technique of the ancient Indian classic *Panchatantra* where each story is encapsulated inside other stories. In *Charulata*, as in *Home and the World*, the inner conflict of the lead feminine character is framed by the growing sense of crisis within the immedite context of family. Both the individual and the family are themselves framed by the political awakening of India

at the turn of the century. The greater movements in the world cause just enough moral uncertainty in the intimate world of the family to permit one solitary transgression of the traditional code of sexual morality, only in the end for the circle to close in and for the the errant to be chastised and put back into the firm grooves of tradition with a final debasement of forgiveness by the wronged male. Ganguly draws a parallel between Ray and Renoir on this issue. There are no heroes nor pure villains in these stories of rebellious acts devoid of power and spirit, which are in the end unable to sustain themselves. Even tradition, which appears to win, is tainted as well, because of its failure to offer its own solution to the challenges posed by modernity through indigenous counter-revolution.

Viewers unfamiliar with Ray's genre who have seen too many Hindi or Tamil blockbusters from Mumbai or South India might find Ray's films lacking in power and buoyancy and the acting arrested and mechanical. Ray's films are bound to disappoint those with prior expectations of a display of the exotic shapes and ways of the East, of mysticism, reckless and uncontrolled passion. It is important here to remember that Ray's films are meant to be a powerful and elegant satire on the Bengali bhadralok where Ray, who started his career as a cartoonist, comes full circle, albeit surreptitiously. Though highly decorated both in India and abroad, Ray never developed a popular following in India. Although Ganguly defends Ray brilliantly against the charge of being too narrowly based on the bourgois values of the Bengal Renaissance, and of being politically inconsistent and inarticulate, he does not quite explain convincingly why the Indian masses failed to vote for Ray with their feet or their wallets.

Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film

By Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar (eds.)
New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998, ISBN 1860643051, ix + 330 pp., £14.95 (pbk)
Orientalism By Ziauddin Sardar

Orientalism

By Ziauddin Sardar

Buckingham: Open University Press, 1999, ISBN 0-335-20206-3, viii + 136pp., £12.99 (pbk)

A review by Patrick Williams, Nottingham Trent University, UK

In the two decades since the publication of *Orientalism*, Said's work has had a fundamentally transformative effect, both in terms of the development of the field of post-colonial studies, and in the wider sphere of analyses concerned with politicised discussions of culture and specifically with the politics of representation. One of the most obvious areas for such analyses - but where, paradoxically, less Said-inspired work has occurred - has been film and cinema studies. That gap is at least partially filled by *Visions of the East*, a collection of essays and articles, some reprinted and/or revised, but with a pleasing number appearing for the first time. The kind of necessary study whose appearance has been long overdue, the collection sensibly, if also somewhat predictably, focuses on Orientalism in film, though it is not confined to that, and there are pieces on, for example, "Dance, the New Woman and Fan Magazine Orientalism". Ella Shohat's much re-printed piece "Gender and Culture of Empire: Toward a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema", provides a good overview, covering questions such as the colonial gaze, tropes of the dark continent or terra incognita, gendered or sexualised geographies, fantasies of rape and rescue in desert or harem, and raising a number of theoretical issues which contributors might usefully have pursued - as well as some others which they do. The general tendency of the collection is towards early, and French, film - three of the eleven pieces, for example, focus just on French films from the 1930s. This risks giving it something of an unbalanced feel overall - though there is a sense in which covering the less than obvious areas has benefits. A couple of the pieces, such as Alan Nadel's "A Whole New (Disney) World Order: *Aladdin*, Atomic Power and the Muslim Middle-East", move the discussion both into the contemporary period and the world of *realpolitik*. Nadel's reading of the film relates its duplicities and unstable positionalities to shifting perceptions of Iran and Iraq, and mobile locations of good and evil. "*Aladdin*'s Arabia is alternately a metaphor for American culture, a critique of the Muslim Middle-East, or the nominal setting for an American stage musical. It is the source of dissimulation, and/or

the object of it, the origin of misrepresentation and/or the victim, the world to be escaped or to be redeemed." (194)

Marina Heung's "The Family Romance of Orientalism: from *Madam Butterfly* to *Indochine*" is an interesting attempt to dissect the workings of the "family romance", especially in Regis Wargnier's 1993 film *Indochine* (even though the "romance" would seem to bear little resemblance to her opening definition: "the dominant trope that I will call 'the family romance of Orientalism' allows for the 'rebinding' of wounded masculinity by re-enacting the saga of recovering lost fathers." (161) Heung's discussion generates lots of insights, particularly in relation to the central female characters, Eliane and Camille, though her analysis arguably suffers from following the altogether weird assertion of Laura Kipnis that: "Colonialism itself is seen as a female enterprise - a 'female disease.'" (183) That may have some relevance to Eliane, but even in terms of the Eurocentric narratives of the Raj Revival and after, it lacks applicability; while as a general statement about post-colonialism it is seriously flawed.

One piece which explicitly aims to relate colonialism and post-colonialism is Phebe Shih Chao's "Reading *The Letter* in a Post Colonial World". Drawing from time to time on Fanon's famous three-stage model of the emergence of resistant native consciousness and Said's Orientalism, Chao examines the Somerset Maugham short story: and in particular William Wyler's 1940 film version. It is an interesting close reading of the film - though it is rather difficult to see where or how the post-colonial world makes its entry in any significant way. A more sustained use of theory would certainly have helped - something which is true of the collection as a whole.

Coverage of film, fiction and various forms of contemporary popular culture represent one of the better aspects of Ziauddin Sardar's *Orientalism,* partly in terms of the quality of discussion, but more so because these are precisely neglected areas. For Sardar, representations of the Orient and oriental people have changed little if at all in a century of film-making: "the ferociously evil oriental, who first appeared on the silver screen with the birth of the cinema, remains consistent, indeed has found a new lease of life exactly at the point where standard Westerns became politically problematic…" (95-6) Sardar traces a range of reductive stereotyping in relation to India, China, and the Islamic world in general, particularly in films from the 1930s to the present day. In the contemporary moment, which he is determined to see as straightforwardly post-modern, Orientalism takes different forms and shows different emphases: Japan becomes the Orient *par excellence*; Britain is (apparently) orientalised by US film and TV representations; and Orientalist representations move into yet more cultural forms - computer games, CD-Roms, multimedia packages. Historically, Orientalism as discourse was always concerned with the production and circulation of particular forms of knowledge. That is no less the case today, as Sardar demonstrates the way in which the computer packages reproduce an astonishingly US-centred (and frighteningly limited) narrative of history. Here, the globalising of electronically-circulated knowledge in forms such as *Microsoft Bookshelf*, the Dorling Kindersley *History of the World* or *Encarta Encyclopaedia* confirms a vision of the past and present whose imbalance is even greater than that of the admittedly biased colonial educational models. Much of this discussion is fine; some of it, however, exposes the limits and limitations in Sardar's analysis. For example, the idea that representing Britain in general as tied to the past, or British villains as cruel and greedy, constitutes "orientalising" Britain is to miss the point that a strategy of partial Othering of another culture cannot be simply equated with orientalising; it is also to ignore the fact that Orientalism is not just about

representing a different culture, but is about the military, political, and economic domination of that culture which the representations legitimate.

In many ways, this typifies the book - there are some undoubtedly useful aspects, but they are in danger of being undermined by over-generalisations or insufficiently substantiated assertions. This is true from the opening chapter, which examines *M Butterfly* as paradigm Orientalist text, through to the closing analysis of "the post-modern future". In the former, an interesting discussion of the 1993 Cronenberg film as instantiating important aspects of the Orientalist vision, is undone by bizarre claims such as: "Orientalism's most important impact is not in the relations of power and dominance of the real world of politics, economics and military relations. Its greatest potency is within the psyche of the West itself where, as the perfect vision of perfect love, it has the greatest aesthetic power." (11) Apart from the fact that it is impossible to see Orientalism in general (as opposed to in the very particular example of *M Butterfly*) as "the perfect vision of perfect love", its reduction to a predominantly aesthetic phenomenon is politically dangerous. Perhaps the most worrying aspect, however, is the use of a phrase like "the psyche of the West itself", since for Said it is precisely the ability of people to recycle ungrounded and essentialising categories such as "the Oriental mind" which allows the divisive politics and practices of Orientalism to survive.

From the first appearance of *Orientalism*, academics have been concerned to "correct" Said, to establish their distance, and difference, from him, and to deploy the idea of Orientalism for their own ends. Sardar works hard - and with some credit - to create a different sort of narrative of Orientalism from that with which most of his readers would be familiar. Some of the elements of this different narrative, as already mentioned, are among the book's definite strengths. Despite that, undoubtedly the most disappointing aspect of the book is its treatment of Said, who rates only eleven pages in the chapter on theory and criticism. At one level, of course, it is refreshing that Said is not simply, automatically, the star and centrepiece of the book, and it is useful to be reminded of the work which preceded *Orientalism* or was appearing at the same time. However, this eleven-page slot is symptomatic of Sardar's unfortunate tendency to dismiss Said and to avoid any substantive discussion of his ideas or arguments. Sardar is clearly not a fan of Said, which is fine, but it is hard not to feel that *Orientalism* deserved better, at least in the sense of sustained engagement. (On the other hand, given Sardar's view that Said's contribution is derivative, "easily forgettable" compared to some other studies, and owes its success to "the very dynamic that sustained Orientalism as an arch discourse in the first place", (68) we might consider *Orientalism* fortunate to have received such discussion as it has.)

Where there *is* something like an engagement with Said, it is problematic. For instance, we get the old chestnut of the absence of an alternative to Orientalism in *Orientalism*. The problem is that Sardar goes on to extend the absence textually and chronologically beyond *Orientalism*, (drawing on *Culture and Imperialism*, *The Politics of Dispossession*, and *The World, the Text and the Critic*), so that the book's problems become purported general failings of Said. Apart from the fact that he is then simply, factually wrong (for example, Said devoted a substantial part of *Culture and Imperialism* to resistance to the West precisely in order to remedy the lack in *Orientalism*), Sardar develops a highly tendentious and ill-supported argument - Said, he claims, "sees no reason why there should be an alternative" - though the evidence he adduces is a quote from Robert Young, not Said (73). More than this he argues:

> An alternative to Orientalism is not possible for Said… because for him there is no option beyond secular humanism and its high culture. For Said, there is only one culture: European high culture. Said exhibits as much hatred for things non-Western as the Orientalists showed towards things Oriental. (74)

A different kind of problem is represented by claims such as: "Said borrowed and built upon the earlier studies of Tibawi, Alatas, Abdel Malek, Djait and others such as Abdullah Laroui, Talal Asad, K.M. Pannikar and Romila Thapar, but he did not acknowledge any of them."(65) Again, this serious imputation of unprofessional behaviour and intellectual parasitism is simply wrong: apart from Djait, Alatas and Thapar, all of them are referenced in *Orientalism*, while Djait's book was published in the same year as *Orientalism* and so in no way constitutes an "earlier study". (Alatas's book did appear one year previously, though that arguably leaves little time for Said to "build and borrow" as imputed.)

If this rather gives the impression that Sardar's *Orientalism* is not a very accurate book, that is unfortunately the case, and while the assessment of a book clearly needs to be more than a catalogue of its errors, it is significant that Sardar accuses Said of incompetence - and worse - on the basis of what he (wrongly) claims are errors. The implications, on his own terms, for his own work are indeed unfortunate, then. Although, as mentioned, there are definite strengths to the book, it does not fulfil its potential: for a work in a "Concepts in the Social Sciences" series, it is not very strong conceptually, and although it has a theory and criticism chapter, there is little of the sort of theory - social theory, political theory or post-colonial theory - which might have been expected to inform its discussions.