The Analysis of Film

By Raymond Bellour
Indiana University press, Bloomington, 2000. ISBN 0253337003, xviii + 303pp. £33.00

A review by Herman Wasserman, Cape Town, South Africa

Coming to this book as a post-modern reader being used to experiencing texts as fragmented points of convergence in a field of limitless images and signs with which contemporary media constantly surrounds us on a daily basis, the kind of analysis conducted by Bellour feels somewhat alienating at the outset. Not only are the films chosen for discussion "American classics", i.e. a few decades old, but his style of interpretation -- more or less rigorous close reading -- would also not be considered contemporary. Understandably so, *The Analysis of Film*, the reader is told on the first page of Constance Penley's introduction, is based largely on *L'analyse du film*, printed in 1979 and reprinted in 1995. This book brings together Bellour's "classical analyses of classical Hollywood film" (ix) in a volume that combines several different topics of discussion. The first is Bellour's methodology itself. He explains the motivation behind his method of close analysis by means of shot-by-shot analysis and schematic breakdown of film sequences, as well as the limitations thereof. Secondly, this analytical method is applied largely to the work of Alfred Hitchcock. Also, as Penley points out in her introduction (ix), Bellour's comments on the role of the woman in Western representation could be read alongside feminist criticism that has appeared since the publication of the original version of the text. *The Analysis of Film* also includes a new chapter, "To Alternate/Narrate", on D.W. Griffith's *The Lonedale Operator*.

Bellour's approach is largely structuralist. He pays great attention to the detail from which the film as a whole is constructed, breaking down the film's totality into smaller elements in order to indicate the way in which they are strung together in a system. His preference is clearly for the form of a film as a determinant for its content, or for a body of work belonging to an auteur serving an over-arching, unifying principle from which to return to the investigation into individual films. This approach is illustrated by his method of shot-by-shot analysis, the reasons for which he discusses in the first chapter, "A Bit of History". The freezing of the image constitutes the central gist of Bellour's methodology, but at the same time his methodology is constantly made into a subject of analysis itself. Bellour stays aware of the limitations of the critical act, deferring in the last instance to the film itself as always possessing more meaning than the critic is able to capture in his analysis: "(F)ilm never stops saying something other than what one thinks it says, and …above all, it says it differently than one, always too easily, would make it say it" (4).

The book's concern is therefore not only with individual films but also with film studies itself. It is this self-reflexivity, Bellour's constant examining of his own critical assumptions, that is the most striking aspect of the book. One could find much to at the very least be ambivalent about in *The Analysis of Film*. I did not find it an easy nor a compelling read, mainly because Bellour's preference for detail is less interesting than a situating of the films within a wider discourse or context. Bellour's long argument, in Chapter One, about whether

a written text can do justice to a film invites greater consideration. Bellour loses from sight the fact that any analysis becomes a construction of the film in itself. The written text, then, is no less (or no more) a limited means of representation for what Bellour apparently sees as a referent that lies outside of analytic discourse than language in any form would be. Analysis not so much discovers meaning in a film -- whether it does so adequately or not by virtue of it being written -- in as much as it creates meaning.

But such criticism does injustice to what is probably the most valuable part and, in a sense, timeless truth contained in a book which is in many ways dated. And that is Bellour's eloquent acknowledgement of the constraints of film analysis, a humble recognition of the impossibility to fix meaning: "(T)he paradox in which filmic analysis finds itself trapped, one that constrains the writer as well as the reader: how does one recapture, reconstruct and reorganize a text that never ceases to slip away?" (16)

Dreams Within a Dream: The Films of Peter Weir

By Michael Bliss
Cardondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2000, ISBN 0-8093-2284-6, ix + 242 pp., 20 b/w illustrations $39.95 (hbk)

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

The intention of Bliss's book is clearly to deconstruct a kind of strangeness, the "eeriness", in Weir's work and, in so doing, to determine what links exist between the films themselves and Weir's personal, psychic position. It is an admirable intention. And, given the close readings that Bliss attempts, well supported by an examination of Weir's narrative, character and film style. But, ultimately and sadly, Bliss fails.

It is the imposition of the author's Jungian and Freudian agenda which falls so very flat. Rather than draw us closer to Weir, it takes us further away from both his intentions and his films' identifiable forms and concerns. Is the following enough to support Bliss's case for a connection between Weir and Freud? He writes: "Although Weir doesn't seem to disparage religious feelings as does Freud, he is, like Freud, fascinated with the dream realm." (27)

So, dare I say, are a great many of us -- but that doesn't necessarily make us Freudians. Similarly, the Jungian connection comes overly as potentially tenuous, even in Bliss's initial experiments with the idea. He writes:

> For Jung, as for Weir, these are no philosophical concepts but emotional truths, dramas played out repeatedly in every individual's life in the process of becoming one's self. (29)

Then, in the interview section in the book's appendix, Bliss poses to Weir the following question:

> In a number of interviews you tend to repudiate the influence on your work of your extensive reading in Freud and Jung. Do you really think that these men's work has no bearing on your films? (184)

As an undergraduate I toyed with the idea of become a lawyer, and took one foundation year of Law, before turning to film and literature. Even at that basic level, I am positive that Bliss's question here is inadmissible. It is simply a leading question.

It is not so much that the author's determination to show the Jungian/Freudian influence on Weir is false. Perhaps, indeed, there is something to be made from Weir's intensity of commitment, for example, to the discovery of his identity through the filmic text and his interest in the "otherworldly", which *The Truman Show* certainly confirmed.

But the point has to be made: it is the cultural elements that Bliss gets so terribly wrong. To compare Australians' attitudes to the actual battles at Gallipoli during World War I to American attitudes to Vietnam (as he does on page 85) is, quite simply, to misread Australia's political, cultural and social history in the early twentieth century. Not to realise the link between the stylistic, performative and general directorial elements of Weir's *The Mosquito Coast* with his geographic, climatic and cultural heritage is even more telling. To fail to deconstruct the outsider narrative of *Witness*, which is absolutely driven by a clash of cultures, because the author is so adamant that this narrative must be considered, instead, in light of the "primal scene" borders on the bizarre.

Weir is a distinctive Australian film-maker with an international reputation. His Australian cultural foundation informs his individual aesthetic. To understand Weir you must have a thorough knowledge of Australian history, society and culture. I really wish Michael Bliss had this knowledge: I very much want his book to work. But it doesn't; not quite. And that's a great shame.

The Films of Fritz Lang: Allegories of Vision and Modernity

By Tom Gunning
London: BFI, 2000; ISBN 0-85170-743-2, xiii + 528 pp., £14.99 (pbk)
M By Anton Kaes

M

By Anton Kaes.

London: BFI, 2000; ISBN 0-85170-370-4, 87 pp., £7.99 (pbk)

A review by Dana Polan, University of Southern California, USA

It is one of the curiosities of film history that the films of Fritz Lang -- which one would have imagined to resonate so well with today's concerns with technology, power, communication, and suchlike -- have received so much less attention than other directors (for example, the more romantic, more psychological, and, in many ways, less modern Alfred Hitchcock). But history also frequently has ironic tricks up its sleeve, and it may well be that as we move beyond the first century of cinema, Lang will come to seem fully our contemporary, with compelling things to show us about our modernity.

This at least would appear to be the implication of two recent books in what must now be declared a Lang revival (from Patrick McGilligan's biography of a few years back to a culmination in a major retrospective and conference in Berlin next year). Both Anton Kaes in his BFI Classics volume on *M* and Tom Gunning in his massive study of the corpus of Lang films, eschew a focus on aesthetics (in particular, the artistic quality of Lang films) to concentrate instead on the director as an allegorist whose works interrogate quite concrete aspects of our modern world. Indeed, for Gunning, there is explicit pressing need for the discipline of cinema to focus on Lang: as he puts it, "It is my hope that writing on Lang will become a major preoccupation of film studies in the future" (xi). Both these volumes make quite compelling the interests of a new look at Langian cinema.

For quite some time, Lang was not thought of as a director of modernity but as a modernist director. That is, his films were studied not as material investigations of a historical world (the world of contemporaneity), instead, attention was directed to the films' supposed investigation of deep metaphysical themes -- most of all, the existential inescapability of destiny and fate. One of the central gambits of both Gunning and Kaes is to refuse such modernist metaphysical thematics. Kaes, for instance, virtually gives no mention of the theme

of destiny and when he does explicitly mention the topic (on the very last page of analysis of *M*), he does so to rewrite existential themes in concrete historical fashion:

> This visual reference [in a final tableau of the film] to fate and destiny dramatises a larger tension at work in the film, a tension between the forces of modernity with their emphasis on time, discipline, organisation, seriality, law and order, and those recalcitrant counterforces -- trauma, passion, illness, loss and, finally, death --that defy reason and resist integration (76).

Indeed, what is best about Kaes's volume is his reconstruction of the social, political, cultural worlds of Weimar Germany that *M* responds to (less successful perhaps, because more conventional, is his scene by scene interpretation of the film). Thus, in the course of his volume, we learn about such topics as the rise of serial murders in the Weimar Republic (and public obsession with them); the increasing grip on public consciousness of new media like radio and tabloid newspapers; the increasing transformation of everyday life into an arena of discipline and a concomitant policing of society as well as a peace-time militarisation of the populace; a growing fascination with a typological understanding of criminality according to physiognomy (the portrayal of the bizarre murderer Hans Beckert by Peter Lorre enabling *M*, as Kaes astutely notes, to be picked up by the Nazis as a demonstration of the ostensible ties between perversity and (Jewish) "race").

As a typical example of Kaes's historical contextual reading, take his discussion of *M* as dramatisation of a disciplinary culture:

> The film's obsession with surveillance also addresses the deep-seated fear of an expanding urban population. The ease with which Beckert was able to hide . . . must have scared the contemporary audience. Berlin more than doubled in population by the end of the decade . . . Attempts to control and discipline these masses included insistent endeavors to survey, classify, categorize and supervise them. Vision and surveillance foster discipline and control . . . For Foucault, the perfect disciplinary apparatus enables a single gaze to see everything all the time. For Lang, however, even a single panoptic gaze could not comprehend, let alone discipline and contain, the psychopathological Beckert (49).

The dominant aspects of Kaes's approach are in full evidence here. There is, for instance, the appeal to social history (the changing demographics of Berlin). Furthermore, in the implication of ways audiences (and not just city inhabitants) may have internalized such history there is a suggestion of means to link social history and the analysis of filmic meaning ("must have scared the contemporary audience"). Additionally, there is the supposition that films allegorize social practice (here, the practice of "the disciplinary apparatus") in a manner that makes film analysis accessible to political theory (for example, the Foucaldian theory of panoptic societies).

At the same time, Kaes's declaration that the Beckert character in some ways exceeds the Foucaldian model is noteworthy. *M* is not so much as a transparent depiction of social practices as a working through of them in cultural form. That is, the film investigates political issues to interrogate them by means of artistic rendition. Allegory here is not the one-to-one correspondence of a narrative work of art and real-life social issues. Rather, allegory has to do with a slippage between signifier (the work of culture) and signified (social history), with

a refusal of the artistic work to be just a neutral re-presentation of social reality. Hence, to refer back to his analysis of the end tableau, it is revealing to see how Kaes draws his analysis of M to a close with discussion of the tension between "between the forces of modernity . . . and those recalcitrant counterforces . . . that defy reason and resist integration." He follows this with his last line on the film: "*M* explores this tension, but offers no solution beyond a distraught mother's call for vigilance" (76). *M* is an exploration, not a solution, insofar as the allegorical function of culture is to open up meanings, rather than to shut them down into the form of non-fictional sociological treatise.

Also heavily inspired by contemporary theory, Tom Gunning's *The Films of Fritz Lang* is likewise indebted specifically to contemporary rethinkings of allegory as an investigative mode that pinpoints slippages of meaning, rather than turning art into a univocal social symbol. (Interestingly, for all the vast theoretical reference that Gunning brings to bear on the Langian corpus -- for example, Barthes, Deleuze, Freud, Heidegger, etc., -- he doesn't make explicit use of one of the most famous and seemingly apposite reworkings of the theory of allegory: Paul de Man's in such as a work as *Allegories of Reading*; perhaps de Man's complicated ties to Nazism would have complicated matters in unfortunate directions.) In particular, Gunning makes extensive use of Walter Benjamin's analysis of allegory in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1925) where narratives are read not only in their subject matters but in their very structure as allegories of death. For Benjamin, German tragic drama (or more precisely, the non-classical "mourning play") stages stories of strife, decay, complication in both content (plots about ill-fated court intrigues and destructive politics) and form (narratives given over to fragmentation, lack of cohesion, confusion, and Baroque perspectivalism).

Gunning takes inspiration from such a way of reading narrative to examine how Lang's films are also dominated by dissolution, by an evacuation of higher metaphysical meanings and their replacement by an all-too-worldly realm of human conflict and despair and defeat. For example, in his first chapter, Gunning notes how Lang's early fantastic film, *Der müde Tod* (*Weary Death*), might seem at first glance to offer an other-worldly metaphysic in its depiction of the workings of the figure of Death. But the course of the film renders such deathliness all too worldly, all too embodied and quotidian in its effects. As Gunning puts it, with direct reference to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*:

> *Der müde Tod* relates most strongly to the melancholy aspects of the mode that Benjamin finds in the baroque *Trauerspiel*. The embodied tales of *Der müde Tod* shares Trauerspiel's preoccupation with tyrannical rulers and intriguers and a pessimistic and cyclical view of human history . . . The overlap dissolve in *Der müde Tod*, as in much of Lang, embodies the allegorical vision which, as Benjamin puts it, 'strips objects naked,' piercing through appearance to their mournful significance. . . . Because in *Der müde Tod*, as in the *Trauerspiel*, what lives beneath the surface is the death's head, reality's ultimate significance must be read with the gaze of mournful melancholy (27).

The allegorical method structures the course of Gunning's book. *The Films of Fritz Lang* is unapologetically a book of readings, a chronological and very detailed working through of the films that sets out to pinpoint in story and style their precise enactments of the allegorical impulse. This is not to say that Gunning doesn't entertain other modes of film study than close reading. For example, he makes extensive use of biographical material (culled,

especially, from McGilligan's *Fritz Lang, The Nature of the Beast*) as well as production history. But these always have less priority than a concern for the films themselves, for the ways they function as allegorical investigations. (Interestingly, biography in particular ceases to be mere background contextual material and turns into something to be read in the films: for Gunning, Lang's films are, among other things, stagings of the effort of the director to assert control over narrative so that artists and other creative figures become allegorical renditions of his own self-image as cultural producer.) As Gunning explains the difference between allegorical reading and other modes of film study:

> Neither production nor reception can be banished from the way a film affects us. . . But I would like to emphasize that empirically founded studies of production and reception still require organizing and theoretical assumptions, still demand an act of reading and interpretation . . . The Fritz Lang that these films deliver to us, when viewed as an aggregate and carefully read, is a creature formed by the texts and their readings, as much as a creator: a signature forged through a conversation which seeks to bridge a historical gap between director and critic (416).

But if Gunning concentrates on texts and their reading, this is not to say that an analysis of contexts is ruled out. In fact, as with Anton Kaes, attention to contextual material -- in particular, social and cultural history -- is, for Gunning, both inevitable and essential insofar as the notion of film as allegory has to do with the ways in which cultural works respond to their contexts and make them part of the very material they are working on and through. Note, for instance, how in the quotation that ended my previous paragraph, Gunning understands reading to be a "conversation" that has to do with the bridging of what he calls an "historical gap." Reading is not imagined to be some sort of arbitrary imposition of meaning by the critic, but a dialogic encounter in which the objective historical structures of the past are reinvigorated by the reading process in the present. Objectively and historically, Lang, according to Gunning, engaged in concrete reflections on modernity, and the goal of the critic is to render these reflections verbally explicit. As he puts it bluntly, "Every film is a palimpsest and the film historian must unravel its contributing threads." (417 -- note how Gunning explicitly sees his role as that of an historian rather than, say, some sort of abstract theorist).

In particular, like Anton Kaes, Gunning sees Lang's films as allegories of modernity (each thanks the other in his acknowledgments). And, as with Kaes, to open up space for an allegorical reading requires two steps. First, one must throw out metaphysical interpretation and see Lang's films instead as being about quotidian aspects of our contemporary world. Thus, in one of the most exciting and productive aspects of his book, Gunning re-reads the Langian theme of destiny in historically defined terms as what he names the "destiny-machine," the term's reference to mechanics emphasizing that destiny is not an abstract concept but a socially inflected one. As he puts it, in a phrase that sums up much of his book's position:

> Large consequences sprouting from minor incidents have always kicked the Destiny-machine into high gear, [in Lang films] from Siegfried's linden leaf to Beckert's pencil shavings. But rather than a metaphysical fate, I have associated this network of circumstances with the structures of modern urban life, where every trace can be followed up by the surveillance society (289).

The destiny-machine accounts for a central narrative in Lang's corpus: the battle of individuals for control of the world around them (this reaches its extreme in the films about demiurges such as his Mabuse trilogy). Lang's films are about power in its social manifestations. And, as Gunning's attention to Lang's own self-inscription in the artist figures of his films suggests, Lang himself is seen to be in battle with social machinery, trying to make his films allegorize his quests for artistic control.

The end of this quotation suggests the second step in Gunning's allegorical approach: to the critically negative activity of ridding such an approach of metaphysics, he adds a positive concern with the specific reflections that Lang's films offer on the condition of modernity. As with Kaes, as the quotation's reference to "surveillance society" suggests, Gunning wants to see the content and form of Lang films as dealing with precise concrete issues of history, politics, social structure, the historical practices of everyday life. For example, Gunning notes the recurrent image of radiant shop windows in Lang's cinema (for example, in *M* or *Scarlet Street* or *The Woman in the Window*) but reads this as fully social. Specifically, the shop window speaks of the modern proliferation and display of the seductive commodity, and its representation in Lang's films fits his thematics of desire and its frustration by the material forces of history and contemporary everyday life).

Gunning moves chronologically through the Lang corpus, giving each major work an extended reading in terms of its allegorizing of social context (not every Lang film is discussed and Gunning clearly sees some as not fitting the corpus -- for example, *An American Guerilla in the Philippines*). This emphasis on chronology has as one consequence that it further emphasizes the historicism of Lang's cinema insofar as changed historical contexts lead to changes in the films. To take just one example, a film from Lang's American period such as *While the City Sleeps* goes even further than *M* in detailing the effects of media and mass culture on social subjects in the public sphere.

But to note that chronology enables Gunning to pinpoint variation and development as the Lang films range across cultural and national contexts is only to begin to hint at the many ways in which Gunning opens up Lang's corpus in rich, productive ways. Both Kaes and Gunning demonstrate the importance of Lang as an analyst of our contemporaneity but it is also to their credit as modern readers that their elaborations of an allegorical model enables Lang to emerge so forcefully into the critical lime-light and begin a resurgence as a intensely compelling *modern* director.

Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America

By John King
Verso: London, 2000. ISBN, 1-85984-233-X. 320 pp. £15 (pbk); £35 (hbk)

A review by Dolores Tierney, Tulane University, USA

When John King's *Magical Reels* was first published in 1990 it represented a major work in what was then a very weak Latin American cinema bibliography. What made *Magical Reels* exceptional at the time was that unlike previous continent wide accounts of Latin American Cinema which tended to focus on the militant cinemas of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, *Magical Reels* took on the mammoth task of analyzing the less studied beginnings of film in Latin America, through the hugely successful classical era and onto late twentieth century filmmaking and as such was the first book of its kind. As well as two further and very useful anthologies on the "New Cinemas," Michael T Martin's *New Latin American Cinema Vols. I & II*, the 1990s have seen an increase in the number of books and other secondary material on this vibrant and incredible cinema. These have included several studies of discrete national cinemas, (Charles Ramirez Berg's *Cinema of Solitude: A Critical Study of Mexican Film, 1967-1983*, Paulo Antonio Paranaguá's (ed.) *Mexican Cinema*, a re-edition of Randal Johnson and Robert Stam's anthology *Brazilian Cinema*) as well as multiple journal publications and special editions of journals. (*Screen* 38:4, *Journal of Film and Video* 44:3-4) There have also been several excellent collections, edited and written by the luminaries in the field, John King himself, Ana López and Chon Noriega which have sought to expand the study and definition of Latin(o) American cinema/visual media; *Mediating Two Worlds: Cinematic Encounters in the Americas*, *The Ethnic Eye: Latino Media Arts* and *Visible Nations: Latin American Cinema and Video*.

Thus the re-edition of *Magical Reels* in 2000 inserts King's scholarship into a much healthier and diverse Latin American cinema bibliography, the existence of which he is in part responsible for. This re-edition is particularly welcome for those in higher education and research for whom, despite such a blossoming in this area of film scholarship, *Magical Reels* remains an unrivalled resource in the teaching and study of Latin American cinema. A recent Internet search found it to be a major text on a variety of courses including, "Latin American History through Film," "Latin American Cinema," "Third World Cinema," and "Latin American Culture and Society" at a number of institutions in Europe and the US.

Magical Reels provides a country by country account of the development of cinema in Latin America beginning with a description of the arrival of the medium via the Lumière cameramen and the fascination that it inspired. It goes on to frame the nascent national cinemas in the major filmmaking countries, Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, within Hollywood's temporary disablement by the coming of sound and the resultant window of opportunity this offered Nationalist projects to harness this new medium's nation building potential. This continual contextualization of filmmaking within historical, continental and worldwide events is the greatest strength of *Magical Reels*.

The re-edition comes with a substantial afterword, "Cinema in the Nineties: The Snail's Strategy", which attempts to bring the book up to date with current filmmaking activity in Latin America (late 1980s -- the present) and current critical discourse. King argues that despite the increasing focus on globalization, transnationalism and postmodernity, and the financial necessity of co-productions as a filmmaking strategy, *Magical Reels*' national mapping of Latin American cinema reflects the continued importance of the nation in asserting Latin American identities: "As has been the case throughout history, film-makers in Latin America were forced to work in the nineties in the interstices of global power. And the terrain where this struggle is fought remains the nation." (254-255) Chon Noriega concurs with King on the importance of the nation-state within globalism in his introduction to *Visible Nations*. Using Sergio Cabrera's *La estrategia del caracol/The Strategy of the Snail* (Colombia, 1994) as an exemplary model of contemporary Latin American film production, he argues that the absence of state support or protectionist policies in many countries has meant that Latin American filmmakers are forced to exercise a snail-like patience and perseverance in the making of films.

One weakness of King's own strategy in the production of this re-edition -- placing all the more recent material in an afterword rather than rewriting each chapter -- is that it does not recast each country's history in the light of new research and perspectives which have emerged since its original publication. For example, King frames the history of early filmmaking in Latin America within a narrative of imperialism and colonial influence (Chapter 2), failing to take into account recent emphasis on how Latin American filmmakers indigenized and transculturated this foreign medium. (López, "Early Cinema and Modernity in Latin America," *Cinema Journal* 41 (1), Fall 2000, 50.) King justifies the gaps in his account of millennial filmmaking as inevitable by arguing that the production of a complete account would be a task of Borgesian impossibility. However, his emphasis on theatrical release narrative cinema means that he misses out on rich emergent areas such as global mass media and the rise of community based and independent media.

Magical Reels offers an encyclopedic range of details and analyses of the different national and continental film phenomena in Latin America. One may excuse those occasions where the author feels it necessary to skip over certain topics as this is usually compensated for by detailed footnotes and suggestions for further reading. *Magical Reels* is still the most thorough and engaging account of Latin American cinema in English.

Mean Streets and Raging Bulls: The Legacy of Film Noir in Contemporary American Cinema

By Richard Martin
Lanham, Maryland and London: Scarecrow Press, 1999, ISBN: 0-8108-3642-4, pp. ix + 199, £20.00, (hbk)

A review by Karen McNally, University of Nottingham, UK

The plethora of books and articles already existing on the well-charted subject of film noir might suggest that yet another addition to the catalogue would cause few ripples of excitement. This new paperback edition of *Mean Streets and Raging Bulls*, however, sees Richard Martin delving into the slightly less crowded territory of neo-noir and unusually resisting the temptation to become consumed by questions of genre and definition. Instead, Martin charts the history of film noir from its origins in hard boiled fiction and Hollywood's "B" movie system through its incorporation as mainstream output, its re-emergence in the early 1970s under the influence of the French New Wave, and its culmination in the self-reflexivity and irony of the 1980s and 1990s.

The first half of the book sets a useful industrial and historical context for the development of the genre, giving consideration to the influence of independent film-making upon experimental stylistic techniques, and making connections between the various cycles of noir and the cultural and political climate of each era. In tracing the different ways in which noir illustrates "the notion of the American Dream gone wrong" (34), Martin takes the reader through various stopping-off points such as anxiety concerning female independence, the rootlessness of the post-war male, post-Watergate cynicism and the "greed is good" philosophy of the 1980s. Noticeably lacking in this historical approach, however, is an examination of changing academic responses to film noir. Aside from a brief reference in the introduction to the groundwork done by authors such as Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward, there is little attempt to address how, for example, feminist critics' consideration of the femme fatale figure has challenged preconceptions regarding the response of female audiences to classic and neo noir.

In the second half of the book Martin commences each chapter with an overview of the major distinctions between the neo-noir of each decade and follows with analyses of films from each era. Again, the films are located within their industrial and cultural contexts, with the author stressing how, like its earlier incarnation, neo-noir's facility for experimentation becomes subject to the economic pressures of the Hollywood system. Martin uses his analysis of *Taxi Driver* as an opportunity to discuss Martin Scorsese's contribution to the field of neo-noir and his influence upon other film-makers. While Scorsese's Italian-American cultural instincts and Catholic perspective serve as obvious points of reference when it comes to his work, the author usefully extends such considerations to a discussion of whether the

virgin/whore dichotomy and ideas of guilt and masochistic suffering are as intrinsic to film noir as they are to Catholicism.

Martin's analysis of *Blood Simple* throws up another interesting notion of the film's mix of the classic James M. Cain text of noir and Dashiell Hammett's Continental Op stories. The resulting thematic move away from the disintegration of the middle-class male to the story of "a figure who stems from rather than ventures into the noir underworld" (106) seems a topic worthy of further discussion. Yet this is arguably the major fault of this book. It is simply too short. Martin's analyses produce numerous interesting ideas that cry out to be further explored but are left as tasters. In this case, the author argues that much of neo-noir references its 1950s counterpart in exploring male violence and paranoia as a reaction against the modern experience. Yet he regards the later version as distinguished by its distance from middle-class life, a view that seems to disregard earlier films such as *The Asphalt Jungle* and *The Big Heat* and needs further space to be argued satisfactorily.

The author's discussion of *Reservoir Dogs* as an example of 1990s ironic neo-noir is perhaps the most problematic. Though he is not alone in reading the film along these lines, irony is arguably something which exists in the eye of the beholder. Having described the 1980s referencing of classic noir in films like *Body Heat* as "pastiche", Martin fails to explain adequately why, apart from some stylistic experimentation, Tarantino's blatant cribbing a decade later can easily be described as ironic.

The one indisputable failure in the book is the lack of a conclusion. A single page following the final textual analysis seems woefully inadequate. Some kind of concluding thoughts regarding the ways in which film noir has progressed and at the same time retained its distinctive worldview seems totally necessary. Similarly, aside from an analysis of the African-American subgenre as exemplified by *One False Move*, there is no attempt to discuss in what directions noir might be headed for the future. *Mean Streets and Raging Bulls* is an engagingly written and thoughtful commentary on the history of film noir but ultimately suffers from its restrictive length which disallows a wider discussion of the thought-provoking issues it raises.

Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film

By Gregg Mitman
Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1999, ISBN 0-674-71571-3, viii + 263 pp., 30 illustrations $29.95 (hbk)

A review by David Ingram, Brunel University, UK

Tracing the American natural history documentary film from *Roosevelt in Africa* (1910) to the Discovery Channel, *Reel Nature* places film and television within a wide cultural context that includes constructions of nature in museums, zoos, conservationist organisations and tourism. The central concern of the book, written by an historian of science, is the way in which commercial imperatives have led to representations of nature which emphasise its entertainment value. The title of Chapter Two, "Science Versus Showmanship on the Silent Screen", delineates an opposition that is explored throughout. In this case, Martin and Osa Johnson's *Simba* (1928) is exemplary for its anthropomorphic treatment of animals: the Johnsons gave wild animals individual names, typecast them with human personality traits, made them comic through narration, and ultimately fitted them into an adventure narrative. Yet the climactic lion-spearing scene featuring Lumbwa herdsmen was staged by the Johnsons, and then carefully edited with footage of a Maasai hunt, which Martin Johnson took from an earlier film of one Theodore Roosevelt's African expeditions. Johnson, a former vaudeville entrepreneur, was thus a key figure in the fabrication of authenticity in the natural history film, and went on to seek fame and fortune in Hollywood by filming the sensationalist *Congorilla* for Fox. Yet the tension between science and showmanship occurs even in those natural history films made by scientists themselves for the purposes of scientific research and public education. As Chapter Three shows, the films of American and European ethologists G. K. Noble, Julian Huxley, Konrad Lorenz and Niko Tinbergen all demonstrate how film came to shape the course of scientific research itself, by encouraging an interest in visual communication within the animal world. Moreover, the animal subjects of these films, such as Huxley's *The Private Life of the Gannet*, his 1937 collaboration with John Grierson, were selected for their photogenic qualities, while, as Mitman puts it, "(both) science and entertainment required that only the most spectacular and private aspects of animal life were recorded" (72).

It was with Disney's True-Life Adventures that natural history cinema reached its height of popularity. Mitman provides an astute analysis of the nature-fakery involved in Disney's construction of wilderness as a nostalgic site in which lost frontier values could be reasserted. The domesticated, well-behaved animals in the 1950s television shows *Zoo Parade* and *Wild Kingdom* further reflected the focus on parenthood and traditional gender roles in that decade. Meanwhile in Florida, the development of Marine Studios, and its dolphin star, Flippy, also combined science with trained animal performance derived from the circus, to provide American children with a charismatic animal whose friendly persona, as represented in the 1963 feature film *Flipper* and its television spin-off, was entirely the product of both anthropomorphic projection and the careful suppression of all signs of sexuality and aggression. By depicting animals as essentially friendly, pet-like creatures, these movies and

television shows made an emotionally compelling case for conservationism, and were accordingly supported by organisations such as the Wilderness Society and the Audubon Society. Children raised on such constructions of nature became the young generation of modern environmentalists in the late 1960s, and the eco-tourists of today. The final chapter of the book, "Global Visions, Tourist Dreams", returns to Africa, which has been transformed in the popular imagination from the "Dark Continent" of the days of Theodore Roosevelt to an Eden under threat of ecological disaster. As Western conservationism became international in scope after World War Two, so the films of Armand Denis and Michael Grzimek endorsed the official policies of the major conservationist organisations, which treated the indigenous peoples of Africa as threats to wildlife, and deemed their labour practices incompatible with the aim to maintain National Parks as havens for wildlife. Natural history film thus continues to endorse the tourist's view of Africa, in which the landscape is an object of pristine beauty, empty of human presence, and where signs of human labour must therefore be hidden.

The title of Chapter Three, "Zooming In On Animals' Private Lives", displays Mitman's occasional tendency to use a film studies vocabulary in a rather loose, metaphorical way. More importantly, from the perspective of film studies, some readers may regret the relative lack of detailed textual analysis of the films being discussed. Nor are theoretical issues in documentary film-making entered into, despite the epistemological question concerning the relationship between the "reel" and the "real" to which the book's title alludes. Nevertheless, meticulous and thorough historical research more than make up for the lack of theoretical self-reflexivity. Written in a clear and engaging style, *Reel Nature* is a welcome contribution to the new interdisciplinary field that explores connections between environmentalism and culture.

Reinventing Film Studies

By Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (eds.)
Edward Arnold: 2000 ISBN 0340 67723 6, 464 pp., £16.99, (pbk)

A review by Kirsty Fairclough, University of Salford, UK

Reinventing Film Studies is a rather grand and ostentatious title, yet this is a text that can justify such a grandiose opening statement. The aim of this text book is to question the set of critical tools that film studies has been so pre-occupied with (semiotics, psychoanalysis, ideology) and to consider other approaches towards the field given the rapid social and technological changes that have occurred during the last twenty years. The book is divided into five sections, "Really Useful Theory," "Film as Mass Culture," "Questions of Aesthetics," "The Return to History" and "Cinema in the Age of Global Multimedia." The collection aims not to offer "grids to be applied, but tools of investigation through which to open up and explore the questions that confront us at the start of a new century"(1).

The introduction to the whole book is brief, but to the point. The editors acknowledge the wealth of anthologies which introduce key theories and theorists within the field and are eager to point out that this collection aims to "distil key issues and problems of the contemporary field that are, as the British Workers' Education Association once demanded of the knowledge it sought, "really useful for the future" (1). In the light of this perspective, we are offered a number of key questions which frame each section: What do we need to know? What theories, concepts and methodologies will help us to know? From this point the essays within each section aim to reframe or reinvent the theories which appeared in the 1970s. "Really Useful Theory" is a collection of essays which asks questions of film meaning and theory focussing upon why we need theory, looking beyond the grand, overarching theories of the 70s, in terms of a more concretely located and thus historicised theory which will become as the title suggests, "really useful". Such heavyweight academics including Bill Nicholls, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Gill Branston and Steve Cohan offer their perspective on the need to rethink the tools of analysis, which have, for so long, become the canon of what we know as film theory. Cohan in particular illustrates the shift by way of a case study of *Singing in the Rain* where he analyses the musical from a number of perspectives and illustrates how meaning can change dramatically in terms of the framework applied.

"Film as Mass Culture," perhaps the most interesting section in the collection, offers a new perspective on the idea of film as the first truly mass medium, which functions as an exemplary model for the mass consumption industries. The contributors to this section agree that the notions of the public sphere and massness that have traditionally been reserved for cultural theory and film theory have tended to ignore these integral aspects of the field. Jane Gaines Dream/Factory essay offers a refreshing perspective and contests the metaphor of Hollywood as the "bad dream factory", linking it with Ernst Bloch's concept of hope, concluding that "consumer desire is also a gesture of hope for better things". (97) There are a wealth of topics within this interesting section ranging from Ravi Vasudevan's case study of Bombay cinema to Henry Jenkins' insightful examination of film studies and reception theory and Christine Geraghty's study of the star.

The third section, "Questions of Aesthetics," continues by examining the consequences of rethinking the theories of the 1970s and of the recontextualistaion of film and the mass media. Christopher Williams addresses the identification of realism with narrative, and narrative with the image. Considering both within the dominant ideology, he questions the usefulness of the 1970s concept of ideology which has been inextricably linked to realism. Christine Gledhill takes genre as her starting point and calls for a more flexible approach to genre as a conceptualising theory. Carol Clover then continues by examining genre in practice with a case study of the trial movie. Perhaps the most refreshing essay in this section is Noel Carroll's perceptive look at the problems of judging film which states that the question of whether a film is good or bad is the central activity of the movie-going public, but has been virtually ignored within film studies.

"The Return to History" questions the long agreed but seldom admitted notion that film history is the poor relation of film studies and suggests that today the most relevant theorists are those who recognise they are mutually dependent. Writers such as Vivian Sobchack, Tom Gunning, and Linda Williams collectively unpick the previous theoretical frameworks with which film history has been written and challenge the way that the pre-classical, classical and post-classical periods of cinema have been conceptualised.

Finally, "Cinema in the Age of Global Multimedia" looks at the way that cinema has changed in the era of postmodernism and global multimedia. A diverse range of essays includes Rey Chow's study of the trans-national appeal of Chinese cinema, Ana Lopez's "Facing up to Hollywood" which traces the different ways in which Latin American cinema has faced up to the hegemony of Hollywood and Anne Friedberg's fitting final essay on the end of cinema as we know it in the light of the plethora of new formats and technologies.

This is a collection aimed at a readership familiar with film theory and the debates that surround it and is a useful addition to the academic arena. The title is ambitious but long overdue and goes some way to shifting the agenda that film studies has been so preoccupied with. This is an important book that calls not for a total casting off of the theory of the 1970s, but for a rethinking of its usefulness in the light of the twenty first century.

Salò or The 120 Days of Sodom

By Gary Indiana
London: BFI Publishing, 2000 ISBN 0-85170-807-2. 96 pp., $10.36, (pbk)

A review by Luca Prono, The University of Nottingham, UK

> "Just because it's a holiday. And in protest I want to die
>
> of humiliation. I want them to find me dead
>
> with my penis sticking out, my trousers spotted with white
>
> sperm, among the millet plants covered with blood-red liquid.
>
> I am convinced that also the last acts, to which
>
> I alone, the actor, am witness, in a river
>
> that no one comes to -- will, eventually,
>
> acquire a meaning"
>
> (Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Bestia da stile")

In spite of these as well as other explicit and prophetic lines, critics and intellectuals, especially Italian ones, have been timid to assess the role of the body and of homosexual desire in Pasolini's work. The thriving contemporary revival of Pasolini studies in Italy has rarely shown willingness to come to terms with the author's sexuality. Instead, from the far left to the post-fascists, everyone is busy fabricating his/her own Pasolini. Catholics say he was a pious man at heart, neglecting to account for the challenges that his works brought to Catholic moralistic beliefs and to the bigoted policies of the governing Christian Democratic Party. Left-wing scholars and politicians are willing to claim Pasolini as part of their own anti-fascist tradition, although they are not so enthusiastic to remember his expulsion from the Italian Communist Party on the grounds of his homosexuality. In an extreme effort to achieve an aesthetic restyling to follow their political one, post-fascists have increasingly become keen to count Pasolini as one of their own fold. His nostalgia for that 1930s rural Italy in which he lived as a boy, they claim, includes also the fascist regime that governed the country at that time. Pasolini's ashes are highly contested material. Gary Indiana's study of *Salò* or *The 120 Days of Sodom*, the director's last film, is refreshingly different from the dogmatic approaches sketched above. Its iconoclastic analysis of the film and of the director's public persona is challenging and thought-provoking although it is not devoid of its own shortcomings.

Indiana states from the very beginning of his monograph on *Salò*, published in the BFI Modern Classics series and copiously illustrated with stills from the film, that his notes on the

film and the director will probably not win him any friends among film scholars or Pasolini experts. He then proceeds with a disclaimer on his ability to assess the film and the director within their own historical contexts: "I am not fluent in Italian, so there are myriad nuances in Pasolini's work that I can neither perceive nor contextualise" (9). Indiana's project is to "personalise" his encounter with Pasolini and *Salò*, and thus to declare finally what has remained submerged in decades of official criticism that has made the director a figure with a "sacred aura", "an object of research, a desiccated collection of 'meanings'": "the camera eye in Pasolini's films conveyed a blatant sexual interest in his male actors" at a time when "erotic interest in the male body was still elaborately dissembled in most movies" (10).

Indiana's discussion of Pasolini's sexuality and of the role of homosexual desire in his movies is daring and convincing, and is the best part of the study. Indiana's personalised Pasolini turns out to be a homosexual who "used his sexual difference as a tool of analysis, a goad to empathy" (15). The director's sexual identity, Indiana perceptively remarks, "is rarely reflected in his work as a source of pleasure"; on the contrary, it "inflects his work with melancholy and morbidity" (16). Indiana's logical and sound conclusion is that "it would be healthier, and in the end better for Pasolini's legacy, not to insist so much on his saintliness" (18). Indeed, the main significance of this legacy is "its ability to flush … racism into the open, revealing the limits of repressive tolerance -- that social threshold of shock that says, *We'll accept you if you become like us, love like us, talk like us, believe like us, hate like us* (15, Indiana's emphases).

Yet, Indiana is not simply turning Pasolini from Saint of the Official Intelligentsia to Saint Queer. His approach is willing to expose clearly Pasolini's own shortcomings, in particular what the critic spots as the major "laughable contradiction" both in the director's work and his public persona between his "self-righteous polemics on behalf of the oppressed, particularly on behalf of urban street youth" (a gendered concern that privileges the boys over the girls) and "the fact that he perfectly fits the cliché of the rich fag European director, in sunglasses and Alfa-Romeo, prowling midnight Roman streets for juvenile cock" (17). Indiana's critique also encompasses Pasolini's own stance against the middle-classes, a stance that the critic finds located in utopian pleasure, in his longing for "the pre-industrial, the rustic, the anti-modern" and thus "bitterly useless", representing as it does, "a refusal of reality that … has less to do with actually trying to change things than with proving the virtuousness of the attack" (18). All this reads persuasively enough, and yet, at times, Indiana tantalisingly downplays the resonance of Pasolini's polemics in his own time and falls into the trap of supporting his refreshing critique with cultural stereotypes that don't do justice to either his own or Pasolini's complexity. For example, when he reads *Salò* as a repudiation of Pasolini's previous Trilogy of Life (*Decameron*, *Canterbury Tales* and *Arabian Nights*), Indiana cites among his evidence the tired cliché that "the ideological volte-face has always been commonplace among Italian writers" (30).

Perhaps because I enjoyed so much the part of Indiana's book on Pasolini's persona, I found the analysis of *Salò* slightly disappointing, especially towards the final pages of the book, when the author switches to a descriptive rather than analytical mode, with an almost scene-by-scene account of the movie. *Salò* is first set within the context of Pasolini's production, as a repudiation of the Trilogy of Life and a return to the more political cinema represented by *Theorem* and *Pigsty*. Adapting Sade to the last days of Italian fascism and the Republic of Salò, the film portrays the tortures carried out by a group of fascist libertine officials on local youngsters whom they use to try out a wide variety of sexual perversions, a metaphor of the worst excesses of the regime. Interestingly, Indiana suggests we read the movie as pointing

out that the victims of the tortures are themselves implicated "in fascism's horrors -- by their class, their lack of resistance, virtually by their ability to be slaughtered" (37), thus mirroring the general complicity of the Italian people "sleepwalking in a grand deception" throughout the regime (41). Because the victims' passivity is stressed throughout, *Salò* "engages voyeurism rather than empathy" (57), a conclusion which left-wing intellectuals who privilege Pasolini's anti-fascism may find problematic.

Complementing this reading, Indiana also suggests that "Pasolini's specific agenda of 'perversion' comments on the sexual landscape of the 70s" (45) when the claim for a visibility of "extreme sexuality" was part of the "emphasis on 'lifestyle' as a fashion choice" and "sadomasochism and its affectation had become chic" (46). Therefore, *Salò* is presented as a movie with a split, double narrative moving between a meditation on fascism and a documentary on homosexual cruising.

The (in)famous scenes of shit-eating are explained by Indiana following Pasolini's suggestion that they represent a metaphor for capitalism and consumer society. The consumption of people's waste could not be more precise "as a model of capitalism … suggesting as it does the exhaustion of less toxic forms of nourishment as well as a reversion to cannibalism" (79). This is what prompts Indiana to arrive at his final definition of *Salò* as "a metaphor of feudalism as reinvented by the multinational corporation, the military *coup d'état* and the mediation of all reality via the symbolic" (90).

Indiana's multi-layered reading of the movie is original and provocative. Yet, at times, its richness detracts from a clear overall thesis on *Salò* that can keep all these different layers together, although the reader is warned from the beginning of the book that Indiana is not so much interested in a coherent narrative as in a flow of notes on the movie. Another more important problem is that Indiana seems to be aware of the difficulty of divorcing his discussion of the movie from Italian cultural and historical contexts, and yet these contexts are never fully explored. While Indiana's lack of concern with things Italian may be refreshing when he discusses Pasolini's persona, it is damaging when the critic resorts to broad generalisations such as that "it can be fairly said that ordinary life in Italy under fascism … was infinitely less oppressive than ordinary life in Germany under Hitler" or that "Italy in the 20s had a more open press than the United States did, fairer labour laws and a more inclusive spectrum of political parties" (37). Here Indiana risks reproducing that nostalgia for the past that he finds so annoying in Pasolini and seems unaware that the consolidation of the fascist regime through the late 1920s and 1930s had on its agenda precisely the suppression of the open press and the inclusive spectrum of political parties. Also, the critic acknowledges Pasolini's lifelong dialogue with the Italian Communist Party and tries to make such dialogue relevant for Salò. Yet, such a complex issue would have deserved more than the half page which is devoted to it in conjunction with another thorny matter in Pasolini studies, the condemnation of the 1968 students' movement (85).

In spite of these very few objections, Indiana's *Salò or The 120 Days of Sodom* is certainly a must read for everyone interested in Pasolini and a book that will hopefully contribute to an appreciation of the director that finally enables his contradictions as well as with his own sexuality to come out.

When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood "British" Film 1939-45

By H. Mark Glancy
Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999 ISBN 0 7190 4853 2. 280 pp., 20 illustrations. £12.99 (pbk)

A review by Ian Brookes, University of Nottingham, UK

In *When Hollywood Loved Britain*, Glancy argues that between 1930 and 1945, Hollywood produced over 150 "British" films. He uses "British" to indicate a category of Hollywood films which were set in Britain or the British Empire, or which were based on British literature, culture or history, and which usually featured the involvement of Hollywood-based British producers, directors, writers, stars or character actors. Hollywood made a considerable investment in this "British" category which included some of the costliest and most prestigious productions of the studio era, particularly during the British wartime period. How, then, did Hollywood portray Britain at this time? What factors were instrumental in this portrayal? Why were these Hollywood-constructed versions of "British" significant?

Although Hollywood may have "loved" Britain -- especially as the isolated and beleaguered nation in wartime -- its reasons for doing so cannot be explained simply by an "Anglophile" tendency, nor by any purely altruistic or vicariously patriotic predilection. It was widely assumed at the beginning of the war that the American film industry was on the verge of financial collapse: on Wall Street during the first year of the war, the value of film companies' stocks plummeted. In an industry which depended on foreign earnings to make its films profitable, and in the wartime context of diminishing foreign markets, the studios became increasingly reliant on the severely restricted number of foreign markets which remained viable. Here, the British market was of crucial importance, having already provided over half of the industry's total foreign earnings during the 1930s. British cinema-going during the war set record levels of attendance and, while British films were popular, there were fewer of them, enabling the American film industry to capitalise on an exceptionally thriving market. These market considerations had a considerable influence on industry policy. Hollywood was consequently concerned in the production of its "British" films with narrative formulae which would successfully appeal to both the American and British box-office.

The industry's foreign policy was also influenced to a great extent by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA). Although known predominantly as the industry's censorship body, the MPPDA (Hays Office) also had another influential role in which it brokered the studios' interests in both their domestic and foreign markets. This function included monitoring foreign market situations, negotiating with foreign governments, and advising on issues of foreign censorship. The Hays Office was particularly concerned with the "National Feelings" clause in the Production Code which was designed to ensure that foreign countries and peoples should be fairly represented. The Production Code Administration, under the directorship of Joseph Breen, was particularly mindful of British sensibilities and British censorship regulations, administered under the British Board of Film

Censorship (BBFC). Breen assiduously sought to ensure that the studios' productions would be acceptable to the British. To this end, he insisted on pre-emptive measures to safeguard the studios' commercial interests abroad. If a scene was permissible under MPPDA regulations but not under those of the BBFC, Breen would urge the studio to make alterations or additional "protection shots." If he was concerned about a possible infringement of the Production Code, he often used the threat of British censorship to add weight to his strictures. If he thought material for screen adaptation was questionable, he often sought the opinion of the BBFC. Hence, while it was necessary for "British" films to appeal to American audiences, they were simultaneously *tailored* for British consumption too.

In the 1930s, Glancy demonstrates that Hollywood's "British" films, particularly those produced by MGM, had already created a version of Britain which emphasised its more traditional aspects. Drawing on a "celebrated" *heritage* of literary classics and historical events, these films invoked a sense of national prestige which was invariably based on an idealised national past. "British" usually meant "English" which usually meant anachronistic: a chocolate-box landscape which depicted the quaint charm of rural life. Hollywood's fascination with English social class is evident in these settings where rigid social stratification is often an integral narrative element. Hollywood's perspective of the English class system rarely involved conflict: rather, it suggested a harmonious social arrangement in which the aristocracy and working classes contentedly occupied their respective places. The aristocracy have cut-glass accents, imperious attitudes, and servants; they are keenly aware of their status, strictly observe social proprieties and always dress for dinner. The working class comprises a vaudevillian troupe of "characters;" a comical assortment of amiable buffoons, imbeciles and deferential serfs.

In this context, Glancy argues *Mrs Miniver* (1942) and *This Above All* (1942) significantly foregrounded a "new" middle class: "both address the American disdain for the 'old school tie' England with assurances that a new and more egalitarian England is emerging." (131) As a "British" film, *Mrs Miniver* in particular was crucially significant and phenomenally popular in both Britain and America. Glancy provides richly documented studies of both these films. He accounts for the factors affecting their development by drawing on their literary sources, production histories and critical reception. However, Glancy's readings are inclined to accept the films at face value as narrative representations of the factors already taken to constitute "British." These readings are overdetermined by the specified contexts of their production: in other words, they infer too readily what the texts are supposed to imply. Problems of narrative complexity, ambiguity and contradiction are smoothed over so that the text can serve more neatly to illustrate the context.

Glancy's reading of *Mrs Miniver*, for example, downplays its narrative critique of "British." He suggests that "the Minivers' pre-war complacency barely registers" (148) when they are introduced in terms of little else. Mrs Miniver is first seen in the summer of 1939, anxiously and indecisively preoccupied with the purchase of an expensive and ludicrous hat while Mr Miniver, furtively hiding from his wife, is preoccupied with the purchase of an expensive and luxurious convertible. The narrative "catches" them both in illicit acts of extravagant and unnecessary shopping which seem to be for them a rather childish game in which each deceitfully conceals the purchase from the other. Both seem vaguely guilty. When they go to bed that night, the hat remains silhouetted on the bedpost as an icon of pre-war frivolity. While the Minivers are "jolly nice" and clearly represent "British" decency, they are as yet rather soft and silly, comfortably attuned to a life of easy-going affluence. As with many wartime films, *Mrs Miniver* can be seen as a "conversion narrative" in which a reluctant or

recalcitrant individual learns the value of selflessness in contribution to the collective war effort. The significance of the Minivers is not so much that they are Hollywood-approved "British," but that they become so. Hollywood's version of the English middle class demonstrates its ability to promote certain middle-class values while simultaneously criticising others. In the pre-war climate of appeasement, the hat signifies "flimsy" self-regarding attitudes until it is replaced by the rose as a symbol of British wartime values cast resolutely in middle-class terms and exemplified by the rose-like Mrs Miniver. With the outbreak of war, the Minivers' intrinsically *sterling* "British" qualities come immediately to the fore (and the hat is never seen again). On the basis of her "average" social status, Mrs Miniver becomes instrumental in the "conversion" of Lady Beldon and consequently holds out the promise of a new, "classless" egalitarian England in a way likely to appeal to American democratic proclivities. In *This Above All*, the "conversion" of the disaffected army deserter Clive Briggs is effected through a new generation of "progressive" aristocrats represented by Prudence Cathaway who, like Lady Beldon's granddaughter, repudiates her own class position to align herself with the newly emergent middle-class. But although Lady Beldon may be "reformed" (152), she remains *Lady* Beldon: she is nicer, perhaps, but she retains her authority to determine the winner of the flower show and graciously dispense largesse to the villagers. Conversely, although Briggs ultimately recognises "that he must give up his own selfish preoccupations and fight for England" (141), the narrative nevertheless appears to support his socialist critique of the class system when, in a momentary scene, he sharply recognises his officer's "Claridges" background.

In *Above Suspicion* (1943) -- a curious omission in Glancy's "British" category -- the American newly-weds quickly learn to set aside their honeymoon concerns when the national interest takes precedence. "British" is specified *through* Oxford. Although "Oxford" is seen here as the generating source of stalwart British values, it is also seen to produce fascist tendencies to the extent that traditionally impeccable credentials of a British elite -- aristocratic pedigree, public school, classical university -- are ultimately identified with those of a Nazi elite. Incidentally, it is worth noting the extraordinary number of references to Oxford (but not to Cambridge) in these "British" films.

When Hollywood Loved Britain is an enterprising study which effectively identifies the "British" film as a new generic category. Glancy's exceptionally well-focused research provides the basis for a convincing analysis of the contexts in which these films were produced. This book is not only an important contribution to genre studies and film history: it also provides a significant account of the social, cultural and political factors affecting British-American national identities and their relations in the period.