Animation: Genre and Authorship

By Paul Wells
London: Wallflower Press, 2002. ISBN 1-903364-20-5. 8 illustrations, 160pp. £11.99 (pbk)

A review by Esme Davidson, Nottingham Trent University, UK

In the opening paragraph of this book Paul Wells states that animation is "arguably the most important creative form of the twenty-first century … It is the omnipresent pictorial form of the modern era" (1). Despite animation's prominent status in everyday life, from television commercials to the recent spate of popular feature length animation films to various uses on the Web, the form itself has suffered a long history of systematic neglect -- both critically and academically. Frequently dismissed as nothing more than an entertainment form aimed at children, animation has rarely been considered worthy of sustained critical or academic attention. Over recent years this situation has gradually improved. An increase in the number of film festivals focusing on animation, and the establishing of the Society for Animation Studies in 1987 have helped to raise the profile and popularity of the animated form. Its critical and commercial status in Hollywood was recently recognised when it was granted its own Academy Awards category. However, despite this new critical interest serious academic explorations of animation are still relatively uncommon. Paul Wells is in fact individually responsible for many of the recent contributions to the topic. His publications in this field include *Art and Animation* (1997) (as guest editor), *Understanding Animation* (1998), *Animation and America* (2001), and a forthcoming title *British Animation* (2002), as well as several shorter pieces. Continuing this almost single-handed quest to open up the arena of animation, Wells locates *Animation: Genre and Authorship* as an introduction to the topic while simultaneously engaging with the specific issues of genre and auteur theory and their relationships to the animated form. Using mini-case studies to illustrate his arguments, Wells enthusiastically draws on a wide variety of animation styles and forms from many different countries and cultures. This broad scope of reference provides an excellent means of giving readers access to animated forms they may not readily have encountered, while at the same time delivering the message that there is more to animation than Walt Disney.

Animation: Genre and Authorship is divided into five chapters, the first three of which unite to form Wells' "introduction" to animation. He begins by offering some definitions of animation, and rather than presenting a linear historical review of the development of animation, Wells chooses to concentrate on the common *processes* involved in generating the form across its various techniques. He also considers the special status of animation as an intrinsically modernist art form. The book does not lack a more conventional historical dimension, however, as Wells presents a useful "Animation Timeline" as an appendix, which identifies key "histories" in the evolution of animation across a range of cultures and contexts (113-135).

The bulk of this book, however, is concerned with the unique relationships between animation and two of the structuring theories of film studies: genre and authorship. Wells identifies the "high degree of circularity" in genre studies that focuses on the iconography of

mise-en-scene, or the repetition of common narrative themes, and argues instead for an approach that addresses deeper generic issues such as form and meaning, approach and application. While conceding that many live-action genres such as the Western, horror, and sci-fi forms could be applied to animated forms, and that animation shares various close relationships with the musical and romantic comedy, the question Wells really wants to address is whether animation has any special genres of its own. Wells looks briefly at some tentative suggestions by Richard Taylor in *The Encyclopaedia of Animation Techniques* (1996) but expresses dissatisfaction with the brief and often vague categorisation. Drawing instead on the concept of "deep structure" which permits animation to be uncoupled from the concerns of "live-action" genrification, Wells identifies and defines seven genres of animated film: formal, deconstructive, political, abstract, re-narration, paradigmatic, and primal. "Deconstructive" animation, for example, is defined as "Animation that reveals the premises of its own construction for critical and comic effects" (67), while "primal" animation is described as "Animation which depicts, defines and explores a specific emotion, feeling or state of consciousness" (71). Through these categories, all forms of animation can be addressed in a way that focuses on broad "intention" rather than specific themes or iconographies. Although Wells rather modestly claims that these new generic categories should only be understood as "provisional engagements" with the topic, the originality of this work is sure to become a valued contribution in the fields of animation and of genre studies.

The relationship between animation and authorship proves to be a particularly fruitful area of inquiry. Unique within film making, animation can operate at extremes of authorship: as a large scale production where individual contributions are subsumed beneath a larger corporate identity such as in the Disney model for example, or as the ultimate in auteurist production -- a single film maker working alone. Wells explores animation and authorship through three detailed case studies of Walt Disney, Ray Harryhausen, and Caroline Leaf, defining them respectively as "supra-auteur", "intra-auteur", and "an avant-garde, experimental film-maker, working largely independently, and with a more specifically self-conscious auteurist perspective" (101). Of these case studies the sections on Harryhausen and Leaf are probably of most interest, primarily because Wells includes personal interviews with the animators, giving significant insights into their own understandings of the position and status of their work in terms of authorship.

Animation: Genre and Authorship addresses some of the significant gaps in animation research in an accessible introductory format and should find a wide readership amongst students and scholars of animation, genre studies and auteurism. Providing a glossary of terms and an up-to-date bibliography, with this book Paul Wells undoubtedly succeeds in further cementing his position as the foremost exponent of the animated form.

Aristotle's Poetics for Screenwriters: Storytelling Secrets from the Greatest Mind in Western Civilization

By Michael Tierno
New York, NY: Hyperion, 2002. ISBN 0-7868-8740-0. 167pp. £8.95 (pbk)

A review by Christopher S. Morrissey, Simon Fraser University, Canada

Dante ranked Aristotle *maestro di color che sanno*, "the master of those who know." Since then, Aristotle has got a lot of bad press. But today, in Hollywood, Aristotle is the hot ticket. Michael Tierno, story analyst with Miramax, and independent guerrilla-filmmaker, aims to reveal the "storytelling secrets" from Aristotle's *Poetics* in a new screenwriter's guide. Despite Tierno's penchant for Hollywood hype, both aspiring dramatists and movie buffs have much to learn from this book.

Aristotle's *Poetics* has long had a reputation in Hollywood as a storyteller's Bible. Fortunately, the *Poetics* is much shorter than the Bible. The *Poetics* is so short that each of its pages can be turned over in the time it takes to navigate a DVD. But due to its bizarre nature (a series of terse and opaque lecture notes, available in over twenty cryptic English translations), despite its brevity, it is practically unreadable by an amateur. And it has been a time-consuming struggle for professionals to mine diamonds of wisdom from Aristotle's difficult Greek. Still, the book has long been influential by word-of-mouth, especially through its Renaissance misinterpretations. Enter Tierno.

Tierno calibrates his book well for the attention-deficit Hollywood mind. There are thirty-three chapters, but most are only small bites of two pages or so (after white-space). None go very far in applying the *Poetics* to motion pictures, but Tierno gives enough movie examples for the reader to connect other dots. He brings his own favourite examples before Aristotle throughout the book: *Gladiator*, *American Beauty*, *Rocky*, *The Godfather*, *The Blair Witch Project*, and *Dead Poets Society*. Hence this book is not so much a "how to" manual as an exhortation to "do it yourself" in an Aristotelian way. Almost every chapter ends with a cliché, with hortatory punning on the chapter's themes, as Tierno urges the tyro screenwriter to apply Aristotle. The ad-man's schtick gets tiresome quickly, not least because the content of each chapter is thin enough without this extra padding. But at the book's end, the final exhortation rings true. Tierno self-consciously repudiates his own exclamatory hype and rhetoric, and shows that he has been using Hollywood's own idiom as a Trojan Horse. Hidden inside, there is wily Aristotle. Aristotle's *Poetics* offers "the soundest principles of screenwriting ever articulated," writes Tierno, because of its focus on "how audiences respond to drama."

What story ideas do audiences respond to best? Aristotle knows: those about one action. Tierno hammers the point home: the "ACTION-IDEA," he shouts. It animates the best

screenplays and is painfully absent from all the mediocre ones. But Tierno also reels off a number of bloopers, to which he, a Greekless, non-specialist in Aristotle, is sadly destined. He conflates *metabasis* (reversal of fortune) with *peripeteia* (reversal of action to its opposite course). Like a screenwriter bluffing a pitch before a studio executive, Tierno flies past all controversies over the *Poetics*' technical vocabulary. He blithely asserts the infamous *katharsis* (Aristotle never explained it) has an undisputed literal meaning ("emotional purging"). Tierno tries to make Aristotle's definition of "epic" poetry (Homer) applicable to "epic" movies (*Lord of the Rings*) by making special effects a defining quality of "epic"; but in the *Poetics* Aristotle actually defines "epic" poetry by noting the absence of *opsis* (special effects) in it.

Tierno alleges Aristotle attests to the preference of ancient Greek audiences for dark, tragic endings. But Aristotle actually says the opposite if one reads *Poetics 14* more carefully. Sadly, Tierno suffers from the rampant misconception that Greek tragedies do not have happy endings (there are extant counter-examples). While he may get such details wrong, Tierno's instincts about the *Poetics* are mostly on target, and it's hard to quarrel with his conjecture that Aristotle's admiration for *Oedipus Rex* would translate into two thumbs-up for *Citizen Kane*. Perhaps the book's only unforgivable error is Tierno's confusion of Homer's *Odyssey* with the *Iliad* (52-53).

Thankfully, none of the errors affect the sound practical advice Tierno offers on screenwriting. If anything, his mistakes only cry out for the further refinement of an Aristotelian critical theory. To that end, perhaps what the nascent Hollywood Renaissance needs now is a rigorous re-translation of the *Poetics*, in the idiom of neo-Aristotelian screenwriting gurus like Syd Field, who have discerned a consistent form for successful screenplays.

Billy Wilder: American Film Realist

By Richard Armstrong
Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 2000. ISBN 0-7864-0821-9. 17 illustrations, viii + 164pp. £25.60 (hbk)

A review by Rory Drummond, Christ's Hospital, UK

In sub-titling his book "American Film Realist", Richard Armstrong announces from the start that his is a very particular reading of Billy Wilder's directorial career. There will be little room in its pages, he suggests, to consider the films to which Wilder contributed in the period before his removal to the United States. Nor will the many of Wilder's Hollywood films set outside of America get significant attention. Though he concedes that all these have their place in Wilder's "coherent and important body of work" (6), Armstrong's own tastes lie elsewhere, something that becomes abundantly clear in the book's highly selective Filmography. Indeed, Armstrong dismisses *Sabrina* (1954), *Love in the Afternoon* (1957), *Avanti!* (1972) and several others as mere "Continental romps" (2), whose romantic plots and idealised European settings may entertain but do not convince. For him, the real Billy Wilder is the "rigorous commentator on the American scene" (7), responsible for such films as *Double Indemnity* (1944), *The Apartment* (1960) and *The Fortune Cookie* (1966). All other incarnations are decidedly inferior.

This is a potentially fruitful thesis, isolating as it does a sequence of works spanning most of Wilder's career, and opening up the possibility for contextual study of, as Armstrong puts it, "American life in the middle years of the 'American Century'" (7). A bigger, more ambitious book would be required to do justice to the full scope of this subject matter, but Armstrong does well to show how much social muscle Wilder's tight, carefully wrought, and often very funny, films pack. A strong chapter on *Double Indemnity* explains how that film can be read as a commentary on the sexual mores of the 1940s, and recalls that Charles Brackett, Wilder's usual writing partner, refused to work on a script he considered scandalously racy. Similar social comment is attributed to each of the other films, with, in many cases, similar stories of attendant controversy: *The Lost Weekend* (1945) is discussed as a ground-breaking study of alcoholism; *Sunset Blvd*. (1950) for its treatment of the film industry; *Ace in the Hole* (1951) and *The Front Page* (1974) as dissections of journalistic integrity; and *The Apartment* in the light of its portrayal of the harsh banalities of modern urban living. In each case, Armstrong's argument is perfectly valid, and the notion of Wilder conducting a grand survey of the American social landscape has its appeal. But this line depends on emphasising similarity and neglecting difference, and the individual movies often seem diminished as a result. About some of them, notably the very odd *Kiss Me, Stupid* (1964), Armstrong has disappointingly little to say.

That said, Armstrong's thesis does usefully draw attention to the key aspects of Wilder's craft, those skills and preoccupations which, though used in varying ways and developed during the course of his career, define his characteristic style. He is particularly alive to Wilder's ear for the idiosyncracies of American English, evident as early as the script he wrote for Howard Hawks' *Ball of Fire* (1941), and so brilliantly exercised in all his own, later, movies. Some of

the strongest passages in the book come when Armstrong looks at dialogue in detail, for instance in paying tribute to the authenticity of the many Yiddish expressions used in *The Apartment*. As director, too, Armstrong credits Wilder with many experimental techniques which served to heighten the impact of his films: the neo-realistic mood of *The Lost Weekend*; the inventive voice-overs of both *Double Indemnity* and *Sunset Blvd.*; his general insistence on filming on location, rather than in the studio. These methods were important to him, but were never, according to Armstrong, permitted to detract from the central business of making a film people would want to watch. Wilder's most important directorial trait, we are told, was for "subsuming innovation into mainstream filmmaking" (40).

It is perhaps in the often neglected area of casting that Armstrong gives Wilder the most praise. Noting the director's penchant for complex, unconventional, and discomforting heroes, Armstrong makes much of the fact that these were often played, against type, by actors audiences were more used to seeing as romantic leads. He tells a story of Wilder badgering the reluctant Fred MacMurray into playing the insurance salesman Walter Neff in *Double Indemnity*, precisely in order to toy with the public's preconceptions of the star as a mild-mannered, family entertainer. Not only did this result in one of the finest screen roles of MacMurray's career, but it also lead to him returning, sixteen years later, as the boss of another insurance firm in *The Apartment*. Similar accounts are given of the casting of William Holden as the morally dubious J.J. Sefton in *Stalag 17* (1953) and James Stewart as Charles Lindbergh in *The Spirit of St. Louis* (1957). Wilder, it appears, could be very generous in his casting, and Armstrong shows how Jack Lemmon, in particular -- with and without Walter Matthau -- owed much of his screen persona to the work he did with his favourite director. But Wilder's casting could also be cruelly pertinent. To ask Gloria Swanson and Erich von Stroheim to play Hollywood relics in *Sunset Blvd.* was to draw on all their genuine experience of the vagaries of the film industry, while George Raft's turn as "Spats" Columbo in *Some Like it Hot* (1959) is read by Armstrong as a parody of almost every other gangster the actor ever played.

On casting, as on other issues, however, the limits of Armstrong's thesis make for frustration. Once interested in Wilder's relationships with actors, one remembers that he also worked with Humphrey Bogart and Audrey Hepburn on *Sabrina*, with Charles Laughton on *Witness for the Prosecution* (1958), and with James Cagney on *One, Two, Three* (1961). But as these films do not fall within Armstrong's remit, nothing is said about why the director cast these great stars or how they performed for him. At such points, the reader may feel that the separation of the *oeuvre* into two distinct threads is somewhat artificial, and yet, but for a brief introduction, Armstrong never really attempts to justify his approach. In order to demonstrate that Wilder's "European" movies do represent a different, lesser strand of his work, Armstrong needs to say much more about them. To simply point to an earlier, and now out of print, study -- *Journey Down Sunset Boulevard*, by Neil Sinyard and Adrian Turner -- is not enough.

The limited range of Armstrong's prose also detracts from the pleasure of reading this book. His writing is dry, scholarly and, at times downright inelegant. Each chapter seems to follow the same formula, so that one gets rather too used to the paragraph about *mise-en-scene* coming before those on the central performances, and certain key ideas are asserted and repeated rather than properly developed. In the chapter on *The Spirit of St. Louis*, for instance, Armstrong labours the point that the film is as carefully constructed as was Lindbergh's plane, without ever really justifying the related claim that it is one of Wilder's very best works.

This is a useful, perceptive study, then, but one which side-steps some of the most interesting questions about Wilder's career. I await the book that, instead of dismissing half the director's output, will take on both his "American" and "European" films, and explore how he was capable of two such apparently distinct styles.

Blacks in the British Frame: The Black Experience in British Film and Television

By Stephen Bourne
London: Continuum Press, 2001. ISBN 0-82645539-5. 30 illustrations, xiv + 256pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Gerald R. Butters Jr., Aurora University, USA

Stephen Bourne has a passion. For over twenty-five years he has unearthed, rediscovered and made public the history of black people in British film and television. This self-proclaimed "labour of love," has made him one of the foremost authorities on the cinematic and televisual representation of peoples of colour in Britain. His painstaking archival research and rediscovery of classic works written, directed by, or starring, black people have contributed significantly to this underreported field in British cinematic history. But Bourne's passion for this subject is also problematic and periodically gets in the way of valuable study.

First, let it be made clear -- Bourne's research has been groundbreaking and his archival work lays the foundation for further research in the history of minority representation in the media. But Bourne's work contains some fundamental stylistic and theoretical problems that take away from the significance of his overall achievement.

The first major problem is that of organization. *Blacks in the British Frame* begins with a *Black Film Bulletin* interview with the author that explains how he came into this field of study and problems that he personally encountered in his research and work. Bourne then continues with eighteen chapters of text that focus on a significant individual, theme or subfield in black British film and television history. These chapters roughly correspond with the chronological progression of the subject matter. Bourne is wise to include both film and television portrayals in this work. There has never been a clear-cut demarcation between black British film and television stars (with the possible exception of Paul Robeson, whose career peak was pre-television). Black actors simply did not have the ability to choose one medium over the other; the simple lack of work for black actors in British film and television made this impossible. While Bourne succinctly describes the early history of blacks in film and explores the careers of actors including Elisabeth Welch, Robert Adams, Orlando Martins, Edric Conner and Earl Cameron, the text often becomes tiresome biography without much insight into the prohibitions or limitations these actors faced in their careers. Bourne demonstrates how these actors' and actresses' careers and personal lives intersected. The text often becomes redundant though; if one is unfamiliar with the production being described (and Bourne demonstrates how a great deal of this early material has been lost), the emotion, hardships or triumphs of these actors' careers often becomes secondary.

The final chapter is "A Film and Television Drama Survey, 1936-2001." This, the longest chapter in the text, is often simply a repetition of the material in the previous eighteen chapters without any significant contributory analysis or concluding remarks. As an

independent chapter, it stands by itself, and would serve as an excellent introduction to this subject in the classroom. This chapter would also serve as an excellent introductory article. But the placement of this lengthy chapter at the end seems like an afterthought and much of the chapter is redundant because it is simply repeated information. Bourne's appendices are also problematic. His chapter "The Eighth Wonder of the World" is a remarkable collection of letters that he gathered from ordinary British citizens when he asked for first-hand recollections of Paul Robeson. These letters would have served a much more important role in Bourne's free-standing chapter on this seminal African-American film and musical star. If Robeson was a key figure in British entertainment in the mid-20th century, these letters certainly demonstrate it. Bourne's appendices on the invisibility of blacks in British historical drama and adaptations of literacy classics and his recollection of his involvement in the landmark BBC production "Black and White in Colour" would have been far more valuable within the text then dumped in the appendix.

This is evidence of Bourne's second fundamental problem -- his simplistic theoretical framework. Bourne admits in his preface that "*Blacks in the British Frame* is not a theoretical study and, because of this, it will be attacked or ignored by film and television theorists." Well, Bourne, like it or not, has a thesis -- he simply, repeatedly throughout the text, describes the dismal treatment black actors, directors and writers have faced in the British film and television industry and the almost heroic stance many of these entertainment professionals have taken to face this institutional racism. This thesis is accurate and is clearly demonstrated throughout the text. Bourne slips though when much of the work digresses into a binary positive/negative portrayal analysis and this is where his "passion" gets in the way. Bourne's respect and admiration for these early black actors leads him to a would have, could have, should have commentary in which he appears dumbstruck and bitter that a certain actor or actress was not recognized for a BAFTA or other film or television award. This commentary demeans the professionalism of Bourne's work and digresses into amateur film criticism. Both Bourne and the heroic figures he describes deserve better.

Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire

By Vijay Mishra
New York, NY: Routledge, 2002. ISBN 0-415-93015-4. xxxviii + 296pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Arnab Das and Subrata sankar Bagchi, The Colleges under University of Calcutta, India

The book may encourage any serious spectator of Indian Hindi cinema -- produced in the Bombay film industry, popularly known as Bollywood -- to relocate his/her particular experience of cinema in the historical backdrop of materiality and reception. The author intensively analyzes and interprets the flexibility and complexity of genres of acting, singing, dancing, staging, auteurship, romanticizing, diaspora and other textual contexts of several selected popular Bombay films screened over the last nine decades. The political economy of form, the aesthetic judgment of the changing approach to the nation-state and preoccupations of Indian epic and folk traditions generate the grand context of looking at the popular Indian cinema. The work focuses on the form, which from within its historical limits has strived for the stronger, alternative discourse of passing round its intrinsic imperialistic influence, representing the voices of the emancipation of women, underprivileged and so on. The psychoanalytic approaches in film theory and compatible post-structural arguments are the underpinnings of the methodological discourse.

In the first chapter Mishra invents the self-image of "traditional" devotees of Indian spectators, who watch the projection of their desires to be fulfilled by the diversifying images of God on the screen. The cinema hall seems to assume the metaphor of temple. In the course of time the scenario of desires has shifted its focus from the middle class collective nationalism to aggressive, demanding and illusory self-projection of the have-nots of the Indian system of capitalism (1). The author successfully establishes the singular position of pan-Indian epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana as the "founder of discursivity" (after Foucault), which pervades the formation of Bombay films (4). The generic capaciousness and interwoven autonomous fragments of the epics allow the lack of closure in the main narrative. Moreover, the epics are inherently imbibed by the legacies of genealogy, persistence of "dharmik" codes and the power of the renouncer (5). These pretexts undergo the mediations of traditional folk plays, theaters and lithographic prints on the one hand and the crucial framing devices of British proscenium legacies on the other (8-9) in order to keep on establishing and maintaining the mature Indian genre.

In the conflict between tradition and modernity -- within the broad framework of nationalism -- the genre of the filmic representation of the 1930s and early 1940s (from Achhut Kanya to Kismet) tracks modernity in order to reach its own form (32). It spite of the (inter)subjective differences in reception the genre goes on reframing its nation-making ideology. It also restlessly rethinks its connections to the postcolonial, hybrid existence by means of its own capacities of deconstruction (xix). The author draws on psychoanalytic film theory to interpret the meeting of localized mediations and melodramatic discourses of colonial literature in minor and a few major references of Indian cinema like, *Madhumati* and *Mahal*. *Madhumati* especially, seems to convey the power of the repressed and spectator's attachment

to that power (59). The Indian gothic is exemplified as an articulation of the borrowed colonial elements of sentimentality, gothic romance, realism and Indian aesthetic theories and narratives of rebirth. Psychoanalysis helps retrace the oedipal imaging of film "Mother India", which comes out conformist, yet defiantly subversive to meet the nationalist agenda in the interface between the secularist and fundamentalist tensions. The image of "Mother" affirms law, *dharma* in terms of the colonial language of brotherhood, religion and the human race. The spectator is supposed to confirm the selfless action, the legitimate moral force and anti-nationalist agenda of the central male protagonist.

The fourth chapter examines the nature of auteurship in the dynamic Bombay cinema during its "high period" between the 1950s and early 1960s. The camera as desire in the films of Raj Kapoor and as a means of organizing the ideological aesthetic within the discourse of romance in the films of Guru Dutt are treated as the crucial indicators of the two auteurs of that period (123). The auteurship of both Raj Kapoor and Guru Dutt are considered to occupy an intermediate space between the reformism of pre-independence cinema and neo-traditionalism of contemporary popular Bombay cinema.

Next comes the (con)texts of acting of the legendary actor Amitabh Bachchan. The details of the career of Amitabh Bachchan appear to construct a text, which transcends the construction of stardom to become a parallel one in his own right (156). It achieves the skills of amazing complexity and a sharp consciousness about popular Indian reception of the text. The constitution of the actor's text responded to the shifting needs of the time and the target audience of slum dwellers over a quarter century. Subsequently, the author's ongoing claims about Bombay Cinema as a "grande syntagmatique" (after Metz) has been discussed through the brilliant segmentation of two films, *Baiju Bawra* (1952) and *Amar Akbar Antony* (1977). Mishra espouses that such analyses need to be strengthened by the ideology of the point of view, especially in relation to the female object of desire.

The above intensive practices might have led the author to handle two urgent contexts of current Indian culture. The first one is about nationality on the cusp between secular and sacred and the second is the diasporic desire as determinant of Bollywood cinema. Mishra argues that the dominant narrative of the heroic, patriarchal figure of the Hindu god Rama has inherent qualities of being redeployed for combating the moments of envisioned historical crisis. In the contemporary pan-Indian fundamentalist crisis of Ayodhya, Rama in several (manifest contents) films encounters the sublime, but "real repressed" remembrance of the (fundamentalist) partition of colonial India. The author's analysis suggests that it poses one of the greatest threats to the nationalist secular ideal. The differentiation between the estimated eleven million Indian diasporic population and their attachment to early capital and that of late capital helps locate Bombay cinema in relation to its distinct connections to diasporic desire, effects on form and global marketing.

The segmentation of the Bollywood Cinema, as mentioned above, seeks to follow a chronological order though each segment is open to historical mobility. One great prospect for the book lies in its popular appeal of approaching any serious issue in an identifiable India -- "Ishtyle" of mass culture. Covering the whole span of its growth the author is eager to read the desire in the texts of popular Bollywood cinema as an optimistic local movement, which is worthy to secure a global exposure. The author, however, does not address the serious spectatorship of the "parallel" Bombay cinema. The global academic exposure of the popular Bombay film, in spite of certain limitations of addressing the political economy of form, is a brilliant effort.

British Television Drama: Past, Present and Future

By Jonathan Bignell, Stephen Lacey and Madeleine Macmurraugh-Kavanagh (eds.)
Basingstoke: Palgrave Publishers Ltd., 2000. ISBN 0-333-77496-5. xi + 200pp. £45.00 (hbk),
£15.99 (pbk)
Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television By Jon Dovey

Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television

By Jon Dovey

London: Pluto Press, 2000. ISBN 0-7453-1450-3. viii + 197pp. £14.99 (pbk)

A review by Norma Coates, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, USA

There is no shortage of work to be done in Television Studies, and few limits in terms of its methodological and analytical tools. The two books under review here plough new ground, one in terms of subject matter, the other by refusing the terms of debate already in place for its topic. *British Television Drama: Past, Present and Future*, edited by Jonathan Bignell, Stephen Lacey and Madeleine Macmurraugh-Kavanagh innovates in its choice of topic as well as contributors. Jon Dovey's *Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television* links the current popularity of various forms of television documentary (a term that is often loosely construed) to the changing discourses of public sphere theory. Both books are valuable for their methodological ideas as well as for their fresh approaches to their subjects.

British Television Drama: Past, Present and Future evolved from a 1998 conference that brought together television professionals and media studies academics, two "camps," as characterised by the editors, who do not often interact. The meeting of media workers and media thinkers is the volume's primary strength as well as its main weakness. Perhaps the original conference provided more interaction between the two camps, but this is not reflected in the collection. The book is structured into two sections, or as the editors call them, contexts, one containing the reminisces of producers and writers active during the so-called "golden age" of the British single-play television drama in the 1960s and the other consisting of critical academic work about the subject. This separation is maintained in the essays, with one exception. Peter Billingham's essay about the 1997 eight-episode series *Holding On* includes a brief discussion with the author and producer of the series, as well as the head of BBC Drama at the time. The discussion is based on questions about formal aspects of the series posed by Billingham to his informants. This interaction is valuable, but leaves one wanting more. For example, what would happen if the tables were turned, with the television professionals questioning the academic about his perceptions and insights?

Nevertheless, such engagement, albeit limited and brief, points to exciting directions for future research in and directions for Television Studies.

Both sections make valuable contributions to the field. The collection's inclusion of the voices and viewpoints of writers and producers active in the 1960s and 1970s is a boon for media historians, as well as engaging and interesting reading. The television professionals speaking in the first section tend to make light of the so-called "Golden Age" with which they are associated, but cling to it nonetheless, some bemoaning the loss of those more innocent times when they could invent television drama without serious managerial intervention. Their reminiscing raises interesting questions. For example, writer Alan Plater, while purporting to make light of the "Golden Age", observes that writers in the mid-1960s expected a great deal of the audience, and that the audience did not let them down. How and why has the audience changed in the interim? Has it?

The television writers and producers who contribute to the first section do not speak with a uniform voice, and their recollections are nuanced by gender, background, and location, among other factors. Nevertheless, they collectively assign blame for the end of the "Golden Age" of British television drama to the ascendancy of business people at the BBC and commercial networks in Great Britain and their influence over what and how drama is presented on television. As writer Andrew Davies observes, they have no background in drama, no ability to read a script, and focus on tried-and-true formulas rather than innovation. It would be helpful and insightful to add the voices of programming executives to a volume such as this, as a way of elucidating how they think and why they make the decisions that they do. It is too easy to rest upon basic economic determinism or political economy here, especially when the audience is considered blameless for the television fodder that they watch.

The academic studies in the second section of the volume display the richness of interdisciplinary media studies in their use of different methodologies and frameworks to analyse individual or series of dramatic texts. A notable essay in this category is John Bull's "Mapping the Terrain: Troy Kennedy Martin's *Edge of Darkness*," which applies notions of cultural geography to the analysis of the many narrative levels of the 1985 BBC drama series. Two essays, Julia Hallam's "Power Plays: Gender, Genre and Lynda La Plante," and Madeleine Macmurragh-Kavanagh's "Too Secret for Words: Coded Dissent in Female-Authored *Wednesday Plays*" unsettle the ideal of the "Golden Age" by dissecting its androcentric gender politics. Other essays raise provocative questions pointing to future directions for media studies, in particular John Caughie's "What do Actors do when they Act?", an excellent question that foregrounds the role of the actor in creating dramatic meaning.

Freakshow: First Person Media and Factual Television by Jon Dovey concerns the rise in popularity and proliferation of "factual television" and "first person media" on British television in the 1990s and beyond. Dovey is a media practitioner as well as a media scholar, and uses this background to move the discussion of such programming beyond textual analysis or political economy and away from criticism of it as a genre and as symptomatic of a decline in media and audience standards. Rather, Dovey locates his inquiry within the vibrant field of public sphere theory. Dovey's primary argument is that television is the new electronic public sphere, and as such, reflects the current inversion of the split between public and private theorised by Habermas and others. In Dovey's formulation, individual, subjective experience comprises the new mode of public speech, and is "the only remaining response to

a chaotic, senseless, out of control world in which the kind of objectivity demanded by a grand narrative is impossible" (26).

Dovey provides his key arguments in an introductory chapter, drawing upon documentary studies, political economy and public sphere theory to elaborate his position. He starts from the premise that filmed documentaries have never had any ontological claim on reality, beginning with an early documentary purporting to show live footage of a naval battle during the Spanish American war. He further argues that documentary "truth" on television is always subject to "specific political economies"; that is, documentary is never totally objective or unsullied by the marketplace and the need to deliver audiences to it. In this way, he moves beyond the tendency to decry factual programming as more evidence of television's moral and creative turpitude. Rather, Dovey locates the popularity of first-person media and factual television within cultural conditions both enabled by and enabling the inversion of the public and private spheres.

Dovey devotes a chapter each to five particular incarnations of first-person media and factual television (although his discussion is primarily about television, he includes some examples from film), reviewing (1) "klutz" films, a newly popular form of reflexive documentary filmmaking in which the creator inserts himself (gender intentional) into the film as a guarantor of authenticity and as a denial of mastery of the medium; (2) programmes composed of camcorder or surveillance tapes and their impact on televisual forms; (3) "Reality TV", a term with different valences in the UK and US contexts, particularly that focusing upon criminal activity and other forms of constructed deviance; (4) varieties of TV chat shows; and (5) docu-soaps, in which the lives of "real people" are narrativized to fit pre-defined television genres. A final chapter analyses the significance of the first-person media forms discussed in the study in consideration of the relationship between "broadcast and the communication practices of everyday life that are informed by the media" (154), through which he details his re-formulation of the contemporary public sphere.

Dovey's viewpoint is refreshing, in that he refuses the tired trope of "trash television" increasingly used to characterise the type of programming under analysis. Nor does he resort to blaming the state of culture, or low audience expectations, for the proliferation of first-person media. By changing the terms of discussion to public sphere theory, he opens up a needed space for the discussion of cultural shifts in the notions of public and private, and for questioning and probing, rather than condemning, the obvious social craving for the change in preferred forms of public discourse. This shift also provides Dovey with a level of analytical suppleness not available through adhering to strict theories of cultural pessimism or political economy. Accordingly, Dovey's methodology is interdisciplinary, drawing upon psychoanalytic film theory, documentary theory, Foucault's post-structural theories of the body and sexuality, as well as the recent and historical work in public sphere theory, in coherent, well-argued chapters.

Dovey's fresh approach to his topic is a model for thinking about directions and methodologies for media studies. Omissions in the study itself provide opportunities for future research. For example, although Dovey supports a public sphere that incorporates values and discourses culturally coded as feminine, especially in his call for recognition of the importance of the intimate sphere to modern democratic practice, he does not provide an adequate discussion of the role of women in the production of first-person media. This is most evident in his chapter on "klutz" films, in which all of his subjects are male. He invokes the feminine and feminism frequently, without explicating how he is using or defining the

terms. Dovey is working in the British context, and as such, some of his conclusions may not be applicable to American television, given the commercial orientation that has been part of it almost since the beginning of US broadcasting. One of Dovey's key conclusions is that if the media is to have a role as a public resource, that is, if television is truly to be an electronic public sphere, then the media has to exist in a domain separate from the market. Given the ingrained (and increasing) commercialism of US television, is it even possible to turn it into Dovey's conception of the electronic public sphere?

Both books under discussion here offer exciting new ways to think about media studies, and interesting methodological and research ideas. As such, they contribute to the richness of the past, present, and future of media and television studies.

Comic Politics: Gender in Hollywood Comedy after the New Right

By Nicole Matthews
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000. ISBN 0-7190-550302. x + 162pp. £11.99 (pbk)

A review by Kathrina Glitre, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, UK

Having just marked four undergraduate dissertations on contemporary Hollywood comedy, I am all too aware of the paucity of critical work on the area. Unfortunately, *Comic Politics* is only partially successful in filling the gap. This is not to say it is a bad book, but that its aims are somewhat misrepresented by its title: this is less a book about Hollywood comedy than a book about the limitations of "progressive" critical approaches to comedy and gender identity when applied to popular mainstream film. As a consequence, less than a third of this short book (134 pages) is actually spent discussing relevant films.

The book is firmly placed within a cultural studies approach: "these films pose the intriguing question of whether popular cultural forms might be pleasurable and playful or ideologically coercive, or indeed both" (4). Matthews is specifically concerned to discover the political consequences of these films and whether they resist or affirm the New Right's personal, "self-governing" imperatives. Chapter One comprises a brief introduction; each subsequent chapter deals with a different cycle of comedy in relation to a body of theory. Chapter Two provides a lucid interrogation of academic approaches to parody (screen theory, postmodernism, the carnivalesque), before concluding their limited relevance to such films as *Wayne's World*. Chapter Three examines theories of gender identity, spectatorship and performativity in relation to comedian comedies (e.g., *Mrs Doubtfire*, *Sister Act*), to argue that such performances are more about self-management and "passing" than about disrupting the logic of identity. It is in Chapter Four -- dealing with responsibility and fatherhood in "family" comedies like *Parenthood* -- that Matthews' arguments about the ideology of the New Right come to fruition, tying together previous discussions of self-directing, self-managing individuality to wider political discourses around the responsibilities of New Right self-government.

Matthews' hypothesis that these films teach the spectator to become good citizens of the New Right is important and generally convincing, but her methodology involves some occasional sleights-of-hand. For example, by using *Sleepless in Seattle* as a stepping stone, Matthews claims that, since the 1980s, romantic comedy has been transformed into "family" comedy. This not only omits a range of successful romantic comedies from the period (including the "Brat Pack" phenomenon), it also ignores the tradition of Hollywood domestic comedies, such as the Hardy Family films. But then, the book is generally oblivious to traditions of Hollywood comedy: the only pre-seventies film mentioned is *It's a Wonderful Life*.

The analytical gaps created by these absences are widened by focusing on isolated scenes. Too often, the cultural and political arguments Matthews constructs are not systematically applied to the films which supposedly endorse them. For example, in Chapter Three, Matthews recognizes the emergence of discourses around "personality" in the 1920s as a significant shift in perceptions of identity, but then applies these culturally-specific discourses directly to eighties' comedian comedy. The results are a mass of "mights" and "mays", partly because Matthews never produces the necessary close analysis of the texts and their reception to prove her point.

This suggests one of the main limitations of Matthews' approach: while insisting on the importance of considering how the spectator interprets the meaning of these comedies, she relies on preconceptions and stereotypes rather than evidence to support her assertions. In Chapter Two, she uses film reviews by the likes of Brian Sewell to "prove" that parodies such as *Wayne's World* are watched by "adolescent" males -- an audience for which she clearly has no respect. Matthews may be discussing some of the most popular films of the last twenty years, but her own distaste is barely veiled: despite implying an affirmative answer when initially asking, "Can there be a good enough reason to study the oeuvre of Rick Moranis?" (3), she later shows her true colours by comparing watching *Honey I Shrunk the Kids* to "the very ordinary, the banal" (131). What is missing, then, is any consideration of those potential "pleasurable and playful" elements of popular Hollywood comedy. To give Matthews credit, she does produce a neat Catch-22 explanation of this absence: "one of the real problems of celebrating 'active' and 'resistant' audiences and the many meanings they might take away from the cinema [is that] Neo-liberalism relies on this very kind of active, choosing self to govern the way it does" (132). The pleasures of the audience are (once again) reduced to opiates for the dumb and dumber masses.

Overall, *Comic Politics* is a strange case. Although aimed at undergraduates, the cumulative argument demands cover-to-cover reading, suggesting that Matthews' PhD thesis was not sufficiently reworked for publication (nor sufficiently proof-read). Students hoping to find a critical perspective on individual films or cycles will find little of direct relevance; those looking for more than quick answers will be rewarded with a range of issues to consider and a variety of approaches to apply.

Costume and Cinema: Dress Codes in Popular Film

By Sarah Street
London: Wallflower Press, 2001. ISBN 1-903364-18-3. 10 illustrations, 112pp. £11.99 (pbk)

A review by Rebecca Janicker, University of Nottingham, UK

This edition of the *Short Cuts* series of introductory texts to film studies aims to outline the diverse ways in which costuming can be used to develop characterisations, symbolise events and convey latent ideas within film. The author, Sarah Street, compares and contrasts different filmic versions of stories besides drawing on a range of in depth case studies to illustrate the arguments presented in the text.

Beginning with a descriptive overview of her subject matter, Street draws the attention of the reader to the comprehensive glossary which is provided to define key terms and to clarify their intended interpretations within the arguments. The preliminary case study lays down the format for the first half of the book by drawing comparisons between two different film renditions of the Titanic disaster, *A Night To Remember* (Roy Baker, 1958) and *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997). Here, attention is drawn to the way costume is used to visually divide members of different classes from one another. For example, the "unsinkable" Molly Brown is a first-class passenger somewhat disdained by truly upper-class travellers as "new money"; "Molly is often distinguished by outfits that are brasher than those worn by . . . upper class women . . . Molly may have money but she does not have aristocratic taste" (22). Street uses a variety of examples to show how costuming is utilised differently in the two films; in *A Night To Remember*, it denotes an authentic historical portrayal of clothing, whilst *Titanic* uses clothes to explore key underlying themes such as identity and sexuality. Similarly, the comparison of *The Talented Mr Ripley* (Anthony Minghella, 1999) with *Plein Soleil* (René Clément, 1960) refers to the capacity of costuming for describing personal and social identity, both of which are central to the narratives. In a later chapter, costuming in *The Matrix* (Wachowski Bros., 1999) is shown to explore ideas at the subtextual level, e.g. by focusing on the visual display of power roles.

Moving on, the third chapter is the first of several to take a sole film as its specific focus, exploring the potential of *Desperately Seeking Susan* (Susan Seidelman, 1985) as a "case study for the impact of stardom on film costuming" (55). It is concerned with the manner in which the film employs symbols to portray certain structural oppositions, e.g. conventional versus unconventional, constrained versus free, by using a distinctive jacket worn initially by the eponymous Susan and later adopted by a character who wishes to take on her identity. Here, Street links the use of costume to that of her earlier analysis of *The Talented Mr Ripley* (Anthony Minghella, 1999), where themes of identity and gender are also particularly linked with a jacket. The introduction of terminology such as Hitchcockian McGuffin, clearly defined within the glossary, is explained in the context of this particular costume item being a

symbolic plot device that provides an effective visual demonstration of the polarity of the two characters.

As in *The Talented Mr Ripley*, specific characters' desires to realise their "ideal" selves are often expressed via costume. Clothes can thus be used to suggest "difference, fluidity and possibility" (70), and Street uses these arguments to explain how costume can drive a film narrative, whether made explicit to the audience or not. She elucidates the function of clothing in constructing and altering the personas of characters by drawing on Annette Kuhn's *The Power of the Image: Essays on Representations and Sexuality* (1985): "Clothing has the potential to disguise, to alter, even to reconstruct the wearer's self" (71).

In marked contrast to the overt symbolism of films that make explicit use of elaborate costuming are "contemporary 'realist' films, which aim to convey something of life 'as it is'" (73). Here, the case of *Wonderland* (Michael Winterbottom, 1999) shows that clothes can be used in an understated, "realist" way to display the distinct personalities of the three main characters, e.g. the repeated use of layered costuming to suggest complexity and depth within a particular character. In particular, Street notes that a lack of external signifiers such as celebrity in "realist" films like *Wonderland* can be a key determinant of costuming. The dressing of Susan in *Desperately Seeking Susan* was clearly related to Madonna's then-burgeoning and distinctive real-life star persona, whereas films like *Wonderland* do not feature major stars, and thus have no established celebrity images to take into consideration. Once again, Street argues that star status can influence costuming and that stars may actually use costume to *escape* type-casting, effectively "covering" the customary trappings of their usual identities.

In conclusion, Street argues that costume is an under-researched area of film studies, to its detriment. The role of clothing in film can be functional in the description of such concepts as gender and identity, as well as a valuable tool for advancing visual realism and propelling the narrative. Furthermore, the role of costume in a diversity of media, such as television and theatre, is another related area worthy of research. In drawing attention to the powerful way in which costume affects film the book is useful; however it would perhaps have been beneficial to place the ideas in the context of other areas within the broader discipline of film studies. Because of the nature of the work as an introductory text however, its scope is necessarily limited and it serves primarily as a starting point for those interested to pursue further research on the subject.

"Dear BBC": Children, Television Storytelling and the Public Sphere

By Máire Messenger Davies
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-521-78560-X. 13 tables, viii+280pp.
£13.66 (pbk)

A review by Lincoln Geraghty, University of Nottingham, UK

Máire Messenger Davies' book "*Dear BBC*" is a thoroughly researched and informative engagement with children's relationship with the media, specifically television. A huge amount of research, including surveys, discussions and interviews with children, television executives and policy makers, was undertaken as part of a BBC commissioned project to investigate a number of highly controversial and ubiquitous issues that have surrounded children's media for decades. Issues such as censorship, media consumption, the relationship between broadcaster and audience, and programme genres such as animation are discussed with reference to hundreds of comments given on questionnaires shared by children of all ages.

A major point that was raised in the book was that children take a keen interest in the programmes that are made for them, not just because they like watching them when they get home from school but because they see their programming as a form of social empowerment. For those children that were asked in the survey if and how they would change the sorts of programmes produced for them many "were often concerned to 'protect' the presumed susceptibilities of other children, especially 'little kids', and to require socially responsible messages from all kinds of programming" (248). This characteristic of the research data might come as a shock to adults, particularly parents, as it is often said that television damages our children's social conscience -- that they are becoming immune to violence and sex on the television. It would seem that children's programming is having the opposite effect and the youth of the country is becoming more conservative as compared to the more liberal proponents of unregulated television for kids. With such a conclusion taken from Davies' book it would be of great interest to see if this trend is mirrored in children's reception of film. That of course is where a major argument lies: Do violent movies influence our children's actions?

Davies's chapter on censorship touches upon this debate with a discussion of horror movies and their influences on kids. The murder of James Bulger is taken as an example of the need for more collective responsibility in the raising of the nation's children. According to Davies Britain is suffering from the consequences of the "late twentieth-century privatisation of childhood, with parents and families deemed to be solely responsible for the behaviour of children… [and] adults have ceased to believe that the socialisation of the young is a general, collective responsibility" (167). It was because of this that two ten year old boys were allowed to abduct a two year old child in the middle of a busy shopping centre. Yet, for Davies, the broadcasting community remains the only area in which society collectively

accepts responsibility for and to children. The argument falls between two camps: whether children should be allowed to watch more adult themed programmes as a way of socialising them for future adulthood; or, children should wait until they are able to understand more adult forms of programme. Again, it is interesting that children stressed on their questionnaires that they wanted more intervention in their programming to make sure that they were being protected. If children have become "almost entirely invisible in public spaces" (167) then their vulnerability and lack of empowerment in the adult world will be overlooked, as indicated by those ten to eleven year old school kids interviewed in the book this should not be allowed to happen. Those that believe children have no place in the programming debate are proved wrong by Davies' findings in this chapter. Perhaps more input should be made by children when adults start taking about that perennial favourite -- the 9pm watershed.

As the research findings suggest, the creation of children's media programming should be a joint venture, where the needs of the child with regard to stimulation and entertainment are balanced with the desire of parents to protect their children from those programmes which might be considered harmful. What is perhaps the most important aspect of this conclusion is that children should be consulted, they are capable of expressing themselves and they will not wield their power to produce violent and "demonic" television. Davies' book stresses that the process "works best as a collaborative [one] in which… children, whatever they are like, are treated as if they were sensible people" (248). Such an emphasis on the child's voice is an important one as we enter a new century, where the dangers to social cohesion are magnified through the new technologies of the internet, video gaming, and digital media. Children are at the forefront of connecting with these forms of media, therefore their voices should be heard so that adults can learn just how much they should intervene and do the job that was asked of them in Davies' timely and educational investigation.

Early American Cinema in Transition: Story, Style, and Filmmaking, 1907-1913

By Charlie Keil
Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. ISBN 0-299-17364-X. 117 illustrations, xii + 306pp. £15.99 (pbk)

A review by David Mayer, University of Manchester, UK

Charlie Keil has re-imagined the possibilities of writing film history and has, in so doing, produced a feat of considerable scholarship. His plan, ignoring much current historiographic practice, which usually attempts to account for stasis or change or development in terms of contemporary events or pressures or modes of perception or thought -- and which, consequently, must deal with individual films and specific historical and cultural instances -- is to describe changes in film structure, technique, and technology across the entire film business in the years between 1907-1913. This six-year period Keil labels the "transitional period" and identifies it as the point at which the Motion Pictures Patent Company and other techno-commercial developments, as well as the presence of a growing-but-otherwise-stable audience for film, together create the American motion picture industry and the prototype of the studio system. Driven by economic needs, studios must increase diversity and quality to meet expanding markets. They must develop industrial practices and further technologies which foster these objectives. But, above all, filmmakers, to find and hold audiences, must abandon the production of brief one-reel (or less) films, often non-narrative and even non-anecdotal, and transform their studios' output into narrative films of greater and greater length and greater visual complexity until, eventually, films routinely exceed an hour or hour and a half's duration and offer a multiplicity of camera possibilities and editorial strategies. By 1913, cinema-going, increasingly a middle-class recreation, is on the point of deserting the nickelodeon and flea-pit for the purpose-built picture palace.

Keil's early chapters set out his stall: he is not going to explain the "why" of change but to adopt a "formalist" stance, meaning by this term his concern to demonstrate that, year-by-year, changes in the structure and method of film narrative, in camera technique, and in editing praxis are visible across the entire industry. Films, though often the creations of individuals, will change as a group, and audiences will accept and welcome these changes. Studio heads and directors (D.W. Griffith is an obvious example) may lead in developing a style of film, but their singularity is to be deliberately ignored in favour of effective generalisations. Later, when change is recognised by the reader and when the feature film is developed and successfully marketed, Keil will explore individual films typical or atypical of their year, and note their narrative tactics.

The heart of Keil's study is a chapter dealing with the development of cinema narrative. If one recalls the over-familiar devices of pre-1907 cinema -- rail journeys, processions and the visits of dignitaries, unintelligible football matches, children feeding barnyard fowl, the myriad stultifying banalities of the Lumières and Mitchell & Kenyon -- the gardener tricked by a prankish boy into squirting himself, then taking revenge and soaking the boy, or the

greedy tramps who steal food and bathers' clothing, promise relief from more of the tedium of actualités by offering the merest germ of plot. And plot is everything. Even the Edison-Porter films of 1903 are somewhat diminished by being (correctly) categorised as "chase" narratives. Keil looks at the absence of the basic elements of narrative action: plot, character, and motivation, and shows how these elements are increasingly recognised by America's studios. What begins as mere anecdote and motivation which is difficult, if not impossible, to decipher, becomes, by 1913, complete drama, not simply with Aristotelian beginnings, middles, and endings, but with plots which hang together and which are peopled by plausible (and sometimes multi-dimensional) characters whose behaviour follows from understandable and thoroughly plausible motives -- all in a mere six years.

Keil follows this chapter with further chapters which deal, respectively, with camera-work and with editing. He shows that increased understanding of the possibilities of the camera as more than a recording instrument enable more interesting narratives. Recognition that the camera need not be static, but might severally locate the viewer in the position of various characters within the narrative or might move closer to or further from the characters as they enacted their passions, or might view from aloft, from corners, or from low-down, is to privilege the spectator as a witness to the event. The camera becomes mobile and actually travels with characters, animals, and vehicles and involves the spectator in movement and speed, eliciting further empathy with characters and plot. Keil also shows that editing was to enable industry-wide acceptance that narratives might display concurrent action, saying "meanwhile" and well as "here and now". He likewise offers evidence of how the intertitle was to affect the structure of transitional film, making the photoplay -- now verbal -- able to convey dialogue and equally capable of narrative exposition. Keil acknowledges that studios didn't accept these changes *en bloc*, but moved individually, some more conservative than others for a variety of reasons.

Because Keil has generalised, he concludes his argument by turning from the general to the specific and offering a final chapter which anatomises six "transitional" films. These analyses are technical in that they relate how the film was made and what narrational elements are to be found. The films are wholly divorced from the circumstances which called them into being or the receptions they received. Keil also offers shot-by-shot descriptions of these films, thus again demonstrating differences of structure and method.

Keil's writing is direct and spare, offering clear explanations of the theories and principles which guide his thinking, and he is equally clear in explaining method and result. The consequence of his method is a solid and reliable work which makes a valuable companion to those studies of individual creators and studios. It depicts a slice of the film world without artists or heroes, but it is a world we need to recognise and acknowledge.

Encore Hollywood: Remaking French Cinema

By Lucy Mazdon
London: BFI, 2000. ISBN 0-85170-801-3. vi + 169pp. $24.95 (pbk)
European Cinema: An Introduction By Jill Forbes and Sarah Street

European Cinema: An Introduction

By Jill Forbes and Sarah Street

Houndsmilles: Palgrave, 2000. ISBN 0-333-75210-4. xvi + 216pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Andrea Opitz, University of Washington, USA

For most moviegoers Hollywood and European cinema represent two distinct ways of filmmaking. In *Encore Hollywood: Remaking French Cinema*, Lucy Mazdon argues that traditionally, critical approaches to the Hollywood remake have depended on over-simplified binaries constructed around French "art" cinema and Hollywood "mass" productions, designating the former as "high" culture, and the latter as merely commercial. Mazdon's study challenges automatic -- often careless -- classifications of French films as "better" than their remakes. Her comparative methodology -- analyzing twelve film pairs (French original and Hollywood remake) -- enables her to deconstruct traditional binaries and argue for the intertextual, hybrid nature of constructions of cross-cultural and national identities.

By outlining the extensive history of Hollywood remakes in the first two chapters, Mazdon emphasizes the "remake" phenomenon as a salient part of these two countries' complex relationship over the past century. Her discussion of each cultures' historical, cultural, political, and economic relationship highlights the French's insistence that cinema is crucial to the preservation of their national cultural identity and their subsequent anxiety that Hollywood remakes threaten that identity. Further problematizing the notion that French source films are considered -- by the French and by critics -- "intrinsically 'national' products," Mazdon questions the terms "original" and "authenticity," by pointing out that French films are often co-produced with other European countries, and so often imitate "cinematic genres which are neither French nor a part of high culture" (88). Mazdon concludes that films do not fall "easily into national or generic categories," and emphasizes instead the "intertextuality of all cinema" (49).

Mazdon next addresses contemporary films, focusing on questions of national identity, sexuality -- especially masculinity -- and historicity. The chapter "Remakes of the 1980s and 1990s: Boom Time" analyzes constructions of gender and family, using one of the most

famous remakes, Leonard Nimoy's *Three Men and a Baby* (1987) and its source Colin Serreau's *Trois hommes et un couffin* (1985). Mazdon argues that Serreau's film constructs a rather ambivalent masculine identity, allowing for a possible homosexual reading, while Nimoy's version is a "hysterical affirmation of heterosexual masculinity" (58). In Chapter Four, Mazdon uses *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* and its Hollywood remake *Sommersby* to argue that the French film constructs a sense of national identity seemingly originating from historical documents (so, from fact rather than fiction), with a strong focus on community (rather than the individual). *Sommersby*, on the other hand, "draws heavily upon earlier *cinematic* representations of history" (72), turning it into a melodrama, rather than attempting to portray "history." Like the analysis of *Three Men and a Baby*, this chapter contends that the French film, presenting a "fractured, violent vision of history" (78), articulates identities that are unstable, "inessential and hence performative," while the Hollywood film moves toward a cohesive representation of history, trying to maintain a sense of national culture as "stable and enduring," leaving the construction of identity unquestioned (78).

One of the most interesting questions this book explores is how asserting a national *identity* from the standpoint of a specific national *aesthetic* becomes highly problematic. Mazdon here compares another famous pair, Jean Luc Godard's *A bout de souffle* and its remake *Breathless* (Jim McBride), arguably the most engaging pairing in this collection; movie viewers and readers will readily recognize them as original and remake. This discussion is especially interesting because of Godard's status within French cinema today, despite his original rejection of the "dominant 'national' cinema and [the] recourse to other non-national cinema traditions" (88). Mazdon argues that this apparent paradox makes it a "dangerous venture" to describe *A bout de souffle* as a film with a "specifically French cinematic aesthetic" or even "as a 'high' cultural artefact" (83). Rather, Godard's extensive borrowing and imitating of Hollywood conventions in *A bout de souffle* make *Breathless* a "reproduction of a reproduction" (83).

Subsequent chapters closely examine thrillers and comedies: the genres, Mazdon informs us, most often remade. She investigates why, considering the popular nature of these genres, critics would ascribe a higher value to the original. She elaborates the direct influence of the Hollywood action genre on French films, and the consequent difficulty of locating them exclusively within one national culture.

Mazdon's comparative examinations offer an important challenge to the way we regard remakes (though most non-academic movie goers will ignore the exercise), yet her conclusions are finally disappointing. Instead of a "straightforward copy," a remake must be seen as a separate artefact because it adjusts and appropriates the original. This is a strikingly reductive conclusion; her otherwise insightful and important discussions are scaled down to prove merely this. Most unsettling are her vague definitions of identity and, beyond that, of identification. The question of how one derives a sense of national identity through film is everywhere posed and nowhere answered in this book. Despite these shortcomings, Mazdon's book clearly makes the case that it is both worth while and important to take remakes seriously. The viewer should consciously attend to textual, cultural, and historical tensions between original and "copy," at this time when the global nature of the film industry produces transnational, dialogic products.

While Mazdon's book focuses on the particular relationship between the French and Hollywood film industries, Jill Forbes and Sarah Street's *European Cinema: An Introduction* asserts that European cinema in general defines itself in relation to Hollywood. Forbes and

Street begin their introduction to European Cinema with an overview of economics, politics, ideology, aesthetics and style -- all tightly linked to Hollywood either through influence or active counter-reaction. They discuss the restrictions European countries placed on the distribution of Hollywood films in the early part of the century, in an attempt to contain the growing threat of Hollywood's "box office" dominance. Hollywood imports were treated just like any other commodity. To challenge Hollywood further, Russia and Germany established their own sorts of studio systems, and increased their film production as part of their domestic policy.

In Part Two, four critics present "non-canonical case studies," each contributing two articles in his or her field. These articles are relatively short (twelve to fourteen pages long), and include references and suggestions for further reading. Some of the discussions include Alfred Hitchcock's *The Lodger*, Jean Renoir's *La règle du jeu*, and contemporary films, such as Paolo and Vittorio Taviani's *Good Morning Babilonia*, the 1995 French *La haine*, and the British cult film *Trainspotting*. Readers will be tempted to look for common features defining European cinema in general or specific national cinemas, these articles foreground the tensions between national identities and cross-national identifications. And like in Mazdon's study, continuously contrasting Hollywood's commercialism and audience appeal, European cinema is portrayed as ambivalent, questioning power, politics, and history, and representations of gender and identity.

Derek Duncan's piece on Lucino Visconti's first film, *Ossessione*, for example, explores the questioning of national identity -- or that which is presented as such. Clearly contextualizing his discussion within the political situation in Italy in the 1940's, Duncan provides helpful background information about Mussolini's politics, fascist censorship, and an account of the film's forebear, James Cain's thriller *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. His analysis explores the complex relationship between a film that, according to Visconti, presents a "picture of Italy," and yet works within cinematic conventions influenced by Hollywood. Here, national identity is seen as a negotiation between different self-images: those projected from the inside, and those fabricated on the outside, each exposing the politics of representation. While he emphasizes the importance of the political situation in Italy at the time of the film's conception, Duncan's analysis of the film's presentation of gender in particular (the man's body is the focus of the camera's gaze) supports his conclusion that Visconti, like Spanish director Carlos Saura, uses established cinematic conventions to propose "new ways through which to represent the nation" (104).

Annella McDermott's essay on Carlos Saura's *Carmen* explores the film's distinct Spanish background, its meaning to questions of national identity, and its appeal to an international audience. McDermott discusses historical, political, and cultural influences on the film, and Saura's other work. The flamenco performances in the film expose the tension between tradition, and the constructed stereotypical representation of these traditions. Comparing *Carmen* to other films of its genre -- *Fame*, *A Chorus Line*, *Dirty Dancing* and others -- McDermott concludes that the film asks far more political questions than its Hollywood counterparts, indicating the film's successful balance between audience appeal and local and national politics. By contrast, her essay on Buñuel offers only sporadic links to larger questions of national cinema.

While detailed summaries of films make these essays comprehensible to readers unfamiliar with the films, they nevertheless appear to require a special interest in a particular director's work. This is in accord with the editor's stated goal (xiii.) As a textbook for an introductory

film course, *European Cinema* would provide students with helpful background information for each study, as well as material for thematic discussions that cross European national boundaries.

Even so, while neither of these books wants to cater to the commercial Hollywood or art-house European cinema stereotypes, neither can help suggesting them. Though European movies are discussed as imitating, owing to, and often celebrating their American counterparts, the interpretations here suggest that European cinema invariably offers more complex and ambiguous presentations of reality. Further, the influence of other European cultures on any European film is seen as negotiation of influence, rather than negation. The implications of such negotiation or negation and other issues in these books offer rich material for future discussion in academic film courses, and for the sophisticated moviegoer.

The End of Cinema As We Know It: American Film in the Nineties

A review by Brendan Riley, University of Florida, USA

In an essay about composition, Johndan Johnson-Eilola remarks that the changing world of electronic media should lead us to "overcome a reliance on the idea of writing as production and look instead at ways for considering the values inherent in connection between texts and fragments." In considering the eclectic collection of essays, *The End of Cinema As We Know It: American Film in the Nineties*, we would be well-advised to keep Johnson-Eilola's advice in mind. The book, edited by Jon Lewis, features thirty-four seemingly unconnected essays that make their collective argument through juxtaposition.

The essays can be divided into three main categories -- film history, explorations of single films, and film theory -- each reflecting a primary category of film criticism popular today. The first category, the film history essay, concentrates on exploring a cultural trend in Hollywood cinema by examining the history of some film or event. For instance, Jon Lewis argues that the recent publicity regarding the MPAA struggle over *Eyes Wide Shut* and *South Park* illustrates that the Hollywood rating system is not about "protecting the public good," but about helping studios make more money (and consolidate their hold on the distribution market). Another key essay is Charlie Keil's "'American' cinema and Beyond," in which he explores the erosion of "national" cinema in light of the spread of Hollywood filmmaking to Canada and Australia; the "global monoculture," he implies, will erase national cinema.

The most striking of the film history essays in *The End of Cinema* is Hamid Naficy's "King Rodney: The Rodney King video and textual analysis." Naficy questions the wisdom of the widespread application of textual analysis. He writes, "the repeated screening of dissected images turns them into abstractions, into images without referent, into simulacrum" (301). Whether one agrees with Naficy's arguments about textual analysis or not, his attempt to connect real-world events and politics with the perceived ivory-tower of film criticism is laudable.

The bulk of the essays in *The End of Cinema* are explorations of single films (or people). Although there are some that stand alone in their work, many of the essays look at the same significant films from different angles. It is through these parallel explorations that an overall sketch of cinema in the nineties begins to emerge. For instance, the intersecting readings of *The Matrix* make a map of late twentieth-century cinema that asks about paranoid masculinities, the re-surfacing of "heroism," the identity-politics of celebrities, and the ramifications of our culture of violence. *Saving Private Ryan*, similarly, is used to map out "patriotic" cinema, neo-conservative nostalgia, and the evolution of the blockbuster. *Fight Club* also appears in several essays, being considered in reference to consumerism and neo-

conservative politics, to paranoid masculine narratives, and to shifts in narrative structure in Hollywood cinema.

The most entertaining essay in this group is R.L. Rutsky's "Being Keanu." Rutsky explores a new -- perhaps Derridian -- way of looking at film culture. He writes that we should look "at the fortuitous cultural patterns and associations that swirl around a star's persona and body of work" (186). With a sense of humor necessary for a serious study of Reeves, Rutsky explores the actor's interviews, films, and his physical "blankness" that allows him to shine in films like *The Matrix* and *Point Break*. As he concludes, Rutsky argues that "Keanu's films often seem to emphasize a kind of fluid kineticism over character depth" (192), a point that helps his essay connect with several others in the book.

The last and most interesting group of essays is the "theory" essays that examine a trend or development in light of several films or cultural events. In some ways, most of the essays in the book gesture toward this type of argument. There are a few pieces, however, that best fit in the "theory" category and, subsequently, seem to answer Jon Lewis' opening call to arms more directly than their counterparts. Among the more interesting, challenging essays are: Thomas Elsaesser's argument that the blockbuster film creates an audience that returns, *ad nauseum*, for more of the same; Maureen Turim's Freudian exploration of the moving fantasy image and its role in propagating our culture of violence; Christopher Sharrett's blistering criticism of the unthinking ubiquity of new narrative techniques; and Paul Arthur's piece, which explains the Hollywood apocalyptic blockbuster as a mediation on the demise of the Hollywood blockbuster.

Throughout these pieces, however, there is a sense of nostalgia and longing for an earlier period in film history that seems to have been left behind in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Wheeler Winston Dixon's closing piece speaks most strongly to that sense of closure. Though he ends his "Twenty Five Reasons Why It's All Over" by claiming -- like Godard -- that cinema will go on, the reader hesitates to believe him. His criticism of most of the technological and economic developments in recent film history paints an essentialist picture of film, one that leaves little room for optimism. What's most disappointing about his piece is not that he sees these developments as problems, but that, like Jean Baudrillard, he sees little hope for the future. Unlike James Schamus' rant about independent cinema -- a piece that, despite its disgust at the current state of affairs, gives hope to the reader -- Dixon's essay amplifies the undertone of the book that leaves little room for new filmmakers (and critics) to do anything but long for the heyday of semiotics and the auteur theory.

The End of Cinema As We Know It: American Film in the Nineties presents itself as an exploration of the "condition of American cinema" at the end of the millennium. Given the centenary of the medium and the media blitz around Y2K, the time seems ripe, as Jon Lewis tells us in the introduction, for asking whether Godard's "the end of cinema" has arrived. Upon reading the works collected within, however, it becomes evident that the individual essays are not asking that question, but seem to be tracing out their own interests in 1990s American cinema. Nonetheless, Lewis' nine sections group the essays in ways that comment on one another, that, by juxtaposition, build an argument. At final tally, The End of Cinema is a collection of mostly-solid film criticism by many of the leading names in film studies. The book asks many questions about the state of cinema today and leaves it to the reader to see the answers in the connections between these essays.

Essential Brakhage: Selected Writings on Filmmaking

By Stan Brakhage
Kingston: Documentext, 2001. ISBN 0-929701-64-X. 21 illustrations, 232pp. $18.00 (pbk)

A review by Liza Palmer, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

An editor of a compilation of written works is much like a curator of an art show: a good one can help you to appreciate the familiar, and navigate the new. But it is no easy task to provide context for a body of writing usurped from its original circumstance -- especially when that body of writing belongs to Stan Brakhage, *avant garde* filmmaker and theorist. Brakhage's career spans nearly fifty years, and has produced such seminal, ground-breaking films as *Anticipation of the Night* (1958), *Dog Star Man* (1961-1964), and *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959). His films have challenged the *status quo* of perception, and have courted controversy among filmmakers, scholars, and viewers alike. However, his contribution to filmmaking is undeniable -- one need only look at a Martin Scorsese or Oliver Stone film to recognize his influence. Whether you love Brakhage or despise him, he remains so central to the *avant garde* film movement within the United States that he is hard to ignore.

With well over 350 films to his credit, Brakhage is considered to be an unusually prolific filmmaker; but, as *Essential Brakhage* proves, he is an equally prolific writer. An admirable collection of essays, shooting scripts, and musings, *Essential Brakhage* represents a second chance at some rare works of Brakhage, previously available only in select editions or limited runs, which, needless to say, are priced for the collector's market these days. Gaining selected access to such unique pieces as *Metaphors on Vision* and *A Moving Picture Giving and Taking Book* is reason enough to add this book to your film library.

With Brakhage's moving manifesto "Metaphors on Vision," a piece which aptly begins *Essential Brakhage*, we have the laying-down of the gauntlet that was to alter so irrevocably the practice of film: "Imagine an eye unruled by man-made laws of perspective. An eye unprejudiced by compositional logic, an eye which does not respond to the name of everything but which must know each object encountered in life through an adventure of perception" (12). In all of Brakhage's subsequent works, both film and otherwise, he has returned to this theme of unmediated perception, and has become an inspirational -- and charismatic -- iconoclast of filmmaking rules and standards. His advice to budding filmmakers in *A Moving Picture Giving and Taking Book*:

> My first instruction, then: if you happen to have a light meter -- give it away…
> otherwise: give over reading this further and get on with the game of numbers
> you're playing and its absolute sets of what is *scene*: for I am going on, from
> here, with *seeing* -- any/everyone's ultimate gift to the motion picture medium
> (106).

To editor McPherson's credit, it is intriguing to trace the trajectory of Brakhage's views on filmic perception across the body of his written work. It comes as no surprise, reading such pieces as "Metaphors on Vision," "The Seen," and "Poetry and Film" back-to-back, that Brakhage has now almost completely abandoned representational filming via a camera in favor of a more direct engagement with the film medium -- painting on film stock.

However, *Essential Brakhage*, while providing a good overview of Brakhage's thoughts and theories of film, is not necessarily for the novice. Lack of a significant biography of Brakhage within this compilation could pose a problem for those readers hoping to connect with him for the first time. So much of his life and past experiences are invested in his films and writings; without benefit of a biographical account or a working knowledge of his films, much of the significance of such pieces as "Notes on Anticipation" might be lost. Furthermore, there is little mention of Jane Brakhage Wodening, his first wife, who was so integral to the development of Brakhage's early film aesthetic, which characterized such classics as *The Weir-Falcon Saga* (1970), *Sirius Remembered* (1959), and his 8mm series of *Songs*. Indeed, *Essential Brakhage*, while a welcome addition to the Brakhage bibliography, tends to whitewash, or revise, those very aspects of his life which make him such a fascinating figure in the film world.

To be sure, *Essential Brakhage* wants a stronger editor-figure, like P. Adams Sitney or Robert Haller -- two respected film scholars (and Brakhage experts) who worked very closely with him on *Metaphors on Vision* and *Brakhage Scrapbook*, respectively. Both Sitney and Haller establish and maintain a presence in these influential works, intervening through interviews and analysis, to infuse the material with context. What results is a true negotiation of Brakhage's place in the pantheon of film -- with equal parts admiration and scepticism.

However, *Essential Brakhage* is not totally without merit -- far from it. The revised and updated "Selected Film Annotations" and "Selected Bibliography," courtesy of Marilyn Jull Brakhage, his second wife, will be a valued resource for Brakhage scholars and enthusiasts. As Brakhage himself relates in "Poetry and Film": "I've written a lot, I've spoken a lot, I've tried to make talk into as much integrity as possible" (191). McPherson's selection of Brakhage's written works is testament to this.

Eyes Wide Shut

A review by Paul N. Reinsch, University of Southern California, USA

French theorist / professor / filmmaker Michel Chion closed his book *Kubrick's Cinema Odyssey* on *2001* (1968) with a provocative discussion about the film's links to Kubrick's final film, *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999). Readers wishing that Chion had continued his remarks on the latter film have now had their wish granted. Chion devotes his attention to Kubrick's final film in a monograph for the BFI Modern Classics Series. He positions the film within Kubrick's oeuvre as a work that presents the world as a place where knowing another person is impossible but also impossible to resist trying. This is a world in which one should rejoice in simply being alive, all the while acknowledging that this world is all there is, and that it usually does not make rational sense. Kubrick's film presents an ordinary couple -- Bill and Alice Harford played (by real life couple Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman) -- in a real city -- New York by way of London backlots -- in a dreamlike and stylized manner which initially seems at odds with the banality of the film's contents but is revealed as its perfect complement in Chion's entrancing discussion.

Few films in recent memory have so successfully divided audiences into the camps of the devoted and the disgusted. This text will likely attract readers from both groups and Chion admirably calls both sides to the filmic text. He states with disarming clarity: "My aim here is to try to see what should be seen and to hear what should be heard." To this end Chion notes that in the orgy scene (which, like many other viewers he feels Kubrick did not quite solve), the actress playing Bill's would-be saviour switches. The two women wear the same mask and seem to be one. The viewer can only note the change by examining the woman's nakedness and scrutinizing the film. Chion admits to doing both and uses this example to indicate that while concerned with the banal and the everyday as it documents how Bill and Alice both manage to fill their time when not attending parties or arguing over fidelity, nothing in Kubrick's film can be taken for granted or passed over. Every aspect of the film, the visual design, the editing, the use of music, and performance come under Chion's watchful eye and ear as he doggedly attempts to let the film speak.

And speak the film does, in pauses, breaks, and most notably in repetitions. Chion devotes his twenty eighth chapter to the film's use of "parroting": having a character repeat what another character has said. Naturally Bill does this more than any other character in the film, one of the many ways in which Cruise's manic and active screen persona is subverted and questioned by the film. More specifically, the parroting foregrounds the fact that language often is a series of signifiers floating free of signifieds, that language is speech, literally a series of words which creates the expectation of response and exchange. The instances of parroting finally build to the moment when Alice, now aware of her husband's day-long attempt at infidelity, says "We should be grateful," and a cut to Bill reinforces the expectation of the word's (at the very least) repetition. But it does not come and this creates a stunning

moment which provides Bill and the audience room to reflect on all of the prior instances of parroting and the import of Alice's statement. Grateful for what? Bill and audience both ask -- without speaking. The film says: for life and time and all that these two signifiers bring, or do not bring, with them.

Chion respects the film and its maker and never places himself in a position above either. His approach serves as a model for engagement with a film. The structure of his discussion is far more difficult to duplicate. Chion's comments come in a set order, but much like the film he discusses, where one event often only comes after a preceding event and is not the result of a preceding event, his comments look forward and backward at once. The numbers of the book's chapters get larger as one turns the pages but Chion is not building up to statement on the film. This book is elliptical and repetitive. Chion's conclusions are in his introduction, and throughout his text. The book invites a sampling, or a scrambling of its order, and causes one to wonder if the film too would respond favorably to this reading strategy.

Chion's theory that Bill and Alice Harford will have a son after the events of the narrative and that the film is told from the point of view of this baby will puzzle some readers. Indeed, this is a point which Chion does not fully explicate here or in his comments at the end of *Kubrick's Cinema Odyssey*. His very refusal, however, is another indication that Chion is well-equipped to examine Kubrick's work, which owes at least a portion of its status to the simple fact that it is impossible to fully account for.

The book's first chapter contains the line quoted above about Chion's goal to "try to see what should be seen and to hear what should be heard." The chapter concludes with this teasing phrase: "perhaps the film would say that both seeing and hearing are an illusion." Chion's engaging work brings *Eyes Wide Shut* and the reader closer together and after a polite, functional, and enticing introduction (much as would occur at Ziegler's party where Alice and Bill are both tempted) allows the newly acquainted entities to sort things out on their own. Chion is a fine host and Kubrick's film is lucky to have such an accommodating friend, and proponent for the film's status as a modern classic.

German National Cinema

By Sabine Hake
London: Routledge, 2002. ISBN 0-415-08902-6. 22 illustrations, vii + 231pp. £14.99 (pbk)

A review by James M. Skidmore, University of Waterloo, Canada

The jacket blurb of Sabine Hake's new monograph summarizes why this book is so important: "*German National Cinema* is the first comprehensive account in English from its origins to the present." The Introduction and seven chapters follow a fairly standard chronological division based on German political developments of the twentieth century: Wilhelmine cinema (1895-1919), Weimar cinema (1919-33), Third Reich cinema (1933-1945), Postwar cinema (1945-61), East German cinema (1961-89), West German cinema (1962-89), Post-unification cinema (1989-2000). An extensive fifteen-page bibliography, three useful indices (subjects, names, and film titles), and stills from twenty-two different films round out the volume.

Hake's review of German cinematic history encompasses a number of facets critical to film research. She not only addresses the thematic interests of specific filmmakers or the issues of political events and their effect on filmmaking, but also introduces the reader to the relationship between German society and cinema in economic and social terms. Thus the tension between the commercial necessity of mass appeal and the desire to create independent film documents, present probably in almost any national cinema, receives attention throughout this chronicle, as do the rise and maintenance of star systems, the varieties of government influence evidenced by means of censorship, financial control, and political coercion, the role of genre in film history, technological developments, and the influence of Hollywood. All of these topics are embedded in the social context of each political period, and Hake is to be commended for her ability to summarize succinctly the most important elements of these issues in a clear and understandable manner. No film or filmmaker of importance in mainstream film production is omitted.

Hake's attention to "the elements of popular cinema -- the genres, the audiences, and the stars" (1) is somewhat overshadowed by the question of national cinema. In fact the introductory chapter will be of more interest to readers already well-versed in German cinema (probably not the target audience of this book) who wish to judge the success of Hake's attempts at establishing an analytical framework that acknowledges the category of national cinema without becoming enslaved by it. Hake undermines the category by putting forward a great number of rhetorical questions on the definition of national cinema, and then refuses to answer them -- "the following comprehensive overview of German cinema from the beginning to the present does not attempt to answer any of these questions" (6). Raising questions about a thorny concept but not answering them may be an intellectually honest approach, but it does not give the reader any confidence that what is to come will be worth reading.

There are other points to take issue with as well. Stylistically, Hake often introduces topics by relying on a string of rhetorical questions. This may well be related to her desire to open up spaces "for contemplating possible approaches" (6), but it also makes for bad writing, as the reader must then guess what the author's answer is or might possibly be. Some remarks ("A few films were banned despite, or because, of [sic] their National Socialist fervour" (62)) leave the reader wishing for more information, others ("[Til] Schweiger as a German Tom Cruise and [Katja] Riemann as a German Meg Ryan" (185)) expect the reader to understand what the author is thinking, while still other statements seem to have escaped an editor's eye altogether: "Not surprisingly, Third Reich cinema was from the beginning a cinema dominated by male and, above all, female stars" (68). I am having trouble thinking of a cinema, German or otherwise, that has not been dominated by male and female actors. There are just enough errors to be bothersome: some dates are incorrect (*Lola rennt* appeared in 1998, not 1999; Germany invaded France in 1940, not 1939), and occasional misspellings of names ("Achternbuch"), entities ("Sudentenland", "Wessies", "Ossies") and film titles ("*BeFreier und Befreite*" "*Vierzig m2 Deutschland*") mar the text. The accompanying stills are nice enough, but they are not connected with the text in any direct fashion, and thus have no obvious purpose (as is sadly so often the case in film texts where it seems that the reason for including pictures from films is because you can).

Most tellingly, perhaps, is the fact that Hake, in 192 pages of written text, mentions approximately 780 films. This is evidence not only of her strength as a comprehensive scholar, but also of the inherent weakness of the project's structure. Fewer films and directors, and more thorough and cohesive argumentation about the remaining ones, would have turned a useful book into a superb one.

Hollywood, Hype and Audiences: Selling and Watching Popular Film in the 1990s

By Thomas Austin
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-7190-5775-2. iii + 257pp. £14.99 (pbk)

A review by Rayna Denison, University of Nottingham, UK

An idea whose time has come is the best way to describe Thomas Austin's work in *Hollywood, Hype and Audiences*. The premise is a simple one: to combine a number of film and cultural studies theories in order to gain an overview of the relationships between Hollywood, popular media and viewing audiences. In particular Austin mines the theories of political economy, reception and empirical audience studies to examine the flows of influence between his chosen groups. In doing so he redresses oft-perceived imbalances in power between audiences and industrial Hollywood, as mediated by popular media. Consequently the timely element of Austin's work lies in the inclusiveness of his research topic. By synthesising these prominent theories, he is able to delve into the previously murky terrain of the circulation of Hollywood film.

Hollywood, Hype and Audiences also makes inroads into longstanding theoretical debates not limited to film studies. Chapter Two (Texts in Context), for example, provides interesting insights into several longstanding debates both in film and more widely in cultural studies. Perhaps the most insightful of these is Austin's expansion on Barbara Klinger's work on the dispersible text. This notion, which in some ways opposes entrenched views of marketing found in other film studies theories (notably Justin Wyatt's *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*, 1994), looks to make sense of the fractured nature of film marketing. As Austin puts it "the dispersible film text must offer multiple invitations-to-view to a number of taste publics, even while commercial imperatives may privilege some market segments over others" (141). Aided by a focus on the "circuit of production" involved in Hollywood filmmaking, Austin astutely uses the dispersible text to explicate both Hollywood marketing and media and audience responses to films. Thus he ensures that no aspect of the process of creating popular film is left untouched, a point particularly well-illustrated in his examination of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1992).

Linked to film, Austin also uses this theoretical framework to discuss current issues in cultural studies such as taste, publics and gender. For example, in Chapter Five on *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994), Austin performs a complex analysis of violence in the media clearly implicating Hollywood and the British press in popular taste formations without falling into the trap of implying that these influences are hegemonic. He discusses with clarity the ways positive and negative respondents to the film positioned themselves within discourses on violence initiated by the film's British distributors and British media. In doing so he illuminates wider cultural trends around taste formations, challenging

conceptions of the popular press as a tutelary body guiding and shaping the opinions of the British public.

A similar strength is witnessed in Austin's detailed analysis of the controversies around and reactions to *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992), in the first of his case studies. The basic structure for all of his case studies is exemplified in this chapter as he works through his analysis from the industrial (pre)production life of the film, through the scandals that surrounded it, to the adoption of such scandals by the press followed by audience reactions to the film, examining the impact of the former groups on the latter. Interestingly, in the case of *Basic Instinct*, Austin also notes the impact of exhibition sites (home video) on the uses to which viewers put the film. Such flourishes, which also include memories of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and the importance of age and identity in creating viewing positions for *Natural Born Killers*, are common in *Hollywood, Hype and Audiences* and they provide for some of its most exciting insights.

Due in large part to the new theoretical emphases placed on the examination of films here, Austin's book provides some useful tools for future work in film studies. His hybridised approach does however potentially present some problems. He insists repeatedly on the importance of context when studying films this way, so it is surprising that he chooses Britain as the context for his investigation of these ostensibly American films. He does so in an uncomplicated way at times, for example largely ignoring the complex relationship between the British source material for *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and its Hollywood/American film interpretation. His focus on Hollywood is also occasionally undermined by reference to British source materials that remove some of the immediacy of his argument even as they provide interesting insights into Britain and British audiences, for instance, as a secondary market for American films. These quibbles aside, *Hollywood, Hype and Audiences* does provide an intriguing way of accessing and analysing the relationships between films and their audiences that is inclusive in a way much previous work in the field is not.

Introduction to Documentary

By Bill Nichols
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001. ISBN 0253214696. 404pp. £12.95 (pbk)
The Autobiographical Documentary in America By Jim Lane

The Autobiographical Documentary in America

By Jim Lane

Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002. ISBN 0299176541. 257pp. £22.95 (pbk)

A review by Jamie Sexton, Cardiff University, UK

Attempts to define documentary filmmaking are fraught with conceptual difficulties. Whilst we often feel we "know" when we are watching a documentary at the cinema or on television, it is another thing entirely to try to say why this is. Many critics and theorists in the past have attempted, yet rigid definitions are easily deconstructed. It is to Bill Nichols credit that he avoids trying to pin down what the documentary is in his *Introduction to Documentary*. Rather, like other documentary writers such as Dai Vaughan and John Corner, he steers well clear of providing any ultimate definitions of how documentary filmmaking should be perceived. Instead he provides a number of key elements that have been seen as central to documentary filmmaking but, in order to avoid finality, warns that these are always subject to historical change as well as synchronic slippage (for instance, sometimes it will be impossible to draw any firm line between fiction and documentary filmmaking).

Documentary cannot be defined in any neat, dictionary-like manner:

> **The fuzziness of any definition arises partly because definitions change over time and partly because at any given moment no one definition covers all films we might consider documentary (21).**

Whilst Nichols avoids attempting to pin down what documentary filmmaking *is*, he is nevertheless interested to describe what it *has been*, as well as exploring the many ways in which we may understand documentary filmmaking as different from other types of filmmaking. Thus documentary filmmaking can only be understood within a matrix of intersecting relations.

Nichols begins by attempting to claim some important differences between fiction and non-fiction over the years. He writes that all films are documentaries under some description, but there are two major forms of documentary: firstly, documentaries of representation (documentary as we more commonly understand it); secondly, documentaries of wish-fulfilment (fiction films, which nevertheless are documents of the culture that produces them and reproduce the likenesses of the people acting in them) (2). Whilst this dichotomy does point to useful divisions, I think one could come up with a better term than "wish-fulfilment" for fiction filmmaking. After all, propaganda films may well be seen as documents of wish-fulfilment, too, but are not generally categorised as fiction.

Whilst there are a number of interrelations that feed into what makes a film a documentary, Nichols is keen to stress

what he considers to be the most important factors. He considers these to be institutional descriptions, audience relations and the textual attributes of films themselves. Additionally, Nichols is always keen to note added complexities on top of these important factors.

Institutional descriptions of documentary films are important because they act as an initial classificatory tool for the insertion of films within the networks of production, distribution and exhibition. Such factors feed into the creation of a documentary community, within which documentary filmmakers operate. The documentary community creates a number of assumptions and expectations about what a documentary film is. Commonalities within the documentary community mean that individual practitioners "will shape or transform the traditions they inherit, but they do so in dialogue with others who share their sense of mission" (26). The notion of "community" here may be problematic in that it could be seen to idealise the process through which norms and conventions arise. Nevertheless, such a model does point towards the open-ended, dynamic nature of documentary filmmaking, which is always subject to modifications and paradigmatic shifts of emphasis

The textual nature of the films themselves result from institutional frameworks (and also feed into those very frameworks). By looking at the films themselves, we can come to another layer of classification, though the norms of documentary texts are not unitary by any means: there can be differences within any historical period (e.g., different schools of documentary filmmaking), as well as across changing historical periods. Nichols claims that there are a number of important historical movements

within documentary, as well as a number of identifiable *modes* (such as the poetic mode and the reflexive mode). Modes are seen as existing beyond specific movements, though they may draw upon features chiefly associated with particular movements. Importantly, they are not mutually exclusive, but overlap, so that any one documentary may bear traces of more than one mode.

Finally, audience activity is another important element to consider in the definition of documentary filmmaking. Audiences will, usually, come to documentary films with a different set of expectations than they will a fiction film. The relationship to the represented material is of a different order: documentary films often presuppose a belief in the authenticity of the world depicted, whereas fiction films more commonly presuppose a suspension of disbelief. Whilst this dichotomous distinction does seem a little pat, it nevertheless does point to an important way in which documentary filmmaking often relies on a different set of expectations. Its combination of shaping material into a particular perspective leads to what Nichols terms a reliance on *epistephilia*, that is, a desire to be informed and gain knowledge.

The relationship between documentary and knowledge is primarily aesthetic. Documentary is not a "window on the world", neither is it merely "factual" filmmaking (hence its historical separation from genres such as the travelogue and the newsreel). Rather, it has been constructed as a particular (if not broad and fuzzy) language of presentation, merging the "creative" vision(s) of the filmmaker(s), with an attempt to represent aspects of the social world. For Nichols, the voice of the documentary is the perspective of the filmmaker(s), which shapes the

represented social reality. The "voice" is not merely the voice of a narrator within a documentary (though this is an example), but extends to the formal devices chosen to present selected events and arguments in particular ways. These can include the choice between recording synchronised sound or constructing the soundtrack in postproduction, whether to adhere to a chronological structure or not, and what "mode" to employ in organising the film.

Overall, Nichols provides a number of persuasive arguments as to what documentary filmmaking has been, and what it is. Sidestepping any simplistic explanations, he nevertheless fruitfully points out some of the features that have intermeshed in order to produce a recognisable type of filmmaking. Condensing many arguments Nichols has previously made in a number of pioneering articles and books into a clearly written text, *An Introduction to Documentary* is a recommended guide to students new to this area, but should also provide much food for thought to those more versed in the nuances of this significant mode of filmmaking.

In the last chapter of his book, Nichols briefly mentions the rise of "personal portraiture" documentaries, in which social issues are addressed from a biographical perspective. American documentary films that have addressed themes and issues via personal explorations are the subjects of Jim Lane's book, *The Autobiographical Documentary in America*. In Lane's view, the rise of autobiographical documentaries is "one of the most significant paths taken by American documentarists in recent years" (4). They have revealed that documentary can be "a site of autobiographical subjectivity" (4), have

complicated how non-fiction films and videos represent the real world, and have explored the formal possibilities of the medium.

Lane marks the importance of autobiographical documentaries in disrupting the growing rigidity of documentary form that was being wrought through the dominance of "objective" documentary filmmaking in the late 1960s, particularly by direct cinema practitioners. Lane sees the roots of the autobiographical documentary lying within avant-garde personal films that were being made in America in the 1960s by artists such as Jonas Mekas and Stan Brakhage, as well as more self-reflective films being made in Europe by filmmakers such as Jean Rouch and Jean-Luc Godard. These films, like subsequent autobiographical documentaries, questioned dominant "objective" tenets through laying "bare the material conditions under which the film was made" (17).

The mock-documentary *David Holzman's Diary* (Jim McBride, 1967) is seen as the most important, and unlikely, precursor to the autobiographical documentary. The film may have been a fictional simulation of an autobiographical documentary, but Lane believes its mixture of truth and lying and its experimentation critiqued the objective nature of direct cinema, whilst also relying on some of its conventions (hand-held, shaky camerawork and grainy film stock). It was, Lane contends, a bridge between direct cinema and the subsequent emergence of the autobiographical documentary.

He then goes on to provide a solid and descriptive account of different types of autobiographical documentary from

the early 1970s up until the present day. Much of this narrative -- such as the important influences of this mode as well as the important films made within this mode -- has already been traced, but only in piecemeal fashion. The strength of Lane's book lies in its ability to look at this mode of filmmaking in a sustained, detailed manner.

Lane focuses on three very broad trends within documentary filmmaking: the journal entry approach; autobiographical portraiture; and women and autobiographical documentary. Lane does not make an exhaustive historical survey of the kinds of films made within these categories, but instead analyses particular films in relation to questions of technology, aesthetics and politics. This particular focus is both a strength and weakness. Lane, drawing on personal experience as a filmmaker, is excellent at analysing particular texts in rich detail, relating them to broader areas of autobiography as well as to the technological bases from which the filmmaker(s) work. The weakness of such an approach is evident, however, in that such a focus on particular texts tends to wrench them out of broader institutional histories. Whilst Lane is keen to contextualise films within a socio-political and aesthetic framework, one expects a filmmaker to more thoroughly investigate the economic and institutional frameworks that determine -- at lease to an extent -- the ways in which films are made. In a recent article John Corner has argued that the autobiographical documentary is now largely a televisual, rather than cinematic, phenomenon, but Lane does not investigate in any detail the differences between working for distinct media.

To his benefit, Lane does provide a thorough aesthetic exploration of different modes of autobiographical documentaries. Defending such films against accusations that they are symptomatic of a narcissistic "me" culture, he defends such approaches as being capable of powerfully linking the self to the broader social order (57) and attempting to "understand and express one's own history through new media in the context of shifting U.S. politics" (21). Again, there is nothing particularly original with arguments linking the personal to the political, but Lane does demonstrate, through clear and careful analyses, the way in which such operations are expressed through complex aesthetic strategies.

Lane claims that "journal entry" documentaries "deploy the personal crisis plot, examine the political or ethical role of the autobiographical documentary, and significantly rely on chronological narrative in the representation of temporality and narration" (48). He criticises wholesale dismissals of narrative forms as reductive and simplistic, arguing -- through a close analysis of films such as Ed Pincus' Diaries (1971-76) and Tom Joslin and Peter Friedman's *Silverlake Life: the View From Here* (1993) -- that narrative frameworks are deployed in diverse, and often complex, ways. The autobiographical portraiture, in contrast, moves away from chronological narration in favour of mixing footage in a more synchronic investigation of personal events. This mode is further split into two components: the "family portrait" "inscribes a life story within a broader section of family stories" (95) and developed in the 1970s; the "personal portrait" places the self in relation to a more diverse set of external relations. In the last section of the book, Lane looks at women and the autobiographical

documentary. He sees this mode of documentary as particularly important to the rise of feminist movements in the 1970s due to their insistence on the politics of the personal. Many films made by women in this mode -- such as *Joe and Maxi* (Cohen, 1978) -- are able to look at the everyday lives of women from a critical perspective, in which oppressive social conditions become apparent.

Overall, Lane's book is a solid, interesting account of different forms of autobiographical documentary. Whilst I have touched upon weaknesses of his centrally aesthetic focus, his ability to look at texts in detail is nevertheless a necessary means of countering the simplistic dismissals of such films by previous writers. Yet one of Lane's central arguments -- that this mode was important in countering the rigidities of direct cinema -- relies on envisioning the "other" of direct cinema in a simplistic manner. Such a view also seems to be alluded to by Nichols through the way that he positions direct cinema as a mode lacking self-consciousness (114). Such a view may be true of some films that arose from the movement, but certainly not all. In fact, the excessive shakiness of early direct cinema films as well as their grainy footage can be seen, within their historical context, as signalling to the viewer a *greater* presence of the filmmaker. This is a mode of cinema that is itself in need of a revisionist, detailed investigation, in order to counter the somewhat pat descriptions that in many areas still characterise it.

Law and Film

By Stefan Machura and Peter Robson (eds.)
Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001. ISBN 0-631-22816-0. 176pp. £15.99 (pbk)

A review by Shulamit Almog, University of Haifa, Israel

Machura and Robson's anthology (that was published simultaneously as Vol. 28, No. 1 of *Journal of Law and Society*) offers an intriguing compilation of eleven articles dealing with relations between law and film. Both fields, besides their formal functions, served during the twentieth century as major cultural agents. It is accepted now that film is far more than an aesthetic or merely entertaining object, and that law is much more than just a practical mechanism for resolving conflicts and coercing order. Film is indeed as Graeme Turner states, "a social practice for its makers and its audience; in its narratives and meanings we can locate evidence of the ways in which our culture makes sense of itself." The same could be said about law. Therefore, it is surprising that the scholarly pursuit of the reciprocal flow of ideas, sentiments, attitudes and norms between these two primary cultural artefacts -- law and cinema -- is relatively new. Thus, as the editors note in their introduction, "there is no consensus about what to look at in law and film nor in what form these studies are best conducted" (1). Although the editors try to indicate some main strands of inquiry that emerge, the collection as a unity does reflect the vagueness and elusiveness that the field has not yet conquered, but an appropriate compensation is the breadth of viewpoints and possible directions of investigation we are offered.

With the exception of Peter Drexler, who examines several aspects of the German courtroom film during the Nazi period, most of the other writers deal with American movies. Since America dominated (and dominates) film practice, this is hardly surprising. Nicole Rafter looks at the development of America criminal films over the last seven decades, and their influence not only upon American law, but as a "globally powerful source of ideology about the nature of criminal justice" (24). Steve Greenfield reviews the cinematic figures of the trial lawyers, and examines the ways in which they deal with conflicts between formal law and justice. Both essays aptly illustrate the powerful relations between our legal perceptions and cinematic images, or, to be precise, to American cinematic images.

Gerald J. Thain discusses the two versions of *Cape Fear* (the first filmed in 1962; the second filmed in 1991), and the changes in the portrayals of the lawyer figure as manifesting the ambivalent role lawyers play in contemporary society. Michael Bohnke writes about the image of law in the films of John Ford. He discusses *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), *The Searchers* (1956) and *The Man who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), in order to explore how the process of constituting law is represented. He sees *Young Mr. Lincoln* as "a kind of Parable about the ideal of law" (63), and *The Searchers* as essentially about a custom that is opposed to the rule of law. The third film, according to Bohnke, "confronts the two ways, showing the different assumptions about the inherent qualities of law" (46). Mathias Kuzina explores the cultural implications of two types of American Courtroom films -- "the problem film in the guise of legal drama and the trial movie which may take the form of a social film" (79). Hollywood courtroom drama is also the subject of Stefan Machura and Stefan Ulbrich's

article. The writers try to decipher the tremendous influence those films have on the public concept of justice, and the reason that elements from American movies are repeated even in films that take place in continental Europe. Peter Robson looks at the process of adapting John Grisham's novels to film. Robson claims that the adaptations created some films that make broad social concerns more explicit, but on the other hand, "the conventional domination of consensus in the film has altered the portrayal of the legal profession to a more oblique critique" (163).

The last two writers, Phil Meyer and Guy Osborne, focus upon wider theoretical issues that pertain to the nature of law and film studies. According to Meyer's interesting contention, a jury trial is more like a movie than a novel, and the role of the trial practitioner is similar in many ways to that of the director. After reading this excellent essay, those contentions seem less "speculative" (146) than the writer himself suspects they are.

Guy Osborn, in the last essay, aims to outline the development of legal education in England and Wales, and the shift towards cultural contexts. However, even those who embrace cultural studies, claims Osborn, prefer to investigate what is considered to be "high culture" (law and literature, for example), and ignore what is considered to be popular culture, including films. It seems that in spite of this tendency, there is a growing interest in law and film. It is reflected, among other things, in the chronology of selected films that the book includes (3-8). The late awakening of law and film studies is rather unfortunate, since we are in the midst of a new communication era. Films are now merely segments of a radically different media environment that have changed and will incontestably further transform the ways we produce and consume films, as well as the ways in which law and cinema interlace. It seems that the scholarly attention will probably shift towards the investigation of the links between law and the new technologies that produce moving images, even before we managed to crystallize some valid insights about the relations between law and "traditional" cinema. However, as the essays in the book prove, the investigation of law and film is challenging and evoking, and awaits expansion, that will link it with current technological developments. This collection does not offer a comprehensive set of positions and attitudes shaping the field, but considering the preliminary stage of law and film studies, one can hardly accept that. What the collection does offer is a diverse album of starting points for those who wish to explore this promising field further.

New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction

By Geoff King
London: I.B. Tauris, 2002. ISBN 1-86064-750-2. 14 illustrations, 296pp. £15.95 (pbk)

A review by Paul Grainge, University of Nottingham, UK

As numerous critics have discussed, the term "New Hollywood" is an especially ranging, and often charged, discursive category. It has been taken up in competing corporate and creative definitions, has come to signal the gamut of post-prefixed "isms" of critical periodisation (post-Fordism, post-classicism, postmodernism), and has become virtually synonymous with the form and significance of that unstable beast of contemporary cultural production: the movie blockbuster. While clearly indebted to Steve Neale and Murray Smith's *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* in steering a path through the manifold meanings of New Hollywood cinema, Geoff King provides a lucid, well-organised and sympathetic introduction to the field. Analysing New Hollywood in relation to stylistic, industrial, and socio-cultural issues and contexts, King integrates his analysis in seven chapters that address the Hollywood Renaissance, blockbusters, authorship, genre, star power, narrative and spectacle, and the impact of the small screen revolutions of video and DVD.

The success of *New Hollywood Cinema* is in the way that it covers major debates within the abounding literature on New Hollywood (one would expect this of any worthy introduction) with relatively fresh examples and case studies. The chapter on star power, for example, provides a lengthy discussion of Will Smith to illustrate the commercial calculations of stardom and synergy. While situating his analysis within the necessary framework of star studies, King is not laborious in his treatment of familiar debates and manages to adapt and update them to explore New Hollywood contexts and their specificity. Smith is an indicative and under-examined case of cross-over star appeal, and King provides a compact discussion of Smith's star persona as it has been construed discursively across television, music and movie industries. Similarly, George Clooney provides a critical focus for extended discussions of both stardom and genre, *From Dusk Till Dawn* and *Three Kings* used to exemplify patterns of genre bending and star association in films associated with emergent New Hollywood auteurs, Quentin Tarantino and Spike Jonze. Together with the usual suspects of New Hollywood analysis -- *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, *Batman*, *Jurassic Park*, *Toy Story*, *Gladiator* -- King provides refreshing contemporary examples that prevent *New Hollywood Cinema* becoming a tired synthesis of New Hollywood scholarship. Rather, the book gathers pace to make a persuasive and sometimes original account of American cinema in our global media and information age.

The first two chapters provide competent, albeit well rehearsed, summaries of New Hollywood in its creative and corporate guise. In outlining different "versions" of the term, King is far more comfortable dealing with the regime of the contemporary blockbuster (by way of *Godzilla*) than he is detailing the Hollywood Renaissance (by way of *Easy Rider* and *Bonnie and Clyde*). The latter is somewhat undermined by a scatter-gun approach to social and cultural context. While acknowledging that "it is never easy to make direct connections or to establish precisely how the traces of historical events or social currents find their way

onto screen" (22), King is drawn to simplistic evocations of "freedom" and "rebellion", "doom" and "dark forces" to explain the countercultural tendencies of early New Hollywood movies. While not off the mark, the writing is at times glib in chapter one ("not everyone was invited to the prosperity party" (24)). Indeed, the analysis becomes more tightly argued and convincing when King moves on to the industrial contexts and aesthetic issues that dominate later chapters, and that appear to be King's preferred mode of analysis.

While mapping key theories in digestible thematic chapters -- this is a book that has grown out of and is clearly designed to support undergraduate modules on contemporary Hollywood -- *New Hollywood Cinema* does have a critical position. This is not simply vested in the methodological point that New Hollywood is subject to not one but many definitions, or that change must be analysed alongside continuity in measuring the "newness" of New Hollywood. It argues for the essential complexity of New Hollywood products, including a form of narrative complexity that is often denied or ignored by critics who vaunt (often to lament) the spectacular nature of the contemporary blockbuster. It is in the chapter "Narrative vs. Spectacle in the Contemporary Blockbuster" that King strikes a more concerted argument. Summarising aspects of his previous book, *Spectacular Narratives*, King makes a case for the persistence of narrative within a framework of debate that resists the easy distinctions of classical and post-classical cinema. This is indicative of *New Hollywood Cinema*'s attempt to engage carefully and critically with the meaning and determinants of "old" and "new" in the discursive periodisation of a core culture industry. Traversing key areas of New Hollywood debate in a student-friendly volume that combines theoretical exposition (and argumentation) with some well-chosen case studies, one might say that, in producing an introductory work, Geoff King has made all the right moves.

Popular Cinema of the Third Reich

By Sabine Hake
Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2001. ISBN 0-292-73458-3. 16 photographs, xv + 272pp. £15.99 (pbk)

A review by Robert D. Levy, University of Minnesota, USA

Assumption One: all films made between 1933 and 1945 in Germany are fascist.

Assumption Two: these films, and the people in the industry, succumbed to and translated National Socialist ideology into a more palatable commodity to be absorbed by moviegoers -- that is the nation and specifically the racialized nation.

Without contention or much debate, these premises formed the axes of analyzing German films and the German film industry during the Third Reich for many years. Numerous books, articles, and unpublished theses and dissertations dealing with specific films, actors, directors, and the relationships between the film industry and the government, revised and revisited these basic assumptions; but with some slight and some more significant provisions, the essential notions held true. More or less, the German film industry accommodated the worldview of the Nazi State or, at least, did not offer a contrasting perspective to German audiences. Over the last decade, however, more qualified and nuanced approaches advocated the premise that the Nazi propaganda machinery absorbed the German film industry but not as wholly or completely as previously assumed -- similarly with German audiences. Two of the most persuasive arguments in this new line of argument were Eric Rentschler's *The Ministry of Illusions: Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife*, and Linda Schulte-Sasse's *Entertaining the Third Reich: Illusions of Wholeness in the Third Reich*. While these authors shed light on the complexities of the issues and opened up new paths of exploration, the foundational assumptions of the Nazi cinema held -- shakier, to be certain, but holding. Why, then, undertake another study of the cinema in the Third Reich? With this question, and its timing, Sabine Hake throws her hat into the ring of discussion about the complexities of the German national cinema between 1933 and 1945 in *Popular Cinema and the Third Reich* -- following the discursive trend established by Rentschler and Schulte-Sasse (vii). But what does she have to add to the discussion, and how significant is it that her focus appears to concentrate on the "popular?"

From the start, Hake insists on refocusing the questions and methodologies of understanding the cinema of the Third Reich. Not simply an academic exercise in mental aerobics, her goal is an attempt to normalize the cinema of Nazi Germany and to recognize its place in the history of the German national cinema as a whole. Specifically, she wants to draw attention to the internal struggles of the film industry through its everyday practices and placing the cinema of the Third Reich within the German cinematic tradition, and thus "normalizing" the Nazi cinema and placing it within its proper lineage of the German national cinema -- acknowledging its precursors and successors. To accomplish this goal, Hake examines (and questions) the degree to which National Socialist ideologies penetrated or were perpetuated

by the film industry. So far, this sounds like many earlier analyses of the Nazi cinema, but what stands out in Hake's study is her effort to examine the ordinary and the material practices of making, delivering, and viewing the films. While this "bottom-up" methodology is common in other disciplines, such as social history (a German version includes *Alltagsgeschichte*, the history of everyday life), it is less common in a field dominated by the rule of exception and the extraordinary, such as film studies. Ambitious in scope and hope, *Popular Cinema in the Third Reich* opens the door to a new line of questioning, not just of the "Nazi Cinema" or even the German National Cinema, but also for film studies as a whole. This new methodology locates the meaning and implications of the film industry in a society (the Third Reich) by triangulating its position in relation to the "business" (production, distribution, marketing, and exhibition), the reception or audience-based analyses, and the wider social, economic, and political background. It is, of course, Hake's selection of films and actors that underscores her emphasis on the ordinary and popular, for example she devotes two chapters to Heinz Rühmann and Detlef Sierck, which successfully brings together the differing angles of her methodology. Although the sophistication and simplicity of *Popular Cinema of the Third Reich* add to the body of works on the German Cinema of the Third Reich era, the orientation towards some of the specific practices of the film industry are the most distinctive feature of this book.

Of these chapters, perhaps the most intriguing deal with German films as foreign films in the United States and the construction of cinematic and social space via set designs. In "The Foreign and the Familiar: On German-American Film Relations, 1933-1940" Hake brings together two often neglected aspects in the analysis of national cinemas. Firstly, in the face of Hollywood's undisputed role in world cinemas, Hake provides a brief characterization of American films that were distributed to Germany up to and between the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 and the eve of the American entrance into the World War in 1941. Secondly, she turns the tables and looks at German films in the United States between 1933 and 1940. A predictably small market to be sure and highly concentrated to areas with larger German immigrant communities; but the analysis of "foreign films draws attention to the national as a category of difference," which in turn translates wider social, political, and economic concerns into the daily practices of the film industry from production through exhibition (129). This upside-down (or reverse) approach of looking at German films as foreign films adds an intriguing dimension, especially in the context of the German cinema between 1933 and 1945. It is this second angle of approaching the reception and distribution of films outside of their national origins combined with her grounding in the ordinary practices of the film industry that strikes a most refreshing chord in the areas of film, cultural, and German studies. In fact, while there are choices to be made as far as what is included or left out of any book and how much, how little, or the right balance, what I was really hoping for was more meat in this chapter to bring out her suggestive allusion of looking at German films as foreign films, and the artistic/aesthetic/ideological aspects of this implication on the more material practices of the industry. Who distributed, who showed, and who watched these German films of the Third Reich? And more importantly, what was the nature of the relationship between the German and American film industries (before and after 1945)? Despite my desire for more of this, the concept of this chapter remains fascinating and the analysis is certainly compelling. More importantly, her distancing mechanism does create a unique space in which to look at many aspects of the German national cinema, and which could be equally applied to other national cinema case studies.

Popular Cinema of the Third Reich is an elegantly simple overview of the German commercial film industry under National Socialism. Balancing the demands of breadth or

depth, Hake strikes a reasonable middle ground that does not compromise her thesis or methodology. And, of course, what stands out most in this recent attempt to normalize the cinema of the Third Reich is its more holistic analysis of the industry and its products. While her argument is provocative, and perhaps long overdue, the basic assumptions that all German films made between 1933 and 1945 are tainted with a fascist hue, and to some degree the German film industry was equally tainted by its even tacit cooperation and coordination with the Nazi State --with some qualifications. Having said that though, Sabine Hake's *Popular Cinema of the Third Reich* is an important addition to contemporary understandings of both the industry and the films of the Third Reich and will be of interest to both specialists of German film and cultural studies as well as for readers with a more general interest in film, social, or cultural theories.

Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Play of Shadows

By Vicky Lebeau
London: Wallflower Press, 2001. ISBN 1-903364-19-1. 137pp. $17.00 (pbk)

A review by Arnab Das and Subrata sankar Bagchi, The Colleges under University of Calcutta, India

This book is a veritable and articulate inventory of psychoanalysis and cinema, both of which seek convergence in psychoanalytic film theory. The penetrative mode of interweaving film and psychoanalysis on the basis of their historical sharing adopts a piecemeal approach. In fact, as the book progresses the accumulative effect of the analyses rationalizes the easy shift of emphasis from psychoanalysis to psychoanalytic film theory based on the nature of a historical sharing of the two. The arrangement of the book fascinatingly broaches the central issues around the format of hallucination and hypnosis, wish and dream in productive association with sexuality and sexual difference within the modest context of modernity.

In the first chapter Lebeau chooses to focus on the historical modifications of the psychoanalytic foundation. Freud developed his distinct elaboration of psychoanalysis as a mode of interpreting experience and objects of modernity. In contrast to his mentor Breuer, Freud developed different thinking about hallucination and memory, hysteria and hallucination, narrative and fantasy. Particularly in response to the case of Anna O, he concentrated on his own understanding of the "unconscious". Removal of repression of the forgotten painful memory is actualized in the elusive analytic situation of therapy. Like a camera, the narrative of hysteria -- obtained as a result of transference onto the analyst -- becomes the preferred tool for cure. Freud refined his theory of the relation between wish and symptom, fantasy and divisions of consciousness. In psychoanalytic film theory one needs to identify the unending role of fantasy in dreams, the formations of political and cultural life and the operation of the wishes as the work of a hallucinatory reality of unconscious.

The second chapter initially rests on the conviction of the analogy of cinema and dream and of mirror and screen (30-51). Freud's model seems to transmute the connections between dream and cinema into the "techniques of imaginary" (35). Freud elaborates how and what dreams mean in madness and cure. The process prevails in cinema as well. Psychoanalysis emerges as a theory of reading a text whose manifest content includes desire and anxiety. The opposing drives of wish and fear running alongside are concealed by and find expression through psychoanalysis (40). The author's subsequent pursuit of film, as a simulation "apparatus" (42), proceeds from technology to spectator, from the institution to the psyche. The "apparatus" enables us to return to the real, for the subject to experience the "impression of reality" (43), which is the initial contact of subject with cinema and dream. Representation becomes similarly different from usual and more than real impression. Indeed, unconscious becomes the essential condition of watching, where both the perceptual and illusory qualities in two directions meet at once. The force of apparatus as an ideological system promotes the dominant organization of social life that engages a need for the means to its critique as an

institution of modern culture (46-47). As an institution the mental machinery of cinema functions as an "imaginary signifier". The intervention of Lacanian discourse relevantly considers the image in a mirror and on screen as a spectacle and a fabrication/imago. The signifiers of image initiate a narrative of identity as a fantasy. The fragmentation of the image is in simultaneous encounter with the promised ideal, a fictional totality. Cinema remains a visual record of everyday experience of reality governed by the idealization and aggression aimed at the human body (53). Lacanian mirror staged as the imaginary from the start adds to the condition of cinema (55). The mirror appears as a screen in the imaginary of cinema against a void beyond the field of representation. The cinema ensures the unending desire to seek beyond the visible and the extreme of psychoanalytic shock (58). Zizek's account upholds an urgent extension of the break between an "early" (imaginary) and "late" (real/gaze) Lacan (59). "Imaginary" continues to play key role in broadening the scopes of Lacanian psychoanalytic film in association with Kleinian and object-relational approaches (60).

The lives of his patients as understood by Freud are detailed in Jean-Paul Sartre's "The Freud Scenario". It was commissioned by the American director John Huston in 1958 but never filmed. This conceptual history of psychoanalysis, based on the vision of Freud has undergone three versions. In the third chapter the revisited accounts reactivate the question of trauma, scarring in representation of sexuality at the origin of psychoanalysis (72). The different versions of the screenplay provide a reader with a type of "textual unconscious".

The next chapter on "typical dreams" elaborates the most powerful and prevalent narrative of Oedipus on the meeting point of culture and unconscious. It implicates those dreams in which the dreamer experiences the wish and pain of losing a loved one -- a parent, a child, a sibling -- since waking life. It leads to the compulsive position of a spectator towards murder and incest. A woman, a mother is bound to play a pivotal role in the oedipal scenario of wanting to be like father and not to be like him. Raymond Bellour's unveiling of the Oedipal model of desire and narrative in cinema compares with the modern forms of sexuality and sexual difference in society. The desired fascination of textual analysis of the generalized rhymes found in dominant form of cinema imparts to the "textual dreaming" (83-92), a central context of modernity.

Feminism intervenes in the idea of women -- settled by all the above convictions derived from psychoanalytic understanding of film by Metz, Baudry and Bellour. The range and diversity of feminist thinking address the problems of how and why the woman bears the burden of the image of "castration". The feminist discourse in psychoanalytic film theory has been under a double movement -- complicating the idea of pleasure and an expansion of the frame of reference tracking the concepts of imaginary, identification, disavowal, fetishism (94-95). In the fifth chapter Lebeau goes through the works of Laura Mulvey and Joan Riviere. Mulvey keeps a "world ordered by sexual imbalance" in her sights and opens a space for an interminable analysis of the dilemmas of female spectator. Joan Riviere's thinking about the "womanliness as masquerade" helps trace the relations between feminism and the discourses of queer, postcolonial, black cultural/literary studies. The author actually promotes Riviere's discussion of fantasy and female spectatorship to that of cinema as a technique of aggression.

The relationship between cinema and psychoanalysis encounters blockage and impasse. The felt need of discovering new historical points of engagement leads to the representation of

shock and trauma. Lebeau also exemplifies that the preoccupation of death might become another means of exchange between cinema and psychoanalysis.

Representing Black Britain: Black and Asian Images on Television

By Sarita Malik
London: Sage Publications, 2002. ISBN 0-7619-7028-2. 8 illustrations, vi + 201pp. £18.99 (pbk)

A review by Gerald R. Butters Jr., Aurora University, USA

Sarita Malik's unique career experience has made her the proper individual to write *Representing Black Britain: Black and Asian Images in Television*. As a scholar who has straddled the academic and professional worlds, Malik's experiences at the BBC give the reader insight into decision-making behind the scenes of one of the most important global media outlets. Unlike the vast majority of scholars who write at a distance, serving as cultural critic or as scholar commenting on a world they are not part of, Malik's experience at the British Film Institute, the BBC and the Waterman Arts Center, has proven invaluable in the creation of *Representing Black Britain*; what is clearly now the seminal work on Black and Asian representation in British television. Malik's history and analysis of a "racialized regime of representation" is theoretically sophisticated, intellectually rigorous and nuanced in its analysis. In several introductory chapters the author considers such thorny problems as the limitations of the term "black," the dramatically changing landscape of television in the postmodern media age and the problematics of critical approaches to the subject. Malik intuitively recognizes that the relationship between the British public and the television industry is at a critical juncture in the early twenty-first century. She argues,

> It is this 'pull' between the past (Britain's post-imperial history and the institutional history of British television in relation to a black presence), and the future (of Black Britain at the turn of the century and of British television in the context of wider technological changes) which forms the basis of this book (11).

Arguing that there is no clear delineation between a "now" and "then" in the history of televisual racial representation, the author correctly understands the fluidity and metamorphosis of racial stereotyping and imagery in general.

Malik then divides television programming by genre, devoting individual chapters to television news, comedy, light entertainment, sport, drama and black films as seen on television. This scheme is brilliantly realized, as she guides the reader through a history of racial representation in each genre, a discursive analysis of the problems related to each genre, and a commentary on the interrelationship between the political climate, economic factors and institutional control in the medium.

Malik's analysis transcends the positive/negative imagery model that unfortunately determines the structure of too many works on racial representation. Instead, by utilizing the

theory of critics such as Laura Mulvey, Richard Dyer, Stuart Hall, Kobena Mercer, among others, she is able to effectively use the best of postmodern theory in a way that is grounded in the real world of television broadcasting.

Particularly strong chapters include those on representations of black masculinity and British sporting culture on television, and racial representation in television drama. In her chapter on sporting culture, Malik demonstrates the constant struggle athletes face to prove their Britishness as black citizens. She analyzes the language of broadcasting and popular tropes of black-British masculinity. A clear sexualization of black athletes like Linford Christie operates in sports programming; sportsmen who contest such signification are considered troublesome or uncooperative.

Malik is somewhat more optimistic in her analysis of black representation in television drama. Guiding readers through periods of structured absence (1950-1970) and marginalization (1965-1980), she demonstrates that even when white British subjects turned a critical eye on their own imperialism and colonial dominance (*Jewel in the Crown*), the black subject serves as little more than window dressing. A dominant white subjectivity is the approach that most directors and screenwriters use. She argues that it has only been in the last decade that programs such as *Prime Subject*, *The Final Passage* and *This Life* have emerged, demonstrating the full complexity of black and Asian life. As a word of warning to the reader who may think that the days of multicultural broadcasting are here to stay, she points out that the most watched and sought after foreign imports on television tend to be all-white American situation comedies (*Friends*, *Frasier*) or Australian soaps (*Neighbours*, *Home and Away*).

In her concluding chapter, Malik critiques liberal Brits, the very supporters of multicultural casting and programming. She argues that liberalism is "the dominant paradigm through which British broadcasting works" (178). Malik claims that well-meaning liberalism does not lead to anti-racist programming and that this "sitting on the fence" mentality is one that guides the powers that be at the major television networks. This mentality keeps many Black and Asian directors, screenwriters, cinematographers and actors from working, either frustrating them into submission or politcizing them into creating visual works that might get produced but never distributed or exhibited to a mass audience. Malik's work is a tour-de-force, a thought-provoking guide on how to write an analysis of racial representation in our multi-channel, cable and satellite-driven, media-saturated world.

Science Fiction Culture

By Camille Bacon-Smith
Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8122-1530-3. 319pp.
$24.95 (pbk)

A review by Lincoln Geraghty, University of Nottingham, UK

Science Fiction Culture promised much but failed to really deliver. Camille Bacon-Smith's reputation precedes her and one would have expected her latest book to have been an in depth and analytical investigation of science fiction fan culture. However, after reading the book I got a sense that she had only done half the job; she had only brought attention to the relationship between consumers and producers of science fiction rather than really analyse how important this relationship is to the world of science fiction and popular culture.

The book sets out to identify how science fiction fans, primarily those of literature, have evolved from just simple consumers of sf into producers ranging from convention organisers, web designers, fan club leaders, and authors. Such an evolution has created new consumers of science fiction who are fully aware of the varying spaces that their pursuit inhabits and who are aware of how to interact with and promote science fiction fandom across a spectrum of media. Through a large amount of personal interviews and correspondence, Bacon-Smith has looked at how different types of fans have consumed science fiction and grown up within a community of likeminded people. Alongside these personal accounts of fandom, Bacon-Smith has also interviewed convention organisers and web enthusiasts to highlight how much consumers and producers interact on a necessary level when it comes to booking convention space in a hotel or maintaining a small business. Her chapters look at specific demographic fan groups -- Women, Gay and Lesbian, Teenagers -- as well as specific elements of science fiction literature such as getting your first book published, cornering the bestseller market, and running a convention. Within these chapters Bacon-Smith has interviewed a wide range of people highlighting how important science fiction literature is to them and how much it has helped them in their daily lives; some fans discuss quite sensitive issues with regard to sexuality and relationships and describe how the community of science fiction fandom has been supportive.

With such rich material at Bacon-Smith's command I expected some answers, some clue to why fan communities, science fiction in particular, have become so important to people. Unfortunately, *Science Fiction Culture* does not offer any answers and I was left wondering whether the author did not know, or knew everything but wanted to keep it secret to protect the fans that she obviously cares a lot about. Both she and her subjects love science fiction and the book reflected that passion but I believe *Science Fiction Culture* was missing a fundamental ingredient: Culture. There was no discussion of the bigger picture, how science fiction culture fits in with today's society which is becoming increasingly isolated from itself. Take for example *Star Trek*. Why is this particular science fiction series *the* most popular and well known? Why is its fan community so intricately constructed and continually active? How does such a "culture of *Star Trek*" survive in an America that is made up of so many

differing communities and why is it so attractive to a multitude of people? Whether one can answer these questions is, in many ways, not as important as asking them. With *Science Fiction Culture* the idea of culture and whether or not sf fandom constitutes a culture within which we can safely submerge ourselves does not arise. We are made fully aware of the shifting dynamics of the fan community and who calls the shots, but we are not introduced to the concept that sf culture might represent a future where both sf consumer and sf producer are one in the same. Too much is taken at face value in this book, the interviews and letters are not used to their fullest potential. Instead of letting them speak for themselves the author should have dissected the themes and issues that permeated their texts. At the heart of their correspondence might have been key themes that linked them all -- gender, homosexuality, youth -- identifying a culture of people who are not separated by ethnographic details but connected in their love of science fiction by hope and the pursuit of a better life. An analysis of how such utopian ideals fit in with the production and consumption of science fiction would have revealed far more about the culture of sf than simply joining up the dots between what the fans had to say.

Science Fiction Culture is a valuable source for students of popular culture and science fiction fandom and should not be ignored because it does bring a lot of new and unique material to the fore. It is obvious that Camille Bacon-Smith immersed herself into the research at conventions, fan club meetings, etc. and entered into a plethora of fan communities just to collect all the information and data that she presents in this book. However, I would like to see the author follow it up with an analysis of the culture that she painstakingly introduced us to but with which she did not fully engage.

Screening Science: Contexts, Texts, and Science in Fifties Science Fiction Film

By Errol Vieth
Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8108-4023-5. 9 illustrations, xix + 263pp.
$55.00 (hbk)

A review by Mark Bould, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, UK

Recently, there has been a flurry of books on 1950s sf: Jancovich's *Rational Fears* (1996), the 1997 reissue of Warren's *Keep Watching the Skies!*, Evans's *Celluloid Mushroom Clouds* (1998), Hendershot's *Paranoia, the Bomb and 1950s Science Fiction Films* (1999), Seed's *American Science Fiction and the Cold War* (1999), Booker's *Monsters, Mushroom Clouds and the Cold War* (2001) and a significant portion of Shapiro's *Atomic Bomb Cinema* (2002). Not the latest but certainly the least of these is Vieth's *Screening Science*.

The Introduction subjects *Independence Day* (Emmerich 1996) to a superficial four-page discussion which is the longest analysis of a single film until the final chapter. Having linked the particularity of events in sf narratives to an emerging global perspective, Vieth writes that this "globalization both suggests and reflects the paradigm shift from the national to the global, from the individual consciousness of nationhood to an individual consciousness of belonging primarily to planet Earth and an appreciation of its beauty" (xvi). Admittedly, *Independence Day* is susceptible to both straight and ironic readings, but after a Preface which emphasises contextualistaion it is inexcusable to overlook the fact that it is a NAFTA-era movie located close to the US/Mexico border which advocates the annihilation of migrant labour.

The first three chapters also foreground contextualisation. Despite acknowledging the intersubjective aspect of generic definition and ascription, "Science and Fiction" nonetheless regards genre as a pigeonhole into which to force texts, complaining that a local video store misclassified *E.T. - The Extra-Terrestrial* (Spielberg 1982) and *Cocoon* (Howard 1985) as family movies and *The Blob* (Yeaworth, Jr. 1958) and *The Fly* (Neumann 1958) as horror movies. Vieth first turns to critics of literary sf to help him through this definitional maze -- although beyond nods to Rose's *Alien Encounters* and Scholes's *Structural Fabulation*, all the major works of such criticism (Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, Moylan's *Demand the Impossible*, Freedman's *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, etc.) are omitted -- and then to sf authors such as Heinlein and Ellison. Vieth's perspicacity is again in question when he attempts to invalidate the hard-sf criteria by which the latter judges sf movies by arguing that Ellison's "Adrift Just off the Islets of Langerhans" (1974) falls similarly short (despite a footnote acknowledging its first publication in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*). Eventually Vieth turns to sf film theory, albeit restricting himself to criticising Sontag's "The Imagination of Disaster" (1965), précising part of Sobchack's vastly superior *Screening Space* (1987) and misreading Landon's *The Aesthetics of Ambivalence* (1992) so as

to confuse spectacle with iconography. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relative absence of stars from 1950s sf movies, arguing that special effects took their place.

"Cultural and Historical Contexts" usefully discusses scientifically -- and technologically -- driven change, the development of nuclear weapons, anti-intellectualism, UFO sightings, the relationship between Hollywood and the Pentagon, post-war economic and baby booms, suburbs and consumerism, teen culture, audience composition and sf publishing. Detracting from this chapter is a naïve account of the Cold War and the lack of any concept of ideology: there is merely entertainment or propaganda.

"Industrial Contexts" offers a familiar overview of studio divorcement, the spread of television and the growth of drive-ins. A useful table (117-120) lists by production company 142 sf movies released between 1950-1960 (Warren details a further ninety films from this period; Vieth suggest that there were only nine sf movies in 1961-2 (121) whereas Warren lists fifty-one). The chapter ends with four "case studies": one on United Artists so brief as to be pointless, and then three slightly more interesting ones on American International Pictures, George Pal and Ray Harryhausen.

The two remaining chapters consider the science in 1950s sf movies. After a bizarre claim that most sf movies perform a pedagogic function (138), Vieth argues that regardless of their frequent conservatism 1950s sf movies demonstrate the liberatory potential of science, figured in the female scientist (e.g., Pat Medford (Joan Weldon) in *Them!* (Douglas 1954)). However, Vieth fails to consider the films as anything more than narratives with dialogue, and his analysis is weakened by a failure to appreciate appropriate contexts. For example, he suggests that it is surprising for Janice Starlin (Susan Cabot) to own a successful cosmetics company in *The Wasp Woman* (Corman 1960), overlooking the cycle of career woman comedies spanning from *Double Wedding* (Thorpe 1937) to *Adam's Rib* (Cukor 1949), the career women in 1950s sex comedies, and so on.

The final chapter turns to medical and psychological sciences, offering unexceptional but exceptionable readings of four movies. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Siegel 1956) "is progressive, even radical" (194) in the way Santa Mira accepts divorced men and women (despite the community's persecution of the divorced -- thus sexually experienced -- Miles (Kevin McCarthy) and Becky (Dana Wynter)). *Invaders from Mars* (Menzies 1953) argues that the state is "both an agent of the family and [...] the family in macrocosm" (201) (despite an evident concern with familial child abuse). *The Amazing Colossal Man* (Gordon 1957) demonstrates that "doctors are concerned for people" (205) (despite the collusion between medicine and the military to suppress information). And *The Thing From Another World* (Nyby 1951) is "supremely ecological" (206) because it emphasises the importance of a global perspective (despite valorising the US military).

Screening Space is a potentially useful resource for introducing 1950s contexts to students unfamiliar with the decade. However, it would not be my first choice.

The Second Century of Cinema: The Past and Future of the Moving Image

By Wheeler Winston Dixon
Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000. ISBN 0-7914-4516-X. 286pp. $17.95 (pbk)

A review by Richard L. Edwards, University of Southern California, USA

As Wheeler Winston Dixon argues in *The Second Century of Cinema*, celluloid-based film production and projection are giving way to a "high-definition matrix of dots and pixels laser-projected onto a conventional theater screen, and audiences will overwhelmingly accept this transformation without comment" (xi-xii). Moreover, Dixon continues, while Hollywood might still be at the center of the cinematic universe, marginal and alternative voices, utilizing the latest media technologies, such as the Internet and digital video, will give "dominant cinema" some real competition and provide the audience a "new vision of international access and a democracy of images" (xiv). As his writing implies, Dixon presents a relatively rosy outlook for the upcoming century of cinema. While twentieth century filmmaking fell prey to issues of conquest and dominance, conglomeration and capital, twenty-first century cinema will be more open, democratic and less dependent on commerce: a celebration of diversity and an experience more representative of a full range of cultural, ethnic and aesthetic practices. As Dixon writes: "…the cinema of the next millennium will continue to find its greatest inspiration in those who operate outside the system, creating works of originality and brilliance beyond the zones of corporate financial risk" (11). In fact, the utopian overtones of this thesis find their apotheosis in Dixon's contention that "those who work on the true margins of cinema expect nothing for their labors, other than fulfillment of seeing their vision on the screen" (159).

But why will these "outsiders" have better luck in the next century operating outside of corporate control than today's independent filmmakers? If audiences accept the changes in film production and projection standards "without comment," why will twenty first century audiences be any different from their predecessors? How are new technologies such as the Internet and digital video going to change existing systems of production, distribution and exhibition rather than be absorbed and appropriated by them? Why will a "democracy of images" occur just because we have the "low cost means of the web"? Why will digital technologies play out differently from other heralded media revolutions such as video in the 1960s and 1970s? While I can appreciate the ambition of Dixon's goal here, I am ultimately left with more questions than answers, more contradictions than clarity on why the moving image is heading towards a more democratic future.

Dixon's thesis implicitly connects a "democracy of images" to a particular type of media transformation. This technological determinist viewpoint of digital media results in an optimistic view of the future of the cinematic enterprise. And while digital technologies are going to continue to influence trends in the production, distribution and exhibition of cinema,

it is difficult to see how digital technologies alone are going to lead towards a "democracy of images" rather than being appropriated and commodified within today's global corporate media structures, especially after the uneven history and outright failure of many on-line film sites.

Dixon's technological determinism and new media enthusiasm is tempered by an appealing array of analyses he offers on filmmakers and artists who have worked in the past and the present in cinema, performance art or new media, either at the margins or in contestation with dominant film practices. These investigations, ranging from cinematic adaptations of H.P. Lovecraft to Paul Robeson films, are the bulk of the book's material. From examples that address the possibilities of contemporary low-budget independent filmmaking (like Lisa Cholodenko's *High Art*) to artists working in alternative spaces or new media (like Sally Cruickshank and Phillip Glass) to alternative production contexts (the New Zealand film industry and the Society for Old and New Media located in Amsterdam), Dixon does cover a lot of ground in demonstrating what has already happened and what could still come to pass in various old and new media formations.

But in the same vein, Dixon peppers interviews with various filmmakers throughout each chapter that do not advance the book's main arguments. Dixon provides transcripts of interviews he conducted with various filmmakers and artists including Roger Corman, Jonathan Miller, Bryan Forbes, Brian Clemens, and Sally Cruikshank. While Dixon is bringing in experiences from artists and filmmakers who, for the most part, have worked against the grain of dominant cinema, the interviews do not really provoke much thought about the future of cinema or break new ground on the interviewees themselves. Dixon's interview with Roger Corman is indicative of this tendency. Indeed, one of Corman's responses to a question about 16mm film feels slightly anachronistic in the context of this book. Corman's response that "video might very well be a way to go if you're not aiming directly for theaters" (89), seems to undercut ideas about new digital theatrical possibilities in other parts of the book.

One effect of reading this book is an important reminder that great diversity exists in the visual culture of the digital age. Dixon's book is at its best when he makes original connections between various modes of contemporary moving image culture that are often discussed separately in the critical literature: CD-Roms, performance art, film, theater, digital opera. Yet, this book too often falls prey to this survey-based approach to the future of cinema, an attempt to cover all the bases that may impact the moving image in the twenty first century. This type of broad coverage of divergent media styles and media creators left me wanting a more theoretical and materially grounded analysis.

I would recommend this book to readers who are looking for a survey of various media creators and media formats that are part of the complex and dense histories feeding into the continuing development of the moving image. Also, many of the chapters were previously published in journals or presented at conferences, so many are enjoyable as stand-alone essays. But this also means the book, for the most part, reads as a collection of essays rather than a unified argument. By the last chapter I found myself wanting more analysis of how the numerous examples in the book connected to one another and supported the book's initial thesis.

Shakespeare in Space: Recent Shakespeare Productions on Screen

By Herbert R. Coursen
New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002. ISBN 0-8204-5714-0. 191pp. $29.95 (pbk)

A review by Rebecca Janicker, University of Nottingham, UK

Drawing on a wide range of theatre, televisual and filmic adaptations, this text analyses the idea that Shakespeare might have been a filmmaker. This notion is worth exploring because "film alone has space enough for his almost boundless imagination" (9). The medium of film has served to make Shakespearean narratives "familiar to the individual and common to cultural experience" (10). The book is very physically descriptive of film and its practical applications. Coursen makes extensive use of examples to show how tools as diverse as film, television and theatre have differing strengths and weaknesses regarding the portrayal of Shakespeare. This is especially salient in the first chapter of the book where Coursen argues that television is somewhat constrained because endlessly punctuating productions with commercials necessarily "fixes" them at a certain point in time and dates them. In contrast, the stage "can show us things that transcend the literal" (11) and thus help us to suspend our beliefs and liberate our perceptions of the ideas being portrayed from the everyday and mundane.

For Coursen, the enduring pertinence of Shakespeare relies on the malleable nature of the archetypes he chose to portray, which continually shift with the times yet remain fresh and relevant. Such themes typically encompass ethnicity, gender, politics and social rank (12). Films also reflect the society in which they are made. A comparison is drawn between stage and film techniques and examples are given of where they overlap. Of particular interest is the idea of Shakespearean scripts being adapted as screenplays, e.g. the camera is used to showcase "gender" in Trevor Nunn's 1996 *Twelfth Night* (26) via close-up, that bastion of cinematic presentation which: "suggests, as film can do better than stage, that lives continue in spaces the camera visits only occasionally" (27). Montage is utilised in *Looking for Richard* to help viewers see beyond the present and convey the self-perception of the characters in the film.

The second, third and sixth chapters are all devoted to the in-depth analysis of Shakespearean productions on the small screen, including the Animated Shakespeare strand appearing in the early 1990s. This provides opportunity for the author to discuss the impact of space on such adaptations once again, e.g. describing how television lacks the depth-field of cinema. Cameras are so close to actors that they impose limitations on the range of acting. However, because "television is a linguistic medium" (46), this is of little concern -- emphasis is placed upon what is *said* rather than upon what is *seen*. This "lack of physical depth invites aesthetic shallowness" (56), stunting performance and reducing the impact of the script. Television, Coursen maintains, shapes contemporary thought-patterns, implying that the lack of physical space afforded Shakespeare in television somewhat limits the performance itself.

The fourth chapter provides an analysis of recent film productions, but also dwells extensively on theatre productions. Although fascinating when compared to the physical nature of film as a medium as opposed to theatre, it is debatable as to how relevant such discussion is to an audience primarily concerned with film. *Shakespeare In Love* is discussed as an example of how montage can successfully be used to suggest more than the mere sum of its constituent elements, e.g. gender is shown to consist of more than the character's physicality.

Chapter Five explores notions of whether Shakespeare relies primarily on ideas or on language by studying silent film adaptations. As language is necessarily a relatively minor element in such productions, restricted to skeletal title cards, it is interesting to consider whether they successfully convey key Shakespearean themes. Despite having received criticism for their paucity of language, Coursen maintains that such silents successfully tell a story, as "who would claim to know that *the* story of any of Shakespeare's plays is?" (111). Early films such as *King Lear* teach us how to read a range of reactions across the screen as there exist no close-ups or reactions to rely upon, as in modern productions. The experience is therefore more closely akin to that of watching a stage-play (102). In particular, the silent *Tempest* shows the advent of special effects -- Ariel's disappearance and reappearance, for instance -- and also of location, in film (100).

Coursen's examination of Julie Taymor's *Titus* (1999) in Chapter Seven highlights the director's use of space to elicit extreme, perhaps inappropriate, emotional reactions from the audience, taking them to an "existential space where laughter is the only response left" (137), despite the shocking scenes of violence that pervade the story. Taymor exploits space to create "zones and backgrounds . . . for her characters" (138) in order to tell a more effective story. Once again, the importance of physical space is highlighted. A further example is provided in Chapter Eight, where in Kenneth Branagh's two-hour version of *Hamlet*, all the long shots of the full-length feature are gone and only close-up scenes smacking of a video production are permitted to remain, thus limiting the extent to which physical space can impact upon the story (146).

Essentially this text seeks to delve into the nature and potential of physical space in Shakespearean productions in a diverse range of media. Coursen compares and contrasts an exhaustive assortment of productions to draw out the more and less successful versions of plays. Whilst the book would be a useful tool for analysing the physical presentation of Shakespearean scripts and themes, considerable space is devoted to theatre productions, which may lessen its utility to those primarily interested in mass media.

The Sounds of Early Cinema

By Richard Abel and Rick Altman (eds.)
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-253-21749-3. 56 illustrations, xvi + 327pp. £17.50 (pbk), £37.95 (hbk)

A review by Jeff Smith, Washington University in St. Louis, USA

In an essay on sound effects in early cinema, Stephen Bottomore writes, "It has become a nostrum of modern silent film aficionados that silent films were never silent" (129). Indeed, the phrase "silent cinema" increasingly seemed to be something of an anachronism as scholars like Charles Musser, Tom Gunning, Eileen Bowser, Gillian Anderson, Tim Anderson, and Martin Marks established the framework for examining the ways in which music, sound effects, and even dialogue contributed to the spectatorial experience of early films. More recently, however, Rick Altman has problematized this premise with his controversial essay, "The Silence of the Silents," and his claim that films in certain genres and in certain theaters were shown without any live accompaniment. Were silent films ever "silent"? To paraphrase the rock band Oasis, the answer seems to be "definitely maybe." It all depends on where and when the film was shown, and how one defines the nature of sound in early cinema.

For proof of that maxim, one need look no further than *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, a collection of papers first presented at the 1998 Domitor conference. In examining this fundamental, but seemingly contentious topic, the contributors to this anthology adopt a range of approaches and methodologies to the problem of theorizing sound in early cinema. Following Altman's lead, several authors challenge the received wisdom of previous scholarship on silent cinema. Other contributors opt for more modest claims by seeking to elaborate or refine an already established program of research in early cinema. Still others, like Jean Châteauvert and André Gaudreault, approach the topic in a manner that borders on Cagean philosophy by treating the noises of spectators as part of the cinematic experience and, thus, part of the silent film text. In seeking some overarching shape within this morass, editors Richard Abel and Rick Altman organize the essays into five sections dealing with intermediality, sound practices in production, sound practices in exhibition, early film spectators, and film music respectively.

While *The Sounds of Early Cinema* offers a broad spectrum of approaches across a wide range of subjects, this volume is nonetheless unified by a particular methodological and conceptual problem endemic to this subdiscipline, namely the difficulty of describing and documenting a phenomenon as evanescent and ephemeral as sound in early cinema. This problem is a familiar one to musicologists and theater historians, who sometimes must wrestle with similar challenges in seeking to discuss individual performances of a particular work. The one thing that most silent film historians generally agree on is that, unlike the film images themselves, the sounds that accompanied early films were often live, unrecorded, and highly variable from show to show. Since the sounds themselves are irrecoverable in some meaningful sense, one can only approach them through their discursive traces in reviews,

commentaries, trade press, catalogues, scripts, printed scores, reminiscences, and of course, the films themselves.

In grappling with this methodological difficulty, the contributors to *The Sounds of Early Cinema* employ three strands of argument that appear either singly or in some combination in every essay in the anthology. The first strand of argument concerns the issue of "intermediality" and addresses the ways in which early cinema was imbricated within existing forms of entertainment, culture, and technology. As I noted earlier, the first section of the anthology focuses on this issue, but its implications are evident in a more attenuated form in virtually every essay in the collection. Indeed, if we accept the basic premises that early cinema was marked by a kind of "contamination" through its relation to other cultural forms, then it would seem that its entire history is marked by this type of intermediality. That said, several authors here make a special case for early cinema's intermediality within the exhibition context since it is there that cinema's debt to vaudeville, scientific expositions, melodrama, and legitimate theater is most explicitly and concretely figured.

By setting these two definitions of intermediality in tension with one another, however, the concept itself becomes unnecessarily unwieldy. In *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, this appears to be a particular problem with the way Ian Christie and Tom Gunning's contributions are situated within the first section. While these two essays are among the strongest in the collection, Christie and Gunning respectively deal with early film's relationship to phonographic technology and to the doubling and division of the human sensorium exemplified in the novels of Charles Brockden Brown and Jules Verne. Yet, if the cultural influences of literature and recording technology are within the ambit of intermediality, then it would seem that very little falls outside of it insofar as one can make a similar case for many other art forms, cultural products, or technologies. Moreover, given American and world cinema's ongoing interaction with various strands of technology and culture, intermediality would not seem to distinguish early cinema from classical or post-classical cinema. Thus, in an odd way, by grouping together essays that define intermediality as both an issue of cultural influence and of specific exhibition strategies, Abel and Altman's organization of the volume undermines the special pleading for sound in early cinema that is evident in several essays in the anthology.

In addition to "intermediality", a second strand of argument concerns early cinema's use of intradiegetic sound, that is, sound events that are unheard by the film's audience, but occur within the world of the characters and are narrated through the visual language of early cinema. The chief interest here resides in the ways in which these diegetic sound events are depicted onscreen and how they motivate certain figurations of film style as well as communicate important narrative information to spectators. The second section of *The Sounds of Early Cinema* is largely concerned with this type of intradiegetic sound, particularly in the essays by Isabelle Raynauld, Bernard Perron, and Dominique Nasta.

While the textual analysis found in this section of the anthology is generally first rate, some of the essays are also weakened by a similar special pleading for early cinema that implicitly rests on a kind of "straw man" argument. Raynauld's essay is a case in point. After distinguishing between technological and narratological approaches to silent cinema, she writes, "...this essay will demonstrate that, even if films were projected without integrated synchronous sound, the presumed silent stories told were actually happening in a sound world and not a "deaf world." In other words, silent stories took place, intra- and extra-diegetically, in a hearing world" (69). Here Raynauld appears to be countering a premise that audiences

and previous film scholars actually believed the depicted actions took place within a "deaf world". But does anyone really believe that? While much has been made about Maxim Gorky and Theodor Adorno's descriptions of silent cinema as a "ghostly", soundless world, this always struck me as a bit of poetic nonsense about the phenomenological experience of early cinema for spectators. As a serious analytical claim, the notion of silent cinema as a "deaf world" runs counter to common sense, and might be quickly dismissed on that basis alone. Indeed, if Raynauld were right on this score, her claim would seriously problematize our understanding of "actualities" in early cinema. If early films were really thought to depict soundless environments, this would suggest that audiences did not view "actualities" as spatio-temporal recordings of real places and events in the world, but rather as events occurring in a parallel universe that physically resembles our world, but where the normal laws of acoustics and physics do not apply. Moreover, if Raynauld limited her claims to early narrative films, it would suggest that audiences watched the soundless images of "actualities" in a manner that was radically different from the soundless images in story films. This, too, runs counter to common sense.

So what is at stake in the study of intradiegetic sound in early cinema? If we bracket off questions of technology, then what we are really talking about is a set of narrative motifs regarding sound events rather than the experience of sound per se. Perhaps I am too essentialist here in my insistence on cinema sound as a set of acoustical events or an aural experience, but I believe that this research program simply expands upon the analysis of other early cinema pictorial motifs and stylistic elements. In this respect, the emphasis on sound events "and their place within the narrative strategies of early cinema" is similar to the studies of train images, chases, boxing matches, exhibitionism, emblematic close-ups, and point-of-view structures in early film. Viewed within that context, the five essays that comprise the second section of *The Sounds of Early Cinema* make an extremely important contribution to that body of literature.

The third strand of argument found in Abel and Altman's collection involves sound events that are under the purview of the exhibitor, such as music, sound effects, lectures, and dialogue that were performed live during the presentation of films. If the essays concerned with this aspect are generally more successful than the others, perhaps it is because this has long been legitimized as part of the research program in early cinema and the contributors are building on an already established body of work. Some of the highlights here include Gregory Waller's essay on traveling showman, D.W. Robertson; Stephen Bottomore's essay on the discourses surrounding the use of "traps" for sound effects in early film; Marta Braun and Charlie Keil's piece on Canadian film lecturers; and Jeffrey Klenotic's paper on "talker" films.

While each of these strands of argument contains its own methodological challenges, there are also some problems with the anthology as a whole. For one thing, many of the essays appear to be unrevised conference papers that have changed little since their initial presentation at Domitor. At their best, conference papers are provocative, thoughtful, and aphoristic, confuting conventional wisdom about a particular topic and suggesting new avenues of research. More often that not, however, the brevity of the conference paper format encumbers the development of ideas and closes off potentially interesting ancillary research questions. Indeed, while reading this collection, there were several points where I wished that the author had sketched out more of the background literature to a particular topic, worked through the implications of a concept more fully, or took a particular premise through to its

logical conclusion. With several essays under ten pages in length, many of the contributions to *The Sounds of Early Cinema* simply leave the reader hungry for more.

Even more troubling is the anthology's general failure to engage the work of several important theorists and historians of film sound. Michel Chion is mentioned only twice in the entire collection, and James Lastra's work is referenced in a single article. Moreover, Tim Anderson's excellent piece on "jackass music" in early film music accompaniment is confined to a single footnote. Other scholars, such as Sarah Kozloff, Caryl Flinn, Claudia Gorbman, and Kathryn Kalinak do not register at all, this despite the fact that the latter two have chapters on music in the silent cinema in each of their important and influential books. More strikingly, Martin Marks' pathbreaking Music and the Silent Film is cited several times, but almost all references to this work are found in Jane Gaines and Neil Lerner's chapter on *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which draws heavily on Marks' prior analysis of Joseph Carl Breil's score. While Marks is acknowledged in the introduction as a member of Domitor's conference program committee, almost none of the contributors here see fit to discuss his work. In sum, while I believe that this lacuna can be traced to the brevity associated with the conference paper format, the end result is that *The Sounds of Early Cinema* engages film sound theory far less than the Altman essay that inspired the collection.

Given the difficulties involved in the study of sound in early cinema, it is a project that is implicitly linked to much broader historiographical, ontological, and epistemological questions. By querying the ways in which we define the technology and reception of early films, the study of sound in early cinema turns traditional philosophical issues on their head. Instead of asking "If a tree falls in the woods and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?", Abel and Altman's anthology asks, "If a motion picture shows a tree falling in the woods and it does not make a sound, does anyone actually hear it?" With many well-written and provocative essays, *The Sounds of Early Cinema* makes a fine introduction to the topic. Yet, considering some of the larger conceptual issues raised by the book, it is also a reminder that the study of sound in early cinema has barely begun.

Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture

By Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young
Montreal and Kingston: McGill's University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-7735-2272-7. xv + 370pp.
£18.59 (pbk)

A review by Erica Arthur, University of Nottingham, UK

Promising to be an interesting and important addition to the burgeoning field of academic men's studies, *Spreading Misandry* unfortunately falls far short of its potential. Structured on the premise that military conscription casts men as the more subjugated sex and suffused in the language of victimhood, the book has more in common with politicised men's movement groups like Men's Rights Inc. (MR Inc.) and controversial tracts like Wayne Farrell's *The Myth of Male Power* (1993) than serious academic critique.

Spreading Misandry forwards the ambitious thesis that misandry -- the dehumanisation and trivialisation of men -- is now more pervasive in popular culture than its sexist counterpart, misogyny. Offered no corroborating statistics, the reader is expected to accept this "fact" on the basis of the wide ranging evidence accumulated by the authors -- daytime talk shows, primetime newsmagazine shows, comic strips and cartoons, greeting cards, sitcoms and movies. In the course of wading through all this evidence it gradually emerges that (unsurprising) it is *white male* identity that is under attack from misandry. At no point, however, is race actually theorised.

While no one would deny the existence of some misandric elements the notion that identifiable and pervasive patterns saturate 1990s popular culture is a huge overstatement to say the least. As the first of an eventual three part series, the stated intention of *Spreading Misandry* is illustrative with evaluation postponed until later volumes. Such an organisational strategy is rendered problematic because despite the authors' claims to the contrary the evidence does not always "speak for itself" (xi). With the necessary analytical interpretation deferred, the book is little more than a catalogue of unrelated and frequently disjointed descriptions.

Moreover, the criteria for judging a text to be misandric -- if the male characters presented are wholly evil or inadequate -- is somewhat dubious. Consider the example of Belle's father in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, about whom the authors assert, "Like his traditional counterparts, he is good but *inadequate*. In short, not one of the male characters is unambiguously exemplary" (164). But should inadequacy really be considered evidence of misandry or is it more accurately representative of humanity? The implication here is that Nathanson and Young appraise representations on the basis of a character's perfection which, in itself, is potentially problematic because it elevates unrealistic expectations for male identity.

The authors' ultimate goal to inaugurate a "new social contract between the sexes" that takes the "distinctive needs and problems" of men and women seriously is laudable but they proceed on the false premise that misandry is equivalent to misogyny (235). Misogynistic representations of women were/are damaging to female identity because they provided cultural support to a system of social and economic gender inequality. The same cannot be said of misandry which is why it is not recognised as a serious problem, rather than, as the authors insist, because it has become so normal as to be invisible. The example of Tim Allen buying his wife Jill an unsuitable birthday present in *Home Improvement* is offered as a destructive instance of misandric stereotyping but to make such a claim is to miss the point that it is one thing to make a joke at one's own expense from a position of power and quite another to make a joke about someone that you are in a position of domination over (275).

This points to the fundamental underlying problem with *Spreading Misandry* -- it consistently elides the social and historical context for the gender issues it bemoans. The authors' repeated, preposterous claim that society's worldview is gynocentric and "preoccupied with the needs and problems of women" is evidence only of the constricted conception of "society" that they employ (144). Similarly, they must necessarily discount social and economic conditions to redefine patriarchy as a "titanic conspiracy of men usurping power from women" (108). Hypocritically, not to mention implausibly, they simultaneously promote a conspiracy theory of their own, arguing that it is "ideological feminists" who are responsible for the spread of misandric representations and views in popular culture. With unrelenting inflammatory rhetoric they argue that a "conspiracy" of ideological feminists has "infiltrated" almost "every institution" in order to "indoctrinate" students and launch a "revolutionary crusade" against men in popular culture (236). Adding to this sinister scenario the authors repeatedly imply connections between the denial of Jewish humanity under the Nazi regime and the dehumanisation of men in a misandric culture dominated by ideological feminists. Inevitably, this is never made directly explicit as to do so would expose the ludicrous and illegitimate basis of such a paradigm. Heightened language and extreme analogies seek to rationalise an argument that attributes far too much power to women throughout.

Some attempt is finally made (in the penultimate chapter) to define ideological feminism as a belief in female superiority, rather than a desire for gender equality. Yet, with the exception of a few fleeting allusions to Marilyn French, Mary Daly, Andrea Dworkin and Kaja Silverman, the authors never actually identify precisely who they are talking about, expecting the catch-all "academic feminists" to be generally convincing. Repeatedly, generic unsubstantiated claims are made on the basis of "some women…" or "what women enjoy watching" (143). In this way the authors repeatedly stereotype women as a homogenous group. Overall, arguments are too often based on generalisations, sensationalist prose, vague phraseology that skates over important issues ("feminists have made [misandry] acceptable in one way or another" (xiv)), clichés and "conventional wisdom".

A series of methodological weakness compromise the thematic claims advanced. One major problem with the book is that it proceeds along essentialist lines. At no point is the possibility of cross-gender empathy considered. Instead, it is assumed that men automatically identify with male characters and women with female ones: Statements like "As the only major female character, Adrienne represents female characters" (155) and "men are encouraged to identify with male characters who *put* women in jeopardy" (144) don't sufficiently explain the basis on which a representative claim is justified. This reductive assumption, which condenses everything to a binary division between the sexes and frustrates plurality,

perpetuates the very dualism Nathanson and Young indict "ideological feminism" for promoting.

Similarly, the representative nature of every movie or cultural artefact described is taken for granted. Missing out the particularity of detail, arguments rely on unqualified assumptions like "fictional characters always represent more than themselves" (53). Without documenting the specific ways in which these various texts can be considered typical, the claim to representative status, which is so essential to the author's polemic, becomes circumspect and, by extension, the wider claim about the cultural pervasiveness of misandry is undermined.

And what do men think of misandric representations? Apparently the average male finds it "too painful" to acknowledge "being under attack" because that would involve admitting "vulnerability" and the denial of his "own manhood" (247). This seems spurious at best especially when one considers the target audiences for such supposedly male bashing vehicles as *Dumb and Dumber*. In conclusion the authors warn women to "consider the danger of self-fulfilling prophecies" as men conditioned to see themselves depicted as a "psychotic or sinister… class of victimisers" might live up to stereotypical expectations. In a book that has relied on hyperbole and rhetorical overstatement throughout, the use of threatening scare tactics is perhaps a fitting, if disturbing, end (249).

The Television Genre Book

By Glen Creeber (ed.
London: BFI Publishing, 2002. ISBN 0-85170-849-8. 40 illustrations, xi + 163pp. £14.99 (pbk)
Action TV: Tough Guys, Smooth Operators and Foxy Chicks By Bill Osgerby and Anna Gough Gates (eds.)

Action TV: Tough Guys, Smooth Operators and Foxy Chicks

By Bill Osgerby and Anna Gough Gates (eds.)

London: Routledge, 2002. ISBN 0-415-22621-X. 27 illustrations, xi + 260pp. £14.99 (pbk)

A review by James Lyons, University of Exeter, UK

Questions of genre have played a major role in the development of television studies, most obviously in shaping approaches to the study of form, but also in the consideration of television institutions and the viewing activities/strategies of audiences. Both books under review here evince a wider trend in consolidating such work; the first provides a wide-ranging introduction to the study of television genres, the second anthologises original essays surveying key programmes in the history of the action series.

As Glen Creeber points out in the preface to *The Television Genre Book*, the collection is intended eventually to form part of *The Television Book*, a companion to the BFI's *The Cinema Book*, edited by Pam Cook. This book shares many of the qualities of the latter, not least the accessible, logical structure, and the deployment of "grey box" sections focusing on seminal programmes, books, and debates. The BFI's publication strategy provides the rationale for the structure of this book, anticipating further volumes on industry, history, etc. in order to supplement its approach to television form.

The book begins with incisive ground-clearing essays by Steve Neale and Graeme Turner outlining key issues in the study of genre. From there onwards it is arranged into the broad categories of programming that have formed the basis for many of the most significant studies of television form, such as Drama; Soap Opera; Comedy; and News. Welcome additions to these sections include those on Popular Entertainment and Children's Television, staples of the programmers' schedule, but areas that have historically received rather less critical attention. These sections are subdivided into studies authored by writers who have been influential in developing approaches to individual genres: Jane Feuer on the sitcom; John Corner on the documentary; Máire Messenger-Davies on children's television; and John Hartley on television news, to name just a few.

Accompanied by guides to further reading, these short studies provide uniformly clear and useful introductions to the study of particular genres. Some sections function as fairly straightforward historical overviews, for example Thomas Tufte's informative survey of the Latin American telenovela, whilst others, such as Anna McCarthy's examination of TV advertising, concentrate more on what can be gleaned from a history of critical approaches to the category. In this sense the collection functions as an indicative mapping of the uneven state of the field -- thus Rod Brookes's summary of Sports television underlines the relatively scant attention paid to this enormously lucrative and popular category of programming. Consequently the book evidences the challenges inherent in genre-based approaches to television. As Graeme Turner points out at the beginning of the collection, the industry and audiences tend to talk more about television "formats" than genres, and it is this dialectic between critical and commercial categories and imperatives that must continue to mobilise the field.

Action TV: Tough Guys, Smooth Operators and Foxy Chicks addresses the lacunae in television studies' coverage of genre through an extensive examination of the "action-oriented series formula" (2). Taking as its starting point the renaissance of the action TV series represented by the success of *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Ogersby and Gough-Gates set out the intention of the collection to place under analysis the generic precursors to the current roster of shows. As they point out, "the action TV series of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s developed visual styles, narrative conventions and symbolic iconographies that continue to influence and inform the contemporary crop of action vehicles" (4). Moreover, as John Storey's chapter on "The Sixties in the Nineties" suggests, crucial also to enunciating the present currency of these shows is the recent vogue for their commercial recycling through DVD and video re-releases, big-screen remakes, etc., as well as a burgeoning legion of fan websites. Indeed, as a number of the brief bios of the contributors make clear, many of these academic perspectives are informed by personal memory and/or fandom, a disclosure which underlines the self-reflexive discursive practice instrumental in the scholarly rapprochement with previously neglected forms.

The book is divided into four sections. "Situating the action TV series" comprises a series of essays which seek to locate the "genre within its wider institutional and historical context" (5); the second section on "Representation and cultural politics in the TV action series" examines depictions of gender and race in examples of the genre from the 1970s and 1980s; the third section titled "Audiences reading and re-reading the action TV series" considers the complexity of viewers' relationships with a number of these series' problematic constructions of gender and sexuality; and the final part on "The cultural circulation of the action TV series" looks at "the way the codes, conventions and iconography of action TV series have cut across a range of different media forms, 'spilling out' beyond the parameters of the original texts" (7). What's nice about this collection is the way it manages to balance an imaginative and eclectic range of approaches to action TV (from Yvonne Tasker's situating of *Kung Fu*'s within 1970s discourses on counter-cultural masculinity, eco-criticism, and spiritualism, to Elizabeth Withey's rich historical survey of action TV theme music) with a cohesive sense of a television form developing and mutating in relation to specific social, historical, and institutional circumstances. Ogersby and Gough-Gates' rather weak claim that the action series "thinned out" during the 1980s ensures that the decade gets something of a short shrift here (Nickianne Moody's excellent reading of *Knight Rider* and 1980s discourses of science and technology being an exception), but this remains an energetic and informative collection that takes seriously questions posed both by the original popularity and lasting currency of action TV shows.

The Usual Suspects

By Ernest Larsen
London: BFI Publishing, 2002. ISBN 0-85170-869-2. 63 illustrations, 95pp. £8.99 (pbk)

A review by Scott Ruston, University of Southern California, USA

At the heart of Bryan Singer's 1995 film *The Usual Suspects* resides the unreliable narrator Verbal Kint who challenges Agent Kujan and the audience to determine which elements of his story ring true and which spring solely from Kint's mendacious silver tongue. There is nothing unreliable, however, about Ernest Larsen's study of the film, a recent addition to the British Film Institute's Modern Classics series. Larsen takes the reader on a detailed guided tour of the film, establishing connections with noir classics, true crime stories and the personal experiences of the director (Singer) and screenwriter (Christopher McQuarrie), ultimately rendering a detailed portrait of a film centered on "the ultimate question of the location of power" (17).

Interestingly, Larsen's tour through the film shares a similarity of structure with Kint's narration of the activities of the five criminals: Larsen's detailed analysis of the film itself parallels Kint's flashbacks, while Larsen's exploration of production details, genre conventions and authorial intent parallels the explicatory interrogation scenes between Kint and Kujan. In the film, this equal emphasis on Kint's interrogation and the portrayal of the suspects' actions serves to heighten the contribution of this unreliable narrator, shifting the mystery and thrill from the assault on the Argentinean freighter (as would be the case in a classic crime film) to the puzzle of Kint's story. In Larsen's book, this equal emphasis unites the convoluted story with the external elements to position *The Usual Suspects* as a postmodern contribution to the genre of heist *noir*.

Larsen begins his surprisingly comprehensive treatment with a detailed analysis of the film's opening scene and then uses that analysis to springboard into a far-reaching discussion emphasizing the contextual elements of the film. These contextual elements include numerous details regarding the production history of *The Usual Suspects*; Singer and McQuarrie's history of collaboration; the genesis of the story idea; and the real life crime story that serves as the foundation for McQuarrie's construction of the Keyser Soze myth. The most interesting analysis Larsen makes in this chapter reaches all the way back to the cinematic advent of the mysterious criminal mastermind with Fritz Lang's Dr. Mabuse. Larsen unites Mabuse's centrality and dominant on-screen presence with his specifically national scope of operations, and contrasts this focus with Keyser Soze's international reach and decidedly off-screen location. The film's portrayal of Soze renders him "a far hazier entity" which "takes on the gloomy aura of the Prince of Darkness" (19), according to Larsen. This analysis establishes that, not only does the spectre of Keyser Soze haunt the film, the "more disturbing question of what Keyser Soze represents" (21) haunts Larsen's book.

Just as the film moves from an early emphasis on Kint's interrogation and testimony to greater emphasis on the flashback scenes as the usual suspects unite into a team and begin

their crime spree, Larsen's second chapter delves deeply into a close analysis of these scenes, the team itself and the film's relationship with classic heist *noir* films. Fans of traditional heist films as well as postmodern crime films like *Reservoir Dogs* will appreciate Larsen's detailed examination of *The Usual Suspects*' utilization and alteration of genre conventions. The film lacks some traditional heist *noir* elements, such as the *femme fatale*, the clear narrative closure provided by the police detective, and the failures of the criminals because of moral shortcomings. Larsen dissects how Singer and McQuarrie manipulate these conventions to establish *The Usual Suspects* as a postmodern noir thriller. Appropriate to the 1990s codes of situational ethics, Larsen sees a departure from the clear moral ground of traditional heist noir films such as *The Asphalt Jungle*, *The Killing* and *Odds Against Tomorrow* in which the crimes are genuinely criminal and reprehensible. In *The Usual Suspects*, the team never steals from anybody not already associated with a crime, making the suspects "inoffensively or interestingly criminal" (51). This quality allows them to be heroes (or, at least, champions for the young male audience the film primarily targets), ultimately failing not because of moral shortcomings but because of the overpowering presence of the ultimate bogeyman, Keyser Soze.

Verbal Kint rejuvenates his own unreliable narrative by incorporation of bits and pieces of observed text. Similarly, Larsen returns to the driving question of "Who is Keyser Soze?" by referencing that very question he saw on the side of a bus. To address this question, Larsen detours through some of the negative reviews the film received upon release. Larsen situates these reviews as a preamble to his analysis of the film's role challenging "the primary laws of mainstream narrative movies" and Singer's desire to focus on perception, all of which Larsen sees played out visually "in terms specific to male identity" (56-57). The discussion of the narrator and Spacey's performance is detailed and insightful, identifying the feminized and marginalized nature of Kint (out of the ordinary for a traditional *noir* narrator) as a clue to and fundamental element of his unreliability as the narrator.

Having laid out the film's emphasis on off-screen presence, the associations with heist genre convention, and the issue of perception realized through constructions of male identity, Larsen concludes by examining the film's central enigma (Soze) as the film's narrative veracity shatters along with Kujan's coffee mug. This chapter bulldozes ahead with the same feverish pace as Kujan's realization that he has been fooled by Kint, revealing more and more about correlation between "the manipulation of power and the manipulation of narrative" (85). The shattering of the narrative destroys our developing notion of precisely who Keyser Soze is, and shifts the emphasis to what he represents. Larsen picks up the pieces and provides us an answer. Keyser Soze is more than a con man playing a gimp to fool a headstrong detective. Keyser Soze is more than a criminal mastermind executing a hit with unwitting accomplices. Larsen sees Keyser Soze, by destabilizing icons of rationality and order, as that anonymous, malevolent force which plagues our globalized, postmodern world.

Relatively little critical literature has been produced on *The Usual Suspects*, with Larsen's contribution the first book length treatment this reviewer could find. Larsen's close analysis and enthusiastic treatment adds considerably to the enjoyment of the film and motivates a reconsideration of it along with the classics of the genre. Perhaps future scholars will address the question of why this "unapologetic, unalloyed triumph of evil" (87) was so appealing in 1995 and why it remains so today.

Vertigo

By Charles Barr
London: BFI Publishing, 2002. ISBN 0-85170-918-4. 66 illustrations, 87pp. £8.99 (pbk)

A review by Jon Wisbey, University of East Anglia, UK

The already vast range of writing on Hitchcock and his films might suggest that there exists very little about the man and his work that has not yet been covered by the literature that is film studies, particularly where the subject is one of his most discussed films -- *Vertigo*. It is, then, a delight to find that Charles Barr's monograph on the film in the British Film Institute's Film Classics series offers a fascinating and insightful analysis of the film, one that has (with no detriment to an appreciation of the film itself) the effect of stripping away much of its status as the work of an auteur to reveal instead the complex series of collaborative forces that make *Vertigo* the remarkable film that it is.

Collaboration is a key theme for Barr. He suggests that *Vertigo* -- like *Citizen Kane* -- is a triumph of collaboration, and while he considers Hitchcock to be one of "the two greatest of English directors" (13) -- the other being Michael Powell -- he is always keen to draw attention to the way in which the talents of other individuals are vital in the realisation of the film's look. As an example of this he mentions the restaurant scene in which Scottie (James Stewart) first sees, what he assumes to be, Madeleine Elster -- a scene that, for Barr "is crucial in generating the main emotional and narrative dynamic of the film" (21). Its creation had demanded (at Hitchcock's insistence) an exact studio reproduction of the interior of a famous San Francisco restaurant (Ernie's) which, says Barr, depended upon the talents of art directors Hal Pereira and Henry Bumstead, while the realisation of the restaurant's typical clientele relied upon costumes by Edith Head, hairstyling by Nellie Manley, and make up by Wally Westmore. Strangely though, Barr mentions the contributions of Robert Burks (director of photography), Leonard South (camera operator) and George Tomasini (editor) to this scene (and, indeed, to the entire film) only in passing, but gives special praise to the script and music -- on the latter commenting (quite justifiably it seems to me) that "…it remains incontestable that *Vertigo*, like its two successors, *North by Northwest* and *Psycho*, would be less powerfully effecting without the [Bernard] Herrmann score," adding that the music in the aforementioned restaurant scene "is integral to [its] mesmerising effect" (21-22). Barr goes on to provide a highly detailed account of the script's development through the contributions of three writers (Maxwell Anderson, Alec Coppell and Sam Taylor), which, though fascinating -- incredibly, it took over a year to complete -- seems odd given that so much of the experience of watching *Vertigo* is concerned with its visual qualities. The book is, however, beautifully illustrated with both black and white and colour frame enlargements.

But while greater analysis of the film's extraordinary colour schemes and lighting would be desirable, Barr's detailed analysis of the first forty minutes of the film -- especially the "shot-by-shot alternation between characters" used for Scottie's tracking of Madeleine (Barr notes the influence of Griffith and the Soviet film-makers in these scenes) -- offers an insight into Hitchcock's "pure cinema" (the construction of meaning without recourse to dialogue) that has the effect of deepening our understanding not only of a film that is already very well

known, but also of Hitchcock's own style. Barr also identifies "a larger-scale pattern of alternation between blocks of dialogue and non-dialogue scenes" (39), and notes the fact that a "pattern of alternating modes is one that can be traced right back [to] *Blackmail* made in 1929" (40). Indeed, Barr's reference to this technique makes for an equally fascinating analysis of *Blackmail* in his *English Hitchcock*, and one might also read this book in conjunction with his Vertigo monograph for an understanding of Hitchcock's style, just as Barr suggests that one might read Dan Auiler's *Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic* in conjunction with his own monograph of the film.

Barr goes on to note the way in which San Francisco and its environs -- the space in which the film's action occurs -- offers a surface realism that is often absent in Hitchcock's work. He comments on the fact that the film's "intense and rather magical quality of rootedness" (34) -- in terms of the city's physical realisation -- might be attributable to the influence of Ambrose Bierce and to whom, Barr suggests, the film indirectly refers in the character of Pop Leibel who runs the Argosy bookshop and to whom Scottie and Midge turn for advice on the city's history. But unlike Hitchcock's usual practice of utilising familiar landmarks to confirm the location of a film's action, Barr notes that in *Vertigo* both familiar and less familiar locations are used "to evocative effect" (34), and comments that "the external real world of San Francisco past and present is delineated with great precision in a mode that is at the opposite extreme from documentary" (34). This allows Barr to posit an argument that culminates (by way of a rigorous examination of the film's narrative and visual realisation) in suggesting that the film's dreamlike quality -- not only in its appearance -- but at a narrative level too, might suggest that Scottie imagines the events of the film as he clings to a rooftop at its start. Though this possibility is one that has been suggested elsewhere, for Barr it highlights the way in which (unlike Powell and Pressburger's *A Matter of Life and Death*) *Vertigo* -- in combining objective and subjective modes of narrative -- might be concerned not with the division between real and imagined worlds, but with the *hesitation* between them. This rather disconcerting quality is perhaps one of the film's greatest achievements, and in noting it Barr's study of the film offers not only a very thorough analysis of the film's production and style, but also attests to its enduring fascination.

Voices From The Set: The Film Heritage Interviews

By Tony Macklin and Nick Pici
Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8108-3795-1. 14 photographs, xiii + 335pp.
$39.50 (hbk

A review by Felicia Chan, University of Nottingham, UK

Tony Macklin was the founder and editor of *Film Heritage* from its inception in 1965 to its close in 1978. *Voices From The Set* is a compilation of selected interviews Macklin conducted during the same period.

The volume is more than just a series of conversations with celebrities. As its title offers, *Voices* is a cross-section of views from the different sectors of film production, ranging from acting to directing to producing, writing, editing, and composing among others. The subjects are treated as craftsmen performing a specific function within the film industry and the topics of conversation centre mainly around the processes involved in film-making, rather than around the specific personalities of the stars themselves. Not that these personalities don't come through. After all, who could miss the dead-pan sardonicism of Alfred Hitchcock, who when asked about the recurrence of certain patterns in his films, opines, "Self-plagiarism is style."

Hitchcock heads the section on "The Director". He is joined by Robert Altman, Martin Scorsese, Sam Peckinpah, Robert Wise, Alan Rudolph, John Frankenheimer and Howard Hawks. The section on "The Actor" features John Wayne, Charlton Heston, Warren Beatty, Shirley MacLaine and Stockard Channing. Subsequent sections feature a single representative -- "The Producer" (Walter Mirisch), "The Editor" (Verna Fields), "The Production Designer" (Richard Sylbert), "The Costume Designer" (Edith Head), "The Composer" (Richard Baskin), "The Cinematographer" (Vilmos Zsigmond) and "The Critic" (Andrew Sarris) -- except for "The Writer", which comprises Charles Webb, Norman Mailer and Leigh Brackett.

What I enjoyed most was the nostalgia these interviews invoked. The conversations reveal a Hollywood of about thirty years ago and incites our nostalgia for the late 60s and 70s, such as when John Frankenheimer talks about directing *The French Connection II* and Charles Webb comments on the film version of his novel *The Graduate*. At the same time, there is also nostalgia for an earlier era. Howard Hawks, director of such classics as *Scarface*, *The Big Sleep*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Rio Bravo*, for example, minces no words when asked about the coming of the blockbuster in the 70s: "Interviewer: Is your Hollywood gone forever? Hawks: I'm afraid it is."

The interviews were conducted during a period of transition, where, as the blurb reads, "Old Hollywood was still extant, the new cinema was burgeoning." It was an era where old masters like Hitchcock and Hawks were giving way to new mavericks like Scorsese and

Altman. While the elder talk about their attempts to negotiate with the changes in the industry, the newcomers, who for us form part of the Old Guard today, discuss their attempts to establish their own distinctive identities. Robert Wise comments on the difference between the era of the studio-produced film and the director-dominated films of the newer era, and it is true that comparatively Wise is hardly remembered for helming *West Side Story* and *The Sound of Music*, whilst there has been a proliferation of work on Altman's or Scorsese's "style".

Particularly interesting for me are the interviews with people who worked "behind the scenes". The revelations about their specific contributions to the final film product come close to functioning as a primary source for historical research. Edith Head, for example, whose costume designs grace over 350 films, offers an intriguing insight into the different conditions involved in designing for a black-and-white film as opposed to a colour film. Vilmos Zsigmond, cinematographer for classics like *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *The Deer Hunter*, discusses the need for the cameraman to efface his own personality and style in favour of the director's. In other words, Macklin gets them to talk about their *work*, rather than the individual films themselves.

And yet, there are enough personal anecdotes and vignettes to keep the casual reader interested. How many know that Lauren Bacall was in fact born with a high, nasal voice? According to Howard Hawks, Bacall contrived her now-famous deep alto in order to get through an audition with him which landed her the lead role *The Big Sleep* as well as its lead actor, Humphrey Bogart. And the rest, as they say, is history.

The collection's wonderful sense of immediacy is achieved with a simple device: Macklin is referred to in each conversation simply as "The Interviewer". Thus, what comes across are the distinctive voices of the subjects, as well as a sense of the period in which they worked. In that lies the volume's enduring appeal, for in some ways the words resonate much more now that we have knowledge of what has already come to pass.

The Wild West: The Mythical Cowboy and Social Theory

By Will Wright
London: Sage Publications, 2001. ISBN 0-7619-5233-0. 205pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Stephen McVeigh, University of Wales, Swansea, UK

In *The Wild West* Will Wright returns to the genre of the Western, subject of his 1977 book *Sixguns and Society*. His focus here though is not the cinematic Western. Rather he uses the uniquely American myth of the frontier to survey the development and resonance of social and political theory. Explicating the ideas of such thinkers as John Locke, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, Max Weber, he presents a detailed survey of the evolution of individualism and liberty and offers a model of social contract theory which equates such mythic staples as the cowboy, the wilderness and the community with individual equality and the cowboy's role in the creation of a civil society from "the state of nature".

Wright posits that the frontier myth, which contains the universally popular and recognizable image of the lone individual, the cowboy, is representative of the role of the rational individual motivated by self-interests (private property) in market society. This narrative is important to the United States because it is a narrative of social origin that encapsulates everything which renders America different from Europe -- the endless frontier offers a landscape free of inequalities and restrictions based on sacred or feudal hierarchies. Because the frontier appeared to be infinite, every (white male) American theoretically has equal opportunity to acquire and work private land. For Wright, the cowboy is the symbol of market individualism: "He represents freedom and equality, but he also represents the idea that market freedom and equality can lead to a good society, a civil society…He emerges from the wilderness to create market society, and his vision of civility is defined by an open frontier" (188-189). This frontier, he argues, marks the dangerous state of nature from an orderly social contract; it marks the line between savagery and civilization.

From offering this version of American social origin, Wright proceeds to explore the problems and issues that arose in the maintenance of these values and the different responses and modifications that have been proposed, specifically in the light of the emergence of industrial society, a system that is antithetical to many of the values of individualism.

In this sense, *The Wild West* is a lucid synthesis of a large body of material, an impressively organized introduction to social and political theory. Wright is ever conscious of maintaining the reader's understanding and as such he produces a clear argument, regularly reinforcing its main tenets and underpinning concepts.

However, his use of the Western movie is significantly weaker. The analysis of the films is grounded in an exploration of the tensions between market theory and market culture, the stories America tells itself about the processes of market theory. These stories explicitly

highlight issues that are only implicitly represented in the theory. To this end Wright discusses the ways in which the inequality of women and non-whites is, although unstated, essential to the theory, and the way this inequality is more prominently represented in the movies.

In general he rarely raises his observations above the level of western types or well-worn cliches: he regularly wields such familiar Western constructions as villains wanting to own all the land in the valley; the hero who rides into town and rides off into the sunset; the cowboy dreaming of settling down on the bend of the river. The bulk of his analysis relies on familiarity with these most general of western conventions. And for the most part this level of connection works well. The final paragraph in each chapter, entitled *Illustrative Films*, presents a list of movies that have some vague connection to the preceding material. The value of this material, however, is severely limited. As a list, it provides little analysis of substance. The impression of shallowness is reinforced with the recurrence of the same films in several of the lists. As a resource to aid students of film, this borders on useless -- if familiar with the film, the point he makes is obvious, and if unfamiliar, his points are meaninglessly vague. These sections lack narrative context, lack any focused criticism and feel almost inconsequential. Furthermore, he makes no attempt to differentiate Westerns of different periods. All the examples he offers seem to refer to a single, unified myth. Wright is talking about the cowboy myth in its purest form only -- all of his textual analysis relies upon the cowboy as an honourable, heroic figure. Characters that contravene these archetypal qualities are simply villains, a position that dismisses such interesting and problematic cowboys as those played by Clint Eastwood or created by Sam Peckinpah. Indeed, his only acceptance of contemporary subversion rests on dealing with urban action movies (such as *Dirty Harry*) as a reflection of Eastern, industrial society.

In pursuit of his aims, Wright attempts to pass off clichés or broad generalizations as analysis in support of his argument. In places he seemingly contradicts himself. A good illustration sees him discussing the function of women -- their inequality is central to moral order of market society, he argues, they temper the hero's individualism and provide the balance necessary for civilization -- and suggesting that the hero who fails in love, fails heroically. This is problematic: does the ending of *Shane* suggest he is a failure as a hero? However, Wright seems to acknowledge that this generalization is flawed when he goes on to suggest the hero can either settle down and be civilized or ride off into the sunset at the end of the film and remain a hero. His failure to provide any supporting evidence of heroes failing in love in the chapter's *Illustrative Films* section is telling. The impressive index of films Wright offers suggests a comprehensive body of textual analysis that he does not provide.

As an introductory level text on social and political theory, an examination of the myth of the frontier in the abstract and its role in the creation of American values, this is a book that should be well received by undergraduates. Students of film will, however, be disappointed.

Women in British Cinema: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know

By Sue Harper
London: Continuum, 2000. ISBN 0-8264-4733-3. vi + 261pp. £25.00 (pbk)

A review by Deneka C. MacDonald, University of Glasgow, UK

In her introduction to *Women and British Cinema: Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know*, Sue Harper emphatically states: "I shall not waste much time on critical frottage -- that engagement in so-called controversies which adds nothing to the sum of historical knowledge, but only to citation indexes. That is just a sort of academic 'feeding frenzy'" (1). And indeed, she keeps her promise throughout the text. *Women and British Cinema* is divided into two parts. The first half of the book devotes chapters to particular decades (the 30s through to the 80s), while the latter half of the book deals with producers, writers, directors, costume designers and editors. Further, Harper introduces each chapter with an average of one to three short paragraphs situating the decade in its social and cultural context, before moving on to a substantial list of films released:

> The 1980s were marked by a cultural and political revolution whose consequences are still evident. Margaret Thatcher was in office from 1979 to 1990, and inculcated a regime of astonishing brutality, pronouncing that "there is no such thing as society". She designed a militantly individualistic culture to replace notions of consensus and public responsibility. She could not, of course, have survived so long without a modicum of support from the country at large -- by those who espoused the same system of petty entrepreneurialism, and who knew the price of everything but the value of nothing (139).

This is perhaps an example of what Harper calls her "buccaneering tone" (233). Nonetheless, while many would perhaps agree with the above statements, the cultural context for this (and other) chapter remains overly generalised and sweeping. Moreover, one wonders at Thatcherism being the only social and cultural influence on British cinema in the 1980s.

Although there are a great deal of films "considered" within individual chapters in the first half of the text, there is very little engagement with them. For example, nineteen films are mentioned between pages ten to thirteen and a further thirty three films from pages fourteen to eighteen. Harper's decision to include such a vast amount of films is seemingly based on a desire to demonstrate the lack of "positive" roles for women in early British Cinema, and to be sure, there were not many. As well, in including such an exhaustive list of films, she does demonstrate an extensive viewing experience. Unfortunately, the overall effect is to "list" films that have more to do with the roles of men than of women. Essentially, Harper is trying to do too much in too little space. Her goal is a commendable one, but ultimately her disavowal of theory in favour of disconnected cinematic listings makes the first half of the text seem like a superficial skim through the world of film.

To be certain, the author is well read and she has commodious viewing knowledge of British cinema, but the lack of textual analysis or transitions between ideas, themes and paragraphs often leaves the reader feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume of films. Harper has taken on no easy task here: indeed, to talk about women in British Cinema is also to sift through the substantial men involved in British Cinema -- one can not "get" to the female writers or producers of films without first starting with those who not only preceded them, but dominate(d) the industry. As a result, the first half of the text is really more about men in British Cinema than women.

The second half of *Women and British Cinema* is more cohesive and indeed brings to light the role that women played in British cinema throughout the decades. Harper is careful to define her terms and sets up a clear context for her narrative. There is much more of a balance in this section of the text between Harper's discourse and her filmic examples that illustrate or confirm her discussion of script writing, directing and producing. The second half of the text also gives the reader a clearer understanding of how Harper herself sees women's roles (or lack of them) in cinema. She provides a good discussion of the career and subsequent contributions to film made by women such as Betty Box, Aida Young, Berle Vertue, Norma Heyman, Linda Myles and Sarah Radclyffe. And she is conscientious in her writing, noting that social and economic politics throughout the 60's and 70's played a debilitating role in the career of the female producer (156).