

David Ehrlich: Citizen of the World

By Olivier Cotte

Paris: Dreamland, 2002. ISBN 2-910017-80-5. 136 illustrations, 143 pp. £15.50

A review by Ian Elliot, Canada

David Ehrlich is a leading experimental artist/ animator and educator, a revered participant in the world animation community. This monograph, assembled by experimental filmmaker Olivier Cotte, begins with a brief survey of Ehrlich's upbringing and many early occupations, followed by an analysis of his work in graphic design and film. A detailed filmography is also included, featuring a generous sampling of colour frames and a collection of "contributions" (tributes) from many of Ehrlich's associates and colleagues in the US and abroad. The book's main section is comprised of an extensive, freely structured, interview, aided by well-chosen photographs, wherein Ehrlich discusses his goals, artistic ethos, and working methods.

Ehrlich's animation is both rigorously systematic and intuitive. His thirty-six short animated films are concerned almost exclusively with the melt and flow of pattern and colour, arrived at by intricate strategy and design, but governed by emotion, playing to both intellectual and visceral response. Certain films like *Point* (1984), *Pixel* (1987) and *Radiant Flux* (1999) are entirely non-referential, visually, while others such as *Robot Rerun* (1996) and *A Child's Dream* (1990) render recognisable objects only in metamorphosis. Cotte observes that these single-shot films are "not cinematographic work in the traditional sense of the word", in that they have neither cuts nor "frame sequencing" (14); but in cinema, particularly that as dynamic as Ehrlich's, these techniques are options, not necessities. Ehrlich honourably carries on the vision of abstract animation innovators Len Lye, Oskar Fischinger and Norman McLaren, each of whom he studied closely with.

Ehrlich's filmmaking, which commenced in 1974 on eight-millimetre stock, grew out of ten years of rigorous, enterprising application to the arts: sculpture (studied in India), painting (including Sumi-e in Japan), music, dance and philosophy -- particularly Eastern (being "overly educated", he's "a bit disillusioned by the pretensions of Western linear thinking" [60]). He observes -- imperfectly, he admits -- a unifying, trans-disciplinary way of living and working, and has added live dance and holography to his film work in an ongoing effort to expand its dimensions.

Impressive as Ehrlich's achievements (as an animator) are, his pioneering work is as a catalyst for international animation projects. His involvement in the administration of ASIFA (Association Internationale du Film D'animation, presently at 1,700 members from 55 countries) brought about *Academy Leader Variations*, for which twenty-one animators from Switzerland, Poland, China, and the U.S. adopted "countdown" projection leader as a basis for wildly imaginative animations. The segments (widely seen in the *Tournée of Animation* of 1987) are by turns amusing and exhilarating. A second collaboration, *Animated Self-Portraits* (1989), had Soviet, Czechoslovakian, Yugoslavian and Japanese participation. One particularly humane and ambitious undertaking, an attempt to integrate Jewish and Muslim

animators with adaptations of each other's traditional literature, was realised in part in 1987 but has languished from lack of funds (and difficulty in securing participants from the Middle East). Ehrlich recounts these altruistic endeavours factually, without self-congratulation; he reports that Polish animator Piotr Dumala's extemporaneous "academy leader" segment, sketched on a napkin, was "better stuff" than most pieces Ehrlich had laboured on in his studio for a year (85). In his "finest hour" (69), he has trained children to animate in Vermont (where he lives), Croatia, France and Italy, drawing energy and inspiration from their guileless efforts.

Continuously detailed, energetic and involving, this volume only partly surveys Ehrlich's achievements, and fails to position him amid his predecessors and contemporaries. The book is most successful for those already acquainted with his career; Ehrlich's participation may have brought about the emphasis on the details of his work. This self-effacing artist/ animator, who published *The Bowel Book* in 1980 (the product of his research on colorectal disease, an affliction his father suffered from), is unlikely write a memoir of his own. The testimonials from thirty-six of his peers and associates which follow the book's primary interview may have been intended as a corrective motion. These effusions, often platitudinous ("If David Ehrlich hadn't been born, he should have been invented" [119]) quickly pall.

Haste shows in this compendium; some copy errors are glaring. One example is fit to mention: throughout the main interview, Cotte's questions are in boldface (69-71) and Ehrlich's responses are in plain type -- however these emphases are reversed, confusingly, on page 42. Arbitrary headings like "Intentionality" and "Geometry" disrupt the flow of the interview (59, 65). Ehrlich is lugubriously described as having "directed" his films (61). A humorous autobiographical sketch at the beginning will mystify the uninformed -- it is by Ehrlich, but not credited to him! The presentation of bilingual text (English on the lower half of each page) would generally be awkward for an anglophone. The main interview is cut off abruptly; after a digression into Ehrlich's musical tastes and experience, Cotte ends commenting that his "personal experience" of conversing with Ehrlich "is more important than the final result", alienating the reader and evading a genuine conclusion. The book's final result, however, is buoyed by the vitality and humanity of David Ehrlich, humbly and aptly expressed throughout the interview. Anyone with an interest in film and the fine arts should be absorbed, elevated, and energised.

Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age

By Malcolm Le Grice

British Film Institute, 2001. ISBN: 0-85170-873-0 (hbk), 0-85170-872-2 (pbk). xix + 330pp.

Price: £50 (hbk), £17.99 (pbk)

A review by Ernest Mathijs, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, UK

Malcolm Le Grice (not Michael, as the *Amazon* listing has it) is one of the most remarkable alternative filmmakers of the second half of the 20th century. He is a pioneer of "structural film" in the 1970s, and one of the first to work with digital media, and has had films, video and computer works exhibited from the late 1960s on. He has also been active as a theorist, reflecting on his and other filmmakers' craft and art. This book provides a collection of his most notable essays and debate participations. The book works to its purpose, and as described it "contributes to the contemporary debates about film, video, art and new technology." More important, the essays enclosed revive a seminal period in the 1970s when alternative film was at the centre of polemical debates about the nature of avant-garde and the future of radical or experimental film. For that reason alone this book should be lauded. It is both a historical document and an honest, "inside" account of the discourse(s) of alternative cinema.

Much of this book's value derives from how it has been organised. Le Grice has edited and arranged his essays explicitly respecting the wording and format in which they first appeared. He thus acknowledges their status as historical documents, as materials from a past gone by, whose relevance does not come from being brought up-to-date, but from representing film thought at the time. With the exception of one essay ("Toward Temporal Economy") no content has been altered. Essays from what Sean Cubitt in his preface calls "those lost ephemeral magazines of the film underground" (vii), like *Criss-Cross Art Communications* and *Cinema News*, and even the somewhat better known *Millennium Film Journal*, are here being rescued from obscurity and republished for broader audiences of today, while still breathing past concerns. One of Le Grice's most impenetrable "essays" (in the literal French meaning of the term, attempt), the double-page scheme of "Cinemology," is even reproduced in facsimile, as its look alone recalls the days when drawing graphs (generally "not done" in film studies) was an integral part of making a (political) statement on film. Chronology, too, has apparently been a major concern in organising the materials. Although much is divided into thematic chapters ("On Other Artists," "General Theory"), the sense prevails that all of this is first and foremost a trajectory of Le Grice's gradual development of film thought. Together with the index, allowing one to browse for recurrent references, the authenticity and chronology activate Le Grice's thoughts as a research tool, to be studied by film scholars.

As historical documents, the essays also shed an illuminating light on Le Grice's position as both practitioner and theorist of alternative cinema, from the heydays of British co-op to the practices of contemporary digital cinema. As Cubitt testifies, Le Grice doesn't just present his rights but also his wrongs. In a couple cases, especially in the debates with Stan Brakhage, where he defends himself against being accused of "Greenbergianism" (100), and P. Adams

Sitney, where both get tangled up in definitions of "structural film" (140), Le Grice seems to be losing the argument, at least at points. Yet this doesn't matter. On the contrary -- the honesty and sometimes confessional tone of these intense exchanges only proves how much of film thought is a vivid, riveting, lively business.

In these contexts it is essential to know how Le Grice's work has largely been ignored by American accounts of alternative and avant-garde cinema, like those by Scott MacDonald or James Peterson (except when he is denounced as... "Greenbergian"). Le Grice is regarded by these authors as a writer first, with emphasis on his interpretations of other alternative films in his book *Abstract Film and Beyond* (1977). In the present collection, the balance between theory and practice is restored. As Cubitt writes, for Le Grice film practice, at its most materialist, is the key to understanding film. "Le Grice is here to remind us that the matter is the medium, and that art is material work in a material world" (vii). It may be one of the few shortcomings of this book then that no illustrations of Le Grice's work are provided, although descriptions of projects do partly make up for that. (251-258)

But Le Grice doesn't stop at practice; he is willing to think his work through on a theoretical level. So there is much of the writer Le Grice as well, from "Thoughts on Recent Underground Film" (1972), to "Problematising the Spectator's Placement in Film" (1981) to "Digital Cinema and Experimental Film -- Continuities and Discontinuities" (1999). What is so refreshing about Le Grice's essays is that they are illuminating in language: they tell in clear words how particular works elicit particular (and sometimes general) theoretical considerations. Take his account of "structural film" for instance, in "Thoughts on Recent Underground Film." It is both a critique of how Sitney uses the term and an illustration of a very straightforward realisation of how particular works pass through a very material world (not just in terms of meaning but physically as well) -- a welcome and, even now still relevant warning not to ignore contexts in which films circulate. (26) For pedagogical reasons, probably the best essay in the collection is the last, "Digital Cinema and Experimental Film -- Continuities and Discontinuities" (1999). It sets out the boundaries and peculiarities along which alternative cinema needs to be understood, without reverting to obscure or hip jargon lingo (something which alternative filmmakers revert to all too often), and introduces nearly all necessary elements for the study of alternative cinema, digital and pro-digital, in less than ten pages. Now there's a thought for next year's reading list...

In a period in film studies when attention for alternative cinema seems to exclude the avant-garde and experimental almost completely (not to mention now seemingly out-dated terms like "structural" and "expanded"), and in which many students of cinema seem to have a non-interest, this book is more than welcome. It points to the importance of poetics and aesthetics in the making of and thinking about cinema; it addresses key issues every filmmaker or scholar sees him/herself confronted with, as a practitioner, teacher, or researcher. Finally, it lets us know that the divide between thinking about cinema and doing cinema is a hollow one. No practice without theory, no philosophy without materials.

Movie Wars: How Hollywood and the Media Limit What Films We Can See

By Jonathan Rosenbaum

London: Wallflower Press, 2002. ISBN 1 903364 604. 234pp

A review by Nick Heffernan, University College Northampton, UK

In his 1995 book, *Placing Movies: The Practice of Film Criticism*, Jonathan Rosenbaum suggested that film culture and film audiences in the United States would be better off if there were no film critics at all. On the evidence of this latest collection of occasional pieces and his continued presence as the *Chicago Reader's* regular film reviewer, Rosenbaum has resisted the impulse to set an example by falling on his sword; instead he has directed the hostility he feels toward his chosen profession outwards in a series of well-aimed pot shots at fellow critics.

The recurrent theme of these often angry, sometimes ill-focused, but always passionately engaged essays, is the critical establishment's abdication of independence and responsibility in the face of overwhelming commercial and ideological pressure exerted by the "media-industrial complex." The absence of what might be called a "loyal opposition" has permitted the Hollywood machine's obsession with quick profits and over-spun hype to dictate audience tastes and turn "most of our movie culture to mush" (5). And the chief culprits in this scenario are not the glossy entertainment magazines which shamelessly treat film reviewing and reporting as extensions of the business of promotion, but the influential and "serious" newspapers and literary journals that might be expected to challenge the unadulterated diet of multiplex fare forced on consumers by the industry.

Organs such as *The New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, *Esquire* and *Vanity Fair* particularly vex Rosenbaum for the way in which their film coverage purports to be informed by high-art standards, whilst in effect colluding with the industry's lowest-common-denominator agenda. Rosenbaum takes apart the prominent critics who write for such publications and have over the last decade specialised in portentous "death of cinema" jeremiads, lamenting not only the dumbing down of Hollywood product for the MTV generation but the failure of world cinema to produce successors to the great *auteurs* of yesteryear -- Bergman, Ray, Kurosawa, Antonioni, Godard *et al.* Such pronouncements are, for Rosenbaum, empty displays of middlebrow cultural angst which betray an insensitivity to genuinely intelligent homegrown popular filmmakers such as Joe Dante and a shocking ignorance of the vitality of international cinema in such places as Iran, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South and Central America. They end up simply reinforcing the industry's and the mass audience's suspicions that there are no foreign films worth distributing or watching, ensuring that the bulk of attention goes to big-budget American movies which, even if aesthetically barren, can be written up as "cultural events" (the latest Lucas, Spielberg etc.).

Where cinema is concerned, Rosenbaum is a passionate internationalist. "[E]ven bad or mediocre foreign movies have important things to teach us", he declares (108); and he reserves his bitterest bile for those critics whom he deems too lazy or too swayed by American cultural isolationism to attend and review foreign film festivals or educate themselves in world cinema (they are named, shamed and their publications' editorial policies roundly excoriated). But the "alternative" side of the industry is not let off the hook in this regard either. Maverick director Kevin Smith is taken to task for declaring that he has no need to verse himself in world cinema, as forerunners such as Jim Jarmusch have already done on his behalf, while independent production and distribution company Miramax is berated for its incomprehensible policy of buying up foreign films, re-editing them, and failing to distribute them on anything like a rational basis. Thus critics, filmmakers and distributors conspire in a "kind of landlocked naivete" (108) which goes hand in hand with cultural arrogance and plain ignorance.

So to whom can we look for the promulgation of values that might contribute to a healthy film culture? Not the American Film Institute, argues Rosenbaum, which has done less than cable TV movie channels to preserve and popularise our film heritage, instead resorting to promotional gimmicks like "Top 100" lists that reproduce Hollywood's isolationist world view and pander to the major studios' re-release schedules. Nor academia, where film history has given way to populist media studies syllabi, and where video has displaced the authentic film image. And outside the classroom, academic film scholars have virtually given up on communicating with an interested movie-going public.

At this point Rosenbaum is in danger of slipping into the easy cultural pessimism he finds so distasteful in others. But underlying every complaint and accusation here is a passionate belief that American audiences *would* embrace a more diverse and adventurous film culture if only they were given the opportunity and encouragement to do so. This book may not contain enough sophisticated close textual analysis or detailed cultural or institutional history for academic film scholars, but no film lover can fail to respond to Rosenbaum's lusty denunciations of critical pusillanimity and his zealous proselytising for an outward-looking, historically aware and aesthetically informed film culture with popular appeal. Perhaps some film critics are worth preserving after all.

Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film

By Peter Wollen

London: Verso, 2002. ISBN 1-85984-391-3. 314 pp. £ 13 (pbk)

A review by Patricia Allmer, Loughborough University, UK

In today's academic environment, where specialisation is the credo, academic variety and comfort with a wide range of knowledge that reaches across disciplines is increasingly scarce. The intellectual needs the ability to establish relationships between disciplines, rather than covering a small area of one discipline. Peter Wollen is such an intellectual. He is a filmmaker, scriptwriter, cultural and pop cultural theorist, art historian and theorist, Situationist historian and film theorist. He has written articles on subjects from René Magritte to Gerhard Richter. *Paris Hollywood* is a collection of essays that astounds the reader with its range of reference, its ease and its clarity.

Wollen's book moves beyond the perspectival, beyond the analysis from specific frameworks. His comment on studying and researching British films characterises very accurately his approach on film as a whole: "We have now reached a point when, after several years of study and research, we can begin to think seriously about synthesising a wide range of new information and new insights in order to create a comprehensive new vision" (183). Wollen seamlessly integrates philosophical and analytical traditions his discourse, which draws on Jameson, Freud, Heidegger, Bloch, Sartre, Blanchot, and Marx.

These essays are introduced through the structure of an "Alphabet of Cinema." "A", Wollen writes, "is going to be for Aristotle. [...] I believe that Aristotle can be seen, convincingly enough, as the first theorist of film." (1) He progresses to B for Brecht but also B-movies and Bambi, incongruous collocations repeated in the essays, where we find Joseph Cotton and Joseph Conrad, Humphrey Bogart and Jorge Luis Borges, Jimmy Stewart and John Steinbeck and of course Mickey Mouse and Mao Tse-Tung.

The structure of the alphabet is contrasted by a perhaps loosely connected collection of essays, which are grouped into three sections on "Directors and Film-Makers," "Films and Movements" and "Themes and Styles." The essays, as the title of the book implies, are brought together in a geographic, historic and generic journey through the diverse landscape of film's histories and traditions, covering an array of different directors from auteur directors such as Jean-Luc Godard, Alfred Hitchcock and Ridley Scott to experimental filmmakers such as William Burroughs, Viking Eggeling and Jean Rouch. In this landscape Wollen's approaches lead him from "Riff Raff Realism" to the "Last New Wave."

This journey leads to discussions of speed, space and time in film, and to one of the most interesting essays, "Architecture and Film: Places and Non-Places." This applies Marc Augé's theory that the spaces through which one travels (such as railway stations) are different from place, which "implies a certain stability and a set of historic associations and meanings" (200). This is combined with Walter Benjamin's notions of "space" to ask the

question of "[w]hether cinemas are non-places." Whilst the lobbies, and arguably the auditoria, are non-places, the situation changes when the film begins: "We are transported into another space, a space which seems, in some ways, to be that of a 'place', in others that of a 'non-place.' It is a space which is both lived in and the site of fantasy, a kind of fantasy travel, a series of way-stations to which we have no real connection" (200).

Calling the structural combination of these essays "loose" is perhaps too hasty because their underlying connectivity is stronger than the formal structure of the alphabet. They are tied together by an insistence on interconnectedness itself, which is, in its highest instance, love. This amorous connected-ness pulls together one with the other -- at one level, art and film, in a relationship of mutual influence where it is unnecessary to question whether film is art. Through this, Wollen reveals relations between films, directors, art-movements and artists -- Dadaism, Pop Art, Situationism, Picasso, Breton, LeWitt, Apollinaire, Kafka, and Satie are just as important in understanding film as they are for aesthetic understanding. On another level, coincidental relationships and missed and real encounters are reviewed and links between different lives established.

And then there is love -- as Wollen comments in his "Alphabet of Cinema": "C, then, is for Cinephilia." (5) These essays are far more than just a *tour de force* analysis of film; they are an ode, a loving confession to cinema -- suggested in Wollen's personal accounts of his engagements with cinema. Films are here revealed as part of the happenings which shape our past and our memories -- the films whose titles we have forgotten and of which only one or two scenes have engraved themselves in our minds, the films which caused our first sleepless nights, the films which changed forever our viewpoints, the first film we have ever loved. Remembering these films is more than recalling information -- it is accompanied by feelings, strong enough to send us back for a moment to those specific days that stayed in our minds, in order to become the filmic markers and a part of our lives. All these levels of connections bind us to what film is made out of and is about: art, personal relationships and co-operation, and of course *cinephilia* -- or as Hitchcock and Wollen would have it: "Handcuffed, key lost!"

Polish National Cinema

By Marek Haltof

New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002. ISBN 1-57181-275-X (hbk), ISBN 1-57181-276-8 (pbk). 49 B&W photos, xiv + 318 pp, filmography, bibliography, index. £50.00 (hbk), £17.00 (pbk)

A review by Michael Stevenson, University of Reading, UK

Polish National Cinema attempts the difficult task of representing, as comprehensively as currently possible, the history of a Central European cinema from its earliest times. It wants to do much more than its two well-known predecessors from the late 1980s, Bren's *World Cinema 1: Poland* (Flicks, 1990) and Turaj and Michalek's *The Modern Cinema of Poland* (Indiana UP, 1988). Haltof makes it clear that he realises the debate on the national in cinema has moved on and become much more complex. Thus, *Polish National Cinema* hopes to be rather more than a reference to the constantly pressured history of this cinema. However, its referencing is well done indeed, and for this alone the book will be of great use in Polish cinema studies. Students can depend on finding here the most relevant facts given in detail. The book is periodised chronologically for the first eight chapters, and each begins with a brief summary of the main contextual elements that mark a break in the historical process that engendered new strategies in representation. In this, Haltof recognises a key factor in understanding Polish cinema -- that it is extremely interwoven with its complex history. It is possible to go so far as to say that it is a cinema difficult to come to terms with unless a reasonable grasp of that history is available, as it almost must be part of the process of reading its films. An essential companion, therefore, to this book would be Norman Davies' recently updated edition of *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present* (Oxford UP, 2001), not only the most comprehensive analysis of the struggles for Poland in English, but possibly in Polish as well. Significantly, Davies devotes nearly a quarter of his book to the role of "representation" in the 200-year period that marked Poland's subjugation from 1795 and its constant attempts to free itself. Cinema itself took on the leading role in this task in the period of 1945 to 1989.

Haltof, of course, recognises the centrality of this task in Polish representation. Several times he categorises Polish cinema as "Aesopian" in form, in that filmmakers had to proceed indirectly in constructing their work. They did this to occupy the uneasy space between the people and the State, which itself often had to move between placatory positions, as yet another spate of opposition developed within, gradually exercising its dominance. Even films seemingly supportive of the aims of the regime, such as Andrzej Wajda's debut *A Generation* [*Pokolenie*] (1955) -- at first glance deeply imbued with the prescribed Socialist Realist aesthetic -- contained elements that State censors disliked, so much so that they often debated on whether to exhibit the film at all. Yet the author sees this film merely as "a straightforward story". Haltof does not want to extend himself into a discussion of this grinding representational interface. In fact, he castigates certain Western critics who see Polish film merely as "an introduction to communist politics, to the nature of the totalitarian state, to

censorship and its repercussions" (xii). He proposes rather that, it is "important to see films as films, not political statements playing some role in the demolition of the Communist system".

This leads the author into a dilemma regarding his account of the "best" of post-war Polish film, which Haltof sees as a complex and subtle opposition to processes of repression. It is not possible to sustain (for long) a debate about Polish national cinema merely through a "film as film" position, and in any case, a book that principally aspires to be an excellent and useful survey cannot easily serve such an approach. Paradoxically, more attention to the textual detail of films would have led to a useful understanding of what Haltof, late in the book (180), correctly recognises as the centrality of the Polish Historical process for Polish Cinema, "filmmakers were always at the foreground of Polish life ... *they* ... felt an immense responsibility".

This central contradiction mars what is otherwise an important book for scholars of Polish and Central European cinema. It leads to Haltof downplaying Polish cinema as overly serious when in fact these "felt responsibilities" led to some of the most complex and life-affirming works of post-war European cinema. When Haltof develops longer detailed analyses of single films in three final supplementary chapters, he cannot escape these issues. When describing *Psy* (1992), for example, which he discusses in the chapter "Polish Films with an American Accent," he very precisely has to deal with a film made after 1989, and begin to understand how Polish filmmakers might find a new orientation to the National in a context of apparent freedom, without those determinants that had previously been so strong. History is by no means everything for Polish Cinema but without an understanding of its complexities, its greatest qualities will be missed.

The other two supplementary chapters are on topics that could also have been effectively woven into the main body of the work. They concern "Representations of Stalinism and National Memory," and "Holocaust Images of the Jew in Postwar Polish films." There is an uneasy feeling about the latter. Polish-Jewish relations remain one of the most contentious issues in Polish intellectual life, and I would advise anyone wanting to do further work on this area to conjoin Haltof's discussion with Antony Polonsky's book, *My Brother's Keeper* (Routledge, 1990). What is needed primarily is a comprehensive anthology of textual readings on Polish films. At present, this does not exist. However, Haltof's research on the industry as it responded to an extraordinarily pressured context, partnered with other texts and histories, would help to provide an excellent opportunity to begin to understand this exemplary national cinema.

The American Horror Film: An Introduction

By Reynold Humphries

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003. ISBN 0 7486 1416 8. 12 illustrations, viii + 216pp. £16.99

A review by Alex Naylor, University College London, UK

Reynold Humphries has taken on a difficult task in *The American Horror Film: An Introduction*: to survey the genre's eight decade history in a manner which is theoretically engaged but does not become too unapproachable to the general or student reader. As the writer of what is in a sense a "guidebook" for horror films, he deserves credit for remaining accessible (some knowledge of the basics of Freud, Lacan and Marx is assumed, but this is kept clear and indeed would be difficult to avoid) and for clearly and consistently pointing the novice reader to the landmark films and works of criticism (*I Walked with a Zombie* [1943], *Halloween* [1978], Robin Wood, Carol Clover), but also to neglected gems (for instant, Michael Curtiz's fascinating 1936 film *The Walking Dead*) and stimulating recent critical work (Mark Edmundson's 1997 *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sadoomasochism and the Culture of Gothic* [Harvard, 1999]).

While Humphries' confident grasp of a very broad range of critical and cinematic material is admirable, his analysis itself is somewhat patchy. He contributes strong and illuminating discussions of films and directors he admires, particularly the films of David Cronenberg, and Wes Craven's early output. However, frustratingly, Humphries tends to analyse films, directors and trends much more sketchily and superficially when he does not admire them -- even if, like the Universal horror film of the 1930s or the franchise horror of the 1980s, the films glossed over constitute a historically crucial trend in the genre. Most importantly, Humphries' dismissal of the body of horror films made in the last twenty years (with brief exceptions for the two directors mentioned above) is well-argued but ultimately unsatisfying, because the brevity of Humphries' treatment of the films he judges poor here effectively results in a twenty year gap at the end of the survey.

Another case in point is his dealings (16) with gender and sexuality in the films of the 1930s horror director James Whale, a complex and fascinating topic to which Humphries does real injustice. For instance Humphries claims Una O'Connor's superb comic performance in *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) suggests "a contempt for women" because her character is "a stupid coward who can do nothing but scream". This over-simplistic analysis seems to miss the more complex discussion of gender and femininity foregrounded by the film by Elsa Lanchester's dual role as the author Mary Shelley and as the eponymous Bride herself. In the same passage of analysis, the discourse of camp is dismissed, *per se*, with similar rapidity as merely a "sexist" negative stereotype about gay men, which reinforces prejudice.

Humphries relies heavily on Marxism and psychoanalysis as explanatory paradigms for the horror film; both of which are proven methods for fruitfully engaging with the genre.

However, Humphries' use of Marxist and psychoanalytic theory tends unfortunately often to stick at the level of identifying metaphors in the film text, and thus gloss over crucial subtleties both theoretical and textual.

A worrying example is Humphries' definition of the Gothic at the start of the first chapter -- a more or less idiosyncratic collection of defining tropes (including "sinister, remote castles" and "characters of an aristocratic nature") are reeled off, without reference to any of the body of scholarship on the subject. While Humphries' work does not have the leisure to engage in a lengthy discussion on defining the Gothic, a reading of David Punter's *The Literature of Terror* (Longman, 1996), which is quoted elsewhere in *The American Horror Film*, ought to have furnished sufficient background. Work on horror and on the Gothic intersect so far that an engagement with Gothic scholarship would seem a more or less necessary part of an introductory work on horror.

Perhaps again as a result of haste or time constraints on editing, Humphries occasionally contradicts himself on important points. For example, a neat division between conservative horror and radical horror underpins much of Humphries' discussion in the book's second section, and is dominated by an auteurist division of horror output (138, and Chapter 6 in general). However, elsewhere in the book (56–57), Humphries argues cogently against such simplistic divisions of films into conservative and radical, and against auteurism as a theoretical approach rife with contradictions and inadequacies (40). In a further irony, it is Humphries' auteurist moments, when he writes on the directors he finds most interesting and valuable, which deal with film texts in most satisfying and convincing detail.

The Cinema of Economic Miracles: Visuality and Modernization in the Italian Art Film

By Angelo Restivo

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8223-2799-6. 22 illustrations, 232pp. £14.50 (pbk), £41.90 (hbk)

**A review by Anthony Siu, State University of New York,
Buffalo, US**

Arguing against the belief that both Italian cinema criticism and psychoanalytic discourse have come to a deadlock, Angelo Restivo's book *The Cinema of Economic Miracles* is an attempt to prove their significance. Using psychoanalysis (particularly the concept of "the real") as the central organising principle of the book, Restivo looks at Italian art films of the sixties and their relationship with national reconstruction after the war. Unlike the New Historicists, Restivo is not interested in treating the films as a simple register of historical events. Instead, he is interested in refashioning historicity and exploring how these films can be read as a kind of historiography in which "the *textuality* of the nation" (15) is revealed. In order to illustrate such textuality, Restivo highlights moments of rupture in these films, drawing our attention to an unstable national space that is constantly being reconfigured.

Restivo's theoretical stance -- history as "always already" interrupted by the real and nation as a myth -- are nothing new to readers who are familiar with Jameson and Bhabha's work, not to mention Žižek discussion of the real in Hitchcock's films. But what is new about Restivo's argument is that he unveils the limitations of Italian neo-realism as a national paradigm without obliterating historicity. Focusing on an indeterminacy that recurs in the dialectics between centre and periphery, the North and the South, and fantasy and reality, he offers a critique of Italy in the sixties. He shows that post-war Italy was still in the process of being fixed. Thus, the gaps in these films exhibit the same quality of becoming that defines the nation-in-process. While this reading of Italian neo-realism might appear as a generalisation of the neo-capitalist Italy, I think Restivo is certainly not trying to disregard the specific details of the films. On the contrary, his reading of *Open City* (1945), *La Dolce Vita* (1960), and *Red Desert* (1949) registers his attentiveness to the relationship between these films' internal logic and historicity.

A significant portion of *The Cinema of Economic Miracles* is devoted to cognitive mapping -- how spatiality is problematised by how part-objects such as the gaze and the voice pose an internal limit to the films' totality. But as a whole, the discussion of melodrama and its relation to homosexuality strikes me as distinguishing it from recent studies of the same subject (notably *Vital Crises in Italian Cinema* [University of Texas, 1995] and *Mists of Regret* [Princeton, 1995]). Crucial in his argument is the way he treats the homosexual as an alterity, not as an identity. Earlier work such as Peter Bondanella's *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present* (Continuum, 2001) discusses how, of example, Pasolini's *Salò*

(1976) evinces homosexual repression rather than counters social taboos. In Restivo's account, however, the issue of sexual liberation or repression is no longer the key question. Whether it is the "modernist homosexual" in *Ossessione* or the character Terence Stamp in *Teorema* (1968), the homosexual serves as an instance of rupture within the narrative and the "crisis of the sign" (91) rather than an identity. Although Restivo's does not make the connection between psychoanalysis and queerness explicit, his point about the impossibility of reading the homosexual suggests that the real is at the center of understanding queerness. Implicit in his account is how the real effects the impersonality of queer sexuality. Not only is Restivo able to bring the problematics of sexual differences back into the politics of an aesthetic movement, but also how psychoanalysis, as the key "methodological underpinning," (7) is indispensable for our investigation of homosexuality.

In terms of melodrama, Restivo's stress on temporality makes an original contribution to the study of the genre. We cry watching melodrama because what is supposed to happen to avoid the sad happenings or ending appears "too late." Drawing upon this feature, Restivo offers a powerful critique of Italian neorealism by pointing out how the temporal schema in melodrama, with its insistence that everything is "too late," is diametrically opposed to the immediacy demanded by neorealism.

My reservations about Restivo's book, however, lie in his amalgamation of theories. Do Lacan's notions of the real and the drive function the same way that Jameson discusses signifiers? Can the de-centring of Foucault's discursivity be equated with the disjunction of the return of the repressed? Restivo himself is certainly aware of the incompatibility between these theoreticians. Although he says that his aim is to "let the tension become productive so as to see more clearly the contours of the fault" (10), the argument might be more powerful if he could lay out more how he departs from psychoanalysis when he appropriates paradigms such as postmodernism. Precisely because of this, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles* is certainly rewarding for those who are bored with the dryness of formalist analysis and those who are interested in the joy of theoretical debates.

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

By Jon Lewis (ed.)

New York: New York University Press, 2001. 0-8147-5161-X. 385 pp

A review by Elizabeth Rosen, University College London, UK

Few books I've read recently have exasperated me more than *The End of Cinema as We Know It: American Film in the Nineties*. The collection is unfocused, occasionally undisciplined and even, at times, uninteresting. But it's not as if the reader isn't alerted to these facts from the start: Editor Jon Lewis undermines every one of the collection's propositions in his brief introduction, including its anchoring theme.

Lewis wants to use Jean-Luc Godard's tongue-in-cheek comment "I await the end of cinema with optimism" as the collection's thematic focus, but then weakens the very idea of an end to cinema by stating that it is the uncontested dominant art form of the twentieth century. Making the unintelligible claim that "history is sometimes driven by chronology" (1), Lewis starts with a premise that "assumes the historic importance of the nineties American cinema" (2). But one has to wonder whether such an assumption is a sound one, any more than taking Godard's comment at face value would be wise. Lewis must have had doubts himself, for after several pages of prepping his reader to his argument, he undermines it with the following hedge: "At the risk of complicating matters here at the start, perhaps this is not the end of cinema but rather a transitional period from one new American cinema to another" (8).

There is no question that cinema has changed radically in the past fifteen years. George Lucas is making movies without actors, and the "film experience" is often had within the privacy of one's home, to name just a few. But film, because it is a technology, has always been subject to change. Is the movement to digital filmmaking, or the shifts in funding and distribution more radical than the movement from silent to sound, or from black-and-white to colour?

The End of Cinema is most interesting when it addresses these radical shifts in the making and viewing of cinema, as it does in its first chapter, "Movies, Money, and History" which examines the corporatization of cinema. But Lewis ties his authors' hands from the very start by asking them to write such short pieces. The collection would have been served better by halving the number of essays -- it currently has a whopping thirty-four -- and increasing the length of the pieces so that authors could do more than give expository overviews or chronological surveys as they are often forced to here.

Making such editing choices would have been easy enough for whole sections of the collection have little or nothing to do with the stated theme of the book. A chapter such as "The End of Masculinity As We Know It," while it identifies a theme that preoccupied filmmakers of the decade, has nothing to do with the end of *cinema*. Similarly, a chapter

about the interpretation of the body in appearance-obsessed Hollywood films, while potentially a ripe topic for analysis, lies outside this collection's purview.

Even more frustrating is the surprisingly uneven scholarship of some of the essays. Some authors are just sloppy, as when Pat Mellencamp writes that Neo's final phone call in *The Matrix* (1999) is made on a cell phone (it's not: the whole point is that it has to be made from a "hard line"). Others undermine otherwise strong critiques by ending on dubious notes, such as Krin Gabbard does when he concludes his thoughtful reading of the nostalgic and elegiac tone of *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) with "As an apparatus of the state, *Saving Private Ryan* does what it has to do: it re-creates a fascination and reverence for war so that, someday in the not too distant future, the state can put this fascination and reverence to use once again" (138). And still others resort to the sensational rather than the critical as Chuck Kleinhans does when he includes stills from the infamous Pamela Anderson/Tommy Lee home video which, while certainly giving the reader a sense of what the fuss was about, does little to elucidate since, as Kleinhans admits, the sex portions of these home videos were a small percentage of the actual footage on them.

The Nineties were a decade that saw real and quantifiable changes in the film industry. Everything from exhibition technologies, viewer strategies, distribution schemes, spiralling production costs, synergies, and film and sound techniques underwent notable shifts. For film scholars and amateurs alike, those changes and their implications are of interest. Consequently, when Lewis writes in his introduction that the contributors to the final chapter of the anthology "take the collection's title seriously" (8), one can only be frustrated and puzzled that this was not uniformly true of the collection.

The European Cinema Reader

By Catherine Fowler (ed.)

London: Routledge, 2002. ISBN 0-415-24092-1. 4 illustrations, xii+268pp. £17.00

A review by Eugenie Brinkema, State University of New York at Buffalo, US

Not to quibble right off, but might Catherine Fowler's *The European Cinema Reader* been better off calling itself *A European Cinema Reader*? After all, European cinema in history, practice, and theory is a mighty big topic, and that one little article could have served us with the crucial disclaimer for any anthology tackling such an enormous field: I know my limits, I am not attempting it all. Sadly, no such qualifiers precede Fowler's collection, and as a result, the Reader's over-broad aim and the mixed quality of its articles fail to live up to its misguided, grandiose title.

Fowler's strategy for this slender book (a mere twenty-two articles, several of which are only a few pages long) is evidenced by the four sections of the Reader: "European Film Culture," "Moments from European Film History," "European Films and Theory," and "The Boundaries of European Film Criticism." Each section has subsections: for example, the final part is divided between "Europe and America" and "European Film Industry" (a breakdown inconsistent with the rubric "film criticism" -- these articles are industry analyses, no more, no less). The bibliography is extensive and excellent; a library card and a few quarters can make those pages yours for far less than the price of the book.

Although the "Introduction" nicely problematises what a European cinema looks like, brings in requisite problem topics like *auteurism*, national cinema, and the relationship between high and low art, and would make a fine first-day article for an undergraduate survey course on European film, this theoretical framework does not seem to impact the articles chosen for the Reader proper. Each section begins with a short introductory essay by Fowler, but while these pieces are designed to historicise and contextualise the coming articles, their broad scope simply underscores how spare and insufficient the selections are. For example, while Fowler nicely problematises the false dichotomy between European (read: art) and American (read: entertainment) films in her opening remarks, the Reader provides a paltry two articles (a combined twenty-six pages) on the issue.

The most valuable section, entitled "Moments from European Film History," would have made an excellent anthology on its own; indeed, one wonders why such a nicely focused topic was ignored in favor of this sloppy assemblage. Selections here run the gamut from André Bazin's famous remarks on Italian neo-realism to the oft-anthologized Dogme 95 "Vow of Chastity." They are undoubtedly useful. They are also, however, undoubtedly anthologized *elsewhere*. Why read them here? This Reader's audience would seem to be the undergraduate film student beginning a course of study in European film who requires a short, brief exposure to various ways of looking at Europe and film. What is this student offered here? Are students who care about detailed aesthetic analyses the very same who are interested in the economic structure of the Spanish film industry? Does Eisenstein's rigorous,

formal shot-by-shot breakdown of his *Strike* (1925) not make an odd bedfellow with Janet Thumin's account of British box office attractions? This monstrous assemblage fails to achieve a quirky post-modern pastiche (and I'm not at all convinced that that was Fowler's goal); rather, it just seems at best messy, and at worst completely useless. Given that the collection is so short, every article bears an enormous burden and the laws of competition fatefully intervene: pieces that are boring take up valuable literary space. Like persons with a similar designation, they come to be quickly resented.

And the omissions! Where are *auteurs* like Marguerite Duras or Alain Robbe-Grillet? Neither has a mention in the index. Pier Paolo Pasolini's omission is shocking, for both his cinematic and theoretical contributions ought to be required knowledge for any student of film. And although Fowler mentions the crucial presence of two world wars in the history of European cinema, the few textual references are in regard to World War I's impact on film production and industry -- where is the theoretical work on the structural and thematic impact of the wars? Given that numerous books have been filled with analyses of fascism and its impact on modern European cinema, doesn't it deserve at least one essayistic nod in this collection? Finally, one wonders why a selection from Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Continuum, 1989) is missing from the section on Europe and film theory: that philosopher's brilliant account of the structural changes in European cinema after World War II would have been welcome as both a truly theoretical piece of writing (film theory proper is given little attention here) and a pan-European analysis.

The final great elision, the unforgivable gap, is forthrightly acknowledged in the Introduction: "The omissions of the canon are also present here, thus there are no articles on women directors and only brief mentions of smaller European countries; however, the bibliography at the end of the book does offer detailed references to work in these areas" (10). Well. Female directors and smaller countries have been condescendingly awarded bibliographic mention for decades; we might have hoped that a Reader from 2002 would have finally granted them permission to sit at the big kids' table. It would not be inappropriate to ask what "European Cinema" this Reader refers to in its title when it systematically excludes from real critical attention a sizable portion of Europe's population. That old ridiculous fantasy of continental wholeness is maintained only through the wilful disavowal of minority presences. Let us hope that in the future, cinema studies is actively, viciously, wonderfully ripped asunder; let us hope for many readers, many Readers, and far less use of the exclusive, exclusionary *The*.

The German Cinema Book

By Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter, and Deniz Göktürk (eds.)

London: British Film Institute, 2003. ISBN 0-85170-946-x. xi + 291pp. €23.83 (pbk)

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

How can you summarize over one hundred years of cinematic traditions and histories in a single volume -- and under three hundred pages? There have been few attempts to do so [1]. As the editors point out in their introduction, these previous histories are characterized by a "teleological ideal narrative, which has dominated the perception German national cinema for decades" [2]. *The German Cinema Book* seeks to avoid this trap by bringing together an holistic and synthesizing approach, which uses conventional German cinematic periodization within a more thematic approach that emphasizes the many concerns and questions of recent German film scholars. To this end, the book is divided into five sections: "Popular Cinema," "Stars," "Institutions," "Cultural Contexts, Cultural Politics" and "Transnational Connections." Perhaps more importantly, *The German Cinema Book* brings to the English-language reader a wealth of information and resources on the depth and complexities of the German national cinema, which often transcends and resists an overly simplified chronology or periodization. Bringing together some of the most cutting-edge research and work in German film studies, *The German Cinema Book* serves both as an excellent introduction for a general audience, but the sophistication and scope of the book's thematic history should be more than enough food for thought for scholars and experts in film studies or German cultural studies.

One area of film studies receiving its fair share of attention as of late is the realm of the "popular." Somewhat neglected -- and almost always hotly debated -- popular films, or those that are commercially successful, have received only passing (or derogatory) commentary from scholarly film studies. As the editors of *The German Cinema Book* point out, however, analyses of popular films is part and parcel of a re-tooling of the trade to open up areas long neglected, including audience and receptions studies, and critical enquiries into the industries producing, distributing, and exhibiting commercial films -- the bane of all Adorno inspired critics of the mass "culture industry." What we have all benefited from by refocusing a critical eye to popular films and related areas is a reinvigorated sense of scholarship of a medium that is ultimately popular and popularizing. Within German film studies this has meant is a reexamination of cinematic genres, actors and actresses, and the German film industry (as a whole, if not an often disjointed *corpus*). In this vein, Johannes von Moltke's chapter on *Heimat* films is a welcome breath of fresh air on this often maligned (albeit kitschy) genre of the post-World War II era in West Germany. By asking us to reconsider the very sense of place invoked in the *Heimat* films of the 1950s, von Moltke returns us to the many contradictions implied by these films, but with a solid (if ambiguous) sense of place -- the essence of *Heimat* (24-25). Somewhat out of place in a section on "popular" film, however, is Robert Kiss's "Queer Traditions in German Cinema." While this is a thought provoking and theoretically stimulating contribution, this chapter seems out of place within

the context of the format. This, of course, then begs the inevitable question not directly addressed in the volume: what is "popular?"

Perhaps, Stephen Lowry's piece on Heinz Rühmann comes closest to hitting this nail on the head. Heinz Rühmann remains one of the most celebrated and beloved actor in the German cinema. With a career spanning the late Weimar period, through the Nazi years, the divided era of two Germanies, and up to the early years of reunification, Rühmann epitomized the German film star. He was not, however, the heart throb of yearning teenagers and adolescents, or the stereotypical leading man, it was his commonness and predictability that blurs all of his films and characters into the quintessential "little man," which according to Lowry contributed to his endearing and enduring popularity (86-87). [2]

If the "new" cinematic theories revolve around the popular, then the two sections on institutions and cultural contexts and politics call into question the relationships between popular films and stars and their wider backdrops, organisationally and politically (if they can be bifurcated). Popular cinema, however it may be defined, rarely includes overtly politically oriented films, although Marc Silberman's "Political Cinema as Oppositional Practice: Weimar and Beyond" begins with the assertion that all films are political (165). Concentrating on the explicitly political cinemas of the German left-wing from the Weimar Republic through its rebirth and echoes in the "New German Cinema," Silberman highlights a particular continuity within the German national cinema transcending the often taboo Nazi years to the post-war German cinemas -- in East and West Germany [3]. While the political films of the socialists or the communists provide an easy point of entry into a political analysis of film, how might a reader look at the genres of comedy and crime films posed by Jan-Christopher Horak and Tim Bergfelder's chapters as political? Perhaps these modes of film making are not "oppositional" in the ways put forward by Silberman, but comedies and crime films often delve into and expose the barely perceptible tears in the social fabric, and this is ultimately a political statement. Along this line, I also question Silberman's premise of equating escapist fantasies with "[conservative] political messages...reinforcing values of the status quo" (165). Rather than being accepted as a truism of film studies, perhaps the escapist fantasies of both the Left and the Right deserve a revaluation.

Since the end of the Second World War, film (as discrete national cinemas and an emerging global cinema) has symbolised the larger social, political, and economic trends in globalization. In many respects this is characterised in film studies as the "Americanisation" of national cinemas across the globe -- or the domination of Hollywood. What is missed by this sweeping generalization, however, is the emergence of cross- and multi-national cinemas that have emerged. In the case of German film, Peter Krämer's chapter, "Hollywood in Germany/Germany in Hollywood," traces the cross-pollination between American and German filmmakers from the Weimar era to the present. What emerges from this portrait is a further marginalisation of German (and Austrian) filmmakers in light of Hollywood's market demands: commercial success (234). Rather than resigning to a fate of consumption by Hollywood, one interesting development within German cinema since reunification has been the increasing portrayal of Germany as a multicultural society. In this respect, German films since the 1990s are securing a grip on their share of the box office (however small in comparative terms), but more interestingly a new trans-national (or global) cinema is emerging (248). This is the focus of Deniz Göktürk's chapter, "Beyond Paternalism: Turkish German Traffic in Cinema." Through the achievements of minority filmmakers in contemporary German cinema, Göktürk creates a more interesting and exciting link to theoretical concerns not usually associated with film studies. Namely, in her concluding

remarks, she ties her "transnational cinema" to the boom of border studies, but also makes an interesting connection to historical and geographical concerns vis-à-vis mobility and migration (255). Within this analytical framework, and highly relevant to von Moltke's contribution to this volume, Göktürk draws on many of the traditional themes in German film studies (especially the many forms of and problems associated with identification in Germany) and at the same time destabilizes the terrain of the conventional debates about the German national cinema by opening up the possibility of a "global" cinema -- at least in terms of the influences of mobility and migration on any one national cinema ...or is this the beginnings of a "post-national" cinema?

While I was left wanting in some respects and somewhat skeptical in others about the integrity of *The German Cinema Book*, the editors have woven a tightly knit collection of essays into an extremely thought-provoking contribution to the growing body of works attempting to present the many fragments of German cinematic history as a cohesive (and comprehensible) whole. To this end, the editors are extremely successful in presenting new and fresh insights in the world of German film studies, but also in the questions arising from their thematic approach. This later point, of what remains to be answered (or asked) is the real gem of this book -- aside from an excellent archive of Internet and print sources in the bibliography -- and what will draw both specialists and a more general audience to this book as a point of entry into the world of German film studies.

[1] Wolfgang Jacobsen, Anton Kaes, and Hans Helmut Prinzler, Eds. *Geschichte des deutschen Film* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 1993); Thomas Elsaesser, Michael Wedel, and Martin Wedel, Eds. *The BFI Companion to German Cinema* (London: British Film Institute, 1999); and Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

[2] In addition to the many outpourings of sympathy on Heinz Rühmann's death in 1994 as mentioned in Lowry's chapter, a 2002 exhibit celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of his birth at the German Film Museum in Frankfurt am Main attests to the continuing and nostalgic appeal of Heinz Rühmann -- as well as his lingering presence on German broadcast television.

[3] An earlier work treating the German Left and film is Bruce Murray's *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation (second edition)

By Richard Dyer

London and New York: Routledge, 2002 (1993). ISBN 0-415-25495-7. 50 illustrations, viii +183 pp. \$22.95

Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film (second edition) By Richard Dyer

Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film (second edition)

By Richard Dyer

London and New York: Routledge, 2003 (1990). ISBN 0-415-25499-X. 52 illustrations, xi +339 pp. \$22.95

A review by Harry M. Benshoff, University of North Texas

It is hard to imagine a media scholar as prolific and as well respected as Richard Dyer. For several decades now he has been at the cutting edge of numerous currents within film and television studies; indeed, upon several occasions he may be said to have *created* those cutting edges. Whenever one thinks about stars and stardom, gay/lesbian and now queer film studies, or more recently whiteness and heterosexuality scholarship, one finds the rigorous, thought-provoking (but always accessible) analyses of Richard Dyer. Two of his most important books have recently been re-released by Routledge in new and slightly altered second editions.

The first of these, *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation*, is the broader and more wide-ranging of the two. It contains a series of essays that deal "through particular instances, with the cultural representations of social groupings," because "how social groups are treated in cultural representation is part and parcel of how they are treated in life, that poverty, harassment, self-hate and discrimination (in housing, jobs, educational opportunity and so on) are shored up and instituted by representation" (1). Dyer's writings, whether he is tracing the evolution of the word "gay" or the similar history of terms used to describe African Americans, illuminate how "culture is politics, politics is culture" (6). Words, like stereotypes, contain and fix identities. They make the unseen seen, order our perceptions of reality, and express social values. These ideas are explored in depth in two of the collection's seminal essays (both copiously illustrated with still photographs). In "Seen to be Believed: Some Problems in the Representation of Gay People as Typical," Dyer examines the history and theory of sexuality and proposes that there are four prevalent modes of representing queers in recent history: "in-betweenism" (masculine women and feminine men), the macho

man, the sad young man, and the lesbian feminist. In "Homosexuality and Film Noir," Dyer argues that the genre's twisted *mise-en-scene* allows for a high incidence of homosexual innuendo as well as forthright characterization. (These observations have been expanded upon in Dyer's more recent "Queer Noir" essay, located in *The Culture of Queers* [Routledge, 2001].)

The second edition of *The Matter of Images* does not contain the first edition's chapter on the homosexual as sad young man -- it is also currently located in *The Culture of Queers*. However, replacing that essay are three new ones that expand the first edition's concerns with masculinity, heterosexuality, and whiteness. In one of them, "Three Questions about Serial Killing," Dyer looks at the race and sexuality of the serial killer, and interrogates our culture's fascination with him (rather than his victims). White rationality emerges as one key to the serial killer's identity as well as his popular appeal, shedding "a ghastly light not on us in some generalized way, but on the specific configuration of values in contemporary society" (116-7). In "Straight Acting," Dyer proposes the "Jane Austen, Barbara Cartland, and New Woman models of heterosexuality" (119). The first understands heterosexuality as "the coming together of opposite but complementary qualities within a context of moral equality" (119). The second also presupposes the complementary nature of men and women, but "positively luxuriates in power difference" (119). The third downplays sexual difference (and its implicit social hierarchy) in favor of "what a man and a woman have in common that can unite them in heterosexual happiness" (120). Dyer argues that the New Woman model is actually closest to how most heterosexuals pair up, even as popular culture continues to celebrate the often violent power discrepancies of the Barbara Cartland model: "It seems that when it comes to sex, heterosexuality cannot countenance sameness and equality" (120). Further bolstering the inherent violence of heterosexuality, Dyer explores how "Male Sexuality in the Media" finds representation via hyperbolic symbolism, exaggerated genre practice, and sexist narrative formulas. Speaking of the brutal and brutalizing nature of most phallic symbols (swords, guns, chainsaws. etc.), Dyer suggests we need to remember that actual penises are "fragile, squashy, delicate things....The penis cannot stab and do all the other violent things it is evoked as being capable of" (90-1).

The Matter of Images also contains another seminal essay, "White," itself expanded into a book of the same name since its original publication in *Screen*. The argument here is that whiteness (like heterosexuality and masculinity) is thought to be a universal quality, that whiteness is everywhere and nowhere, and that its invisibility "is the source of its representational power" (127). This thesis is explored in three very different case studies: the colonialist adventure film *Simba* (1955), the Old South melodrama *Jezebel* (1938), and the low-budget horror film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). Two new essays -- "Lillian Gish, a White Star" and "Into the Light: The Whiteness of the South in *The Birth of a Nation*" -- further expand Dyer's thoughts on whiteness and conclude the book. In addition to those just discussed, the volume also contains essays on three specific films (*Victim* [1961], *Papillon* [1973], and *A Passage to India* [1985]) and an essay on men's underwear.

Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film, first published in 1990, has also been updated and revised in a Routledge second edition. Designed to be a book about the "very few films made by lesbians and gay men with lesbian and gay subject matter" (1), the first edition offered a richly-detailed (and international) approach to the evolution of lesbian and gay cinema up until the 1980s. This is still the second edition's chief value: although a final chapter on lesbian and gay film since the 1980s has been added (a section not written by

Dyer, discussed more fully below), the book is primarily useful as an exploration of historical rather than contemporary queer film practice.

One of the more interesting additions to the second edition is the opening chapter on the 1916 Swedish film *Vingarne* (*Wings*), one of the first films anywhere to deal with explicit homoerotic themes (8). Directed by homosexual filmmaker Mauritz Stiller, the film is a good example of how homosexual themes had to be negotiated within the historical closets of heterocentrist discourses. Based on Herman Bang's novel *Mikael* (filmed again in 1924 by Carl Theodor Dreyer), Stiller's *Vingarne* is a self-reflexive film about the making of a film (itself entitled *Vingarne*) that tells the story of an artist's obsession with his beautiful male model. Dyer argues that the "desultory heterosexual" framing story allows *Vingarne* to "signal homosexuality even as it apparently withdraws from it" (15). In the end, the film's homosexuality remains ambiguous, having been forged within the era's "habits of gay survival, out of the knowledge of how to tread the line between openness and evasion" (12). Like so much of today's "gay window" or "gay-vague" advertising, *Vingarne* "lends itself to both the idealization of homosexuality and its sublimation, both of which could be devoutly desired or genuinely felt" (17).

The next five chapters of the second edition are comprised of the bulk of the first edition. Chapter two, "Weimar," is an in-depth exploration of lesbian/gay films made in Weimar Germany, focusing especially on *Anders als die Andern* (*Different from the Others*, 1919) and *Madchen in Uniform* (1931). Dyer examines the films' cultural contexts, the sexualities of their producers, and the representational tropes they employ. Chapter three examines films inspired by the writings of Jean Genet, including *Un Chant d'Amour* (1950), *Querelle* (1982), and various films by Jean Cocteau. Chapter four, "Underground and After" traces gay avant-garde filmmaking in America from *Lot in Sodom* (1933) through the burgeoning gay culture of 1940s Los Angeles (including the films of Kenneth Anger), before settling in on those of Jack Smith and Andy Warhol. Chapter five, "Lesbian/Woman" examines the lesbian-feminist films of the 1970s, especially those made by Barbara Hammer, and Chapter six explores how the lesbian and gay civil rights movement impacted internationally upon queer films of the 1970s and 1980s.

The final chapter, written by Julianne Pidduck, undertakes the daunting task of condensing the last twenty-plus years of queer filmmaking into thirty pages. Rather than strive for some sort of comprehensive overview, Pidduck outlines the social, industrial, and technological parameters of the recent explosion of queer-themed work. She outlines the rise of home video technologies that both allow for the circulation of older queer texts and facilitate the production of new ones, the continued importance of lesbian and gay film festivals, the production and circulation of activist/art video, and the rise of the so-called New Queer Cinema. Although highly selective, Pidduck's overview is also international in scope, and includes a consideration of queer imagery in popular genres (i.e. more mainstream, user-friendly forms). Examining *Desert Hearts* (1985) and the "modest proliferation of lesbian romance films in the 1990s," Pidduck notes "that simplicity of form allows cultural texts to speak to broader audiences, and the question of access is essential for lesbian/gay film, particularly for younger audiences and for viewers outside of the geographical loop and cultural capital of film festivals and art cinemas" (286, 287). Ultimately Pidduck asks whether the "shifting parameters of authorship, subject-matter and audiences signal an end to the category of lesbian/gay cinema" (293)? The answer to that question -- like all future speculation -- remains uncertain. However, a comprehensive work of history such as Richard

Dyer's *Now You See It* shows us the past so that we may know the present -- and allows us the ability to speculate on the future in a more sophisticated manner.

The New Iranian Cinema: Politics, Representation and Identity

By Richard Tapper (ed.)

London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2002. ISBN 1-86064-804-5. 12 illustrations, xv + 282pp. £14.95 (pbk)

A review by Farhang Erfani, Villanova University, USA

The importance and the prestige of Iranian cinema are no longer up for debate: "It is widely recognized not merely as a distinctive "national cinema" but as one of the most innovative and exciting in the world: films from Iranian directors are screened to increasing acclaim in international festivals" (2). This collection of essays explores the consequences of this success. To begin, let me say that this is an impressive collection, worthy of attention. It is neither too technical, nor too broad in its scope.

Half of the fourteen chapters are revised and expanded versions of papers presented at a conference held in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) during the summer of 1999. Thus each chapter, with the exception of the first (by Hamid Naficy), is rather concise. The majority of the contributors are understandably Iranian, and every one seems to be quite learned and knowledgeable about Iran and Iranian cinema. One last remark about the structure of the collection: there is a comprehensive general index, an index of the films cited in the book, and a much needed and well-done filmography that lists film titles both in English and in Persian, with the corresponding translations.

Richard Tapper (Anthropology professor at the SOAS), introduces the collection. He thematically regroups the essays in a way that is unfortunately not apparent in the table of contents. "The focus of the book" he tells us, "is Iranian cinema since the revolution." But for the sake of greater appreciation of this "New Iranian Cinema," Tapper gives us a glimpse of the pre-revolutionary scene, when "film farsi" – "a popular genre based on comedy, action and titillation" (67). This genre was particularly associated with the Shah's regime and all that it stood for. As a result, after the 1978 Revolution, the Clerics began their tortured relationship with movies.

This difficult relationship between the Islamic government and cinema is perhaps the guiding question of the entire book. The "Islamization" of Cinema, however, is something different. The reactionary politics of the clerics, shortly after the revolution, seemed to put Islam and the Iranian Cinema on opposite sides. The destruction of theatres and "cinemas became a key symbolic act against the government of the Shah, during whose time cinema was considered - especially by the clerics and religious folk -- to be filled with Western mores" (27). Beyond this initial vandalism, it is well known that the clerics have imposed drastic, unpredictable and irrational rules of censorship on Iranian filmmakers. For instance, "it is not allowed for women to be filmed in close-ups, to use makeup...men must not wear ties... no Western music is allowed, no intimate lighting; even the editing must correspond to the Islamic norm" (70). Nevertheless, many argue that the "revolution led to the emergence of a new, vital

cinema, with its own special industrial and financial structure and unique ideological, thematic and production values" (29). No one would endorse the puritan censorship, but it is clear that filmmakers have learned -- while endangering their careers and their lives -- to work around the rules.

But despite their undeniable international success and their artistic resistance to the tyrannical rules, the Iranian filmmakers are not the political critics that one might expect them to be. They "choose to avoid controversial themes entirely. In other words, filmmakers have been led to refrain from making confrontational and socially critical films for the fear of being held accountable for making anti-system or anti-establishment statements through their work" (91). This failure to address political issues is all the more important since Iran is certainly going through a slow political revolution. But this apoliticization of the Iranian Cinema is nothing new, or at least it is not the work of the clerics alone. Already under the Shah, filmmakers veiled their messages under allegories and poetics suggestions. So in a sense, "such a cinema has yet to be established, although the previous regime has long passed away" (116).

This is not of course to say that Iranian cinema is critically impotent, but that it still has a long way to go. Given their circumstances, filmmakers depict an Iran -- or perhaps many Irans -- which will challenge the dominant ideology. The costly Iran-Iraq war has been the subject of films for almost two decades. The war has been a difficult issue for the filmmakers themselves, such as Makhmalbaf, whose own "religious and revolutionary convictions ... collide head-on with his brilliant portrayal" of the war (147). In general, the big screen provided a place for national mourning, given that the regime considered the casualties martyrs; here the movies have undertaken the project of "making visible the invisible" (165).

This capacity for empowerment, for giving a voice to those who lack it, has been most obvious through the female roles in the movies. This topic alone deserves an entire book, and most essays in this one, in one way or another, do address the question of gender. Surprisingly, on this issue, the New Iranian Cinema has adopted "an attitude to women that is far more progressive than attitudes before the revolution" (225). Children have also occupied an important place in the industry; they become surrogates for adults, thus circumventing censorship (232). This rather unique aspect of the Iranian movie industry is also nicely explored.

Overall, this is a book that I highly recommend to anyone who wants to know more about Iranian cinema, culture and politics. Iranian films are more popular than ever -- both inside the country and abroad, especially with expatriates. But at the same time, they lack financial stability and are always threatened by the unpredictable political powers. This book does justice both to the fragility and the beauty of the New Iranian Cinema.

The Silence of the Lambs

By Yvonne Tasker

London: British Film Institute, 2002. ISBN 0-85170-871-2. 64 illustrations +95pp. \$12.95

A review by Daniel Smith-Rowsey, University of Southern California, USA

Yvonne Tasker's new British Film Institute book on *The Silence of the Lambs* sinks its teeth into the mystery of the movie's appeal. Though Jonathan Demme's infamous film is thirteen years old, its cultural manifestations are still with us. Besides the recent sequel (*Hannibal*, 2001) and prequel (*Red Dragon*, 2002) films, Tasker notes the prodigious influence of *The Silence of the Lambs* in subsequent popular filmed fiction: *Seven* (1995), *Copycat* (1995), *Kiss the Girls* (1997), *The Bone Collector* (1999), *The Cell* (2000), *Along Came a Spider* (2001), *The X-Files* (1993-2002) and *CSI* (2000-present). Moreover, Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter have become "contemporary icons," and some of their dialogue has become part of our popular discourse. The Hannibal Lecter character seems to evoke Americans' morbid fascination with dangerous figures -- the American Film Institute recently named him history's greatest onscreen villain. In a world where the real Federal Bureau of Investigation admits to asking imprisoned serial killers for help in finding a deadly sniper, it seems that people just can't shut up about *Silence*. Yvonne Tasker's reviews Demme's major themes and strategies and provides illumination of this dark motion picture, without ever quite calling *Silence* great cinema or deservedly popular.

The Silence of the Lambs cost about \$22 million to make, and earned around \$130 million in North America, and -- as Tasker wisely puts it -- "for obvious reasons perhaps, unsuccessful films are rarely read as symptomatic in the way that *Silence* was at the time of its release." (35) With the scrupulousness of a forensic scientist, Tasker examines the way that *The Silence of the Lambs* integrates gothic horror, thriller, and the traditional woman's picture to create a new kind of hybrid film. The main difference she establishes between Demme's film and its closest cinematic, television-based, and literary cousins is its heroine's relation to male-centered institutions. Though Clarice Starling is clearly working toward "advancement" in a male world, Tasker finds her far less tied to the opinions of any one man. Starling's quest for success and identity is ultimately personal, not defined within patriarchy. As for the source material, "Harris leaves little unexplored [...] Harris's vision is bleak, at times undercutting Starling's heroism." (21) By contrast, the film "heroine's motivation is clear and direct. The film does not simply allow Clarice Starling her autonomy; it is positively celebrated." (21)

Tasker also takes on some of the film's harshest critics:

It makes no sense to simply set aside people's pain, to say that those male gay critics who found *Silence* homophobic were somehow wrong. Nonetheless I see little evidence that gay men saw themselves in Buffalo Bill -- rather the fear was that *others* might see gay male sexuality in that image of deviance. Not recognition but misrecognition was at issue.

Ultimately, Tasker seems to cede ground when she explains that Bill's "perversity is certainly bound up with gender...he treats women as objects, preferring to address Catherine only indirectly as 'it.'" (37) Based on this, Tasker prevents *Silence* from being considered a feminist film -- apparently, Starling's execution of Bill at the end wasn't enough.

Tasker muses on Hannibal Lecter. "Both physically repellent and emotionally threatening, capable of careful, even elegant reasoning while evidently insane, Lecter embodies a contemporary twist on the mad scientist of horror and science-fiction." (75) Lecter is best understood as a synthesis of our best and worst, both a rapacious serial killer and the one man whose insight can save lives. Tasker says, "the detective narrative emphasizes explanation, while horror mobilizes evil or the supernatural. As a hybrid of these two genres, *The Silence of the Lambs* offers us two distinct versions of the serial killer." (78-79) Lecter is both madman and monster. "Violence is methodical not mindless in *The Silence of the Lambs*", she notes. (79-80) All we have to do is understand the ritual, the signature, and we can reassure our health. Tasker quite adroitly points out, "[f]or some reviewers, Lecter's cultured tastes suggested an endorsement of his violence. He is just *too* charming. Peculiar that we do not seem to think that the reverse might equally apply -- that Lecter's savagery might question the culture to which he lays claim (and which Starling desires so badly)." (84)

It is interesting that Tasker concludes her book by explaining that *Silence* is about "getting under the skin, whether through the tools of science or brutal violence." (88) Scientific tools used include psychoanalysis and movie cameras -- Tasker points out that the film is liberal with close-ups. Interesting, because she doesn't stop to contemplate the skin that many male viewers wish to inhabit -- that of Hannibal Lecter himself. In the many pages devoted to identity reconciliation, Tasker never suggests audience identification with Hannibal. By 1991, many males saw themselves as having surrendered everything to females, and Lecter provided fearsome representation: caged, metaphorically castrated, snarling, ravenous, judgmental, top education set to waste, right but marginalized, repellent but still necessary, watching helpless as an empowered "new generation" woman succeeds at the traditional male role. Most men know that they're "evil," and who has more fun at being evil than Hannibal Lecter? Yvonne Tasker, who never professes uncommon affection for the film, yet who begins by noting its Academy Awards sweep, never quite grasps why it was the perfect film for an anxious age. Not only can women appreciate an altruistic heroine who spurns the advances of every male in the picture, but men can appreciate a monster that only engenders sympathy when he puts on another man's face (literally). "People will say we're in love," Lecter tells Starling. But they won't, and for the bitter, confused man of post-feminist America, the most he can hope for is a little *quid pro quo*, after which he will pull out, re-establish his hateful distance, and say, in a feeble, but sincere, voice: "Thank you [Clarice], thank you."