Aliens R Us: The Other in Science Fiction Cinema

By Ziauddin Sardar and Sean Cubitt (eds.)
London: Pluto Press, 2002. ISBN 0-7453-1539-9. i + 186pp. £14.99 (pbk)

A review by Lincoln Geraghty, University of Nottingham, UK

In his introduction Ziauddin Sardar tells the reader that "science fiction explores space," but not the realms of outer space as one might think, instead he has observed that "as a genre the space that science fiction most intimately explores is interior and human; to tell future stories it recycles the structure and tropes of ancient narrative tradition and to devise dramatic tension it deploys issues and angst that are immediately present" (1). In order to fully communicate these future stories "science fiction needs aliens" (5), they are a basic presence integral to the process of examining humanity. They represent difference and otherness, demonstrating what is not human to exemplify what is: "They are the dark antithesis that illuminates the patches of light within the structure of stories, throwing into relief what it is to be human" (6).

As a collected work of nine varying essays this book offers a palatable examination of the alien represented in science fiction cinema and refreshingly advertises that it is not merely confined to the Hollywood versions to which audiences have become accustomed. However, upon reading this book there seems to be an overwhelming sense that the editors and authors have allowed themselves to be railroaded into producing exactly the kind of work from which they set out to be different. Half of the front cover illustration is devoted to a familiar picture of the popular *Star Trek: Voyager* character Seven of Nine, regarded by some as an ingenious ploy to get more teenage boys and their fathers to watch *Star Trek*. *Aliens R Us* appears to be trying the same thing since Seven of Nine is not discussed in any of the nine essays; her image is being used solely to promote a book which inharmoniously wants to "look beyond a purely generic approach to the subject."

At the core of Sardar's introduction there is a distinction made in science fiction between East and West. Sardar specifically refers to the imperial mission of science fiction on the final frontier; a "frontier on which Western thought has been constructed and operated" (16). Western thought has constructed the alien out of its concept of the East, savagery and nature are held up as a mirror to humanity to prove the West's civilised superiority. For example, according to Sardar the Borg in *Star Trek* represent "orientalist stereotypes of Japan -- they are the American fear of Japan writ large" (14). By all means this theory is a valid argument, the interpretation of *Star Trek*'s mission as a meta-narrative of colonialism is well known and has been thoroughly analysed elsewhere: See for example Daniel Bernardi's *Star Trek and History: Race-ing Towards a White Future* (1998) or the essays printed in Taylor Harrison, et al. *Enterprise Zones: Critical Positions on Star Trek* (1996). Similarly, Christine Wertheim's chapter in *Aliens R Us*, "*Star Trek: First Contact*: The Hybrid, the Whore and the Machine," promises to continue this line of analysis by offering another view of the Borg as "a reflection

of our own hybrid, freakish 'nature,'" one might say that they are the most alien of aliens because they "represent the otherness in ourselves" (14). However, whether by accident or design Wertheim's essay suffers from two quite important flaws which detract from her argument and reflect badly upon the book's overall reception.

Firstly, Wertheim fails to acknowledge let alone understand her work's position within the field of *Star Trek* and media studies. The Borg are no strangers to critical examination yet it seems the only prerequisite to the chapter is that one must dislike *Star Trek* as she continually dismisses the film and characters as uninteresting, unoriginal, and "utterly predictable" (75). Her language reflects her disdain for *Star Trek*, describing a poignant scene from the movie as if it were like "two little boys wanking a giant collective member" (75). It is worthy of note that Wertheim does mention Seven of Nine at the beginning of the piece but instead chooses to examine the relationship between the android Data and the Borg Queen. Whether this warrants the front cover attention is open to debate.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the essay has been poorly edited with many of the characters' names misspelled: "Reiker" instead of Riker, "Deana Troy" instead of Deanna Troi, and "Jordie" instead of Geordie (75). A simple and quick check of the film cast list or maybe even bothering to check one of the numerous *Star Trek* reference books would have given the author and the editors the proper spelling. Even more unforgivable is the fact that the misspelling was not confined to fictional people, the editors failed to spot Chuck Yeager's name was misspelled "Yaeger" (74). It would seem that either this essay was rushed through to meet the deadline or the author or editors lacked the necessary attention to detail needed to make this chapter worthwhile reading.

This book does not fail to deliver some interesting analysis and contemporary thought on the alien in science fiction cinema; the essay by Junker and Duffy on *Deep Space Nine* is imaginative and so too Mair's essay on *Independence Day*. However, due to the somewhat rushed nature of the editing and linguistic style the book does not live up to what it promises, particularly with regard to how it was advertised.

The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway

By Slavoj Zizek
Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2000. ISBN 0-295-97777-9. 56pp. £9.95 (pbk)

A review by Suh-Young Catherine Kim, University of Sheffield, UK

In *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway*, Zizek analyses David Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997) with particular reference to the Lacanian notion of the Real, which is one of the three registers, introduced by him -- the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real. Contending that the film offers an unconventional way of understanding the relationship between 'fantasy' and 'reality', Zizek seems to assert that this is, and should be, the only way to account for their relationship due to the characteristic of the Real order.

The book consists of ten chapters. The first two explain the sublime but ridiculous aspect of the Real order in a roundabout manner without directly mentioning or defining the notion. Chapter three focuses on two notions, 'fantasy' and 'the Real' with reference to *Lost Highway* and is followed by the analyses of three particular scenes of the film in chapter four. In the following three chapters, he criticises the all-understanding and all-explaining tendency of film analyses and further applies the discussion between fantasy and reality to the analyses of Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* (1998) and Thomas Vinterberg's *Celebration* (1998) in relation to the concept of the 'father'. Zizek examines *Lost Highway* again in this respect in chapter seven, celebrating the film's achievement in presenting fantasy and reality in the same dimension. The discussion diverts again in chapter eight where Zizek relates the multiple fantasmatic narrative to cyberspace. Zizek contends that, in spite of this multiplicity, one cannot avoid the predestined ending and "even God himself cannot change Destiny" (38). Regarding this 'destiny' as the impenetrability of the fundamental fantasy, which is in the realm of the Real, he concludes that this is "*Lynch-territory* at its purest" (44).

Zizek throughout the book opposes the separation of what should be on different extreme termini: such as the symbolic Law and the obscene superego; censorship and its target; the *femme fatale* and patriarchal domination; the characters of Fred and Pete in the film; and fantasy and reality. In other words, he places them on the same surface, or on the other side of the impossible Real. According to him, "the Law itself needs its obscene supplement; it is sustained by it, so it generates it" (6). Thus, the superego is the dark side of the symbolic Law, censorship unintentionally generates perverse by-products (7), and the *femme fatale* is in fact "effectively a fantasmatic support of patriarchal domination, the figure of the enemy engendered by the patriarchal system itself" (10). A similar attempt is made when he argues that both reality and fantasy in *Lost Highway* "*end in failure* for the man" in that Pete directly fails in the sexual act with Renee, and Fred, although he makes love to Alice, is unable to have the object of his desire since Alice disappears after telling him, "You'll *never* have me!" (15). Fantasy, therefore, does not overcome the tragic sense of reality but rather shares it.

Zizek places the dark side of the Law, the unintentional by-products, the *Femme Fatale* and fantasy in the same category, which he refers to as the "inherent transgression".

Comparing the protective father in Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* and the "rape-enjoying father" in Vinterberg's *Celebration*, Zizek asserts that these figures are not placed on the other side but they are both fantasmatic constructions, which cover over their own impossibility. This impossibility alludes to two kinds of deadlock, which are firstly the inevitability of the Symbolic castration and secondly the unfeasibility of approaching the unconstrained enjoyment of the Real order. Zizek, throughout the book, tries to shift the focus from "the vertical into the horizontal", in other words, he puts the two dimensions of reality and fantasy on the same surface (35). According to him, this is exactly what is presented in the film: the second part of the film, the story of Fred, is "the fantasmatic inherent transgression" of the everyday life of Pete presented in the first part. The film, therefore, sublimely shows fantasy and reality on the same surface through its "most ridiculously pathetic scenes" (22), creating the ridiculous sublime of the Lynchian universe.

Zizek maintains his conceptualisation of the notion of the Real from *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)* (1992) to *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztof Kieslowski Between Theory and Post-theory* (2001), and from his reality analyses from Nato's bombing of Yugoslavia to the September 11 catastrophe, associating the notion with concepts such as horror, threat, violence and impossibility. Due to this impossibility with which even God cannot interfere, Zizek's subject is paralysed inside the world where fantasy and reality agree to direct the subject towards the predestined failure in a sublime but ridiculous way.

Bertrand Blier

By Sue Harris
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-7190-5297-1. 208pp. $19.95 (pbk)

A review by Will Higbee, University of Exeter, UK

Sue Harris' study of Bertrand Blier -- arguably one of the most provocative French directors of his generation -- is a timely addition to the Manchester University Press "French Film Directors" series, given the growing interest amongst Anglophone scholars of French cinema in both comedy (Blier is generally perceived to have exerted a pioneering influence on actors and directors at the forefront of the comic film in France post-'68) and, more generally, in 1970s French cinema (though he has continued making films throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Blier is perhaps most readily associated with French cinema of the 1970s and the *succès de scandale* that surrounded the release of *Les Valseuses* (1973)).

Harris offers the reader an informed, coherent and highly engaging analysis that aims to better comprehend the aesthetic humour and cultural context of Blier's work. To this end, the book combines an approach that foregrounds the specifically French cultural context of Blier's oeuvre with a theoretically informed analysis, focusing primarily on reading Blier's films in relation to the writings of Bakhtin and his notion of the carnivalesque.

Having laid out a precise chronology of the director's career to date -- outlining the main stylistic and thematic concerns contained within his films -- in chapter two Harris turns to consider the continuities between Blier's work and dramatic culture in France, post-1945. Interestingly, the author chooses not to focus extensively on Blier's already well-documented links to the *café théâtre* of the 1970s. Instead, Harris turns her attention to the continuities between the dramatic cohesion of Blier's films (collision of tragic and comic, unpredictability of language and action; privileging of superficial characterisation over psychological depth) and those found within the Theatre of the Absurd of the 1950s.

Drawing extensively on the writings of Bakhtin, chapter three explores the notion of the carnival as structuring motif in Blier's work. The arguments that Harris sets out for viewing the playful, scatological, and corporeal aspects of Blier's films through this Bakhtinian optique are both compelling and illuminating. Verbal and physical contempt for systems of authority and ludic expressions of excess are, Harris argues, used by Blier as a technique of artistic subversion that moves beyond simply offending notions of good taste and behaviour in order to challenge safe and accepted bourgeois attitudes and assumptions.

Undoubtedly, the most provocative and polemical readings of Blier's films are to be found in chapters four and five, where the author challenges those critics who have tended to point towards what they perceive as Blier's reductive and aggressive attitude to the female subject, the objectification of female protagonists as sex-objects and (in his earlier films at least) the male-centred narratives as evidence of misogyny. Harris maintains that such an interpretation of the director's work fails to account for the fact that Blier's aim is to place such types and tropes on screen precisely to subvert narrative and cultural assumptions about gender through

performance. Thus, women who appear to be desirable sex objects are shown to be indifferent to the act, or else lack emotional sensibility: in Bakhtinian terms, then, women serve as a foil to the weaknesses and faults of their male counterparts.

This defence of Blier's work against the claims of misogyny is extended into the final chapter, an examination of the director's output since the early 1990s -- *Merci la vie* (1991); *Un deux trois soleil* (1994) and *Mon homme* (1996) -- a period described by Blier himself as marking his "second career" as a film-maker. Whilst many characteristics of his earlier films remain -- structural features of subversion and inversion; the portrayal of marginalised groups; exploration of male-female relationships and the expression of utopian community -- the director's deployment of a series of central female characters is, Harris contends, further evidence of the accusation of misogyny as misplaced in relation to Blier's films.

Harris' arguments against the alleged misogyny of Blier are presented persuasively to the reader. And yet, whilst the detailed examples from *Les Valseuses* that the author uses in chapter four to support her thesis may well endorse her position, they also serve to highlight the highly problematic representations of women provided by Blier (regardless of the director's intentions). The director may well use such female types and tropes in an attempt to disturb or subvert conventional attitudes and assumptions about gender, but the repeated portrayal of female characters as "dirty", degraded or objectified, combined with the sexually aggressive presence of Blier's male protagonists, leaves such representations highly susceptible to a negative appropriation by patriarchy.

As a polemical reading of a director such as Blier who has been equally feted and rejected by critics and audiences at various points on his career, this book will, one hopes, encourage vigorous discussion over the intention and merits of Blier's contribution to post-war French cinema, as well as informing wider debates concerning the representation of women in popular cinema.

Canadian National Cinema: Ideology, Difference, and Representation

By Christopher E. Gittings
London: Routledge, 2002. ISBN 0-415-14282-2. 42 illustrations, ix + 338pp. £15.99 (pbk)
Quebec National Cinema By Bill Marshall

Quebec National Cinema

By Bill Marshall

Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-7735-2116-X. 9 illustrations, xx + 371pp. £19.95 (pbk)

A review by Catherine M. Munroe, University of Exeter, UK

Any author who takes on the task of writing a book on a national cinema faces a formidable task as the mere act of defining a nation-state involves marginalising or excluding certain groups. As Bill Marshall states in his preface, any book tackling the topic of a national cinema "has to justify its boundaries and exclusions, even and especially if it aims to address several disciplines and potential readerships" (ix). Many of the books within Routledge's National Cinema Series, such as Susan Hayward's *French National Cinema* (1993) and Pierre Sorlin's *Italian National Cinema* (1996), approach national cinema using a chronological framework based on the analysis of film production trends. Tom O'Regan's *Australian National Cinema* (1996) concentrates less on individual films themselves but instead presents a historiography of a national cinema with a focus on the conditions under which Australian films are made and positioned by criticism. In contrast, Christopher Gittings approaches the topic of Canadian national cinema through case studies of individual films within chapters that address popular contemporary issues of colonisation, ethnography, the production of a national cinema, narrating nations, visualising First Nations, and multicultural fields of vision.

While these case studies provide very useful readings of many of the films, Gittings often assumes a great deal of knowledge on the part of the general reader. As the book is situated within the Routledge series, the potential readership for this book is an international audience; thus, I feel the book could have benefited from a more rigorous introduction to Canadian history and cultural production within which to locate these films. For example, the first two chapters on films as a colonising discourse and who is ethnographical in film would have made more sense if they had followed, rather than preceded, the third chapter on the production of a national cinema and the establishment of the NFB. Notions of "whiteness" elucidated in the early chapters tend to be attributed to a British Anglo-Saxon identity, rather

than the much more complicated mixture of Scots, Irish, French, and other white European settlers, a distinction that is alluded to later. Furthermore, the hegemonic impulse of the production of a Canadian national identity needs to be seen in relation to the nation's fear of being consumed by the overwhelming cultural industry of the neighbouring United States. For example, the reasons why John Grierson was brought to Canada to establish the NFB are not explained until the third chapter, when they would have strengthened and contextualised the discussion of *Drylanders* in the first chapter.

If Gittings' book had not been published under the heady auspices of an ambitious series of critical works on national cinemas, my criticisms would have been lessened. Gittings himself acknowledges in his introduction that no major monograph yet exists that covers all of Canadian cinema history and that the task he has given himself in his book could not possibly fill such a void. Certainly, as an examination of ideology, difference, and representation in Canadian filmmaking, Gittings' book laudably gives voice to poorly distributed and often neglected films of First Nations and other ethnic minorities. Within these case studies, Gittings problematises questions of identity: inclusion and exclusion, race and representation, gender and sexuality.

Gittings' attempts at inclusiveness stand in marked contrast to Bill Marshall's controversially named *Quebec National Cinema*. Marshall mentions in the preface that "the idea of this book was rejected by another publisher's series on national cinemas [is he here referring to Routledge?] on the grounds that Quebec 'is not a nation,' whereas 'Canada is' (in the singular)" (x). I must admit that my liberal Southwestern Ontario sensibilities shuddered when I first read the book's title, but I was quickly won over by Marshall's refusal to simplify terms such as "nation" and "identity." Recognising that the term "Quebec film" is a porous and problematic one, Marshall nevertheless finds it a useful one to encompass "any film made in French in Quebec with majority or significant Quebec funding and personnel." However, the notion of "Quebec" does not remain static. In each chapter, Marshall renegotiates and problematises the term in relation to a wide range of theoretical frameworks: the production of a nationalist discourse, 1960s Quebec cinema as a cinema of modernisation, Quebecois cultural production in relation to France, the United States, and Canadian Anglophone production, films made by women, and the representations of the First Nation and immigrant (allophone) "Others".

Marshall's writing is at its finest in chapters such as "Foundational Fictions", in which he demonstrates a basic format that allows him to skilfully wend his way through the intricate relationship between film production in Quebec and the nationalist question. He begins the chapter with two films that illustrate the problematic nature of Quebec national cinema: Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault's *Pour la suite du monde* (1963) and Michel Brault's *À tout prendre* (1964). He deftly places readings of these two films within a theoretical framework informed by Deleuze's discussion of Perrault in *L'Image Mouvement* and *L'Image-Temps*, as well as within the historical context of the Quebec of the 1960s; in particular, the Quiet Revolution and the October crisis.

Each following chapter continues this pattern, setting up a theoretical and/or historical framework and using insightful readings from key films to illustrate each point. Marshall's *Quebec National Cinema* is a major contribution to the study of Quebec cinema as it is the most ambitious, comprehensive, and thought-provoking study published in English to date.

Comedy Is A Man in Trouble: Slapstick in American Movies

By Alan Dale
Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8166-3657-5. 34 illustrations, 270pp. £18.00 (hbk)

A review by Hsiao-Pin Chang, University of Nottingham, UK

This book is a research of "slapstick" in American movies from the silent era to the present; Alan Dale investigates the definition of slapstick and explores the different forms of slapstick of different comedians. Since the beginning of the twentieth century 'slapstick' has been our name for popular, rather than literary, low physical comedy (1). Dale uses this general concept of slapstick to discuss the distinctions of slapstick in different eras of American film comedy. Dale argues that slapstick in comedy is individual based, it stems from the performance, idea and training background of comedians. He also addresses the difference between silent and sound era slapstick: in silent films, slapsticks rely on the physical movements or gestures of comedians, and in sound films slapsticks can be produced not only from the comedians' physical movements but also the dialogue among characters.

In the book, Dale discusses the slapstick of classic and contemporary comedians and examines its changes and influences up to present American film comedy in different chapters. He introduces Charles Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, the Marx Brothers, Preston Sturges and Jerry Lewis, and analyses the differences and distinctions between their slapsticks, suggesting that there is a changing discourse of slapstick not only based on their different forms of performance but also different social and historical contexts of American film comedies. The way Dale structures the book indicates that there is an evolution of slapstick in American film comedy. Each chapter is an essay on the slapstick of a key comedian, and each chapter has the same structure of exploring the issue of slapstick. In the beginning, Dale always provides the background of the comedian, such as family or training experience at theatre, and he starts analysing the specialty of the comedian's slapsticks then illuminates the distinction between other comedians' performances. At the end of the chapter, Dale gives his own opinion on the influence and contribution which the comedian made to present American film comedy. For instance, in the chapter on Chaplin, Dale argues that there are not only aspects of childhood memory in Chaplin's films, but also a reflection of his personal feelings about contemporary political issues. He asserts that Chaplin was led by the desire to make a political statement, but the intention fractures in the articulation, which is perhaps more personally revealing than a more coherent political critique (57).

The chapter called "Girl Heroes" is a special part of the book, Dale expounds upon a discourse that only male comedians do proper slapstick, which is funnier and acceptable for audiences under the historical and social contexts of the early twentieth century. He suggests that the image of the female heroine in film comedies is independent, misbehaved, in other words, she is "bad." This kind of woman image was not acceptable in 1920s American

society; therefore, they have to choose between comedy and motherhood in slapstick movies (101). Dale quotes Mark Sennett's "dogma" about female characters' position and function in film comedy: "When the heroine is young, the audience enjoys laughing at her up to a point. But then she needs to be rescued from the possibility of ridicule if she is to have a happy ending as a wife and mother" (101). In this chapter, Dale emphasises his point that women are also able to do comic slapstick. In order to break the ideology that only male comedians have the legitimacy to do comic slapstick, Dale provides substantial information about actresses in film comedy, for instance, the chemistry between Katherine Hepburn and Carry Grant, Mae West's deviant charisma, and director Preston Sturges' favorite actress Betty Hutton. Their popularity proves that women can be funny as well, and they are also able to do physical comedy.

Dale gives very detailed historical information, and in each chapter he spends a lot of time analysing different slapsticks based on the comedians' different film characters; there is also a lot of analysis of individual film sequences. Dale provides an informative handbook for some readers who want to know particular background information on comedians or their films. But for those readers who are more interested in the notion of slapstick in American film comedy, the first chapter contains a clear and definitive description of slapstick and its historical change in film comedy. From the structure and content of the book, Dale has convincingly applied and expressed his impressive research of each film comedian, and most important of all, it is not difficult to read. Readers can be selective with the book and enjoy reading about their favorite all-time classic comedians.

Conversations with Wilder

By Cameron Crowe
London: Faber and Faber, 1999. ISBN 0-571-20162-8. 679 illustrations, xix + 373pp. £20.00 (hbk)

A review by Richard Armstrong, BFI Associate Tutor, UK

Screenwriter-director Cameron Crowe's book of interviews with veteran Hollywood screenwriter-director Billy Wilder recalls a Wilder screenwriting collaboration. You can almost see the chipper Wilder of old brandishing his cane whenever Crowe's questions prompted that quickening which came when the going was good.

The wit of Billy Wilder, and the adventures of Billy Wilder have been reiterated and retold so often that they have become, like the ephemera daubed outside Grauman's Chinese Theater, a fixture of Hollywood lore. The outcome of a series of talks which longtime fan Crowe had with Wilder at Wilder's Beverly Hills office, *Conversations with Wilder* feels like the last, fortuitous word on an aging legend who told Wilderphile Adrian Turner in the early-1990s that he was "interviewed out." Left to dawdle, Wilder, ninety-one when these sessions began, is not averse to re-rehearsing old chestnuts such as Marilyn Monroe's retakes on *Some Like it Hot* (1959), or his fracas with Bogart on the set of *Sabrina* (1954). A longtime fan, Crowe indulges the master deipnosophist for this lavish coffee table insight into the Wilder world.

Unable to secure an interview with Wilder myself, Crowe's assiduous scene-setting put us in the same room.

> Wilder pauses to survey the lively atmosphere around him.The doctor manipulating him, Audrey exercising nearby, me holding a microphone.
>
> He has clearly missed the beautiful chaos of a movie set. With barely disguised glee, Wilder encourages our behaviour, but commands us to specific places in the room. Suddenly the room pops with loopy syncopation. We all feel like characters in a Wilder film. And he knows it. He stands watching the successful scene he has just staged. His face melts into a rare look of complete creative satisfaction. It's just a small smile, a simple expression of deep bemusement, and it's the most revealing glimpse Wilder could offer any biographer. This is who he is. This is his bliss (302).

Elsewhere, Crowe takes us to Billy and Audrey Wilder's favourite restaurant, Mr Chow in Beverly Hills. Playing on the running joke that animates their conversations, he announces his early arrival at their rendezvous. It is an ironic joke, given the brisk tempo of Wilder's work. The Wilders have already arrived -- "Billy in a dress suit, Audrey in Chanel" -- and the waiters first seat Billy "at his favourite seat at the usual table" (214). Wilder's routines are as fastidious as his work.

Forming a bridge between the polished nonchalance of the prewar boudoir confection, the world according to Lubitsch, and the uncertain redemptions of the postwar period, Auden's "Age of Anxiety", Wilder's output often grasped and represented an "American Century" beyond the studio gates. There are those who celebrate the Wilder of the risque bon mot, the Lubitschian world of *Sabrina*, *Love in the Afternoon* (1957), and *Avanti!* (1972). And those who prefer the tough-minded hard-ass of such as *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), and *Ace in the Hole* (1951). Crowe is as apt to gush over Audrey Hepburn's Givenchy-attired Sabrina as he is to celebrate that final heartbreaking low angle shot from *Ace in the Hole*.

Elusive whenever deeper meanings are sought in his work, Wilder reiterates his status as a Hollywood player who knew how the pipes of a canny entertainment fitted together and reveled in the resulting accolades. It still pleases him when an audience bursts into spontaneous applause after a scene from *The Apartment* (1960) is screened at a 1998 Oscar telecast. However one baulks when Wilder cites *Forrest Gump* (1994) as his favourite recent film, its mainstream efficiency and relevance to mid-century America makes sense as a descendent of both *Ace in the Hole* and *Sabrina*. In less friendly times, "Wilder was considered the system personified with all its serpentine wiles and crass commercialism." Seen in our committee-driven age, a Wilder film increasingly resembles auteur cinema at its most distinctive.

By 1999, Crowe himself had become a Hollywood player, having written and directed the Oscar-winning *Jerry Maguire* (1996). Inviting Wilder to talk about such craftsmanship as his use of voice-overs, putting Jack Lemmon into a confined space, and the benefits of including silence in the screenplay finds Crowe an enthusiastic disciple at a masterclass. However frustrated you are when no straight answer comes about that, supposedly terrific, footage of Peter Sellers from *Kiss Me, Stupid* (1964), the attempt to track the "Lubitsch touch" back to Mauritz Stiller's *Erotikon* (1920) makes for an interesting episode.

But exactitude is less important in the coffee table genre than a sense of occasion. Consonant with Crowe's project of enabling us to live out these meetings with the Wilders, such snapshots as those from the "wrap" party for *The Spirit of St. Louis* in 1957 have a density and amplitude that make that evening almost audible.

Culture: Reinventing the Social Sciences

By Mark J Smith
Buckingham and Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-335-20318-3. viii + 148pp. £14.99 (pbk)
Studying Culture: A Practical Introduction

By Judy Giles and Tim Middleton.

Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. ISBN 0-631-2062-1. 24 illustrations, ix + 280 pp. £15.99 (pbk).

Subject, Society and Culture By Roy Boyne

Studying Culture: A Practical Introduction

By Judy Giles and Tim Middleton

Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. ISBN 0-631-2062-1. 24 illustrations, ix + 280 pp. £15.99 (pbk)

Subject, Society and Culture

By Roy Boyne

London: Sage, 2000. ISBN 0-8039-8350-6. 31 illustrations, xii + 179 pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Nick Couldry, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

Cultural studies is arguably in a period when broad choices must be made which will have long-term implications on its future development. These choices concern method, but also the epistemological framework within which methods are meaningful. Most would probably agree that such choices will draw on a range of social sciences and humanities disciplines, and in that loose sense be multi-disciplinary, but some argue that the

field of culture is multi-disciplinary in a stronger sense, requiring the abandonment of formal disciplines for a post-disciplinary field of study.

Mark Smith has energetically followed this latter line of argument and as a sociologist of science and culture he brings to these debates a wide frame of reference, including from philosophy. His book starts promisingly with a careful account of the historical development of the term "culture" which locates it not just within the well-known history of the Enlightenment and the battles over high versus popular culture, but more generally in the establishment of a social sciences canon from the early nineteenth century onwards. He is surely right to point out the tension between the apparent openness of culture's definition as broadly a way of life and the historical specificity of how the term has been used. He also makes welcome parallels in Chapter Two between cultural studies and the developments of actor-based sociology, whether phenomenology or symbolic interactionism. From this perspective, cultural analysis can be seen as "identifying and interpreting the social existence of the people under consideration and demonstrat[ing] how their values and stories make sense" (36).

He then takes us through familiar territory, the established canon of cultural studies theorists: Marxism and structuralism/ semiology (chapter three), the Birmingham school and its insistence on questions of "mediation" (chapter four) and post-structuralism (chapter five). These chapters are at times useful, although I would have welcomed more on whether this standard line-up offers cultural analysis all it needs: his accounts of

structuralism or the term 'identity', for example, do not go beyond generalities.

There are at times interesting juxtapositions, for example in chapter five between Derrida's work on meaning and empirically-based work on the complexity of everyday lives (Daniel Miler, Alison Clarke). Not surprisingly he finds a gap here, since Derrida and other post-structuralists are philosophers concerned with questioning the coherence of the underlying assumptions governing the social sciences and humanities, whereas empirical researchers have more local and direct questions to ask about everyday cultural practice.

Leaving aside the oddity (on which he doesn't remark) that his theory is from the continental philosophical tradition, whereas the empirical work considered is narrowly based in the UK, I want to take issue with the direction of Smith's argument more generally. In assuming that grand theory can illuminate the questions for empirical work Smith follows a familiar line within cultural studies. But the fact that it produces only a gap, rather than any insights that can be developed further, suggests that this whole theoretical strategy is flawed. Indeed, Smith's book shows the problems of this strategy when pursued to its limits.

Smith's whole book is premised on a wider philosophical argument: that the field of social science needs to be refashioned from an anti-foundationalist perspective, suspicious of truth claims and issues of evidence, and more interested in the status of social science writing as discourse. Smith's priorities emerge at the end of chapter five, when (107-8) he calls for a general "rewriting [of] the

literature on knowledge" that is more democratically inclusive. This will involve two things: rereading the actual claims made by (presumably "mainstream") social science as narratives and rhetorical structures, and, second, acknowledging the "complex conditions and varied ways in which people use social science as knowledge" (108).

Clearly these two projects are worth pursuing, if the social sciences are to be adequately reflexive about their own discourse and how their claims are taken up in wider society. But what is this "knowledge" Smith refers to explicitly here? Presumably it is the result of a rigorous inquiry that can justify its claims from evidence. But in Smith's book, in spite of hints (63), questions of evidence are never adequately addressed.

There is a good reason for this inattention to evidence; Smith's larger philosophical position (scornful of "truth junkies" who play the "truth game", (19)) disavows such questions. This position is broken-backed. If truth, in some sense, is not at stake in the social sciences, then why is it even interesting to study the "truth" about social science discourse, or indeed any discourse?

Smith's call in this final chapter for a "post-disciplinary social science" therefore lacks substance, since the real point of his project is obscure. Instead, he offers us some very partial and loaded discussions of what he rates as "good" (cultural geography) or "bad" (criminology) examples of social science work, judged in terms of their relationship to power structures. Almost everything in the social sciences and the study of cultures is problematised except Smith's own very partial epistemological position.

That **position however is barely developed, except through brief implication, making the book as a whole rather unsatisfactory.**

It was a relief to turn from this airless territory to Giles and Middleton's textbook which foregrounds precisely how cultural studies gets done in relation to specific evidence and materials. As they put it in their subtitle: "a practical introduction". A consequence of cultural studies' maturing as a university subject is of course the need for textbooks which bring the subject to life, without mystifying language but equally without hiding the real complexities lurking just beneath the surface of cultural analysis. Giles and Middleton have succeeded admirably. Their book has a number of detailed strengths, which should mean it is widely used across a range of courses.

First, they carefully, even exhaustively, explain the terms they use, and their emergence from earlier, often difficult, debates. Explanation precedes and then develops passages from key texts, whose language would have been very demanding without the context Giles and Middleton provide.

Second, the range of topics they cover is sensible and importantly balances general theoretical debate and case study material (for example an interesting case study of the cultural meanings of the inter-war suburban house, chapter six). I will have one concern to raise about their choice of topic later, but it does not detract from the overall usefulness of the scope of the book.

Third, in almost every chapter, they present readers with documentary material on which to test out abstract concepts. This takes two, equally useful forms:

autobiographical material from the literature or from the media, often historical material; and second visual material, including maps, not as simple illustrations, but as documents to be studied for how they represent space in distinctive ways. The range of material students will need to grapple with in absorbing this book is impressive, and should be stimulating in itself.

Fourth, as these forms of evidence suggests, Giles and Middleton do their readers a service by insisting that both history and cultural geography are a central part of cultural studies. Many before have noted (for example Meaghan Morris) that cultural studies has consistently paid too little attention to questions of history, so it is a great merit that Giles and Middleton make the process of history, its complexities and puzzles, central to the way they encourage readers to engage with cultural evidence.

Fifth, their choice of theoretical materials in particular chapters manages to work outwards from very basic starting-points to issues of real difficulty: on questions of representation (drawing on Jo Spence in chapter three), the narrative tropes of history writing (Hayden White is used in chapter four) and the relationship between space and representation (Henri Lefebvre in chapter five). The discussion is therefore generally stimulating, and takes risks where they need to be taken.

I have nonetheless reservations on their book, some relatively minor, but one more substantial. On the minor level, there are some theorists who don't get a fair treatment, for example, Pierre Bourdieu. A casual reference on page 167 is not compensated for by a brief and rather negative discussion of *Distinction* later in the

book (226-228). More significant, given my comments on Mark Smith's book above, but clearly not a criticism that can be laid at Giles and Middleton's door alone, is their adoption of a rather conventional position on the implications of poststructuralism for history. So chapter four, having covered very well the complexity of historical data and the insights from White's narratology, ends rather lamely with the idea that for cultural studies history is merely about sifting historical discourse for the ways in which it can illuminate the *present*. Partly true in one sense of course, but hardly adequate as a motivation to students for getting historical detail right, which in other ways the book encourages.

This last point links to a broader weakness in the scope of the book which has too much on questions of representation and too little on the material structures which produce, circulate, and help structure the consumption of, representations. There is no chapter on the economy (only "consumption") or on the state, or on power. The final case study on information and communication technologies, including new media, therefore seems detached from the rest of the book and lacks conviction.

The weakest chapter in the book in my view is however on "Subjects, Bodies, Selves", and it is here that postructuralist orthodoxy dominates to the detriment of the sensitivity to empirical material the authors show elsewhere. Giles and Middleton run through the standard references (Althusser, Lacan, Foucault), but never open up for question the orthodoxy that has resulted from poststructuralism. Is it really so incontestable that "subjectivity is *constantly* in flux, *constantly* in process and

only ever briefly stabilized" (193, added emphasis)? They seek to justify this claim with examples of everyday self-doubt that can just as easily be taken as evidence not of the self's fragmentation, but of the complexity (which is not necessary recent, let alone "postmodern") of practices of reflexivity _by_ selves. At this point poststructuralist orthodoxy contradicts Giles and Middleton's argument elsewhere on the importance of taking agency seriously, for example in consumption practices (223).

To be fair, this is a difficult area and I must make explicit my own view that cultural studies needs to rethink quite radically its approach to the subject and its over reliance on philosophical theories of "the self" rather than sociological studies of the practices of actual subjects.

One valuable point then in Roy Boyne's _Subject, Society and Culture_ is his willingness to take head on such difficult meta-issues in considering the future of sociology. Instead of assuming any easy consensus, Boyne foregrounds an unresolved problem about the status of the 'subject' in social theory. Unlike cultural studies in some versions of its history (including perhaps those of the first two books reviewed), sociology for Boyne "is a contested field" (1). There is a theoretical gap, he argues, between the claims of leading sociological theorists to deconstruct the "self" and their actual failure to address the problematic notion of the "subject".

Boyne explores this gap in two authoritative contemporary approaches to the social field, those of Bourdieu and of Actor Network Theory. This is difficult territory, but Boyne's argument in each case is careful and stimulating. His challenge to Bourdieu is not in itself new,

since many writers have argued like Boyne that Bourdieu's insistence on structure is at the expense of a sensitivity to the thinking, imagining subject, while at the same time noting the biases built into Bourdieu's account in favour of certain types of agent. On Actor Network Theory, Boyne's argument strikes me as more original. He argues that Bruno Latour, this theory's chief iconoclast and proponent of the actor-network concept in which inanimate objects are no less networked "actants" than the conventional human subject, closes off many important questions about the construction, and perhaps contestation, of power and oppression through the interrelation of specifically human subjects.

In the second and third parts of Boyne's book, he develops the question of the subject through readings of artists (Newman, Baselitz, Bacon) and filmmakers (Kieslowski, Cronenberg). These readings are at times difficult, even obscure, drawing in an allusive way on a wide range of sources including philosophers such as Blanchot and Derrida. An underlying theme is the fragmentation of the ethical subject following the Holocaust, an issue that motivated all the cultural producers he discusses.

I found clearest and most approachable the chapter on Cronenberg's *Crash* which analyses well the stripped down, instantaneous self, without recourse to history or a future, of the film's subjects, and how Cronenberg closes off serially all possibilities for enriching their frame of subjectivity (156-162). To this pessimistic view of the contemporary subject, Boyne juxtaposes the notions of witnessing and friendship from Blanchot and Derrida, which for him offer a way beyond the impasse of twentieth century history, in terms of a "community of fate", "a

relationship of propinquity which is, in the era of technological and temporal repetition, the only available certain basis for human interconnection" (163).

There is much sensitivity in Boyne's readings, here and also in the studies of Newman and Bacon, but overall the book left me uneasy at its wider strategy. I was disappointed that, having started from sociological territory, he does not return to it after his detour through art, film and philosophy. He never confronts the obvious question of whether, and if so, how his elaborate readings of some very specialised forms of cultural production are relevant to sociology's attempt to understand the range of contemporary subjects in their social settings. What of the shift in the twentieth century of the status of the cultural producer, and questions of political economy? Methodologically, these are literary readings of canonical texts of a conventional sort. Second, while there *may* be connections between the rarified level of Boyne's argument and "everyday" subjectivity, they need to be argued for and not assumed. Otherwise sociology remains stranded in the antechamber of literary criticism, leaving cultural studies without an expected ally in understanding the real lived complexities of contemporary cultures.

There is a danger then, on the evidence of these three books, that far from sociology and cultural studies coming together in a reinvigorated analysis of culture, they will pass each other, rather sadly, in the night. Let's hope the actual outcome is different.

The Danish Directors: Dialogues on a Contemporary National Cinema

By Mette Hjort and Ib Bondebjerg. Trans. Mette Hjort
Bristol: Intellect Books, 2001. ISBN 1-84150-035-6. 41 b/w illustrations, 288pp. £24.95 (hbk)

A review by Andrew Nestingen, University of Washington, USA

The aim of Mette Hjort and Ib Bondebjerg's *The Danish Directors* is twofold: to provide a sourcebook on Danish cinema to an English-language film and cultural studies readership (8); and to contribute to the revision of film studies initiated by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll in their 1996 volume *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* -- the volume under review comes with Bordwell's stamp of approval (he wrote the preface); the reader will also recall Hjort's essay on Danish cinema in *Post-Theory*. Bondebjerg has contributed to discussions of cognitive film theory, as have many of his colleagues at the University of Copenhagen's Department of Film and Media Studies. On both registers of its project, *The Danish Directors* works well, making available a rich resource for students and scholars interested in Danish and Scandinavian cinema, and raising salient questions concerning national cinemas.

The Danish Directors contains nineteen interviews, each of which is prefaced by the director's curriculum vitæ. Two introductory essays precede the interviews, and a glossary clarifying relevant points of reference follows them. The first essay, "Danish Cinema: A Small Nation in a Global Culture", locates changing political, cultural, and aesthetic tendencies in postwar Danish cinema in relation to the globalization of film and television. The second, "Four Generations of Danish Directors", provides a brief overview of Danish film history, focusing on the directors interviewed. The authors have organized the interviews chronologically, from Gabriel Axel (1918) to Thomas Vinterberg (1969). Also included are Gabriel Axel, Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, Bille August, Lars von Trier, and Susanne Bier, among others.

While the course each interview takes varies, Hjort and Bondebjerg raise similar questions with each director. The interviews begin with questions about the director's entry into filmmaking and about his relation to the major institutions in Danish film. From there, they track the development of each director's career, exploring issues of financing and production, casting, directing, acting, language, audience, views of national culture, and the problems of multinational co-productions.

Few discussions of Scandinavian, let alone Danish, cinema are available in English -- although Tytti Soila and company's *Nordic National Cinemas* and Peter Cowie's work might be mentioned. In contrast to these, *The Danish Directors* employs a narrower methodology and takes a more limited object of study, but ends up furnishing a fascinating, sophisticated, enjoyable, and informative account of the knotty world of Danish cinema.

The directors' responses provide a fascinating introduction to their work, Danish cinema, and contemporary practices of financing and production in European cinema. The interviews elucidate in a lively and often humorous manner the manifold influences, institutions, decisions, and forces that shape the images that make it on screen, although there are a few exceptions -- Jørgen Leth's prattle about his philosophical influences, for example. Leth's comments do little to clarify his films but foreground his pretentiousness. The majority of interviews are outstanding. Particularly intriguing are the interviews with Kragh-Jacobsen and von Trier -- the latter as iconoclastic, silly, and brilliant here as elsewhere. In these two, the interviewers push the directors to probe the institutional, professional, and national relationships that have shaped their filmmaking, revealing links that would not be otherwise evident. The questions concerning Kragh-Jacobsen's *Island on Bird Street* (1997) illustrate a central issue in national cinema, the complexities of multinational co-productions. Kragh-Jacobsen relates how he came to differ over the script with the screenwriter John Goldman, chosen by the English production company under pressure from US investors: Goldman's adaptation of Uri Orlev's novel was "pure Walt Disney," according to Kragh-Jacobsen (169). Hjort's questions glean a detailed account of how disputes over financing and production decisions shaped the film's ending, as well as numerous other elements. The example explains the overdetermined image better than many a theoretical essay. Other interesting interview moments are Ole Bornedal's discussion of *Nightwatch* (1994) as a Danish production, and subsequent Hollywood remake (1998), and Erik Clausen's discussions of multicultural Denmark. The interviews would mesh well with a screening of any of these directors' films in the classroom.

In discussing interviews so far, I have used a male pronoun when referring to the directors. I have done so because of the nineteen interviewees four are women. I do not mean to suggest that the authors have erred by choosing too few women filmmakers. Surely the gender imbalance among the interviewees indicates that in Denmark, as elsewhere, film industries have been dominated by men, a point Ole Bornedal makes in his interview (232). More significantly, the imbalance points to a problem with the premise of the book. Feminist scholars, most prominently Anne McClintock, have argued that nation-states and national culture have never fully recognized, included institutionally, or valorized women's roles in national public spheres. Nation has been implicitly gendered male, for the putatively universal national subject is indeed gendered. In asking male directors to ruminate on Danish-ness and cinema, the questioners reproduce the category of the national without adequately dismantling the parts that constitute it. The same critique could be raised about ethnicity and nationality, as well -- and seems to be an especially pressing question now, given the recent victory of the right in Danish parliamentary elections. On the other hand, to Hjort and Bondebjerg's credit, it must be noted that the book explores class-based and regional fissures in Danish culture in provocative ways.

The Danish Directors is a highly significant addition to scholarship on Scandinavian film in English. Although it eschews some theoretical issues, it provides an insight into Danish cinema that will be valuable to scholars interested in national cinema. It is a contribution that is not only significant, but timely -- in light of the recent success of another Dogme film, *Italian for Beginners* (Lone Scherfig, 2000).

Death's Showcase: The Power of Image in Contemporary Democracy

By Ariella Azoulay, Trans. Ruvik Danieli
Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001. ISBN 0-262-01182-4. 46 illustrations, i+303pp. £23.95 (hbk)

A review by Anita Biressi, University of Surrey, UK

Ariella Azoulay's *Death's Showcase* is a groundbreaking book that maps out the public visual display of death in contemporary culture. Drawing on troubling and politically loaded histories and mediations of the Holocaust, Palestinian-Israeli strife, Bosnia and Hiroshima, the author re-thinks the place of death in the field of vision and contemplates the political consequences of violent imagery for contemporary political subjects. The author begins by signalling three "typically modern" arenas, three "seemingly neutral" spaces in which loss and death are articulated: the analyst's clinic, the white cube museum space and the television screen. In these places, she argues, imaginary, tangible and virtual mediations of trauma and loss are permitted and moreover they all produce the conditions for "an unfinished work of mourning." For the analyst the originary moment of trauma is irrecoverable, for the art aficionado the ultimate artist is always yet to arrive and for television the missing image is the unrepresentable moment of death itself. With this emphasis on the contemporary re-working of the aesthetics of loss, mourning and of death itself, especially within new technocultures, it is little wonder perhaps that the author turns to the work of Walter Benjamin in particular; a figure who himself occupies a critical space shot through with loss, nostalgia and disappointment. In one sense the debates in this book operate as astutely layered dialogues with Benjamin, and especially with the several drafts of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Other key thinkers invoked here include Barthes and Foucault, whose work respectively on the rhetoric of the image and on scopic regimes, space and the production of knowledge aids the author's negotiation of contemporary visual terrain. The main concern here is with the prevailing visual aestheticisation of death and the potential threat to progressive political action that can happen when citizens/viewers are distanciated from the atrocities displayed on screen and in photojournalism. Azoulay's intervention both exposes the aesthetics of death as problematic but more importantly she seeks out in the work of installation artists and photographers imagery that refuses complicity with this aesthetics.

The book is comprised of eleven chapters and, although it is most productive to read the first three chapters on Benjamin at the outset, the subsequent eight chapters can be read almost as stand alone essays. It is difficult here to do justice to the range of analyses undertaken. Case studies unpack the complex and displaced relations between visibility and death in a variety of forums including art installations, war photojournalism, amateur film footage, city space and territory in Jerusalem and in films such as Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. Chapter Six "The [critical] image" will be especially valuable for those interested in investigating ways in which to theorise and *evaluate* images of death that potentially operate as challenging critiques of power. Concentrating on photography, the chapter establishes the camera's instrumental complicity with institutional power before showing how it can also undermine

governmentality. For example, when Israeli photographers breached no-go areas to capture pictures of the Intifada, when photographers compile alternative archives or produce alternative evidence that censures power, then governmentality is openly challenged. The essay also explores with great clarity the intersubjective space of action and discourse within which the camera operates and the role of the camera as an actor in space (99). It is a commonplace that the camera is not simply instrumental and objective in its operation but Azoulay goes much further in considering its role in time and space; demonstrating how the conditions for the production of camera work might also produce the conditions for the modern representation of death. The chapter "The floodlit arena [of murder]: Yitzhak Rabin" provides a clear example of how this works. It explores the assassination of Rabin in the city plaza in Tel Aviv. Unusually it seeks to track the *shared* ideological imperatives that brought murderer Yigal Amir and his victim Rabin together in a public and filmed arena of death. Here too Ronny Kempler an amateur photographer who "had a bad feeling" (175) persisted in trying to film Rabin despite being rebuffed by police; little knowing that he would capture the moment of an assassination. Azoulay analyses the relations between these three figures, analysing the lines of power and vision (official/authority, critical/counter authority and amateur) that crosshatched the plaza on that day. She argues that to understand the reproduction of death in the contemporary visual field one must recognise that the historical actions of these interlinked subjects cannot be separated from objects in the field -- guns, security and amateur cameras. Azoulay's point here and throughout the book is that the camera is not simply a witness but *generates* history; the camera, like the gun, does not simply document murder but is part and parcel of the murder-event. Provocatively the author suggests that modern violence and murder is and has to be imagined differently due to its integral relation to the visual field and its technologies.

Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema

By Murray Smith
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. ISBN 0-19-818347-X. 265 pp. £15.99 (pbk)
Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film: Film as an Emotion Machine By Ed S. Tan.&
Moving Pictures: A New Theory of Film Genres, Feelings, and Cognition By Torben Grodal

Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film: Film as an Emotion Machine

By Ed S. Tan

Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996. ISBN 0-8058-1409-4. 296 pp. $69.95 (hbk)

Moving Pictures: A New Theory of Film Genres, Feelings, and Cognition

By Torben Grodal

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. ISBN 0-19-815983-8. 306 pp. £15.99 (pbk)

A review by Tico Romao, University of Gloucestershire, UK

Over the past few years, film studies has witnessed a proliferation of works by cognitive film theorists investigating the emotions and the cinema. In addition to the pioneering work of Noël Carroll, and the collective efforts by Smith, Tan and Grodal, the publication of *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion* (1999) marked the occasion when the cognitive perspective on the emotions was consolidated within film theory (see Sarah Cardwell's insightful review of this anthology for *Scope* (August, 2000)). Taking together, the significance of these works stem from the way they seek to differentiate themselves from previous studies of the affective dimensions of film. On the one hand, the cognitive perspective contrasts itself from psychoanalysis and its reliance upon muddled and all-encompassing notions such as identification and pleasure. On the other, the cognitive perspective takes issue with previous cognitive explanations for problematically disconnecting emotional response from the comprehension of films, and for positing the mere enjoyment of problem-solving as a film's principal pleasure. However, one would underestimate the significance of these works if one restricted their impact to simply revising and, in some instances, eclipsing earlier accounts. What the new cognitive stance has affected

is a redefinition of the primary investigative objects of film studies; neither the film spectator nor the film text itself can be adequately studied without reference to the emotions.

Ed Tan's book advances these central premises of the new cognitive perspective. Working from a framework that integrates film theory with research in social and cognitive psychology, Tan seeks to supplement David Bordwell's purely cognitive account of narrative film comprehension by analysing the underlying dynamics of emotional response during the viewing of the mainstream narrative film. According to Tan, mainstream films elicit two types of emotions: those that arise as a response to the fictional world depicted, and those that are evoked with respect to the film itself as an intentionally produced artefact. While Tan claims that both types of emotions are solicited by mainstream films, fictionally elicited emotions tend to predominate. From such observations issues Tan's central thesis that the core emotional engagement with narrative film is interest. For some, Tan's characterisation of interest as an emotion may appear strange since interest is rarely considered prototypical when anger, fear or joy are. Yet on this point Tan follows the precedent established by such eminent psychologists as Nico Frijda and Carroll Izard who argue that a basic feature of the emotions is an "action readiness" toward forthcoming stimuli. Since action readiness assumes a virtual form when watching films as a result of the spectator's inability to intervene in the events fictionally portrayed on screen, the action tendency most often taken by the spectator is a willingness to invest interest and maintain attention to the developments in a film's main story lines.

Tan goes on to analyse the interest elicited by mainstream narrative films by an appeal to four explanatory principles. First, one must distinguish momentary interest in the immediate details of the unfolding of the narrative from one's final judgement of the film itself. For Tan, it is the dynamics of momentary interest that is the more significant psychological process. Second, interest at any given moment in a film is directly proportional to the narrative expectations that the moment generates. The greater the narrative expectations elicited at that moment, the greater the interest invested by the spectator. Conversely, any momentary decrease in narrative expectations will result in a corresponding decline in interest, as exemplified by the comic relief scenes that frequently intersperse action films. This relationship between interest and expected narrative outcomes is conceptualised by Tan through an economic metaphor of investment and return. Third, narrative films generate two types of narrative expectations, what Tan labels foreground and background returns. Foreground returns refer to short term expectations concerning the playing out of a particular scene while background returns designate longer term expectations pertaining to the resolution of the main story lines. The "net" interest of a particular moment in a film will therefore be determined by the interplay of foreground and background expectations. Fourth, Tan asserts that interest is a "self-enhancing process" (111). By this he means that the very effort of formulating expectations and investing sympathetically with characters will heighten the anticipated enjoyment of the resolution of narrative expectations, which, in turn, will lead to an increase in one's attentiveness and emotional investment in the narrative.

After outlining the cognitive and affective dimensions of interest, Tan asserts that thematic and character structures are the two central foci of spectatorial concern, around which foreground and background expectations are formed. Thematic structures are paradigmatic dramatic scenarios, such as conflict and revenge, which possess an intrinsic affective valence. In contrast, character structures refer to the spectator's relation to character, which Tan describes through more familiar notions of social type, sympathy, empathy, and narrative point of view ("observational attitude" to use Tan's terminology). On the basis of such

considerations, Tan advances what may be the most significant claim of his book; namely, that suspense, surprise and mystery constitute three basic narrative procedures that differ with respect to how they control spectatorial interest through their distinct means of guiding expectations and focusing narrative concerns.

Despite the overall cogency of Tan's book, some of his concepts could stand for greater clarification. Tan's definition of empathy as "all the cognitive operations on the part of the viewer that lead to a more complete understanding of the situational meaning for the character" (172) seems overly broad and the operations referred to do not necessarily lead to any congruency between the affective states of spectator and character, one of the defining features of empathetic response. Further, one can question the degree to which thematic and character structures can be actually distinguished. Tan's analysis of a film's thematic structures in terms of plot points is often formulated with reference to a character's actions, consequently problematising his overarching distinction. Still, Tan's book is an important contribution to the new cognitive perspective. His delineation of interest underscores how affective factors shape narrative structure while the book itself constitutes a major development in the study of film narration that warrants a wider reading beyond the confines of cognitive film theory.

Like Tan, Grodal seeks to demonstrate the ways in which cognitive and emotional responses to films are holistically integrated. *Moving Pictures* does so by advancing a framework in which types of visual fiction -- what Grodal labels "psychosomatic superschemata" (282) -- are seen to be underpinned by basic mind/brain processes. Grodal's principal argument is that differences in types of film correlate to differences in mental/neurological functions. The most fundamental of these mental/neurological functions pertain to the sympathetic and parasympathetic subsystems that compose the autonomic nervous system. The function of the sympathetic subsystem is to support motor action, usually to activate flight or fight responses. The parasympathetic subsystem, in contrast, does not assist motor action but prompts "restorative" activities, such as laughing and crying, as a response to situations perceived to be beyond voluntary control (43). Sympathetic reactions are therefore active while parasympathetic responses are passive. This distinction between sympathetic and parasympathetic responses leads Grodal to posit a fundamental divide between two types of films (or, minimally, film sequences). The first is the narrative film that relies upon motor schemas of active voluntary action that evoke sympathetic reactions. The second is the lyrical film, usually experimental or avant-garde in nature, which tends to activate a network of associations rather than schemas of motor action or volitional control.

Upon this central theoretical edifice, Grodal adds analyses of a variety of filmic processes that are equally tied to essential functions of the mind/brain. The spectator's capacity to engage with narrative film is assisted by the spectator's possession of an innate mental module that facilitates the cognitive and emotional simulation of the mental states of other persons, be they real or fictional characters. Further, Grodal develops the concepts of "telic" and "paratelic" experiences that correspond to the ways in which a spectator's identification with a character is modulated. If the film relies upon canonical narrative schemata of goal oriented action, then the activities of the film's characters are registered by the spectator as volitional and teleological, what Grodal calls a "telic experience". However, if the film contains sequences in which goal oriented action is short circuited by obsessional and regressive concerns (as in *Marnie* and *Vertigo*) or is momentarily put on hold (as in comedic routines and musical numbers) then the spectator simulates the affective valence of the non-goal oriented activity itself, an experience Grodal labels "paratelic". Manipulation of the

representation of space and time can further determine whether spectatorial response will be lyrical, telic or paratelic. When goal oriented actions are depicted in scenes whose spatial and temporal relations are appraised as "objective", then telic experiences will prevail. Yet when the representation of a scene is rendered "subjective" either through spatial or temporal distortion, as in dream or fantasy sequences, then paratelic and even lyrical responses may ensue. The remaining half of Grodal's book is devoted to developing a typology of film genres based upon how these theoretical parameters of lyrical, telic or paratelic response define a particular generic form.

The theoretical framework that Grodal advances is ambitious. It constitutes an attempt to offer a holistic and integrated account of mind/brain functioning (no small achievement) while seeking to provide a fairly exhaustive explanation of a spectator's cognitive and affective responses by reference to these functions. The relative weaknesses and strengths of the book derive, to a large extent, from such efforts at grand theory. One major drawback to Grodal's appeal to innate, mind/brain functions is that he underplays the cultural determinations of cognition and emotion. Although Grodal does acknowledge such social factors, cognitive and affective responses are primarily conceptualised as bottom up flows from the processing of perceptual stimuli to higher order cognitive functions of appraisal and categorisation. Top down processes that consist of categorising phenomena through culturally supplied schemata are, for the most part, ignored. Yet current connectionist approaches to brain functioning, such as Daniel Dennett's multiple drafts model, which stress parallel processing as the hallmark of mental activity problematise any account of a given instance of cognition as either a strictly bottom up or top down process. In addition, Grodal's desire to explicate films in relation to innate, mind/brain functions at times pushes his analyses in directions that are more interpretative than explanatory. Grodal's discussion of the non-voluntary biological aspects of the opening sequence in *Vertigo*, for instance, may provide a novel and interesting interpretation of this celebrated credit sequence, but it hardly constitutes a convincing explanation of how spectators typically respond to it.

It would be unfair to only point to these problems in *Moving Pictures*. Within his broader argument, Grodal proposes a range of less ambitious theories that are explanatorily perspicacious. His discussion of how the reality status of film is ascertained by spectators throws fresh light on debates on realism in the cinema, while his examination of how narrative frames mediate emotional response illuminates the appeal of many self-reflexive films. It is the wealth of smaller scale theories such as these rather than the tenability of his principal thesis that makes *Moving Pictures* a rewarding read.

In comparison to Grodal's broad theoretical ambitions, Murray Smith's *Engaging Characters* is a much more delimited study. Instead of attempting to account for all manner of affective responses to visual fictions, Smith restricts his remit to explaining how characters are the main focal points of a spectator's emotional attention. To clear the way, Smith mounts a persuasive critique of structuralist accounts of character and spectatorial response. Smith argues that structuralist conceptions of character are inadequate since they are modelled upon differential accounts of meaning that are unable to explain the mimetic aspects of a character's traits and physical features. Smith finds the structuralist model of the spectator equally lacking since social determinations are only envisaged as constraining, providing no room for agentially motivated response. In its place, Smith proposes a cognitive account of the "imaginative" spectator who, through the faculty of the imagination, engages with fiction in ways that are both culturally determined and inflected by agential reflection.

If Smith's discussion ended here, his contribution to film theory would not be insignificant. Yet the major accomplishment of *Engaging Characters* is not critique but theory building. Finding lay and psychoanalytical notions of identification incapable of capturing the subtleties of emotional response to characters, Smith breaks the concept down into its three constituent elements: recognition, alignment and allegiance. Recognition refers to aspects of character depiction that facilitate the representation of figures to be recognised and re-identified as narrative agents, usually through their possession of basic human attributes. The concept of alignment identifies narrational processes that are usually understood under the aegis of narrative point of view. Smith sees this latter notion in need of further clarification, so he distinguishes between narrative procedures that pertain to attachment -- the following of a character along his or her spatio-temporal path -- and techniques that provide subjective access to a character's mental states. The final element of Smith's theory is allegiance, which refers to how narratives guide a spectator's moral orientation to the characters in a film. Taken together, these three elements form the "structure of sympathy" that defines the cognitive and affective aspects of character engagement.

One would be hard pressed to find a more comprehensive account of character than Smith's book. His argument is enhanced not only through applications of the theory to the mainstream cinema, but also by the theory's ability to explain non-mainstream techniques of character depiction. Since Smith's book has been extensively reviewed and commented upon since its publication, I will use this moment to address the way Smith seeks to describe the precise roles of empathetic and sympathetic responses within the spectator's engagement with films, an issue to which he returned in his later piece "Imaging From the Inside" appearing in the anthology *Film Theory and Philosophy* (1997).

In *Engaging Characters*, the concept of empathy describes aspects of spectatorial response that produce a congruency between the cognitive and affective states of spectator and character. However, mainstream films systematically provide information to spectators that is in excess of a character's knowledge of the narrative situation. Such instances generate significant discrepancies between the mental states of spectator and character, a fact that leads Smith to conclude that empathy plays a secondary role to sympathy since the latter concept is better suited to capture such differences. Empathy, in the form of imaginative simulation, is consequently relegated to probing character states when they are presented in a narratively opaque manner.

This position is revised in "Imaging From the Inside" in which he provides a more prominent role for empathy in our response to films. Following Alex Neill, Smith maintains that it stands to reason that empathy should play an important part in the spectator's engagement with fiction since empathy is routinely used in our everyday understanding of others. As a result, Smith asserts that certain textual features, such as optical POV shots, constitute cues that prompt the spectator to imaginatively simulate a character's mental states. Smith unfortunately does not specify what other textual cues have been used in this capacity, but his claim that the "multifaceted alignment" in Larry Clark's *Kids* encourages the spectator to empathise with the film's main characters undermines his earlier position that alignment is not sufficient, in and of itself, to produce empathy. So long as there are no significant countervailing factors -- such as the provision of information to the spectator that exceeds a character's knowledge, or the depiction of a character as brutal and wholly without charm -- narrational alignment may very well encourage us to empathise with our fictional surrogates.

It would be false to suggest that these three texts are in agreement in all matters. Tan and Smith disagree over the extent to which spectators are aware of a controlling narrational presence guiding spectatorial attention, whereas the ultimate neuroscientific basis of Grodal's framework is not easily reconciled with Tan's and Smith's acknowledgement of how cultural factors impinge upon cognition and emotion. And the debates within *Passionate Views* attest to the variety of voices within the new cognitive perspective. But perhaps the most significant achievement of this stance has been the expansion of the descriptive vocabulary by which films are analysed. Tan's discussion of the mechanics of interest, Grodal's use of such terms as lyrical, telic and paratelic to describe the parameters of visual fiction, and Smith's unpacking of the concept of identification into recognition, alignment and interest, all provide new and important tools by which to investigate the affective dimensions of films. In sum, these three texts propose a cognitive and affective poetics of the cinema.

Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice

By Don Fairservice
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-7190-5777-9. 25 illustrations, xvi + 347pp. £16.99 (pbk)
Film Production Theory By Jean-Pierre Geuens

Film Production Theory

By Jean-Pierre Geuens

Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000. ISBN 0-7914-4526-7. xii + 299pp. £14.00 (pbk)

A review by Mike Wayne, Brunel University, UK

An increasing number of media and film studies courses now integrate practical modules or pathways into a discipline that first emerged as a theoretical and historical account of signifying practices. As a result, theorists have become involved in practical work and sought to harness its experiential, hands-on nature to the critical aims of theory, while many practitioners with experience in the film and television industries have crossed over into academia and have been required to self-reflexively interrogate their knowledge and skills. The reason for theorising the act of cultural production is exactly the same as it is for the critical social sciences generally. To become conscious of the multiple determinations on our practices helps enlarge the scope for human agency over structure and make genuine choices over habituated routines. This is the aim of theorising practice in my view and the criteria against which attempts to theorise practice should be judged. There is still a dearth of critical textbooks to hand to help students in this regard. Two new books, *Film Editing* by Don Fairservice and *Film Production Theory* by Jean-Pierre Geuens, are thus welcome, if problematic, contributions to the field.

Film Editing is very much a product of the sometimes-difficult rapprochement between theory and practice, critical and vocational impulses occasioned by professional filmmakers crossing over into academia. The author, Don Fairservice, is a professional editor who has also taught at The National Film and Television School and The Northern Film School. *Film Editing* focuses primarily on early cinema; from the first Lumiere shorts to the establishment of the classical Hollywood style and the widespread introduction of sound in the early 1930s. The aims of the book are fourfold:

> My motive for examining the often primitive and unsophisticated early structuring methods of silent films was to discover what steps brought film language to its most recognisable form; to explore any other avenues of experiment that might have suggested themselves on the way; to discover why

> most films continue to be shot and structured in the ways that they are; and finally to evaluate new approaches that challenge convention (2).

The first aim, to discover the steps that were taken to develop the language of cinema, is clearly mapped out in an accessible manner. Fairservice reconstructs the history of developments in the techniques of storytelling, such as the early discoveries of the advantage of staging the action obliquely to the camera and thus opening up fore, middle and background planes of action; developments of narrative strategies such as shot-reverse-shot, variable camera positions on the scene and so forth. In reconstructing this history, Fairservice is aware of the dangers of imposing a retrospective narrative that constructs a linear teleological history of techniques that culminate in the classical narrative structure. The problem with such a retrospective historiography is that it conceals the alternative lines of narrative storytelling that *could* have been taken in different circumstances. Thus Fairservice offers an interesting re-reading of Edwin Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). This film has been widely read as the first (surviving) example of a film using cross-cutting between two scenes happening at different places at the same time. This *appears* to take place after the robbery has occurred, where the bandits are making their getaway. The film cuts back to the telegraph office where the operator is now freed by his daughter. We then cut to a barn hall dance that is interrupted by the operator who raises the alarm. A posse is swiftly assembled and in the next scene is already, improbably, engaging the bandits in a gunfight. There appears to be some inexplicable ellipsis here if we want to retain the theory that the cutback to the operator is an early example of crosscutting. Fairservice suggests in fact that when we cut back to the train operator being freed and raising the alarm, this is not an example of "meanwhile" (i.e. taking place after the robbery) but instead, follows the literary narrative convention of running back to an earlier point in the story before it splits into two parts. The advantage of this is that it explains why when the operator has raised the alarm the posse catches up with the bandits immediately. In effect at the point where the bandits are robbing the train, the posse are on their way although the spectator only knows this later after the narrative has backtracked and run forward again.

Inevitably, given the large number of Griffith films that have survived, D.W. looms large in this history of early cinema. Fairservice is sensitive to contradictory formal strategies that Griffith's deployed. *The Lonedale Operator* (1911) for example mixes the 180-degree rule with its disruption. The latter are not mistakes, but have their own logic within the context of the action. Griffith both develops storytelling conventions that would become mainstays of Hollywood (analytical editing, cross-cutting) while also remaining committed to early cinema's "frontal presentation" (that is the mise en scene's awareness of the camera). Yet while Fairservice acknowledges this latter formal trait of early cinema, he does not probe it theoretically. Tom Gunning's well known work in this area makes no appearance in Fairservice's book. This seriously diminishes the extent to which this book can theorise alternative cinema strategies as opposed to simply record their empirical presence. Equally problematic is that this is largely an "internal" formal history of techniques, which despite its attention to the uneven development of early cinema, ultimately gives the impression that there is a teleological drive for these techniques to unfold into the classical narrative. A richer historical contextualisation would have countered this. For example, the hybrid nature of Griffith's work had something to do with his working practices: he never used a shooting script, even on his full-length features. But of course the shooting script was to become the key instrument by which, in an increasingly hierarchical industry dominated by capital, producers controlled and subordinated their director in the name of cost and quality control.

Fairservice does not of course just focus on Hollywood. He devotes a chapter to the revolutionary cinema of Soviet Union in the 1920s. Interestingly, here there is a richer historical contextualisation of the determinants on the filmmakers, but this serves only to reinforce the naturalisation of the classical narrative institutionalised by Hollywood as being somehow outside historical circumstances. And then there is that lack of theoretical depth noted above regarding the "frontality" of early cinema. Here this manifests itself in some of the taken-for granted assumption underpinning Fairservice's assessment of montage. If classical Hollywood editing is characterised by its seamless invisibility, then Soviet montage was characterised by a visible, perceptible emphasis and delight in the constructedness of editing. Tom Gunning finds an affinity between the frontality of early cinema and the self-reflexivity of the avant-garde. But Fairservice here retreats to a conventional British suspicion of formalism, modernism and experimentation, in favour of more intuitive, organic aesthetic criteria. On Eisenstein's Odessa Steps sequence Fairservice complains that it is: "too intellectualised: in the process it falls short of truth and consequently, greatness" (190). The problem is not with this assessment in itself (Fairservice is entitled to his opinion) but that it is expressed as if it were not itself a deeply constructed, socially derived (although now naturalised) value-judgement. Nevertheless, read with due care, this is a useful book, and ends with chapters on contemporary film and television practices, such as *Homicide: Life on the Streets*, which go beyond invisible editing.

Film Production Theory by Jean-Pierre Geuens is a much more critical assessment of dominant cinema. If Fairservice dislikes intellectualism and favours emotional engagement, for Geuens, it is precisely emotional engagement and the lack of intellectual distance that is the problem with contemporary Hollywood. For example, the visual kinetics of the steadicam has made sensory overload the norm. Geuens' irritation with the homogenisation of style in contemporary Hollywood is understandable, but the larger claims he makes, that the capacity of spectators to think is being sucked out of their experience and engagement with cinema, is more problematic. For Geuens there is much at stake. He takes cultural politics seriously and he wants to engage the aspirant filmmaker as an intellectual committed to their artistic responsibilities. But the terms by which he addresses the cultural worker are problematic. His main concern in the early chapters appears to be to speak to those who are cut out to be *artists* and not with the broader pedagogic possibilities of having practice on the curriculum. In discussing the responsibilities of the artist his reference point is Heidegger and his discussion of Van Gogh's painting of peasant shoes. Now, while this discussion is interesting, it seems a surprising reference point in relation to collectively made, technologically reproduced mass medium such as cinema. Why not Benjamin or Brecht, two modernists who understood well the relationship between film and modernity? Heidegger though is more congruent with Geuens's rather conventional and elitist notion of artistic creativity:

> The artist first works in the world, breathing, inhaling, absorbing the difficult material. After a moment, some strange forms appear, changed and reshaped by the artist's inner sensitivity. A transfiguration takes place. The artist is shaken. The work of art is now exhaled, opening up a space where viewers have momentary access to something not earlier part of their lives (47).

This individualistic and mysterious formulation of cultural labour is of a piece with Geuens's problematic homogenisation of dominant cinema as ideologically degraded, without any point of resistance, negation, contradiction or critique. Viewers, he tells us, "are comforted into accepting their lot" (40). Similarly, he offers an idealist history of post-war Hollywood in which he privileges the aesthetic over the political and economic. The rise of the

emotionalism of contemporary cinema is derived, he tells us, from the working through of the immanent logic of the counterculture demand for an art of sensual immediacy which by-passed intellectualism (16). In fact, the early 1970s saw the emergence of a slew of critical Hollywood films because of the political crisis generally and the economic crisis of Hollywood as a profitable industry. If there was an integration and amplification of one component of the counter-culture in New Hollywood by the end of the 1970s, it was because the political crisis had resolved itself in the rise of the New Right and the economic crisis of Hollywood had resolved itself in the rise of the carefully crafted, multi-audience addressed blockbuster.

Yet despite this initial, inauspicious theoretical foundation, Geuens' book blossoms dramatically and fruitfully in subsequent chapters, breaking with his earlier elitism and individualism. His critique of the American film school for example berates them for their unthinking adoption of industry standard working practices that encourage hierarchy, division of labour and competition amongst the students. Instead he calls for a collaborative ethos open to experiment and failure. In the absence of radical change within such films schools as UCLA and USC, he advises the students not to enrol but to teach themselves. Subsequent chapters are organised around the different components of the production process: writing, staging, lighting, the frame, sound and editing. In each chapter Geuens sketches the historical roots of current practices in these areas and critiques them. On writing he describes how the screenplay has become a commodity written with the sales pitch in mind: "Buttons are pushed every two minutes to keep the pace from ever languishing. Because today's writers do not concern themselves with the finished product, their souped-up screenplays are neither suggestive nor eloquent" (89). He relativises industry standard norms not only historically and from a wide range of theoretical sources, but also practically, invoking filmmaking internationally (although mostly from Europe) as alternative examples. In these chapters *Film Production Theory* provides a synthesis between history, theory and practical examples that is invaluable to the student engaged in film or video practice. Here the student will find the resources to think, reflect, make choices, be stimulated, create and experiment.

Gender, Politics and Communication

By Annabelle Sreberny and Liesbet Van Zoonen (eds.)
Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2000. ISBN 1-57273-242-3. ix + 348pp. £22.95 (pbk)

A review by Mike Chopra-Gant, University of North London, UK

The essays collected in this book deal with three interconnected questions concerning how different areas of political activity are represented as gendered in media discourses. The first two sections of the book take politics in its most literal sense and examine the representation of male and female politicians in both "serious" and popular media and the role of media in relation to women's movements respectively. The final section returns to the more personal aspect of the political, examining the articulation of the concerns of "ordinary" women in the media, particularly through the forum offered for these views by talk shows. The book's aim is to demarcate a relatively under-theorized cultural terrain bounded by the terms, gender, politics and communication.

The first two chapters examine media representations of the American presidency. Mary Ellen Brown and Darlaine C. Gardetto consider media constructions of Hillary Clinton's image, using detailed analysis of coverage of Clinton's testimony at the "Whitewater" hearings to argue that the role of "first lady" embodies a contradiction between public and private spheres, symbolising family and the private sphere, but also provided with a public role as the president's wife. These contradictions are amplified in Clinton's case because of her own public, political activities. The authors argue that the breach of the public/private divide implies the emergence of new social forms but is treated by the media as a choice between traditional roles. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen examines the construction of U.S. Presidents' masculinities, focusing on the campaign fought between George Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton in order to reveal the perpetuation of hegemonic concepts of masculinity within political discourses.

Karen Ross and Annabelle Sreberny examine media coverage of British politicians following the near doubling of the number of women MPs brought by the 1997 election of the Labour Government. Ross and Sreberny undertake a content analysis which asks "whether the British media portrayal of women politicians is substantially and determinedly different to male politicians" (81), and then move towards the "insider's view", exploring how women politicians manage their own media coverage. Finally, in this section of the book, Liesbet Van Zoonen considers the Dutch media's treatment of the effects on family life of the political lives of Dutch MPs.

The second section is concerned with the relationship between media and women's movements. In her contribution, Bernadette Barker-Plummer presents a case study of the media strategies of the *National Organization for Women*, and the results of those strategies between 1966 and 1980, achieving partial success but also producing coverage which reinforced a public/private division of social life. Leonor Camauër examines the publicist practices of the Swedish women's movement. The problems women's organizations

experience in gaining mainstream media coverage of the issues with which they have particular concern is most pointedly illustrated by Sonia Bathla's insightful analysis of the attention given to a range of women's issues by the mainstream Indian press. Bathla argues that the press has maintained a silence about these issues, which has contributed to the continuance of traditional, brahmanical patriarchal culture in modern India. In the final chapter in this section, Jana Kramer and Cheris Kramarae examine the potential of the Internet as a forum for debating issues concerning women. Kramer and Kramarae suggest that the Internet constitutes an alternative public sphere, and they conclude that although there are problems with utopian visions of the Internet, it nevertheless offers real possibilities for effective political organization.

The final section of the book is devoted to the relation between talk shows and women's politics. Elayne Rapping examines the four shows which, she argues, established the talk show as a genre; *Sally Jesse Raphael*, *Geraldo*, *Donahue* and *Oprah*. Rapping observes in these shows what other scholars have identified as a "therapeutic discourse" particularly associated with narratives of addiction and recovery. Rapping argues that by focusing on these issues, which had been politicized by feminists, but obscuring the political issues, talk shows operate to restore these issues to the private sphere. Andra Leurdijk offers two case studies examining representations of gender, race and multi-cultural society firstly in Oprah Winfrey's show and secondly in a series of Dutch audience discussion shows, concluding that a key difference is the presence in the Dutch shows of an assumption that all reasonable people reject racism. Paradoxically this operates in such a way as to forestall discussion of prejudices which lie beneath the appearance of racial tolerance. Minna Aslama analyses a popular early Finnish talk show, concluding that the conversational mode employed in the interview format accounts in part for the shows appeal to women viewers inviting a participatory mode of viewing. Finally, Limor Peer, examining U.S. talk radio, concludes that its potential as a democratic public sphere is unrealized, with few women hosts, a small female audience and limited discussion of women's issues.

Overall the work collected in this volume presents an exceptionally rich empirical picture of the interplay of gender, politics and media across a global range. While on the one hand the diversity of the essays collected here might be seen as emblematic of postmodern fragmentation, they are unified by the degree to which they reveal the persistence of a gendered public/private divide across the range of media cultures considered in this book.

Global Hollywood

By Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria and Richard Maxwell
London: BFI Publishing, 2001. ISBN 0-85170-845-5. 279pp. £15.99 (pbk)
At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World Edited by Esther C. M. Yau & Sanshô Dayû By Dudley Andrew and Carole Cavanaugh

At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World

Edited by Esther C. M. Yau

Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8166-3235-9. vxv + 342pp. £16.50 (pbk)

Sanshô Dayû

By Dudley Andrew and Carole Cavanaugh

London: BFI Publishing, 2000. ISBN 0-85170-541-3. 96pp. $12.95 (pbk)

A review by Rayna Denison, University of Nottingham, UK

What is happening to film in this multimedia capitalist conglomerate-driven age? That is the question that both *Global Hollywood* and *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World* are attempting to answer, albeit in disparate ways. Dudley Andrew and Carole Cavanaugh also deal with the issue of global identity in their recent book from the BFI Film Classics range on Kenji Mizoguchi's *Sansho Dayu* (*Sansho the Bailiff*). *Global Hollywood* attempts to explicate the dominance of the world's pre-eminent film industry: how it came to power and the mechanisms by which it remains the dominant force in creating a global cultural industry. *At Full Speed* on the other hand delves into Hong Kong film-making attempting to show how it functions, particularly in relation to Hollywood and Southeast Asian cinematic traditions. While the former makes frequently thought-provoking and occasionally shocking reading (Hollywood will apparently sink low indeed to remain powerful), *At Full Speed* is often more concerned to explain the brilliance of Hong Kong film-making than it is at pains to show how this national cinema performs in the borderless world of its title. Andrew and Cavanaugh's book takes a different tack than Esther Yau's in dealing with the Japanese film industry of the 1950s but it overcompensates somewhat for what is undeniably a great film, by overemphasising its importance in European culture. This inevitably leads them to play down its role in indigenous Japanese culture, but it remains a helpful introduction to what is a complicated film born of an even more complex period in Japanese history.

Providing a new incarnation of *Screen* studies, *Global Hollywood* reads Marxist *Screen* theory through a political economy analysis of film industries across the globe. Such terminology closely shadows recent discussions at *Screen* studies(see the Conference Reports section of *Scope*), but in this case it is actually political economy that shines, providing detailed investigations of a wide range of hitherto ignored topics relating to film. The multimedia conglomerates that swallowed Hollywood's studios provide the central focus of the discussions but the authors also bring in international trade bodies like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the GATT talks to untangle the power relations between Hollywood and the rest of the world. The Marxist inflection inspires much of the authors' desire to provide Hollywood's competitors with "fixes": with ways and means of resisting Hollywood's global imperialism. This is perhaps the least appealing aspect of *Global Hollywood* as it biases their approach necessitating a negative view of Hollywood from the outset.

Global Hollywood is however at pains to explore the idea of Hollywood itself: where is it, what is it and how does it and has it functioned? The authors determine early on (3) that Hollywood is where the New International Division of Cultural Labour (NICL) is, i.e. where its labour is situated. The NICL they claim has been designed to include "a variety of workers within the culture industries whatever their part in the commodity chain". In this way they include a definition of Hollywood with a far wider basis than found in many other discussions. The result of this definition is their focus on the industrial traces of Hollywood and its implications on the world stage not merely for the producers, directors and stars but also for "janitors, accountants, drivers and tourism commissioners as well as scriptwriters, best boys and radio announcers" (52). This inclusive view of Hollywood in turn creates in *Global Hollywood* a focus on empirical evidence. It is from the analysis of the facts and figures of the American film industry that this text backs up its inclusive claims, claims that lead to a more realistic implication of Hollywood's power at home and abroad.

Framing the majority of its discussions in terms of Hollywood industrial control of the NICL the authors delve deeply into the practices of Hollywood filmmaking diachronically both inside and beyond American borders. They are at their very best when challenging previous theoretical discussions of film, particularly those theoretical discourses failing to account for the industrial nature of Hollywood. For example, Chapter Five contains an assessment of Hollywood's marketing practices that undermines much of Justin Wyatt's earlier work in the field. By analysing the companies involved in the marketing of Hollywood and its products they are able to redefine marketing and to show that marketing functions on four levels: sales, advocacy (raising Hollywood's profile and acceptability), surveillance and reassurance. This is in contrast to the high concept approach taken by Wyatt, which forms only a small coda to the ramifications of marketing discussed in *Global Hollywood*.

The third of these marketing practices, surveillance, illuminates one of the darkest aspects of Hollywood's global profile, discussed at length in Chapter Six. They show how TiVo and Moviefone (the latter owned by AOL Time-Warner) for instance form spy networks that Hollywood studios use to surreptitiously monitor viewing habits: how much we spend, what we watch and in which formats, all without our knowledge or consent. Further discussions of Hollywood copyright practices (Chapter Four) and the industry's manipulation of the NICL in developing nations provide examples of Hollywood's industrial ruthlessness helping to justify their negative take on Hollywood. This is not to suggest however that *Global Hollywood* is fundamentally flawed in any way: rather it provides a refreshing new approach based on empirical analysis on a massive scale which (deservedly?) casts Hollywood in a bad light.

The professed desire in *Global Hollywood* for it to be relevant "to both popular and policy-driven discussions of films" is perhaps its weakest offering. It never examines how Hollywood films are actually used in different local contexts, or even how they are seen to perform in a transnational sense. This means that for the authors Hollywood is becoming a threat: a threat that must be curbed by state and international legal intervention if the onslaught of Hollywood's global cultural imperialism is to be resisted. This pessimistic analysis is perhaps not unwarranted in the light of the disturbing examples they unearth. However, if Hollywood were as all-powerful as *Global Hollywood* would have us believe, then the positive stance of *At Full Speed* would seem potentially ludicrous. Instead, it is possible that more positive movements within and aspects of Hollywood, such as co-productions with national cinemas and the distribution of "foreign" film titles undertaken by many of Hollywood's biggest studios belie the perceived threat of America's film industry as seen in *Global Hollywood*.

If cultural imperialism is the global cinema's greatest problem, *At Full Speed* offers examples of how Hollywood is not always getting things its own way. In the case of action particularly, *At Full Speed* shows Hollywood attempting to learn from its Hong Kong counterpart, borrowing techniques, talent and back catalogues of films from its industrial rival. David Bordwell's comparison between Hollywood and Hong Kong action stylistics and Stephen Fore's examination of Jackie Chan's career in particular sum up problems in debates around the "flow" of culture.

At Full Speed suffers from, if anything, a plethora of desires. It contains three sections, one on the Hong Kong New Wave, a second called "In Action: Entertainment, Aesthetics and Reinventions", and a final section covering, in the main, the vast expanses of nostalgia, dislocation and transnationalism. Of these the most coherent, and least relevant to the immediacy professed in its title, is the short section on Hong Kong's New Wave. While Hector Rodriguez performs an admirable reception account of what he terms Hong Kong's "film culture field", Law Kar's essay reads at times like a shopping list of New Wave films and filmmakers. Neither of these pieces really address the idea of modern Hong Kong cinema functioning beyond Hong Kong: Law Kar's attempts to link the New Wave of Hong Kong to industrial unrest in Europe for example provides little more than a superficial link. However, Kar is quick to note the import of televisual training of directors to the emergence of the New Wave and Rodriguez skilfully plots the links between emerging trends in film academia and the New Wave. These links provide some level of credence to later claims for a difference between Hong Kong cinematic style and that of Hollywood.

The other two sections of *At Full Speed* struggle to maintain coherent identities. In Section Two pieces on the action genre are mixed with others focussed elsewhere, for instance on women in Hong Kong filmmaking. The final chapter complicates notions of a national identity and nostalgia around the hand over of Hong Kong in 1997 with others about transnationalism and even homosexuality in Wong Kar-wai's films. These sometimes-odd juxtapositions are to an extent explained away in Esther C. M. Yau's introduction, but the lack of focus in the text as a whole reinforces a sense of Hong Kong in flux, a factor in Hong Kong film studies which *At Full Speed* is supposed to be addressing.

There are some truly impressive pieces hidden away in *At Full Speed* however. Bordwell's analysis of action sequences in Hong Kong cinema provides an excellent vantage point from which the terrain of Hong Kong action becomes accessible. Furthermore, Kwai-Cheung Lo's article titled "Transnationalization of the Local in Hong Kong Cinema of the 1990s" tackles

the question of where and what the Hong Kong film industry actually is and how it functions. The idea of the "local" is also problematised, not only in terms of the Hong Kong film industry but also where the local can be seen in its film texts. Kwai-Cheung Lo's article is probably the closest that *At Full Speed* comes to addressing the borderless world of its title.

While Andrew and Cavanaugh's *Sansho Dayu* focuses more simply on the contexts of this single Japanese film in doing so they often manage to provide a more coherent reckoning of the Japanese film industry than is provided for Hong Kong in *At Full Speed*. This is at one and the same time both the text's great strength and its weakness for they make obvious their external approach to *Sansho Dayu*. Thus the importance of *Sansho Dayu* becomes reliant on its success not domestically but in terms of the European festival circuit and in relation to the works of other Japanese filmmakers deemed worthy by the BFI (predictably Akira Kurosawa). This externality means that while *Sansho Dayu* provides a respectable introduction to both Mizoguchi and his film, it does not really add much to considerations of it in terms of an industrial rather than aesthetic creation.

Sansho Dayu the book is therefore preoccupied with the kinds of close textual readings traditionally favoured by film scholars, providing new students of Japanese film with a variety of aesthetics based approaches to the film text. It offers good literary contextualisation, in the form of Cavanaugh's tracing of the film back through to its literary foundation in the Confucian rewriting of the legend by Mori Ogai. Further to this Andrew succinctly positions *Sansho Dayu* in terms of auteur theory and its acceptance by contemporary European film theorists more generally. However, what this means that the book lacks is any sense of *Sansho Dayu* as a commercial product, one intended for trade not only indigenously, but also and perhaps primarily in Europe and beyond. As such the book provides a good jumping off point for analyses of *Sansho Dayu*, but by holding with traditional approaches to film it lacks somewhat in its ability to add to our understanding of Mizoguchi's film.

These three texts attack the problems of film, and the way that texts are created and disseminated in an increasingly globalised culture industry in insightful ways (even as far back as the 1950s), but to differing extents. *At Full Speed*'s preoccupation with explicating the nuances of Hong Kong cinema is perhaps the reason it appears less focused than *Global Hollywood*. Perhaps tellingly, it is at its strongest when addressing the ideas of where Hong Kong fits into this increasingly globalised world. *Sansho Dayu* too offers its most interesting insights when illustrating how this early Japanese film went "global" by its inclusion in international film festivals. *Global Hollywood*, which drips with data and analysis pertinent to the conception of a world-wide culture industry (or perhaps multiple transnational ones), is perhaps the more groundbreaking of the three however and may well set the standard for future *Screen* studies work. What it can not and does not do, however, is address the film texts created by America's massively powerful film industry, which factors provide the relative strengths of *At Full Speed* and *Sansho Dayu*.

Hollywood, Westerns and the 1930s: The Lost Trail

By Peter Stanfield
Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8598-9694-3. 27 illustrations, 258 pp. £18.99 (pbk)

A review by Ron Wilson, University of Kansas, USA

Peter Stanfield's subtitle, "The Lost Trail" refers to the previously unexplored scholarly territory of the "B" series western and the late thirties cycle of "A" studio westerns. More specifically it concerns a newly generated field in genre study that advocates the use of empirical research in its examination of peripheral texts. Stanfield argues in his introduction that much of the previous genre criticism on westerns has utilized as its meta-narrative the idea of the "frontier myth." The concept has its basis in the essay by Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," popularly known as the "Turner Thesis" that suggests that the American character was delineated and developed as a result of the progress through the various frontiers in American history. The frontier myth has perpetuated in film and literary scholarship by the likes of Jim Kitses, Will Wright, John Tuska, Richard Slotkin and others until it has become a definitive method of examining select texts that accommodate its primary function -- the significance of Western Expansion in the United States as the dominant myth. Stanfield's purpose is to re-orient critical studies towards a more historically grounded approach to genre.

In an essay called, "Is a Radical Genre Criticism Possible?" (first published in 1990) Alan Williams called for a new film genre studies rooted in "real historical integrity." He briefly outlined three aspects of this approach which would involve: "(1) starting with a genre's 'pre-history,' its roots in other media; (2) studying all films, regardless of perceived quality; and (3) going beyond film content to study advertising, the star system, studio policy, and so on in relation to the production of films." Peter Stanfield's book is an exemplary model of this approach to genre studies in its examination of the western genre and its historical and cultural contexts during the 1930s.

After a brief introduction in which he discusses the purpose and scope of his study as well as his dissatisfaction with previous genre studies of the western, Stanfield begins his examination with the westerns made in the early thirties during the transition to sound. This first cycle of westerns, covering the period from 1929-1931, is noted for its attempt to court a female audience through prestige product. Relying on exhibitors' trade journals and textual criticism of the films themselves, Stanfield concludes that this brief cycle ended as a result of both the Depression and the suspension of antitrust litigation.

The major studios returned to concentrating on the major metropolitan markets, rather than trying to appease rural and small-town markets with "outdoor dramas." This resulting void was filled by the independents with "B" westerns. It was in such an atmosphere that the series western and the singing cowboy originated.

Stanfield emphasizes the "pre-history" of the singing cowboy in Chapter Two. "A history of the singing cowboy," he states, "needs to look outside film and to take into account the co modification and exploitation of what was to become known as country music" (60). The author traces the roots of the singing cowboy in minstrelsy and the development of the yodel tradition made famous by such singers as Emmett Miller and Jimmie Rodgers. It was out of this tradition that Gene Autry emerged in the early 1930s, first as a recording artist and then as a radio artist. Termed "hillbilly" music, and then "folk" by *Billboard* magazine, the classification "Country and Western" was not coined until 1949. This change in classification was brought about as a means of ridding the previous nomenclatures of any pejorative and negative connotations. According to Stanfield the "history of the singing cowboy is intimately tied up in this process of making country music respectable and therefore marketable" (63). The model for the Autry cowboy was not the archetypal Owen Wister variety but rather, Will Rogers, Stanfield argues. Suggesting that this "homespun" type negotiated the transition from the agrarian past to the modern, Stanfield convincingly demonstrates that Autry's westerns provided the same narrative model. The cowboy, as exemplified by Autry's persona, "while still speaking to the rural ideal, offered himself up as flexible figure able to mediate between the old world and the world of modernity" (79). This is not the world of frontier myth, but of a contemporary rural west coping with unhistoricized problems.

Stanfield's examination of the cultural and social contexts, as well as the industrialized context of Republic Pictures is exceptional in both its analysis and scholarship.

Chapter Four, "Class-A Western Features" covers the period from 1935-1938 (Stanfield organizes his book chronologically through the decade). Renewed interest in Westerns, fed by the popularity of the Autry formula, caused the major studios to take notice and another cycle emerged between 1935 and 1937. Stanfield examines several A features including *Annie Oakley* (RKO, 1935), *The Plainsman* (Paramount, 1936) and *Ramona* (Fox 1937), which were marketed as historical melodramas set in the West, rather than Westerns, to differentiate their product from that of the independents. The studios marketed these films for a diverse audience, and one of the key factors in doing so was to emphasize romance, as part of the narrative. Many of these films utilized stars who were not solely associated with the Western genre (this is a point that Stanfield makes clear in regards to series western stars, such as Ken Maynard, Buck Jones, Gene Autry *et al*, who were firmly identified with the western, and made no attempts to move beyond it) such as Jean Arthur, Gary Cooper, Don Ameche, Loretta Young, and Barbara Stanwyck. According to Stanfield, "In keeping with their aim of pleasing a wide and diverse audience, Westerns produced in this period offer significant innovations in settings, character types and, in particular, the roles given to women" (146).

In his final two chapters Stanfield examines the westerns produced from 1939-41, primarily as allegorical texts that "spoke tacitly to contemporary tensions and concerns" in addressing both "internal and global conflicts" (147). In doing so Stanfield presents a refreshing and engaging critical commentary on such films as *Destry Rides Again*, *Jesse James*, *Virginia City*, *The Westerner*, and others. Peter Stanfield's book is a significant and important case study of a genre placed within an historical perspective and utilizing a combination of empirical studies with textual analysis. As the author states in his conclusion, "By shifting debate away from the overarching paradigm of the frontier myth, and by analysing Westerns from the perspective of their production and consumption contexts, I have offered a more historically grounded and culturally responsive understanding of the genre..." (225). It is

hoped that this will prove a useful model for further scholars to exam other genres in a like manner.

The Language of New Media

By Lev Manovich
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001. ISBN 0-262-13374-1. 68 illustrations, xxvii + 354pp. $34.95 (hbk
Visual Digital Culture: Surface Play and Spectacle in New Media Genres By Andrew Darley

Visual Digital Culture: Surface Play and Spectacle in New Media Genres

By Andrew Darley

Visual Digital Culture: Surface Play and Spectacle in New Media Genres

By Andrew Darley.

London: Routledge, 2000. ISBN 0-415-16555-5. 2 illustrations, x + 225 pp. $22.99 (pbk)

A review by Bob Rehak, Indiana University, USA

As new media takes on increasing definition as a discrete object of academic study, foundational books are appearing, books whose goal is to forth logics and vocabularies that will determine critical understandings of the computer's impact on cultural representation. The problematic nature of this project arises from what might be called the ontological undecidability of new media forms (everything from videogames and CGI filmmaking to full-motion simulator rides and virtual reality): do they constitute something new under the sun, a paradigmatic rupture in modes of representation and subjective experience? Or do they rather extend and transform existing relationships between text and audience, screen and spectator? Each choice seems to dictate a different set of critical models, forking paths labeled broadly (and perhaps crudely) by postmodern theories of simulation and the hyperreal on the one hand, modernism and formalism on the other.

Both *The Language of New Media* and *Visual Digital Culture* engage with this problem by emphasizing, to some extent, new media's historical continuity with preexisting forms. That is, neither Darley nor Manovich breaks entirely with the previous century of discourse on the cinematic apparatus, spectacle, the role of the subject /spectator, and the impact of technology on

representation and reception. At the same time, both emphasize the need to understand new media on its own terms, as an emergent form with its own tendencies and likely developmental paths. While the works differ in key aspects, they are united by a twin focus on mapping the *aesthetics* of new media (and thus a diminished interest in questions of political economy, audience analysis, and other investigatory models in the cultural studies tradition) and on the applicability of existing theory to these formal attributes. The conceptual picture that emerges from this hybrid approach is neither simplistic nor abstruse: indeed, the books' achievement is in bringing coherence to complexity without sacrificing either.

Both works are indebted to Jay David Bolter's and Richard Grusin's *Remediation* (1999), perhaps the first comprehensive attempt to describe new media as a genre with unique aesthetic markings. For Bolter and Grusin, new media are defined by a continual oscillation between transparent "immediacy" and opaque "hypermediacy," and by remediation itself -- a "complex kind of borrowing in which one medium is itself incorporated or represented in a new medium" (45). Manovich and Darley, each in their own way, build on the foundation laid by Bolter and Grusin (and Marshall McLuhan before them (and Walter Benjamin before him)), arguing that industrialized mechanical -- and now digital -- reproduction has profoundly altered the aesthetic form and phenomenal experience of media, foregrounding issues of multiplicity, seriality, and fluidity, to name only a few. Thus one condition of admittance into either of these works is agreement with a kind of hedged determinism: in examining texts and technologies in tandem, it is hard to deny that the hardware and software of image manipulation and display have favored the evolution of certain textual forms while discouraging others. The question of *which* formal attributes have emerged as defining traits of new media -- and the critical import of that emergence -- are where Manovich and Darley can most productively be read against each other.

The Language of New Media **opens in an unorthodox manner. A series of images -- still frames from Dziga Vertov's 1929 *Man with a Movie Camera* -- interspersed with single blocks of text form a prologue entitled "Vertov's Dataset," encapsulating Manovich's argument as well as his unusually straightforward, epigrammatic voice. For Manovich, the connections between early theorists of cinema (principally Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein) and contemporary modes of mediated experience are myriad and suggestive. Put bluntly, new media have codified the principles of montage into an aesthetic signature that is by turns irresistibly powerful and vapidly mundane. Alterations of reality made possible through film recording and editing carry over to digital image manipulation and creation; resequencing of time and compositing of space have become ubiquitous functions of user interface and software applications, as handy as the "cut" and "paste" commands or the "windows" of the graphical user interface. Just as the shift from print to**

electronic recording naturalized certain codes until they came to seem inevitable artifacts of the medium, so has the digital era condensed the visual language of its parent form, cinema: a progression in which "avant-garde aesthetic strategies came to be embedded in the commands and interface metaphors of computer software. In short, the avant-garde became materialized in a computer" (xxxi).

The book is characterized by such bold -- and often counterintuitive -- pronouncements. Not one to beat around the bush, Manovich paints his taxonomy of new media in broad, confident strokes, invoking theories of film, literature, and pictorial art with aplomb. He works outward from the base of computer hardware and software to the superstructure of cultural expression, examining the interface and applications through which digital images are produced, then the nature of these images themselves, and finally the conventions of form characterizing new media's surfaces (dense, fluid, and photorealistic) as well as its organizational logic (narrative's database-like structure and a tendency toward spatial exploration as governing metaphor for user experience). Principles of numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and "transcoding" -- the ultimate substitutability of cultural information once it has been digitally encoded -- are the fundamental ingredients of new media.

This sureness of touch, coupled with provocative and imaginative thinking, is bound to delight some and discomfit others. The former will see in the precision of metaphor a near-epiphanic clarity, a necessary tidying of new media's bewildering variety. The latter will resist an argument that seems, at times, too neat, a model so totalized that it makes sense only on its own terms. Finishing the book, one wonders where to go next, how to apply the framework Manovich has provided.

If Manovich flirts with incoherence at any point, it is in his analysis of artificiality versus realism and the political implications of seamless digital montage, an argument that raises important questions of epistemology and ideology in regard to new media, but fails to make a convincing case, relying as it does on metaphysical assumptions of a transcendent truth. This concern about new media's tendency toward dissimulation reappears, elaborated at greater length, in Darley's *Visual Digital Culture*. More cautious than Manovich but equally committed to exploring the emergent aesthetics of computer imaging, Darley argues that digital modes of production have given rise to a genre of representation that "endorses form over content, the ephemeral and superficial over permanence and depth, and the image itself over the image as referent" (81). Thus, new media present a heightened formalism, stressing sensational experience over contemplative depth, a trend epitomized in videogames and motion-simulator rides but present in such innocuous entertainments as Pixar's *Toy Story* films (82-88).

By contrast with Manovich (who begins by stating his formal laws, then illustrates them through example), Darley builds his case from the outside in, analyzing films, games, music videos, television advertisements, and immersive rides to determine their formal conventions. The particular aesthetic trends undergirding Darley's account of new media include realism, interactivity, and simulation; in early sections, *Visual Digital Culture* charts the historical emergence of these attributes in the field of computer gaming, special effects and digital cinema, and "special venue attractions" (31-36) such as Imax and motion simulators, setting up the later argument that contemporary visual culture is a kind of limit case in which surface, and play with surface, have become media's primary pleasures. Chapters on hyperrealism and simulation (81), the waning of narrative (102) and, especially, the anomalous quality of digital imagery (125) constitute Darley's most persuasive theoretical interventions, locating rules and tendencies that structure new media forms. (It is also in these sections that Darley comes closest to Manovich's aesthetic concerns, including a concern both authors share with new media's simultaneous privileging and troubling of montage.)

Darley's concerns with the problematic ontological status of the image and the impact of repetition on narrative are presented in rather muted and qualified terms. Rooting himself in the thought of Jean Baudrillard, Guy Debord, Umberto Eco, and Fredric Jameson, Darley reinscribes -- in his final chapters on spectators and spaces of consumption -- a particularly postmodern critique of reception in which "the spectator of the forms under consideration is more of a sensualist than a 'reader' or interpreter" (169). While this portrayal raises the crucial question of subject positioning and construction in new media genres (and to Darley's credit, care is taken to separate modes of viewing and participation that distinguish TV from, say, gaming), it seems unfortunate that the specter of the passive, feminized voluptuary -- the easily-sated image glutton, reminiscent of the comatose VR slaves in *The Matrix* -- arrives as part of the package.

***Visual Digital Culture* seems the more thorough and nuanced of the two books, taking into account a broader range of relevant critical and cultural theory. In addition, its attention to specific attributes of surface and form -- optical effects in films such as *The Abyss* and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, or the plotline and play of videogames like *Quake* and *Myst* -- leaves one with a clearer sense of how to recognize and conceptualize new media. (Manovich's more abstract terminology, of modularity and transcoding, for example, is inspiring but rather vague.) Both works, however, belong on the shelf of those working in contemporary media studies; each offers compelling insights for those involved in the history of film and television. Reconceptualizing both current media forms and the origins that gave rise to them, *The Language of New Media* and *Visual Digital Culture* bring welcome definition and direction to a vital and evolving discipline.**

Laughing Out Loud: Writing the Comedy-Centered Screenplay

By Andrew Horton
Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000. ISBN 0-520-22015-3. 232pp. £11.95 (pbk)

A review by Hsiao-Pin Chang, University of Nottingham, UK

This book basically positions as a textbook for people who are interested in writing a comedy screenplay, whether a stage comedy, film comedy, or a TV sit-com. The author, Andrew Horton, introduces the notion and meaning of comedy and provides a lot of useful skills for writing a comedy screenplay. It is a handy and interesting textbook for people who are inexperienced but want to try to write a comedy play. However, this book not only targets those potential comedy screenplay writers, but also focuses on the people who are curious about the history, definition, and various forms of comedy. I am going to draw upon the function of the book from the perspective of comedy as a genre rather than just as a textbook for writing a comedy, though this is one of the main purposes of the book.

For those people who have more interest in knowing comedy than writing it, Part Two and Three provide both the historical background and updated knowledge of comedy and explain the distinctions among different kinds of comedy, from stage to sound comedy, from anarchistic to romantic comedy. Horton also makes a detailed introduction of TV sit-com; he explores two American TV comedies, *Seinfeld* and *The Simpsons,* to show potential writers how to write a successful TV sit-com from the analysis of these two TV comedies. Meanwhile, Horton spends two chapters talking about the international film comedies and comedy in documentaries. He tries to give readers an overview of comedy writing. He examines the dialogues, jokes and the plots of comedy, and it gives readers a new vision to realise where the comic dynamic is. And because this book is designed for the potential screenwriters, all the terms and examples Horton uses are simple and practical, therefore, it is also an informative and useful book for people who have no idea about comedy.

In the book, Horton has articulated that stage and screen comedy can be seen as following two important roads: anarchistic and romantic (43). He considers that these two elements can apply in different forms of comedy, for instance, in a comedian-centered TV sit-com. Horton states that the main distinction between anarchistic and romantic comedy is that there are more social and political parodies in anarchistic comedy. On the other hand, romantic comedy focuses on the domestic more sharply than does anarchistic comedy (49). The focus of romantic comedy is on boy-girl relationships, particularly as related to the conflict between personal desire and family and social institutions (49). In Chapter Five, Horton explores the history of American screwball romantic comedy from the 1930s, from *It Happened One Night*, *Bringing Up Baby*, to *As Good As It Gets*. He organises the common points of these films: all the couples are from different social and family backgrounds, one or both of them are screwball, and it's all about the complexity of relationships between men and women. He

implies that there is not only a romantic rapport existing between the couple in the romantic comedy, but also the elements of screwball comedy which are silly and eccentric jokes between the couple make the comedy funnier and more laughable.

In Chapter Nine, "Feature Film Comedies", Horton categorises seven different sorts of film comedy, and he analyses a film in each category. Among these categories, the most interesting ones are: women and American comedy, race, politics and humor. In the first, Horton pays close attention to the women director, and he uses Penny Marshall's *A League of Their Own* as an example. In this section, Horton makes a tribute to film comediennes and women comedy directors, and he analyses the plots and screenplay of *A League of Their Own*. He believes the reason why this film was successful was because it managed to have its comedy both ways: the first half was often hilarious and very light and bright, often pure farce, but in the second half and particularly the last act the film had few laughs and a surprising number of tears, all wrapped in the banner of nostalgia and renewed sisterhood (111). In another section, Horton mentions the black director, Spike Lee, and his film *Get on the Bus*. In this category, Horton articulates that humor and comedy become important ways in which a minority group can discuss its situation, in relation both to dominant cultures and to its own people (111). *Get on the Bus* is a political road movie, it is about the identity, role and significance of the African American male in American culture today (112). Lee uses the dialogue among characters as the origin of laughter, though the issue itself is serious. The way Horton demonstrates these seven categories of film comedy is simple and clear, because he mentions a film in each category and it becomes much easier to read. It has enabled readers to have a clearer idea about (film) comedy.

Because this book is made for the people who would like to try screenwriting, Horton makes a really useful list of film comedies; not only Hollywood films, but also from other countries to suggest readers watch some of the classics. This is a clear approach to encourage readers to know and appreciate comedy. It not only benefits the readers who have the potential for becoming screenwriters but also the readers who have plenty of interest in film comedy but don't know where to start. Though this book is about comedy screenwriting, it actually has much wider uses.

Promised Lands: Cinema, Geography, Modernism

By Sam Rohdie
London: BFI, 2001, ISBN 0-85170-853-6. viii + 280 pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Josh Stenger, Wheaton College, MA, USA

From its inception, cinema has been concerned with and dependent on geographical space. Moreover, it emerged alongside competing modernist impulses that sought, alternately, to explode a sense of linear time through the arts and humanities, and to consolidate and master temporality (and to a lesser extent temporariness) through technological and scientific advances. The ability to record moving images, therefore, arrived at the modernist moment when apprehensions about space and time were rife, according to Sam Rohdie in *Promised Lands: Cinema, Geography, Modernism*. Noting that the "history of cinema belongs to modernism" (3), Rohdie is especially interested in the convergence of humanistic intellectual enterprise, scientific inquiry, artistic endeavors and philosophical debates that, together, framed both modernism and the birth of cinema.

The book begins with an account of the establishment of *Les Archives de la planète*, a sprawling collection of visual images that, aspiring to a kind of Borgesian comprehensiveness, aimed to provide a massive documentary record of our geography. Rohdie uses the Archives as both a springboard and an anchor since the collection so usefully illustrates the conjunction of cinema, geography and modernism that the book proposes to investigate. This conjunction, however, is not always as central as the book's title suggests. That is, while *Promised Lands* maintains a biding interest in each of these areas, (French) modernism is Rohdie's chief concern.

Rohdie himself notes that the three coordinates "are not exactly studied. They are traversed" (33), and indeed he wanders across a range of episodic ruminations in which cinema and geography function as prisms through which we might glimpse modern consciousness. With respect to cinema, Rohdie is less interested in individual films -- although these do garner some attention, especially works by Godard, Welles, Fellini, and Rossellini -- than with cinema as a medium that radically affected artistic, philosophical, and scientific senses of temporality and spatiality. Rohdie traces cinema's origins not only to Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey, but to Impressionist art. For Rohdie, Muybridge and Marey put specific technological apparatuses in the service of quasi-scientific pursuits and catalyzed the mechanics of motion picture production. At the same time, like Impressionism, cinema relied on its contemplation of shape, color, light and form to include the viewing subject as a "constituent of the image," giving rise to a "new optics that touched on psychologies of sight and thereby upon desire" (13). Rohdie is most interested in the French *nouvelle vague* and Italian neo-realism, movements which sought to amplify possibilities for interpretative and experiential indeterminacy.

As with cinema, Rohdie is drawn to geography insofar as it enacts and makes visible a number of modernist currents: the desire to record, demystify and ultimately colonize other spaces; the military-scientific imperative to codify and catalog the world; philosophical and artistic musings on the relationship between space and memory; and, of course, the intersection of geography with technologies of vision. Rohdie is less interested in specific spatial *topoi* so much as imagined, and imaginable, spaces -- geographies of desire, loneliness, modernism, and the like. He devotes special attention to the advent of *Géographie humaine*, a way of understanding geography as something produced not so much by nature as by the human communities that inhabit a landscape. Though never named as such, the *Géographie humaine* makes for an interesting precursor to more contemporary, Lefebvre-inspired approaches to the production of space, as well as to the general field of cultural geography.

Promised Lands is a timely work given the recent mutual interest between cinema studies and cultural geography. Each chapter is titled after a place-name whose connection to the chapter is not always extant. The thirteen chapters are further divided into shorter sections, and Rohdie uses these -- apropos of his interests -- to move frequently from place to place. The writing ranges from the meditative to the itinerant, combining critical insights into his declared interest with less immediately relevant personal memoir. There is something distinctly literary about the book; however, fragmented into so many tableaux, Rohdie's observations never quite cohere into a unified argument. At times, his focus shifts quickly, suggesting not the patient Impressionist portrait or Bazinian long-shot but a more peripatetic, postmodern collage. The book is neither unfocused nor short on substance, but it does require one to meet Rohdie on his own terms, and these are not always the terms of traditional academic forays into these areas. The book may disappoint those looking for a sustained discussion of cinema's intersections with geography and modernism. Rohdie himself seems aware of this, noting at one point that "[f]ilm history can… caus[e] other relations and other histories to fade or disappear" (31). Not wanting to reenact this, Rohdie's attention to film can occasionally seem haphazard, not because his observations are poorly formed, but because cinema is not the dominant framework of his analysis. As a text that is perhaps more comfortably situated in the broader field of visual studies than in film studies, however, Rohdie's book remains a useful resource for those interested in the relationship between visual culture and modernist conceptions of time, space, art and subjectivity.

Reel Knockouts: Violent Women in the Movies

By Martha McCaughey and Neal King (ed.)
Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001. ISBN 0-292-75251-2. i+279pp. $22.95 (pbk)

A review by Rebecca D. Feasey, Bath Spa University, UK

Reel Knockouts is assembled and sold as an edited collection of violent women in the movies. The contributors range from the assistant professor in the Department of Film, Television and Theatre Studies at the University of Notre Dame, assistant professor of Sociology at the University of California, an associate professor and chair of the English department at Ursinus College and an associate professor of women's studies in the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies at Virginia respectively. With this in mind then, *Reel Women* employs a diverse use of psychoanalytic theory, feminist discourses and cultural studies to explore the gender, violence, pleasure and fantasy of violent women in the movies.

The book is divided into two parts, the first of which offers a discussion of violent women in "Genre Films," the second of which takes issue with what is calls "New Bonds and New Communities." With the exception of Judith Halberstam's heartfelt yet harrowing research on "Imagined Violence/Queer Violence: Representations of Rage and Resistance," all of the essays in this volume are original works penned specifically for the *Reel Knockout* collection.

The section entitled "Genre Films" looks at violent women from the "Kung Fu" film, the "Women in Prison" cycle and "The Stripper" movie before devoting a chapter to the archetypal femme fatale in the shape of the Hollywood powerhouse Sharon Stone. "New Bonds and Communities" looks at an impressive range of femme fatales and fatale femmes from a diverse range of films including the high-budget *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), the low-budget *Blonde Justice* (1994), the virtually unknown *Set it Off* (1996) and the ever-popular *Thelma and Louise* (1991).

I applaud both McCaughey and King for this, the first book-length treatment of violent women in the movies. However, I am more than mildly curious as to who the editors are pitching the research at. In the introductory section, the author takes issue with the literature on violent women in the movies to review reasons for rejecting them as tools in feminist struggle. In so doing, they advised that: "readers unconcerned with academic debates might want to skip this discussion and begin the essays" (11). I am slightly perturbed by this somewhat dismissive statement as it seems to draw a clear line between those who study the cinema and those who merely have a cultural fascination with the medium, a distinction I find to be both unnecessary and unhelpful both within and beyond the academy. The fact that the book speaks in both a clear and coherent language makes the distinction between the academic reader and the supposedly unsophisticated film buff even more ludicrous. For example, in her discussion of the revolution of women in prison films, Suzanna Danuta Walters informs the reader that *Caged Heat* is a cult production in a way that would make studied post-modernist auteurs like David Lynch cream in their de rigueur black jeans (113).

I consider myself something of a theorist, but I can assure you that this is not run-of-the-mill academic commentary.

I nod in acknowledgement at much of the collection, and even find myself in agreement with selected essays such as Wendy Arons' discussion of violent women in the Hong Kong kung fu film and Laura Grindstaff's account of memory, haunting and revenge in the violent women's picture. However, I cannot help but question Susan Knobloch's analysis of Sharon Stone as what she terms, an anaesthetic. As an ardent fan of the actress in question, I am unable to agree that this actress who so powerfully embodies power and menace in contemporary Hollywood film is in fact admired when playing hapless victims of violent men in a violent society. I would argue that the viewing public likes to see Ms. Stone as the violent and violating killer woman, with the phenomenal box-office grossing of *Basic Instinct* (1992) as a case in point. Sharon Stone's star image was almost single-handedly constructed around her part in *Basic Instinct*, however, it was only the predatory femme fatale aspect of the character that took hold in the media sub-conscious. Since the phenomenal success of *Basic Instinct*, Stone has reprised this explicitly sexual and dangerous performance in erotic thriller after erotic thriller including *Sliver* (1993), *Diabolique* (1996), *The Specialist* (1994), and *The Lake* (2002).

Stone-esque diatribes aside however, *Reel Knockouts* is an important contribution to the field of film, media and gender studies and will be essential reading for academics, film students and those with an interest in contemporary screen violence.

Saints and Avengers: British Adventure Series of the 1960s

By James Chapman
London: I.B. Tauris Publishing, 2002. ISBN 1-86064-754-5. 22 illustrations, xiii+282pp. £14.95 (pbk)

A review by Lincoln Geraghty, University of Nottingham, UK

James Chapman's introduction to *Saints and Avengers* ends with the words: "The adventure series has for too long been ridiculed by television critics; it is time to redress the balance" (15). The following ten chapters are a fine example of such a reassessment, entertainingly and accurately giving life to a decade of television that has often been ignored by academics and television aficionados. Chapman's work is a meticulously detailed account of the British Adventure serial; starting from the not so renowned *Danger Man* he charts the development of the television private detective through a decade which saw an immense output of British creative talent. He takes each series as the basis for a chapter, analysing its impact and detailing how it portrayed crime fighting within a Cold War cultural and political context. Often comparing the series to the literary adventure stories of the day such as Ian Fleming's James Bond, Chapman describes how the adventures of John Steed, Simon Templar, *et al*. played a significant role in the construction of a distinctive British identity that could be exported to American television.

As well as putting popular series like *The Avengers* and *The Saint* in new contexts, the book takes other series such as *Danger Man*, *Adam Adamant Lives!*, *Man in a Suitcase*, *The Champions*, *Department S*, *Jason King*, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, and *The Persuaders!* and gives them the attention that has been lacking. Such "cult" texts need to be looked at since they are arguably Britain's best example of competing with the American market. One could rightly say that America has never matched the impact and style of the Bond movies, but as for television, American adventure series have dominated with examples such as *Mission: Impossible* and *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*. Not only is Chapman trying to redress the balance academically but he is also trying to do it nationally. We are swamped with American television everyday; American TV icons are imbedded in our own national psyche. Would a British teenager today be able to pick out Buffy or Homer Simpson from a police line-up? I think so. Doctor Who or Alf Garnet. Perhaps not? However, by re-evaluating the British series of the sixties Chapman is showing us that it has not always been that way. Thanks to the vision of Lew Grade and the tenacity of the writers, British adventure serials tempted millions of viewers to turn on and watch, not least because they offered a sense of dramatic escapism from daily life. As the decade wore on the serial became less "realistic," as in the case of *Danger Man* which remained in the narrative realms of gritty crime drama and international espionage, but rather more "fantastic" as episodes of *The Avengers* famously demonstrate.

One of the most interesting themes to come from the analysis of the adventure series is how they are indelibly linked to the James Bond mystique. Both the literary and movie versions of Bond seem to have had an important and imperious influence over the creation and development of the main protagonists in the adventure series. If being unintentionally based on Bond the actors playing John Drake and John Steed, Patrick McGoohan and Patrick Macnee, intentionally played their characters so as not to be like Bond. They did not want to replicate the violence and womanising but rather emphasise the honour, duty, and chivalry which belonged to an "earlier generation of gentleman heroes" (25). Either way, it is an interesting point that the image of James Bond was a defining factor in the development of the British television detective. It is all the more intriguing that although the Bond ethos was at the heart of many of the series, few managed to catch on in America even as the Bond films were turning over huge profits across the Atlantic. This trend is in no small part due to the fact that they represent something so uniquely British that American TV audiences just did not understand where their stories were coming from. Perhaps only when their episodes were beyond absurd, to the point of fantasy pastiche as seen in *The Avengers*, did overseas audiences like what they were watching.

Saints and Avengers can be seen as a thorough follow-up to Chapman's earlier *Licence to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films* (1999), both books offering new debates and new analyses of often overlooked forms of British media. It would be interesting to see how he might fare in producing a work centred on those series that he regularly mentioned but did not expand upon -- the American adventure series. How would British private detectives compare to the likes of Magnum or Michael Knight? Probably quite well, judging by the cult status Chapman's heroes have acquired since the sixties. I for one would like to see a rematch.

Savage Theory: Cinema as Modern Magic

By Rachel O. Moore
Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999. ISBN 0-8233-2388-5. 3 illustrations, x + 200 pp. £13.95 (pbk)

A review by Jeff Power, University of Western Sydney, Australia

As I am writing this review some Fundamentalist Christian schools are urging students not to view *Harry Potter* because of its magical influences. There is a great irony in this as if Rachel Moore is right then it's the very institution of the cinema that propagates magic far more then any one film.

Savage Theory effectively theorises what we all know tacitly: what happens in the cinema is indeed an experience of magic. In a highly abbreviated definition drawn from Marcel Mauss magic is defined as simply "doing something". In a way all film theory is an attempt to explain the magic or what it is that is done to us in the cinema. Moore's exploration of magic within the context of primitivism/s is done in such a way as to convincingly provide an alternative to current theories. This work also opens up fertile grounds for more research.

In the introduction her use of the word magic as a form of film theory is explained. As she states it contains three main theses: "[1] to rearticulate the primitive beliefs already present in early film theory. [2] to encourage the analogy between ritual and cinema and [3] that the film image is an eminently modern, magical fetish" (6).

She returns to early film theorists in order to gain a fresh perspective on the impact of cinema before it became part of the social furniture. Unfamiliar facets of familiar theorists such as Eisenstein, Lindsay, Balaz, Epstein, Kracauer, Benjamin and Bazin, are drawn together to highlight the large debt to forms of Primitivism. Another fascinating and consistent concern for early film theorists was as Moore states, "the way modern language was seen as an impoverished expressive form whose arbitrariness and imprecision could be overcome by the moving picture" (7). From our perspective this sort of hope can appear as grandiose yet as the book unfolded I was struck afresh at how paradoxically the impact of the moving image is enormous, yet still so difficult to adequately comprehend.

The consequences of Modernity have been heavily theorized and yet Moore's gift is to synthesize and draw out important strands within the space of a few pages. The cinema emerges as part of the problem of modernity and its "affective scarcity" and almost as an attempt to heal itself. The audience's fascination with the cinema proved fascinating to early theorists and Moore uses the images of first contact between the savage and the civilized as a model: "Through the contrivance of primitives eyes we see the marvel of technology's recent past… technology makes the primitive and at the same time, the primitive makes technology magical" (50).

The cinema shares much in common with magic in that it brings life to the otherwise inanimate object. The images of the object stand as powerful modern fetishes. In this she draws from Marx and his notion of the commodity fetish and uses Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising* as an example "wherein the commodity itself almost narrates the film" (76). Bresson's *L'Argent* is explored in detail and in light of the carefully woven argument reveals itself as Phantasmagoria, a strange play of animated objects shimmering with layers of meaning. It's this ability to read film in new and often startling ways that makes this work stand out as a significant move forward. Another work that is analyzed in depth is 1971 film *nostalgia* by the American artist and writer Hollis Frampton. The film, a fascinating document of the transition from photographer to filmmaker, is especially clarified through the notion of the "redemptive power of film" present in Benjamin and Kracaeur. As Moore states, "The abiding modern disease was the waning of experience, the loss of felt time and the ascent of representation, or mediated experience. In rescuing the experience of temporality, Framptom uses the cinema as a form of magical healing" (142). My only complaint is that when she refers to the project of Psychoanalysis she stays only with Freud and passes over Jung whose work was far more engaged with the image and far closer to the early film theorists.

This is a complex, deftly argued text that crosses many theoretical boundaries. It is not recommended for the beginning student but rather rewards the advanced reader. Finishing the work I was struck by Moore's intense and intimate engagement with early theorists and pondered how this seemed to reflect something more than academic curiosity. In a way she has opened a space for the restoring of magic to a place in which it had almost been lost.

Science Fiction Film

By J. P. Telotte
New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-521-59647-5. xiv + 254pp. £14.95 (pbk), £40.00 (hbk)

A review by Lincoln Geraghty, University of Nottingham, UK

In a year such as 2002 that saw varying types of science fiction film such as Lucas' *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones*, M. Night Shyamalan's *Signs*, and Spielberg's *Minority Report* hit the top of the box office charts, it is little wonder that few of us can really put our fingers on what defines a science fiction film. Whether it is an epic space opera, extra-terrestrial life, a dystopian view of the future or even menacing cyborgs brought to life in the infamous *Terminator* duology (1984 & 1991), science fiction above all else represents an "estrangement from reality" (4) coupled with an overwhelming sense of wonder. To define the science fiction film genre means that not only does one have to take into account the multitude of iconographic conventions associated with science fiction's sense of wonder but they also have to look at its literary roots as far back as Greek myth and legend up to Wells, Verne, and the Pulps in order to fully grasp the sort of storytelling involved. Once beyond a survey of fantastic literature it would be beneficial to look at other popular genres of cinema such as the horror or the western to identify similar characteristics that have made these genres so long-lasting and successful. In *Science Fiction Film* J.P. Telotte not only manages to condense these sorts of historical and cultural investigations into one volume but he also manages to offer in-depth readings of four popular films to illustrate the differences within the boundaries of the genre and how most science fiction films cross between and through those boundaries to provide quality cinematic entertainment.

As part of the Cambridge "Genres in American Cinema" series the book offers chapters on trying to define science fiction as a genre; a critical survey of methods used to analyse science fiction film; a history of its antecedents including literature and film; and finally four chapters devoted to specific examples of what constitutes science fiction focusing on *THX 1138* (1971), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), *RoboCop* (1987), and *The Fly* (1986). As one would expect, there is a lot of ground to cover in just one book but Telotte handles his task well and succeeds not only in providing a thorough and comprehensive overview of an overlooked genre but he also manages to provide a book that does not patronise readers, be they new students to the field or die-hard science fiction fans.

Very much at the heart of the analysis is the idea of boundaries and the hybrid nature of science fiction, in particular the constant overlapping with genres such as horror. From the outset Telotte explains the process of "differentiation" (8) -- the method of identifying what to include and exclude when trying to define the genre -- and takes this as the stepping stone to further investigation in the introductory chapter entitled the "The World of Science Fiction Film." It is here that we are introduced to ideas of formal structure, crossing boundaries, science fiction as fantasy, and special effects. From there Telotte moves onto the various types of formal analyses that critics can use to interpret and extrapolate the hidden meanings

of SF film. He starts with the humanist approach followed by Susan Sontag's "The Imagination of Disaster" (1966) which views SF as primarily about disaster and the satisfaction audiences get from seeing their anxieties manifested in giant monsters and allayed when humans fight back (38-40). Further methods of film study include ideological criticism, psychoanalysis, feminism, and postmodernism.

Telotte devotes much of his book to Tzvetan Todorov's theories about the fantastic, matching his categories of fantasy with three subgroups that Telotte sees as the main, "catchall," areas that help to define science fiction films: films of the "marvellous" covering aliens and space exploration; the "fantastic" addressing issues raised by films that confront technology's tenuous relationship with society, both within a utopian or dystopian past, present, or future; and lastly the "uncanny" which deals with the subject of the body and its transformation seen in robot and android driven stories (10-16). To be science fiction a film must fit with one of these categories, most SF films feature characteristics from all three which highlights science fiction's porous nature and appropriately leads the reader onto Telotte's final section concerning the four feature films.

Telotte brings refreshing insight into the four films discussed; his work on the "uncanny" text of *RoboCop* is both original and perceptive in emphasising the film's "doubling" and "special causality" motifs (166). *The Fly* perfectly underlines the crossing of boundaries important to SF as a genre and how important it is to both discriminate between them and consider the generic ground they have in common.

The films discussed in the final section are not unique examples of Telotte's three subcategories of the fantastic. For example, he could have chosen four films such as *Logan's Run* (1976), *E.T.* (1982), *The Terminator*, and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) to name just a few that would have been acceptable. However, his choice exemplifies how much science fiction film as a genre has to offer American cinema studies and how important a text such as *Science Fiction Film* is to students and academics alike.

The Seeing Century: Film, Vision, and Identity

By Wendy Everett (ed.)
Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000. ISBN 90-420-1494-9. 210pp. $21.00 (pbk)

A review by Rebecca Amato, City University of New York, USA

Arguably the most dubious feature of Cinema Studies has always been its interdisciplinarity. When American institutions of higher learning began creating specialized departments of film and cinema studies thirty years ago, those fledgling creatures -- Frankenstein-like with their faculties composed of literary critics, art historians, and film practitioners -- wobbled into academia with a scattered sense of purpose and uncertainty about their legitimacy. *The Seeing Century: Film, Vision, and Identity* is a perfect testament to the still wavering ability of film theorists to make their critical writing self-evident in its utility, immediate in its impact, and lucid in its meaning. With an equal number of smart, thought-provoking essays and opaque, sticky ones feeding off a smorgasbord of circular logics, *The Seeing Century* is a worthwhile read not only for the five or six fantastic, intelligent essays, but also as an artifact of the state of Cinema Studies shortly after its first quarter-century of existence.

The book opens with an elegant essay by editor Wendy Everett outlining the foundations of her project. In a very Foucauldian manner, Everett offers the suggestion that the essays be read "not only in relation to each other, but also within a wider critical context… they do vividly capture a moment of perception, or rather, a whole range of such moments, reflecting the diverse viewpoints, cultural backgrounds, disciplines, and research agendas of the authors" (1). Presumably asking the reader to be as much an anthropologist of these essays as a student, Everett goes on to describe the three thematic groupings of the books: "(De)constructing history: memory, language, and identity;" "Imaging the self: personal and national identities;" and, "Gendered Visions: Sexuality, Identity, and Representation." Each theme explores how cinematic spectators both read the meta-narratives of their nationalities, sexualities, genders, and histories as they are represented in film and how spectators formulate their own, personalized narratives in relation to these representations.

The book's motive works at its best when linking film directors' own visions with their finished products or when the films are contextualized within the histories of their nations of origin. Peter Wagstaff's "The Dark Side of Utopia: Word, Image, and Memory in Georges Perec's *Recits d'Ellis Island histories d'errance et d'espoir*" beautifully analyzes Perec's personal history as the orphaned child of Holocaust victims and his desire to therapeutically construct an alternative history to his own by narrating the journey of European immigrants to the United States. Framing Perec's own work is Wagstaff's thoughtful invocation of Roland Barthes, a theorist who, like Perec, meditates upon memory and the photographic image. As Wagstaff explains, "Seeking, after his [Barthes'] mother's death, a photograph that will enshrine for him the truth of her existence… he nonetheless cannot evade the traumatic realization that 'in front of the photograph of my mother as a child, I tell myself: she is going

to die.' The death of the mother is a theme to which Perec, too, feels impelled to return more or less obliquely, throughout his work" (41-42). In this way, the essay makes a strong case for the reliance of identity upon the cinematic image, both as a salutary re-imagining of one's history and as a means of fictionalizing it.

Maria Cami-Vela's work "From 'Reespanolear' to 'Europeizar': The Subversion of Francoist Mythology in *La Flor de mi secreto* (*The Flower of My Secret*) of Pedro Almodovar" also posits how cinema allows directors and spectators to question their identities, only this time in relation to nationhood. Constructing foils between traditional Spanish icons, which Almodovar rejects, and a multicultural, open-ended vision of Spain's future, the film offers an unconventional national mythology, one which preserves the uniqueness of Spanish identity without essentializing it within old ideals of sacrificing women, militaristic men, and the "mythical Castille" (115). Cami-Vela's simple ability to place Almodovar at the center of a debate about nationhood within post-Franco, Spanish cinema and her careful analysis of how *La Flor de mi secreto* uniquely articulates the debate is the strength of the essay. Identity and its cinematic representation are clearly at the center of her inquiry and her conclusions follow-through with a direct, provocative impact.

The least convincing and perhaps most forehead-against-the-wall aggravating essays are those that constantly reference Freud -- even if the connection is tenuous -- as if he were the only legitimate arbiter of all things related to identity. Thus, as the book moves on from its empowering introduction, the essays begin to teem with allusions to "Freud's Wolf-Man," "the narcissistic overvaluation of thought," and "Oedipal dramas." Lorna Fitzsimmons' contribution "Of 'Broken Wall, the Burning Roof and Tower': Gyno-Turning in *Limit Up* and Svankmajer's *Faust*" is a perfect example of this riveted need for psychoanalysis. In describing Nike, the "devilish" incarnation in *Limit Up*, Fitzsimmons writes, "Nike is cast in the role of the phallic mother from whom Freud concludes the girl expects to receive a penis during the phallic stage before turning away resentfully in favor of what the father can offer, thereby maturing from a desire to have a penis to that of wanting a child" (150). One wonders how many spectators of this film were more struck by Nike's "phallic motherhood" than the fact that Danitra Vance, the first African-American cast member of *Saturday Night Live* and therefore a powerful black female role model, was playing her? Similarly, in Raya Morag's "Life-Taker, Heart-Breaker": Mask-ulinity and/or Femininity in *Full Metal Jacket*," the suggestion that the marines' spontaneous singing of the "Mickey Mouse Song" after murdering an enemy sniper is "an obvious and ironic expression of their fatherless state" (193). As Morag establishes earlier, of course, this female sniper becomes a stand-in for their "demasculating" father-figure, Sergeant Hartman, because of her "castrating" defeat of the soldiers. What of the fact that the marines are all adolescents and that the "Mickey Mouse Song" is a sad reminder to spectators of these young men's arrested development? What of the dissonance between the murder of a woman and the soldiers' stated moral imperative of protecting the "American way of life," which includes the lives of their own female relatives? Such explorations into the text might yield richer, more challenging conclusions about identity and film than reductive castration anxiety theories do.

The Seeing Century is, indeed, a worthwhile read and the goals Everett sets forth in her introduction are well worth consideration even if some of the book's essays do a questionable job at meeting them. And for scholars interested in tracing the genealogy of Cinema Studies, it is a fine example of how far the field has come and how much fascinating ground it has left to cover.

Thelma & Louise

By Marita Sturken
London: BFI, 2000. ISBN 0-85170-809-9. 96pp. £8.99 (pbk)
The New Avengers: Feminism, Femininity, and the Rape-Revenge Cycle By Jacinda Read

The New Avengers: Feminism, Femininity, and the Rape-Revenge Cycle

By Jacinda Read

Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-7190-5905-4. 304pp. £14.99 (pbk)

A review by Claire Sisco King, Indiana University, USA

Three men watch a surveillance videotape of a woman robbing a gas station at gunpoint. The woman, framed in black and white on a small television monitor, handles the robbery with grace, ease, and a certain politeness. The men react to the scene with shock and disbelief, each awestruck by the sight of a woman with a gun. As such, the position of these men, characters in Ridley Scott's film *Thelma & Louise* (1991), mirrors the incredulity and astonishment expressed by many in response to Scott's controversial film itself.

This fascination with the relationship between women and violence is the object of study for two recent publications: *Thelma & Louise* by Marita Sturken and *The New Avengers: Feminism, Femininity, and the Rape-Revenge Cycle* by Jacinda Read. Both books investigate the relationship between feminism, popular culture, and representations of violence, and Scott's 1991 film and the controversies surrounding its release are central in both analyses. However, Sturken and Read make significantly different arguments about the film.

Regarding *Thelma & Louise*, Sturken asks, "What was it about this film that so cogently tapped into public fears and desires, that appealed to so many people as the film they had been waiting for, and that was so vehemently dismissed as misguided if not dangerous by others?" (9). To answer this question, Sturken's analysis largely works to position *Thelma & Louise* generically, focusing on the film's inversion of typically male-centered narrative structures.

Specifically, Sturken argues that *Thelma & Louise* is marked by a "hybrid genre status…from screwball comedy to buddy movie to road movie to outlaw movie" (23). For example, comparing the film to *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), Sturken notes that as women the characters of Thelma and Louise "recall and then rescript many iconic heroes of American cinema" (23). Moreover, Sturken suggests that *Thelma and Louise*'s cross-country

car chase allows them to disrupt spaces traditionally coded as masculine: the American west and the road.

Sturken's detailed analysis of *Thelma & Louise* in regard to larger generic conventions is useful, especially for readers new to the field of film studies. However, the decision to focus so largely on the film's generic status seems to cast Sturken's discussion of *Thelma & Louise* almost solely in terms of male representations, leaving little room to discuss the film's relationship to other onscreen representations of women and violence. The result is an underdeveloped discussion of the film in the context of other female-centered films and its own historical moment.

For example, Sturken forecloses possibilities of discussing *Thelma & Louise* in terms of rape-revenge narratives by categorically asserting that the film is not a "female revenge film" (65). Rather, Sturken argues *Thelma & Louise* is more "a story of bad luck, impulsive action and the consequences of violence" (65). Her decision to make such a claim seems motivated by her assumption that female revenge films always "demonise or destroy" their central female characters (65). Sturken suggests that Scott's film should not be considered a revenge film, a genre she calls "not very friendly to female characters" (65), because of its empowering representations of women. Such an assumption is reductive, however, assuming that no feminist discourse exists within the female revenge genre and never considering texts in which female revenge is constructed as empowering for women.

In contrast to Sturken's approach, Jacinda Read's text *The New Avengers* attempts to reposition rape-revenge films as constructed historically rather than generically. She argues that "rape-revenge is best understood not as a genre, but as a narrative structure, which has been mapped on to and across not only a whole range of genres, but a whole range of historical and discursive contexts" (25).

Additionally, Read positions rape-revenge films as "an active attempt to make sense of" the cultural climate of the late 1980s and early 1990s, particularly in regard to feminism and the discourses of the New Right (32). She argues that these films attempt to negotiate the contradictions and disjunctions between popular constructions of "the feminine" and "the feminist" and to "produce popularly available and accessible versions of feminism" (7).

Read's recasting of rape-revenge as a narrative cycle, not confined by generic boundaries, is a persuasive argument. Moreover, her attempt to fully explore rape-revenge films, rather than subsuming them within larger filmic frameworks, is laudable. However, many of the films central to Read's analysis raise questions about rape-revenge that the text does not sufficiently engage.

For example, some of the films Read analyzes explicitly feature violence against women but only *imply* that rape has occurred, choosing not to represent the assault onscreen. For example, as Read notes, in *Sleeping with the Enemy* "rape is replaced by a more generalized domestic violence" (69). Likewise, in *Thelma & Louise*, though we see Thelma's attempted rape, Louise's previous rape in Texas is only alluded to. Other films analyzed by Read depict male violence against women without ever making the suggestion of rape or sexual assault. For example, *The Quick and the Dead* "does away with rape…and leaves only the figure of the vengeful woman" (140), and in *The Last Seduction* a woman avenges a man who has violently wronged her, though rape does not motivate her revenge.

As the "first full-length study of the rape-revenge film," and as a text interested in the various transformations and translations of this narrative structure, *The New Avengers* does little to address the displacement of rape within this cycle of films. This book never sufficiently asks *what happens to rape* in the rape-revenge film, *why* rape is "done away with," *why* rape is pushed off screen, nor what this fact says about feminism, women, and violence in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Theories of the New Media: A Historical Perspective

By John Thornton Caldwell (ed.)
London: The Athlone Press, 2000. ISBN 0-485-30091-5. 331 pp. £17.99 (hbk)

A review by Herman Wasserman, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa

Those avid cyber surfers who, upon reading the title of this book, had expected a new venture into the largely uncharted ocean of internet or cybertheory, might be a bit disappointed.

Instead of only analysing the latest developments in electronic media and, as is usually the case, predicting future trends, this book in many ways looks back rather than forward. By collecting fifteen (counting the introduction) chapters on media ranging from television and cinema to computer games and the internet, *Theories of the New Media* attempts to show, firstly, that contemporary theories about cyberspace and digital technologies should take cognisance of work done in film and television studies in order to be able to gain a better understanding of the questions facing them. Secondly, the book's kaleidoscopic focus is a warning against homogenizing "new media" or allowing it to be colonized by whatever the latest technological advance might be.

On the first issue -- the necessity for an historic consciousness in analysing new media -- Caldwell is acerbic in his rebuke of those he describes as "digerati" taking part in a "digital landrush":

> No longer a proprietary province restricted to enlightened, prophetic intellectuals like Lewis Mumford, Jacques Ellul, and Neil Postman, one is as likely to find critical anxieties, not just in the digerati's *Wired*, but in rather mundane places like the *L.A. Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the Sci-Fi Network, the Discovery Channel, and (at the top of the aesthetic pantheon), syndicated reality programs like *Access Hollywood* (2).

His disdain for the articulations of popular culture (a disdain that should prove problematic when dealing with the chaotic, hyper-democratic medium of the Internet) about electronic media, is based on his contention that these articulations "tend to look past an entire tradition of insights about electronic media in film and television studies":

> Although the digerati tend to presuppose novelty in framing fundamental critical questions, many of their chosen problems have churned historically through research and accounts of radio, television, cable, video art, and motion pictures. The master-paradigm of novelty does effectively drive editorial policy on the digital. Yet the historical amnesia that novelty presupposes serves few who care to adequately understand the social and cultural logics of new media (2).

Regarding the heterogeneity that any investigation into new media should account for, Caldwell states as follows:

> To give up notions of comparative, cross-institutional, and cross-cultural critical engagement because digital media is pitched commercially as unified and total is to acquiesce to the very cult of the new that fuels the consumer electronics industry. This book attempts to question such a unity, by highlighting a schema of reilient discursive and intellectual markers (3).

To this aim, then, of problematising the unity of technodiscourse, the book is divided into four sections. The first section, titled "Theorizing Technohistory: Old Media/New Media", contains contributions by Raymond Williams, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Brian Winston and Bill Nichols and can be seen as reactions to the McLuhan legacy about a global information society (17). In the second section of the book, "Producing Technoculture", the focus is on how this information revolution heralded by McLuhan articulates with class, economics and politics. It contains chapters by Arthur Kroker and Michael A. Weinstein, Vivian Sobchack and Allucquere Rosanne Stone. The way audiences react to and consume new media, thereby constructing identities and reproducing or refiguring power relations, is the central theme of the section titled "Consuming Technoculture", with chapters by Ien Ang, Cynthia Cockburn, Helen Cunningham and Ellen Seiter. The final section of the book is described by Caldwell as being about "resistant media practices" (25) that engage with boundaries and take up issues of identity. It is in this section especially that the Internet is dealt with, although the previous section closed with Ellen Seiter's chapter on television and the internet, in which she approaches the internet from a gender perspective. In this last section, hacking (Andrew Ross), cybercommunities in India (Ravi Sundaram) and the undermining of binaries by means of cultural hybridity on the Internet (Guillermo Gómez-Pena) are discussed.

The Internet therefore does get its fair share of analysis, albeit mostly from the point of view of resistance and counterhegemonic discourses. It is unfortunate, though, that more developmental perspectives were not included in the book. The impact that the so-called Digital Divide has on countries in Africa, for instance, is more important than to be dismissed as a "guilty afterthought" (26) of intellectual endeavours. However, Caldwell's collection provides some unconventional and challenging new perspectives, and the book's emphasis on a historical foundation for the development of theories about emerging media forms is a cautionary note that deserves attention, giving to which the embarrassment that hasty predictions about technoculture so often give rise.

Violence and American Cinema

By J. David Slocum (ed.)
New York, NY: Routledge, 2001. ISBN 0-415-92810-9. viii + 311 pp. £13.99 (pbk)
The Tarantinian Ethics By Fred Bottling and Scott Wilson

The Tarantinian Ethics

By Fred Bottling and Scott Wilson

London: Sage Publications, 2001. ISBN 0-7619-6837-7. 192pp. £50.83 (hbk)

A review by Todd Onderdonk, University of Texas at Austin, USA

In the midst of a resurgent public clamour over violence in the media, two new books attempt to bring a keener scholarly focus to the issue of American cinematic violence: J. David Slocum's excellent anthology, *Violence and American Cinema*, and Fred Botting and Scott Wilson's psychoanalytic meditation on the films of Quentin Tarantino, *The Tarantinian Ethics*. In his introduction to the anthology, Slocum argues for the need to consider the multiple valences of the "lazy signifier" of film violence, with its traditionally unarticulated specificities of culture, history, and genre. Rigorous study is needed to healthily infuse a stunted public discourse on media violence, a discourse that has tended to focus almost exclusively on the supposed social effects of violent representations. This so-called "apparatus theory" operates upon the dubious but common sense assumption that representations have a direct causal relationship to events in the real world. But the often-hysterical popular discourse that relies on this view has always overlooked crucial specifics; what is needed, Slocum argues, is detailed historical and cultural context, deeper inquiry into the complexities of genre, and a healthy dose of theory.

Slocum's incisive and far-ranging introduction, a detailed and theoretically attentive history of critical treatments of the issue from the time of D.W. Griffith to our own, offers an invaluable starting point for scholars entering the field of cinema violence -- and it offers an exhaustive bibliography in the notes as well. The anthology's twelve essays, almost all of high quality and theoretically probing, are grouped into three sections, "Historicizing Hollywood Violence," "Revisiting Violent Genres," and "Hollywood Violence and Cultural Politics," though the critical discussions within each essay are much more healthily eclectic than these divisions imply. In fact the inclusiveness and breadth of critical approaches demonstrated by the essayists is the strength of the anthology, which features cutting-edge contributions to the central discourses of contemporary film theory, history and criticism.

Hybridity is the watchword. William Rothman's essay, for example, "Violence and Film," is as much about theorizing viewership as it is about historicization. Rothman takes on

"apparatus" theories by contextualizing the condemnatory discourse on violence in cinema as a moralistic Victorian holdover, questioning the American public's readiness to believe that "movies cause our fellow Americans, but presumably not us, to lose their moral bearings" (38). Though when Rothman turns to readings of films by Woo and Scorcese to rebut assumptions about effects of film violence on audiences, he reverts to an ahistorical, universalizing model of viewership inattentive to differences of race, gender and class that might produce quite different experiences of a given film. Another historicization, Leo Charney's superior "The Violence of a Perfect Moment," is equally a genre study. Charney argues for the increasing intensity and frequency of violence in the action genre as a "hysterical" attempt to recover an always-already lost presence. Charney situates the rise of film, especially the early "cinema of attractions," in the context of modernism's obsession with lostness. Marsha Kinder ends the section arguing for a distinctively American "comic exuberance" with which violence structures (and resists the narrative closures of) films that emerge in the anthology as a virtual high canon of cinematic violence: *The Wild Bunch*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Natural Born Killers*, and *Menace II Society*.

Essays in Part two display a similar hybridity, though each does focus on the specificities of a genre, including the early slapstick comedy (Peter Krämer), the gangster movie (Richard Maltby), film noir (Paul Arthur), the Western (Lee Clark Mitchell), and the action film (Rikke Schubart). Mitchell and Schubart focus on masculinity as a central determinant of the formal features of the genres they discuss, while Kramer and Maltby *historicize* the formal features of theirs. Krämer examines the conditions of production and exhibition in which the choreographed violence of slapstick comedy began to give way to the classical Hollywood emphasis on narrative, though this "norm" of storytelling intentionally obscured the continuing importance of violent "attractions" within Hollywood classicism. Maltby examines depression-era conditions of production and reception as he dismantles the threadbare critical tropes through which the gangster movie has traditionally been interpreted.

Part three turns to cultural politics, with essays considering the violent power asymmetries expressed in movie representations of race (Ed Guerrero), domestic violence (Phyllis Frus), Western cultural identity (Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg), and the Holocaust (Terri Ginsberg). Yet genre and history play an important role in these studies as well. Guerrero, while keeping an eye on shifting representations of gender, surveys violence in black filmmaking from the blaxploitation movies of the late 1960s and early 1970s to the "hood-homeboy flick" of the 1990s. Goldberg considers the way the hybrid genre she labels the "counterhistorical drama" -- movies such as *Salvador*, or *The Killing Fields* that present Westerners confronting atrocities in exotic lands -- privilege and heroize the Western subject position over that of the native or victim with whom the filmmakers ostensibly sympathize.

Fred Botting and Scott Wilson's *The Tarantinian Ethics*, seems to answer J. David Slocum's call for more deeply theorizing approaches to movie violence, though neither violence nor cultural politics is as central to their inquiry as one might wish. Botting and Wilson shift between Tarantino and Lacan to allow each to shed light on the other in an often witty and illuminating dialectic. Yet the authors' acutely appreciative take on Tarantino's "genius, evil or otherwise," manages to leave implicit crucial issues of representation and power politics (and the gendered and racial implications of these issues) that the director's deeply masculinist work relentlessly -- and violently -- foregrounds (10).

The Tarantinian Ethics argues that Tarantino's films stage "ethical" transgressions of the boundaries of the commodity culture in which they were created, exceeding and eluding patriarchal structures of desire that immobilize the subject within the symbolic order. Violence in these films is thus seen through a Lacanian lens as an irruption of the "real" into the "frozen," symbolic ordering of existence. For Lacan, subjectivity is formed through an alienation from "reality" occasioned by the entry into language, or the symbolic order. The "real," however, is that which, in its unsymbolizability, intrudes into and disrupts the symbolic order, often in the form of violence or trauma. The language Botting and Wilson use to describe such moments figures this violence as an implicit political good, even as liberation, though they eschew any mention of a real-world political exigence for their findings.

Botting and Wilson focus on the tense relation between film narrative and its periodic violent "attractions," demonstrating the ways that violence determines the course of Tarantino's narratives and lends them meanings transgressive of the "law of the father." The traumatic accidents and chance violence of these films -- the bump that causes Vincent Vega to shoot Marvin's head off in *Pulp Fiction*, the robbery gone awry in *Reservoir Dogs* -- is the "real" for these characters, and its influence has generally what Botting and Wilson consider redemptive effects. *Pulp Fiction*'s Jules, for example, reassesses his life as a hit man when he is "miraculously" spared by the missed shots of the "fourth man" who bursts firing from the bathroom.

But for Botting and Wilson, such redemptions are not moral or political. The book distinguishes the Tarantinian "ethics" from traditional moralities by linking the latter to the socially inculcated and complicit workings of the Freudian superego. The authors argue, with Emmanuel Levinas, for an ethics of dis-interest, of distance from the "interestedness" of political and social exchanges ruled by such moralities. Tarantino's "archival" approach to cinema, for example, exemplified by his video store background and heterogenous taste in movies, is just such an ethical improvement. In the pluralities of his taste, Tarantino adopts a standard of aesthetic judgment apart from the unitary and excluding conception of the archive established under the "name of the father." The Tarantinian "matriarchive," judges a film not according to established, unifying social codes of aesthetics or popularity, but on the degree to which it is "true to itself" -- a code that insists on the singularity and fragmentary nature of the object (8-9).

Yet the subtle heroization of Quentin Tarantino in *The Tarantinian Ethics*, audible in the implicit intonations of liberation and redemption from the law of the father that his films are said to enact, must give us pause, especially if we consider the unreflexive representations of romanticized hypermasculinity and stereotyped and degraded femininity so prevalent in his work, and so integral to his representations of violence. Though Botting and Wilson may declare politics to be outside the purview of a psychoanalytically derived ethics, the asymmetries of power between the genders, and the ideologies that representations of these relations both reflect and underwrite, call for an account of the political intentions or effects of that ethics -- an account missing from the volume entirely. The problem may be in Botting and Wilson's attitude toward theory. The distracting contrast between the inconsequence of the incidents or banal snatches of dialogue the authors select for their examples, (the riffing on citations of the word "shit" that opens the book, for example) and the intricate and weighty arguments that are drawn from these (often non-telling) details, suggests that it is critical and especially psychoanalytic theory itself that is being heroized in the book, with Tarantino functioning more as conveyance than subject. For *The Tarantinian Ethics* seems to operate in

a world apart, preferring the intricate patternings of theoretical allusion and interconnection to the messiness of the imperfect world it references only abstractly. Even when a cited scene ends as a "re-affirmation of phallic law," the authors seem politically satisfied if only some element has been introduced which *complicates* or makes visible the workings of that law (31).

Is an intimation of a politics enough? At various points *The Tarantinian Ethics* looks like a critical mirror image of the Tarantino some commentators have disparaged for "depthless" intertextuality, for his emptying of content in an endless postmodern play of cultural reference. Botting and Wilson seem as deft and delighted to play the intertextuality game of critical theory as their subject/auteur is to reference his personal "database" of film history and cultural kitsch, and both privilege the construction over the ostensible referent. The authors are perhaps too happily in agreement with the Lacanian Tarantino they assemble for their genuine erudition to have the bite it deserves. This is especially marked if we compare *The Tarantinian Ethics* to the more explicitly feminist or ideological criticism of Lacanians like Jane Gallop or Slavoj Zizek, who tend to use Lacan to trouble their subjects -- even if, as with Gallop, the subject is Lacan himself. As an application and creative working-through of the theories of Lacan, the work speaks with authority; as an approach to political applications of those theories, or to Tarantino and the position of his films within American cultural politics, *The Tarantinian Ethics* is far too reticent.

The Western Genre: From Lordsburg to Big Whiskey

By John Saunders
London: Wallflower Press, 2001. ISBN 1-9033-6412-4. 7 illustrations, 131 pp. £11.76 (pbk)

A review by Ron Wilson, University of Kansas, USA

This slim volume is part of the Short Cuts series published by Wallflower Press whose primary purpose is to provide introductory texts concerning various aspects of film studies. As such this particular work offers a brief guide to some of the key films and theoretical concepts and criticism of the western film genre. John Saunders admits in his introduction that because of the "sheer scale of the genre" he is only able to discuss a tiny sample of films. His subtitle "From Lordsburg to Big Whiskey" even narrows down his study to an historical niche, from 1939 (the year John Ford's *Stagecoach* was released) to 1992 (Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* release date). Saunders' approach to the western is heavily reliant on the concept of the moribund "frontier myth" (first made famous by historian Frederick Jackson Turner) and all of the necessary critical baggage that goes with it. This is not meant as a negative criticism, it is simply that the critical approaches to the genre have been dominated by this meta-discourse for a long time and only recently have others been attempting to produce new and different approaches to the genre. Saunders, for example, gives a brief mention of Peter Stanfield's recent work on the "B" series western (yet excludes a bibliographic entry for him) and Jane Tompkins and Lee Clark Mitchell are likewise given passing nods. Saunders exempts himself by stating that, "No single approach will fit all films, and the readings that follow will draw on whichever promises to be most productive." The present book then represents a compact introduction to the western film and the major critical approaches to the genre.

Saunders begins with a brief survey of these approaches. Stressing the importance of the Turner thesis the author states that it, "represents what Americans would like to believe and so becomes available to the film-maker, and with the growth of American studies generally, the film theorist and historian" (6). Keeping this in mind Saunders precedes through the major critical discourse, briefly capsulizing the work of Jim Kitses, Will Wright, John Cawelti and others. The introduction also includes a brief history of the genre. Saunders then proceeds in his next chapter with a detailed analysis of George Stevens' *Shane* (1953). Breaking the film into sixteen sequences, roughly corresponding to the sixteen chapters of Jack Schaefer's original novel, Saunders analyzes the film in terms of symbolism, characters and action. His purpose is to illustrate a basic reading of a western film (hence the chapter title "Reading a Western").

The author follows this detailed reading with an analysis of three films by three different directors which are considered "classic" westerns: *My Darling Clementine* (John Ford, 1946), *The Naked Spur* (Anthony Mann, 1953), and *Rio Bravo* (Howard Hawks, 1959). Saunders' aim here is to show how various directors utilized the iconic western hero in their respective films. Noting directorial differences Saunders argues that, based on Kitses argument that the

western hero is defined by his being placed at the intersection between civilization and the wilderness, Ford emphasizes the historical environment, Mann the tormented psyche within the hero himself, and for Hawks the solidarity of others. The author then proceeds with a close content analysis of the films to prove his point.

In chapter three, Saunders examines the portrayal of the legendary outlaw Jesse James in three different films: *Jesse James* (Henry King, 1939), *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* (Philip Kaufman, 1972) and *The Long Riders* (Walter Hill, 1980). In an attempt to show the modification of the outlaw hero through changes in society and cinema audiences from 1940-1980. Briefly discussing the concept of the outlaw hero and his modification over time, Saunders then proceeds into a short description/analysis of each film. The brevity of these analyses does not really allow for a detailed discussion of the films in terms of cultural and historical context. This being more a fault of the book's form rather than the author's content. The selection of films being analyzed though is a worthy one, and is developed further in Saunders' work.

Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1968) is the "revisionist" western discussed at length in Chapter Four. Saunders examines the film as a part of the trend towards a deglamorized vision that began in the mid-1960s with the "spaghetti westerns" produced in Italy. Much of the analysis of the film is influenced by the criticism of Will Wright, who saw it as part of a number of westerns of the late-60s that "charted the changeover from a market to a managed economy, seen in the replacement of the classical opposition between the individual and society, where the hero intervenes to protect the community, with the depiction of an elite largely indifferent to the surrounding society" (83). Other films produced during this period, provided as examples, include *The Professionals* (1966), *True Grit* (1969), and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969).

Saunders continues his brief look at the revisionist westerns in his last two chapters. Chapter Five concerns the depiction of Native Americans in such films as *Little Big Man* (1970), *Ulzana's Raid* (1972) (an underrated film), and *Dances with Wolves* (1990). A new attitude began to develop in the post-war western, which was sympathetic to the portrayal of Native Americans in film. "How the West was Lost" is, according to Saunders, a meta-narrative that runs through many of these films. In his final chapter, Saunders takes a look at the "post-modern" western and further "revisionist" impulses on the genre. Part of a wider revisionist drive, ushered in by the political climate of the 1990s, films such as *Posse* (1993) and *The Ballad of Little Jo* (1993), reflect an interest in marginalized subject areas of the western (race and gender). Most of this chapter is devoted to an examination of Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, which Saunders claims is the "last truly memorable western."

Saunders' book is a very readable and compact introduction to the western genre. It should prove useful as a basic text for an introductory class that, hopefully, would be supplemented by additional readings.