Crash Cultures -- Modernity, Mediation and the Material

By Jane Arthurs and Iain Grant (eds.)
Bristol: Intellect Books, 2003. ISBN 1-84150-091-7. 41 illustrations, v + 202pp. £14.95 (pbk)

A review by Jon Baldwin, London Metropolitan University, UK

This book is a collection of essays concerned with the cultural study of the crash in modernity: "our history, far from being one of steady progress, is in fact an incremental accumulation of crashes."(1) The plethora of crash events under scrutiny includes real crashes, fictional crashes and representations of crashes. The real crashes discussed include the drunk-driven mangled Mercedes Paris demise of Princess Diana, as well as two accident-prone French cultural theorists: the argument with a laundry truck which resulted in the death of the author Roland Barthes, and the "very intense pleasure" (80) experienced by Michel Foucault upon being struck by a car on a summers evening. Now, remind me what's the French for "green-cross-code"?

The fictional crashes discussed largely involve J.G. Ballard's novel *Crash* (1973), Jean Baudrillard's review of Ballard's *Crash* in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), and David Cronenberg's controversial film adaptation of Ballard, *Crash* (1996). Other films discussed range from the 1900, 40-second, single shot, car-collide-with-camera *How It Feels To Be Run Over*, to the bi-plane crash into the desert in *The English Patient* (1996), via the girl knocked down, and subsequently breast fondled, in *Un Chien Andalou* (1929). Audience reactions to Cronenberg's *Crash* are revealingly investigated in Jane Arthurs' contribution to the book, which is an unlikely -- but successful -- stitching together of Lacan and empirical audience research. In this way the physiology of cinematic spectatorship is emphasised. A further analysis of Cronenberg's *Crash* by Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, suggest that sex in the film can be read as banal, repetitive, work-like and everyday. For the authors this means that *Crash* can be read as foregrounding the libidinal economy of labour.

Further crash, bang, wallops in the volume include Andy Warhol's subject matter, for instance *Car Crash*, *Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times*, *Ambulance Disaster*, *Five Deaths Twice II* (1963). A more metaphorical use of "crash" occurs in Bill Greenslade's discussion of the motif of the financial crash in the novels of Dickens, Elliot, and Hardy. Other essays in the volume draw attention to the popular spectacle of staged car and rail crashes in early cinema, and confirmation is given that the first vehicles in history were funeral chariots. Animist relations to the crash event are scrutinised and these are argued to disrupt attitudes toward the technology / magic distinction. Race and the crash come together in the analysis of the televised beatings of Rodney King, and discussion of Frieda Kahlo's self-portraits of her technologically wounded body. The welding of flesh and metal in Ballard's *Crash* is utilised to discuss cyborg ontology. Attempts are made to relate the rituals of mourning and death of Princess Diana to the sacrifices held in primitive societies, and there is consideration of the cultural significance of Diana's iconic body. Many photographs of the hand-made

tribute images to Diana that adorned the vicinity of Kensington Palace, the Mall and Westminster Cathedral accompany the essay. The final contribution is a "fictional" account (with digitally manipulated images) of the 1937 mid-flight disappearance of Amelia Earhart.

The book is largely a product of the School of Cultural Studies, University of the West of England (U.W.E.), Bristol, UK. Of the sixteen contributors, only five are *not* from U.W.E. The fact that there are many photographs, visual documents and illustrations in the book give it a coffee-table feel: included are images of racing car crashes, motorboat collisions, stills from Cronenberg's *Crash*, Princess Diana iconography, and the reproduction of a postcard commemorating the *Cromer to London Express* train crash in Colchester (1913), coupled with advertising rides to witness the spectacle of the wreck.

Every crash, the editors assert, "reminds us that we have stepped over the line separating the benignly abstract from the horribly concrete, from 'risk society' to crash cultures" (1). If the move from the mediated and abstract to the material and concrete involves a movement from potential "risk society" to actual "crash culture", then arguably the upshot is, in turn, another necessary movement and another suffix-like use of *culture*: from a crash culture to a *Therapy Culture* (Frank Furedi, 2003).

Film Editing: The Art of the Expressive

By Valerie Orpen
London: Wallflower Press, 2003. ISBN 1-903364-53-1. 51 illustrations, 138pp

A review by Martin Stollery

I once asked students to compare dialogue sequences from *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (Tony Richardson, 1962) and *Ronin* (John Frankenheimer, 1998). Could they discern editor Antony Gibbs' individual "handwriting" in these otherwise disparate films? With no jump cuts or montage in either sequence, this proved difficult to do. Valerie Orpen's attempt to focus attention on expressive dimensions *within* continuity editing is therefore a welcome contribution to literature on this topic. Her accompanying argument -- that editing cannot be studied in isolation from *mise-en-scene*, camera movement, dialogue, music, and performance -- suggests one reason why it so often proves elusive to analysis. Editing is everything and nothing, its expressiveness achieved through organising anterior elements. Every other element is to a certain extent divisible from the totality of the film, but editing is indivisible from what it combines. Editing, in its coordinating function, bears a certain resemblance to direction, but the editor's status as a technician generates debate about whether it should be described as art or craft. Orpen's opening chapter and conclusion outline these arguments. The intervening chapters essentially comprise a series of closely analysed case studies intended to explore them.

The case studies refine the analysis of films already central to the academic canon. Without denying that editing privileges Jeff's (James Stewart's) perspective in *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954), Orpen draws attention to shots from the optical point-of-view of two or more characters, or shots emphasising the significant absence of any character's point-of-view. She also illustrates how editing sometimes shifts alignment away from Jeff through emotive reaction shots of Lisa (Grace Kelly), thereby highlighting that identification, empathy, or allegiance is not solely or primarily dependent upon seeing through someone's eyes. Orpen's discussion of *Raging Bull* (Martin Scorsese, 1980) revisits its most strikingly edited fight sequence. It also explores some of Thelma Schoonmaker's and Scorsese's more subtle choices in the film's less violent moments. The timing of cuts, for example, when Jake (Robert de Niro) observes Vickie (Cathy Moriarty) is shown to be crucial in establishing his attitude towards her. The third extended case study, inevitably, is *A Bout de Souffle* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1959). Whereas *Raging Bull* elegantly balances rapid editing in its fight sequences with longer takes in domestic settings, mobile long takes and sporadic jump cutting intertwine in *A Bout de Souffle* to sustain its restless, nervous rhythm. The continuing power of this film's jump cuts, even after *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994), *Armageddon* (Michael Bay, 1998), et al, lies in their capacity to conceptually as well as visually bewilder audiences.

Film Editing's penultimate chapter, "Stars and Actors," epitomises the book's strengths and weaknesses. It investigates editing patterns associated with star entrances, the relationship between editing and the performance style of character actors, and the aesthetics of *Jean Dielman* (Chantal Akerman, 1975). Yet as part of a larger argument about expressive

dimensions within continuity editing this chapter, like those preceding it, is ultimately digressive. Orpen concedes the films she discusses throughout *Film Editing* are not "really 'typical' of the classical narrative system". More diverse examples from the classical Hollywood period need to be analysed to justify the claim that many of them "were not so conventional in their editing after all: they often broke the rules, they often 'cheated', for emphatic and expressive purposes" (p.59). Analysing a wider range of Hollywood films could lead to a more finely nuanced account of how the "rules" always left room for expressiveness. Historical variation within the classical period, for example the shift from ending sequences with a dissolve to ending on a cut, also needs to be taken into account. This would enable innovation and exceptional achievements in the editing of individual films to be more precisely located and assessed.

Film Editing, to be fair, is part of Wallflower's "Short Cuts" series, designed to introduce topics to students rather than provide anything like the final word on them. As such its tone is well judged and the final pages indicate that much more work remains to be done. What should be added is that one group of people worth listening to in any further research is editors themselves. The filmography names editors as well as directors, but their voices, with the welcome exception of Thelma Schoonmaker's, are largely absent from the main body of the text. This is a shame given that editors are of necessity very close analysts of the films they work on. Critical dialogue with their insights could enrich academic perspectives on the art and craft of editing. The argument for the expressiveness of editing could be more thoroughly substantiated by paying closer attention to the (context-bound) creativity of the people who actually do it.

[Martin Stollery is co-author, with Roy Perkins, of *British Film Editors* (BFI, 2004).]

Genre, Myth, and Convention in the French Cinema, 1929-1939

By Colin Crisp
Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-253-34072-1. xxvi+460pp

A review by Susan Hayward, Univerity of Exeter, UK

Colin Crisp's latest book on French cinema is undoubtedly, like his earlier book, *The Classic French Cinema 1930-1960*, a labour of love, and meticulous commitment and for this we must be very grateful. He has, once again, taken on board a mammoth task -- a broad sweep of genre and star types of the1930s cinema -- which will make the work for future scholars that much easier because he has done such a great deal of the hard initial spadework. And done it in minutiae. Thus his study, a recording of nearly everything that was produced by the French film industry during those turbulent years of the 1930s, represents a huge opening up of a field that has largely remained uncharted. Now scholars can really get into this era in a new way -- in particular by focusing on popular genres and stars other than the canonic few which regularly receive attention in film histories. So we must thank Crisp for this. It is a work of the same importance as Abel's on the French silent cinema era. My only regret is that unlike Abel's studies, Crisp's book is completely without illustrations.

Yet the strengths of the study are clear to see. Apart from the careful cataloguing of all the films and an extensive discussion of the narratives of many of the films -- invaluable in themselves -- Crisp has also attempted to take us further in our understanding of the value of these films by trying to create a sense of how they were received. Thus, whilst audience figures and knowledge about reception of these films is very difficult to pin down, as Crisp readily acknowledges, the author has worked extremely hard to expunge existing material in order to give us a sense of what was popular and why, or rather, how it was received. In this latter context, Crisp uses contemporary popular cine-magazines, and the views of film critics of the time, as ways of measuring the impact of films and genres and indeed stars. And this seems an entirely appropriate way to proceed.

Whilst this is a momentous piece of research, there are nonetheless some problems, although I will immediately say that no book can embrace everything. The first and foremost problem, in my view, is that the author fails, in any substantive way, to link his discussion of genre into the socio-political climate of the years. For example, in his chapter on "Identity," he mentions the felt anxiety around questions of sexuality, but takes the point no further. Questions of masculinity and femininity are posed in the chapter on "Gender and Family," and whilst the issues are mapped out, they are not subjected to any systematic analysis. We repeatedly get synopses of the films, but no real attempt to contextualise the film products within their historical moment. A similar criticism can be raised against the chapter on "Nation and Race." We really do not get a sense of the background to the preoccupations the films appear to be addressing. The term "myth" is bandied about as if it is a natural and innocent word. Thus we are told that genres and stars embody or reflect back certain myths, but no attempt at in-depth analysis of what this might mean is made nor is there a relating of the function of

myth back to hegemonic practice. This lack of locating the subject matter is then the main disappointment for me in the book. Also problematic is the fact that Crisp seems to have made a deliberate decision to not put his study in discussion with other very good investigations into this period -- namely Ginette Vincendeau's work on popular cinema in the 1930s, where she deals very interestingly with masculinity in crisis, and other related issues of gender and the family, and Michèle Lagny's historically located study of this decade.

But these criticisms should not detract from the fact that this study brings us a wealth of material, painstakingly collected and systematically organised into a comprehensive and coherent whole. In essence, Crisp has provided us with an important piece of groundbreaking scholarly work. It is now up to us to take it further. But I would say that his ability to master an understanding of industrial practice is going to be a very hard act to follow, as indeed his last chapter on "Box Office Success" makes clear. In it, he brings new insight into the production practices of the 1930s, which we will all, I am sure, find enormously informative and invaluable.

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Hitchcock’s Films Revisited: Revised Edition

By Robin Wood
New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-231-12695-6. 49 illustrations, xliv+405pp. £13.49 (pbk)

A review by Frances Pheasant-Kelly, University of Nottingham, UK

This revised edition of *Hitchcock's Films Revisited* marks several shifts for its author, Robin Wood, both personal and political. The book is divided into two sections, the original *Hitchcock's Films*, and the later *Hitchcock's Films Revisited*. This most recent revision is newly prefaced by an account of the historical, cultural and personal factors that have influenced the author's writings, and also includes a new chapter on *Marnie* (1964), entitled "You Freud, Me Hitchcock: *Marnie* Revisited."

The preface refers back to the original *Hitchcock's Films*, exploring, at length, Wood's personal life, and its influence on his initial readings of the films. He also maps developments in approaches to film studies since the inception of the original book (written in the early 1960s). The second book differs from the original in a number of ways; it reflects Wood's self-professed enlightenment of dominant ideology, cultural constructs and feminism. As a consequence, it tends to be thematically based, rather than film based, which makes for a more coherent approach since Hitchcock's work is so topically orientated; secondly, in acknowledging developments in film studies, the work attempts to contextualise *auteurism*, and inclines towards psychoanalytical theory. He thus shifts from his original stance, where he endorsed Hitchcock as "pure cinema", a cinema to be experienced rather than intellectually analysed, to one where he deconstructs Hitchcock's anti-realist devices. Nevertheless, Wood stands by his original interpretations of the films, which, if simplistic at times, are still relevant. Indeed, the whole book, articulated through its unique structure, with the intact account of his original readings, is a useful chart of the development of film criticism.

The original work was committed to *auteur* theory, which was at the forefront of film criticism when the book was written -- the title of the book, of course, immediately alludes to this. The second book still strives to articulate Hitchcock's greatness, but acknowledges that the *auteur* is now considered to be but one facet of film studies situated within a myriad of other factors. *Hitchcock's Films Revisited* also moves from a scenario where Wood questions why we should take Hitchcock seriously, to a post-modern climate where he is invariably taken seriously. Wood continually draws parallels in this third edition between his analysis of the films and his own personal life.

The early book, then, establishes Hitchcock as an *auteur* by recognition of a steady and deepening development of themes, a consideration of the function of suspense and an appraisal of the technical aspects employed. That Wood did not at the time recognise certain

facets of Hitchcock's films merely exemplifies Hitchcock's progressive thinking. Wood focuses on those films that are often considered to be Hitchcock's best, and devotes a chapter to each. This is somewhat self-limiting, as the films are invariably linked thematically, and consequently some of the overriding Hitchcockian issues seem to be under-explored in the early book (such as voyeurism, the transgressive female, the problematic mother, and themes of masquerade and duality). In a chapter on *Rear Window* (1954), he considers the cinematic analogy, but does not really pursue it, and there is little reference to the psychoanalytical parallels that Hitchcock so obviously alludes to. He also comments about "the insistence of eyes", but does not really explore fully the theme of looking. There are also frequent and sometimes superfluous comparisons to other art forms, which may be somewhat distracting for the film studies reader. By looking at the films individually, he also misses the collective of artifice and distancing effects that Hitchcock so deftly weaves the viewer in and out of.

The second book benefits from a consideration of a wider range of Hitchcock's films. Wood also acknowledges that Hitchcock is essentially analysing patriarchal institutions, and uses this as a thread for subsequent chapters which tend to be more topically organised, e.g. "Plot Formations," which focuses on the notion of the falsely accused man, the guilty woman, the psychopath, espionage and intrigue, and marriage. Wood considers that it is the guilty woman theme that predominates, in terms of creating most disturbance for both the narrative and for the audience, in that the punishment meted out does not invite audience satisfaction. Wood thus recognises that Hitchcock is exposing the fallibility of dominant ideological structures, rather than merely reproducing them. In acknowledging this, he falls into line with other authors, such as Tania Modleski, who considers that Hitchcock actually exposes women's plight in patriarchy. Wood also considers narrative structure in relation to patriarchal structure, with an emphasis on symmetry, specifically in relation to *Blackmail* (1929). Much of the second book is concerned with relationships within patriarchy, both heterosexual and homosexual. In a chapter entitled "Murderous Gays: Hitchcock's Homophobia," Wood again draws on parallels with his own experiences, with an emphasis on *Rope* (1948), and similarly ascribes aspects of misogyny and homophobia within the films to Hitchcock's personal life. This approach, at times, seems irrelevant and unsubstantiated.

He goes on to explore the theme of stars and *auteurs*, examining factors in the construction of identification, concluding that a simple formula such as the male gaze, is not wholly viable. He approaches his revised selection of films psychoanalytically in a number of instances, and in so doing, concludes that Laura Mulvey's thesis of cinematic practice and the male gaze is inadequate.

He also examines much more fully maternal figures and feminist viewpoints. In the additional chapter on *Marnie* he focuses on the "free association" scene and the "rape" scene, commenting that "*Marnie* was made at a time when the women's movement was beginning to sensitise us to those major problems of sex and gender that assumes such prominence during the following decade (unnoticed in my original account, written before I had ever heard the term 'sexual politics')" (p.392). He goes on to discuss *Marnie* in psychoanalytical terms, within which the film is constructed, and from a "feminist" point of view, considering Mark Rutland as "The Great White Male". However, despite re-visitation, the multifarious fascinating aspects of *Marnie* remain under-explored.

The book as a whole digresses more than the reader might desire into the author's personal experiences, but is a comfortable read, and even if at times it lacks theoretical substantiation, Wood's self-revisionist discourse retains the lucidity and passion of his original work.

Hollywood v. Hard Core: How the Struggle over Censorship Saved the Modern Film Industry

By Jon Lewis
New York and London, New York University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8147-5142-3. xii + 377pp. £13.00

A review by Alex Naylor, University College London, UK

Jon Lewis's ambitious and thorough book centres on Hollywood's dismantling of its principal competitor in the early 1970s: independently produced explicit films both from the pornographic film industry and from the art film world (for instance, *Last Tango In Paris* [1972]). However, *Hollywood v. Hard Core* expands its focus outward to tackle the wider history of Hollywood's -- and American culture's -- relationship with censorship and the idea of obscenity. Lewis's thesis is that the Hollywood film industry's standardised self-regulation (first via the MPDA Production Code or "Hays Code", and more recently via the MPAA ratings system) neither results from an inherent conservatism nor is imposed on filmmakers from "outside". In fact, by placating conservative elements in the marketplace (and in American culture), the Hollywood film industry cannily distinguishes its own, regulated product from disreputable alternatives, and thereby guarantees itself exclusive access to many modes of distribution (cinema chains, video store chains, non-pay TV).

This is a fascinating argument, which in Lewis's hands becomes a far-reaching analysis. His concentration on the economic concerns and consequences of Hollywood censorship extends into both politicised and aesthetic analysis. In fact, the book turns on the inextricable connections Lewis demonstrates between art, politics and capital within the film industry. Politically, Lewis's argument builds to a convincing polemical conclusion. Aesthetically, while the book's topic means that it is necessarily short on textual analysis, it is notable that when Lewis discusses films, whether it is *Deep Throat* or *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), his analysis of their work with social taboo is always both nuanced and interesting.

The centrepiece of the book's argument is two chapters that form a compelling narrative of Hollywood's tussle with the porn film industry in the early 1970s. An ailing Hollywood film industry was worried by the possibility that more porn films like *Deep Throat* and *The Devil and Miss Jones* (1971) might successfully cross over to mainstream audiences, erode the distinctions between "legit" and "hard core" -- and compete with Hollywood product. Hollywood was bailed out not by audiences (Lewis points out the record-breaking attendance figures for porn "blockbusters"), but by conservative, Nixon-appointed Supreme Court judges, who in 1973 revised liberal obscenity laws dating from the 1950s.

In a particularly revealing passage (180 – 181), Lewis quotes the horror director Wes Craven on the political functions of MPAA content regulation. "We of course do not have government censors", says Craven. "That would be totalitarian. It would also be unnecessary.

What we do have is the MPAA." Lewis goes on to point out a growing trend in the MPAA's requests to filmmakers for cuts to achieve an "R" rating. Increasingly, it is not specific acts or content, but the intensity of that content on which censors focus. Sequences must be cut down, volume decreased, frames cut out -- and the impact of the film as a whole is decreased. "Revelatory or radical political content", Lewis points out, often needs to shock or to be intense. The harsh and politicised horror of Craven's early films like *Last House on the Left* (1972) and *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977) would be much more difficult to release un-mutilated today, Lewis argues.

Lewis charts his thesis with admirable thoroughness, devoting a chapter to the impact of the HUAC hearings on Hollywood filmmaking, and another to an overview of the legal history of censorship and obscenity law in American society. The first of these manages to illuminate a familiar subject in a new way: Lewis proposes that the HUAC hearings were an important step *in Hollywood's economic favour*, transforming its relationship with the American general public. However, the second is largely a summary of a well-documented history. While it is heartening to see an argument so painstakingly backed-up and contextualised, one occasionally gets the impression of a surplus of meticulous documentation of known facts, where referring the reader on to other published work might have done the job more concisely.

However, this is a minor quibble with a work that is generally not only solid, but a pleasure to read. Lewis's style is clear, conversational and fluent, and he is not afraid to leaven his scholarship with entertaining (and illuminating) Hollywood quotations and anecdotes.

The book's final punch is the suggestion that the industry's self-regulation, while appearing liberal, is actually a stricter censorship regimen than could ever be legally imposed by the United States government. This, he argues, is part and parcel of a national trend in censorship and obscenity laws which constitutes a real and current erosion of free speech: and taking advantage of this trend which is a major source of the studios' current financial success. "The system is indeed "doing exactly what it was intended to do"', Lewis concludes (299) -- and the Hollywood film industry is reaping the profits.

Jean-Jacques Beineix

By Phil Powrie
Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001. ISBN 0-7190-5533-4. 27 illustrations, vi+240pp. £12.99 (pbk)

A review by Devona Mallory, Scott Community College, USA

As part of Manchester University Press's "French Film Directors" series, *Jean-Jacques Beineix* explores the work of this very controversial filmmaker. Phil Powrie's main focus espouses the age-old theory that Beineix's work is mostly misunderstood by film theorists, critics, and sometimes, the public. Through his comprehensive and thought provoking analysis of Beineix's films, Powrie proves his point.

Besides opening with a foreword by the editors of the series, a preface, and a foreword by the author, the book includes a foreword by the director Beineix himself. This part lends credibility to the material because it demonstrates that the subject approves of its publication. Beineix claims, "Phil Powrie's work delights me, it encourages me to make films, to carry on a dialogue with spectators. He has made considerable use of psychoanalysis in his study; I find this angle most appropriate, since it is one of the bases of my work [. . .]" (xiii). This ringing endorsement definitely enhances the book's prestige. Furthermore, since the book is part of the "French Film Directors" series, many of the passages are written in French with accompanying English translation and footnotes so the reader can follow the material.

Additionally, Powrie provides a brief biography of Beineix's life, and discusses the French film criticism that was prevalent at the time Beineix's films were released, to show the atmosphere that Beineix and other French filmmakers faced. According to Powrie,

[m]ost of Beineix's feature films to date were released in a single decade, the 1980s, and he is generally seen as the best example of what came to be known as the *cinéma du look*. This was one of the two new types of film to emerge in the 1980s [. . .] the *cinéma du look* was placed by many, including Beineix himself, in a position of confrontation with the cinema of the *nouvelle vague* [. . .] Beneix attacked the *nouvelle vague*, and the establishment critics who supported the modernist cinema it represented, for being out of touch with contemporary, and especially youthful audiences. (1)

In other words, because Beineix rebels against the established film movement, the critics negatively criticize his work. Therefore, they are already predisposed to dislike his works out of pique.

The book mostly focuses on six of Beineix most famous and most discussed films: *Diva* (1981), *La Lune dans le caniveau* (1983), *37°2 le matin* (*Betty Blue*) (1986) and (1991), *Roselyne et les lions* (1989), *IP5* (1992), and *Mortel Transfert* (2001). Powrie sections each film into clear and distinct sub-categories, which include a film synopsis, background about

the making of the film, timely critical analysis, and Powrie's take on the various critics, and his own views. He says about *37°2 le matin*,

It will be remembered that fragmentariness was one of the chief criticisms by negative reviewers of the 1986 version [. . .] This is because [. . .] those reviewers did not recognise how the film was functioning as a soap [opera] [. . .] by establishing a realist grounding in everyday events, into which are inserted typical points of intensity whose function is to elicit emotion, an emotion all the more intense because it is grounded in, but shown in sharp relief from, quotidian banality. (129)

Initially, Powrie's weakest point seems to be with his film synopses. Even though Powrie gives a step-by-step narrative, it seems he leaves some details out, especially about character motivation. This in turn makes the plots seem ridiculous and convoluted. For instance, here is part of *Diva*'s synopsis,

Jules the postman makes a pirate recording of the famous black diva Cynthia Hawkins at the Opéra, observed, unknown to him, by two Taiwanese. He obtains her autograph in her dressing room where he steals her white dress, and returns to his loft (an old garage) to listen in the previously unrecorded diva on his hi-fi system. (28)

Although this may not be Powrie's intention, it may make the reader wonder how he would be able to explain the value of Beineix's work. However, the synopsis is not the place for explanations, the analysis is. Fortunately, the rest of the sub-categories explain Beineix's vision. Hence, the weakness changes to a strength. Obviously, it must be very difficult to give clear and concise plots about ideas that are themselves complex and complicated. As Powrie states, Beineix is more of a visual and symbolic filmmaker. These factors do not translate very easily into written form.

Overall, through detailed observation and analysis, Powrie demonstrates Beineix's positive contribution not only to French Cinema, but to World Cinema as well. Indeed, history has shown that the most persecuted eventually becomes the trailblazers to a more positive way of artistic expression.

Mouse Morality -- The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film

By Annalee R. Ward
Austin: University of Texas Press. 2003.ISBN 0-292-79153-4. xv + 181pp £10.95 (pbk)

A review by Jon Baldwin, London Metropolitan University, UK

Mouse Morality attempts to analyse the attitudes, values and moral messages in five recent consecutive Disney animations, *The Lion King* (1994), *Pocahontas* (1995), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996), *Hercules* (1997), and *Mulan* (1998). Ward utilises rhetorical criticism to do this and concludes that Disney sends out mixed moral messages. Ward deviates somewhat from traditional academic discussion and criticism of Disney. She argues that,

> [d]ismissing Disney films critically as hegemonic agents of self-interested, consumeristic values that communicate patriarchal, racist, hierarchical, and antiauthority visions of morality misses powerful dimensions of prosocial morality and aesthetically delightful animated art. (135)

Putting aside, for one moment, the notion of Disney supposedly teaching "prosocial morality", what else does Ward say about the "delightful animated art"? Well, little, in terms of an analysis of the role of movement, rhythm and colour, and worryingly there are no stills form the films analysed to accompany her commentary. Of course, it must be assumed that Disney did not grant permission, but then Ward should account for this omission in her text and rethink passages that, unless one is fully acquainted with the specific film under consideration, rely on a detailed knowledge of the animation and character illustration under scrutiny.

Ward's belief in Disney's self-appointed task of teaching morality and pedagogic role in the socialisation of children is apparent in her discussion of the female lead role in *Pocahontas*, which followed *The Lion King*. The latter film had a male hero and Ward suggests that "[b]ecause of that male focus, Disney tries hard to balance its releases to provide identification with the female gender." (6) This worthy attempt to balance gender role models for children will no doubt come as some surprise to those who believed Disney had a more material agenda.

The method of rhetorical criticism utilised in isolation by Ward can be considered problematic insofar as it disallows consideration of how the wider cultural context might influence readings of the films. It does not take into account the *Disneyfication* surrounding the films reception -- for instance the cuddly toys, fast-food tie-ins, and other merchandising operations. Nor does it relate Disney productions to other competing commodities such as *Toy Story* (1995) or *Monsters Inc*. (2001). Ward is quite explicit in acknowledging that her use of rhetorical criticism is in distinction to that of Michael McGee, "and others who believe

that criticism must also include the context in order to illuminate the representative textual fragments that actually constitute the rhetoric" (139).

Ward does perform some interesting readings of the films under scrutiny. Jungian archetypes are used to investigate *The Lion King*, *Pocahontas* allows insight to how Disney deals with colonialism, virtue ethics are raised in the exploration of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Hercules* illustrates contemporary celebrity culture, and *Mulan* foregrounds issues pertaining to inter-culturalism. The upshot of Ward's analysis is the suggestion that Disney transmits mixed moral messages. For instance, females can be leaders but male leadership ought to be the norm; family values are important but it is fine to disobey authority as needed; responsibility is valued but also you should follow your heart; stereotyping is wrong but black means evil; females can be strong and self-sufficient but they are only truly happy when they have a man; what is inside is what is important but also physical beauty is important (124).

An important issue arises regarding the reading of these mixed messages. Ward's implicit understanding of the young audience of Disney is that they largely need protecting and parental guidance in their consumption of Disney. This is a poorly theorised conception of young audiences. It implies that young readers simply accept what Disney transmits without any discernment, and cannot, for instance, distinguish between or conceptually handle mixed messages. This runs counter to the findings of contemporary audience studies. Further there is no empirical audience research in the book. This means that we learn how an academic reads Disney, we learn how reviewers read Disney, but we never learn how children themselves read Disney. To be sure Ward's analysis could well be a useful starting point in researching audiences of Disney, but ultimately I feel we would learn more about Disney's worldview and Disney's young audience by conducting a series of focus group interviews with children themselves.

The book emerged from Ward's research for her Ph.D, and unfortunately it sometimes shows. Ward is Associate Professor at Trinity Christian College, Illinois, and is also president of the Religious Communication Association. This background informs her discussion of morality and evaluation of Disney: "[b]y relegating the church, and more specifically God to irrelevancy, Disney refuses to admit a serious role for religion." (76). Hence the analysis is somewhat conservative, family values oriented, and religious: the understanding of morality is more Mickey Mouse than Marcel Mauss.

Selling Hollywood to the World: U.S. and European Struggles for Mastery of the Global Film Industry, 1920-1950

By John Trumphour
New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-521-65156-5. xvi+378pp. $80.00

A review by Douglas Gomery, Resident Scholar, Library of American Broadcasting, University of Maryland, USA

Once the pioneers of the Hollywood studio system had created Hollywood, and the First World War left the European film industries in shatters, through the end of the silent era, the coming of sound, and the pre-T.V. Classical Hollywood period, European nations struggled as how to derail Hollywood's hold on the film cultures. The oligopolistic Hollywood studies through the 1920s fashioned a trade association -- usually called the Hays office -- to work with the United States government in an effort to preserve the Hollywood domination.

Slightly mis-titled, this book, based upon the author's Ph.D dissertation, analyzes European efforts to overcome the Hollywood studio system's power in their nations. But because doing the "World," as stated in the main title, or even all "European" nations, as stated in the subtitle, would be a daunting task, Trumphour -- after establishing the rise of Hollywood and its workings with the Republican party administrations of Harding, Coolidge and Hoover -- then analyzes Great Britain in 100 pages, France and Belgium in 60 pages, and then ends with his conclusion.

This book hardly covers Europe and surely comes nowhere close to covering the world. One wishes it had, because the cases of Great Britain and France have been well studied, and Belgium can not surely represent the rest of Europe. Where is Germany? It's in there, but only in comments. If, as the author claims, Belgium was swayed by the Vatican, why not Italy as well?

As someone who has studied Hollywood power for a quarter century, I know why. If one would seek to use primary documents from the countries at hand, the research would take years. And it would take just about as long to learn all the different languages to read the documents and understand the culture from which they came. Europe was in flux between the wars, and if the dates in the subtitle are correct, then the Second World War would make the issue even more complex. Here is a case study, at best seeking more. But while a first rate case study, it is no more than that -- and most of the world's nation-states and populations would be insulted to think Great Britain, France and Belgium stood and represented them.

The approach the author takes to this familiar question of Hollywood hegemony is to examine Britain, France and Belgium governmental documents (where the best documentation lies), as well as cultural and religious institutional reaction to the coming of Hollywood cinema, and its dominant role in their nation states. The author seeks to explore

the clash between the forces of Hollywood as supported by the U.S. government and the British, French and Belgium societies. He states this as a social history.

He has to do this as a social history because this historical era, and the set of international questions its posed, have been explored in the past by so many of us. But here, at least in the first third of the book, Trumphour adds little about the Hollywood studio system and the creation of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association. He takes on the issue of Jewish ownership of the Hollywood studio system and its output for WASP USA, but this has been done before. If Trumphour is to add anything, it is in the role of religion to analysis.

However, in the end, Trumphour adds little. Can we find it surprising that nation-states with long and developed cultural institutions at the core of their societies resist the globalization of Hollywood? That they resisted seems and does add nothing to the literature.

Trumphour's documentation is long and impressive. But here weaknesses lie as gaping holes. To use the microfilm of the Will Hays papers, which I culled and placed in a certain order from a collection housed in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, where I was able to select only 1/10th of the primary documents, is fine. But to credit this to Rutgers University microfilm division, and not to the skills and faults of my own culling is simply lazy. Trumphour wants the naive reader to believe he went to the source, but he did not. That lies in central Indiana, not as a culled copy on microfilm in a library in New Jersey.

I will praise him on one count, as we see his addition to the literature surrounding this field in his use of the Quigley papers, held at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Quigley was a powerful Roman Catholic layman (the term the religion uses), as well as publisher of a major trade paper, The Motion Picture Herald. Otherwise, this book simply rewrites from the familiar sources (often non-primary books), and explores nothing new.

As for Great Britain, the usual suspects -- John Gierson, Alexander Korda and J. Arthur Rank -- are covered once again. A review of the use of primary documents seems to indicate that most of the data was gathered from the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, U.S.A., rather than sources in London, and elsewhere in Great Britain. He claims to have visited several archives in London and Paris, but they seem lacking in the notes. This again makes the experienced researcher ask: why not go to the archive with the primary documents? Why only use easy-to-find U.S. documents? The same problem lies in the chapters on France, but not Belgium. One can only wonder why?

While the impressive set of notes is a great plus -- future scholars can use these cites as jumping off point (and go to Indianapolis, for example) -- they are actually quite thin. I commend the use of the Quigley Collection, and the use of Presidential Libraries, but again ask: why nothing on the Coolidge administration (other than the fact that he has no Presidential Library)?

Trumphour starts his "Introduction" with the following quote before the formal text: "Death to Hollywood", attributed to John Maynard Keynes, one of the great economists of the 20th century. But there is no note as to where this quotation came from. Did Keynes study the situation with Hollywood imperialism into Great Britain? That would have made for fascinating reading.

Here is an example of a Harvard professor -- knowing nothing of the film industry -- discovering the obvious. For example, that the Roman Catholic Church did not hold a reign of terror, and other religions played an important role, is fine and well-known, but what about the Baptists or Lutherans? They took stands on movies, but we learn little of that here.

In conclusion, Trumphour has penned a textbook summarizing the work of others, and adding little to the analysis that has been going on since Hollywood constructed the first cultural globalization in the weeks after the end of the First World War.

The Cinema of Emir Kusturica: Notes from the Underground

By Goran Gocic
London: Wallflower Press, 2001. ISBN 1-903364-16-7 (hardback)/ISBN 1-903364-14-0 (paperback).17 b&w Illustrations, 196 pp. 13.99 pbk/ 42.50 hbk

A review by William A. Martin, McMaster University, Canada

Goran Gocic's concise encyclopedic typology of the exceptional creative veracity of Yugoslav director (and musician) Emir Kusturica is an important work for academics and laypeople alike. Its straightforward manner, and short length, accompany well the author's teleology, which as he tell us repeatedly, concerns "deconstructing" Kusturica for a Western (read: North American) audience (1). His charge of cultural proletarianism is pointed; the hermeneutical complexity of Kusturica films may seem incorrigible to those bred on the dilettante "movies" of that lineage spanning from George Lucas to Steven Soderbergh, just as Jackson Pollack masterpiece would to those versed only in the iconic fetishism of Andy Warhol. Indeed, despite legitimate claims to past cinematic genius (i.e., Cecil B. De Mille, Orson Welles, Frank Capra), North American audiences expunged the sublime exposure of cinematic sublimation long ago. "Cinema tends to be [the Americans'] prime propaganda tool. And they used to be good at it," Kusturica laments at one point, "I am one of those who learned my trade by watching Hollywood movies. Unfortunately, there is not much to learn anymore" (127).

Little surprise, then, that Gocic breaches this amnesia by way of discussing Kusturica in terms that are both, conceptually postmodernist and poignantly aware of the political tragedy suffered by the Slavic nation throughout the twentieth century, especially as it was delineated through its art and film. Gocic uses his numerous interviews with the radical director, moreover, to supplement this genealogy, which helps us sympathise with that Eastern European artistic impulse that all too often seems truly Other to a North American audience. Consider for example, the following quotation, which serves as a motto for both his essentially Slavic artistic passion: "I start off each time trying to make a comedy," Kusturica relates at one point, "but I always end up making a tragedy, against my will" (12). Living and creating *a rebours* is the price Kusturica pays for embracing the ecstatic aggression of Slav ethnicity, just as it underlines his genuine empathy for the freaks, animals, gypsies, and anti-heroes that so beautifully come to life in his films. Gocic's Kusturica is a cultural anthropologist rather than a mere moralist, however, a Dostoevsky rather than a Balzac. Perhaps this is why Gocic compares Kusturica to Satyajit Ray and Akira Kurosawa, both of whom also produced localized or "ethnic" cinematic narratives that were unappreciated by their countrymen. Indeed, he suggests that the "strength of [Hector] Babenco, [Mira] Nair, and Kusturica is that they "work in the countries they originate from -- or at least draw inspiration from these countries but are at the same time fairly 'Westernized'" (120). Gocic is quick to point out, however, that the fusion of East and West in Kusturica is highly stylized; for he abhors nothing more than creating "food for thought that smells like plastic" (121).

Kusturica's "cinema of nostalgia", for example, underline the strength of his "artistic instincts" (136), even as his "relation to history" is intertextually "redefined" (132) by the postmodern love for self-referential "openness" (158) and "incredulity" (159). "I am like a drug addict," Kusturica insists when asked about his influences, "who uses all kinds of drugs" (139). His cinema is so "dominantly visual and emotional", we are told, that it must be "potentially intellectualized and rationalized on the level of concept" (142). For example, Gocic makes the case that, "Kusturica merges five different levels of reference to 'the past': Yugoslav history, Yugoslav myths, Yugoslav films, his own existing opus, and [to] *Underground* itself" (146). Little surprise, then, his conceptually modern narratives inevitably moves toward "a synthesis of unexpected, seemingly incongruous elements" (159), for "transcending" is rarely possible without "transgression" (163). All the same, Gocic also convincingly argues that the "core" of Kusturica's "cinematographic concept is something basically apolitical," and "rather built on irrational, archetypal, axioms" than Marxist principles (163). As with all genuine artistic expression, Kusturica's films are overtly anti-hegemonic and irreducible to simple catch phrases; in the words of Gocic, they are texts of *jouissance* (bliss) rather than texts of *jour* (pleasure), which is undoubtedly appropriate for a maverick Slav whose "cinema is a cinema of excess" (173).

In conclusion, whereas much academic engagements with directors over the past decade has been theoretically (read pedantically) obtuse, Gocic's passionate intellectuality and hermeneutical economy makes this work a must read for academics, as well as for those generally interested in European Cinema's *auteurs*.

The Cinema of Wim Wenders: The Celluloid Highway

By Alexander Graf
London: Wallflower Press, 2002. ISBN 1-903364-29-9, ix +179 pp. £13.99 (pbk), £55.00 (hbk)

A review by Tim Grünewald, University of Washington, USA

Alexander Graf's *The Cinema of Wim Wenders* presents the German director as an antidote to the ever increasing poisoning of images. In the first two chapters, he discusses Wenders' cinematic philosophy, more specifically his theory of the image, the narrative, and, most importantly the relation between the two. Then he analyzes six films in the previously developed context. While the first two chapters serve well as a concise yet comprehensive introduction to the theory of Wenders' cinema, they present few new insights to those familiar with the literature on Wenders' films. The strength of the study lies in the close readings. Here, Wenders emerges as a moral filmmaker "who mistrusts stories in film when they become more important than a film's images" (154).

Since Wenders is certainly better known for his visuals than his narratives, it is fitting to begin with Wenders' philosophy of the image. The director's affinity to the realist branch of film theory in general, and to Siegfried Kracauer in particular, has been widely discussed in the literature. Thus it comes as no surprise that for Wenders, filming "enables the redemption of transient things as well as reproducing these accurately" (23). Graf then suggests that the photographic image's "latent truth value" (35), which Wenders so cherishes, is particularly susceptible to the dangers of manipulation. To be true to physical reality is therefore not simply one of cinema's unique capacities, but a moral obligation. Wenders wants cinema to counteract the dilution that images have been suffering from their endless dissemination and commercialization in television.

By focusing on how Wenders uses narrative to explore the problematic relationship between image and story, Graf adds to our understanding of the director's philosophy. We learn how the man on the rails in *Silver City* (1969) exemplifies how a story can "assert its presence in a film against the will of the director" (37); how the appearance of Peter Falk / Columbo in *Wings of Desire* (1987) makes the other characters (and us) wonder if "the existence of a real-life figure or the existence of a fantasy figure" is more likely; and how a story can be like a vampire that "bleeds the life out of its protagonists" (46), as in *The State of Things* (1982), when the director Friedrich is killed in a narrative turn that resembles too closely the type of story he refused to direct in his own film. Furthermore, Graf emphasizes the episodic structure inherent in most of Wenders' films, exemplified by his road movies, and his de-emphasis of "dramatic high-points" (56) which allows Wenders to prevent the story from dominating the film.

More than half of Graf's study is dedicated to an analysis of six films spanning most of Wenders' career from *Alice in the Cities* (1974) to the *Million Dollar Hotel* (2000). Graf's perceptive readings of selected scenes further illustrate Wenders' approach to the image-story problematic. For example, a close reading of the *mise-en-scene* of a TV set in *Alice in the Cities* displaying *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) shows how television appropriates and commercializes the cinematic image (80). Another example from the same film illustrates how a childlike vision allows "objects on the edge of the diegesis" to take control of the camera and occupy significant space in the frame (82). Graf's analysis of the spectator position in *Wings of Desire* further exemplifies his approach. Wenders struggles with the paradox that story is a threat to the image on the one hand, yet indispensable to providing coherence to the images on the other. This is played out in an ambivalent case of suture. At the beginning the camera is aligned with the angel's perspective via a point of view shot. However, Wenders frequently changes to objective perspectives and disrupts the identification with the character, preventing an immersion into the story.

One film, however, is conspicuously missing in Graf's analysis: *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999). The documentary's visual aesthetics is indebted to television. It became a commercial hit and grossed more than any of his previous or subsequent films. If it didn't look (in parts) like a video clip, it served at least the purpose of one. It boosted sales of the namesake recording and enabled numerous subsequent releases of the starring musicians. It also tells the somewhat heroic story of Ry Cooder, who enables the phenomenal rise of the Cuban musicians from oblivion to Carnegie Hall. Not that this is a bad thing in and of itself, but some aspects of *Buena Vista* complicate if not contradict Graf's introductory framework of Wenders' philosophy of film. And that seems all the more reason to include it in the study. The same holds true for the advertising films Wenders produced, which Graf but mentions in a footnote (161).

Graf concludes his study with the assertion that cinema is first and foremost a storytelling medium that "descends, in form, from dramaturgy, theatrical production and the novel" (154), and thereby renders Wenders enterprise somewhat quixotic. Considering the current hyper-multiplication of images via digital and web television, it seems that Wenders' ideals indeed have no future. But this is all the more reason to seek out alternative visions such as Wenders' Graf's study serves well as an introduction for the newcomer to his visual philosophy and provides interesting readings of six films to the more seasoned Wenders scholar.

The Southern Movie Palace: Rise, Fall and Resurrection

By Janna Jones
Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003
The Place of the Audience: Cultural Geographies of Film Consumption By Mark Jancovich and Lucy Faire, with Sarah Stubbings

The Place of the Audience: Cultural Geographies of Film Consumption

By Mark Jancovich and Lucy Faire, with Sarah Stubbings.

London: British Film Institute, 2003.

A review by Ina Rae Hark, University of South Carolina, USA

Increasingly over the past decade, scholarship on film audiences and film exhibition has foresworn the grand, all-encompassing paradigm in favor of the material specificity of the local. No longer is the audience imagined only as a theoretical construct produced by the operations of the apparatus. No longer is the history of moviegoing assumed to be the history of moviegoing in major urban centers of the United States. *The Southern Movie Palace* and *The Place of the Audience* are two admirable additions to this new body of work on film consumption in particular places. Jones focuses on one kind of movie theatre, the picture palace of the twenties and thirties which survived urban renewal to be restored to life. Her research subjects are six theatres in the American South: the Fox Theatre in Atlanta, Georgia; the Tampa Theatre in Tampa, Florida; the Carolina Theatre in Durham, North Carolina; the Saenger Theatre in Biloxi, Mississippi; the Orpheum Theatre in Memphis, Tennessee; and the Alabama Theatre in Birmingham, Alabama. Jancovich, Faire and Stubbings confine themselves to one locality, Nottingham, England, and explore the "cultural geography" of watching films in every possible sort of theatrical and home setting that has been available in that city over the past century. Both books combine archival research with ethnography and documented personal recollections; Jancovich, Faire and Stubbings administered questionnaires and Jones conducted extensive face-to-face interviews. The former use their findings to interrogate received opinions from an impressive array of exhibition and reception theory, while Jones, though theoretically informed, is strongest in making the oral histories come alive through attention to the personalities involved in the preservation and restoration of each of her theatres.

It is in the stories of their respective resurrections, and the revelation "of the cultural implications of what it means to preserve the past," that Jones's book makes its most

significant contribution. While there were some small differences, the rise and fall of the Southern movie palace followed a typical pattern in most localities. Symbols of the modernity and prosperity of their cities'central business districts, the palaces either excluded or segregated African-American patrons. When the Civil Rights Movement eventually resulted in desegregation of theatres and other downtown businesses, whites fled to the suburbs, central cities became rundown and dangerous, and federal urban renewal projects usually did not renew but razed whole blocks.

In acting to stop the destruction of the once magical movie palace, municipalities claimed to be making them a centerpiece for the return of vitality to the city center, but Jones cannily points out that the nostalgia for the movie palace often had something to do with the desire of the white middle classes not to cede hegemony over them to African-Americans or others euphemised as the "wrong sort of people."

Jones also teases out other paradoxes at the heart of the restoration of movie palaces. There is the conflict between those who want to recapture the materiality of the past and those who need to make the preserved building into a self-sustaining business in the present. A tension involved in every one of her case studies, it emerges most vividly in the description of the anal retentive preservationists on staff at the Fox and their dismay over the damage done to their precious light fixtures and door knobs by the bourgeois suburbanites who come to see touring Broadway shows (or worse, rap concerts) and the careless production staffs who move in to put up the sets or install the lighting. Then there are the contrasts between enthusiastic local amateurs who descend upon dingy walls with a motley crew of painters and the consummate professional experts in color restoration employed by EverGreene Painting Studios of New York.

Each palace takes on a different new identity. While the Fox is now the premiere venue for imported live stage shows in Atlanta, the Saenger specializes in presenting performances by community groups, a practice that proved fortuitous when the antiquated sprinkler system went off unexpectedly during a rehearsal and clean-up could begin immediately due to one of the leading players owning a carpet cleaning business and having his truck parked outside. The Tampa and the Carolina still show films, primarily foreign and independent features, with the Carolina taking care to showcase community subcultural interests with its Jewish and Gay and Lesbian film festivals. The Orpheum programs touring shows similar to those that visit the Fox and the Alabama, but its manager, Jack Halloran, has written a history of the theatre and emphasizes what Jones calls "discursive" preservation as well as material preservation. Halloran particularly uses the theatre as a locus for confronting and ameliorating the racial divide in Memphis that the theatre once symbolized.

Halloran is evidence of Jones' most original argument: that, at bottom, the preservation of a movie palace only happens if a single individual is driven to save it, often for deeply personal reasons. There is a novelistic vividness to her portraits of such characters as "consummate salesman" Cecil Whitmire of the Alabama Theatre or formidable southern ladies Carol Moses and Pepper Fluke, for whom rescue of the Carolina Theatre also served as an outlet for their own artistic self-expression.

Not least among these personalities is Jones herself, who makes no bones about her own investment in such "time traveling." Interview subjects don't refer to her as "Professor Jones" but as "Janna" or "Miss Janna". She begins her introduction with a recollection of lying on her back on the stage of the recently emptied Tampa Theatre (where she works as a

volunteer), looking up at the electric stars in its ceiling and pondering all those who have done the same stargazing since the building opened in 1926. Her presence as narrator/protagonist is never effaced by the rest of the colorful cast of characters.

By contrast, the three authors of *The Place of the Audience* never appear personally in their far more traditionally detached academic study. It exhaustively documents a history of entertainment in Nottingham as well as the part that cinemas and other delivery systems for films have played in creating a distinctive identity for Nottingham among English cities. Not only are there the familiar narratives of the rise and decline of the city-center movie palace, the move of cinemas to suburbia, and the rise of both suburban multiplexes and urban megaplexes, but also a consideration of the modes of viewing accorded home video and satellite television stations. There are occasionally chapters where the cultural history of the city trumps considerations of film consumption (e.g. chapter 6 on suburban development), and those where it is harder to talk about a mode of consumption in purely local terms (e.g. chapter ten, on the change from viewing films in cinemas to on television.). Most of the time, however, the authors strike an admirable balance, as in the discussion of the significance of Diamond Cable to the Nottingham market.

In addition to providing an exemplary case study of modes of film consumption in a specific locality, *The Place of the Audience* makes several important contributions to the theory of film consumption generally. The authors use details with local specificity to amend more sweeping generalizations about audiences and exhibition sites without in turn elevating their own findings into some kind of totalizing paradigm. They also emphasize that there is a sliding scale that relates the places and manners of consumption to the filmic content of a given location or medium. For instance, as they note in their chapter on new media, "As a result, while new media are creating new forms of film consumption, the claim that they will make leisure outside the home redundant needs serious re-evaluation. Not only are new media consumed within specific social and cultural contexts, but there are other factors involved in the consumption of film which are often ignored through an overemphasis on these new media" (239).

Their research does reveal a certain privileged magic to filmic content: whatever the social construction of the experience involved, the fact that watching a film is part of that experience lends it an indefinable cachet. For instance, in examining the archival records on the various entertainment uses of Nottingham buildings that served in turn as music halls, cinemas, and then bingo parlors, Jancovich, Faire and Stubbings discover that the many impassioned articles about the closings of cinemas are not matched by similar rhetoric about either the transition from music hall to cinema or of the closing of bingo parlors that replaced cinemas:

Many halls were converted into cinemas in the early part of the century, and yet there are no nostalgic articles that presented these conversions as a sign of cultural decline, and this is in sharp contrast to the coverage concerning the conversion of cinemas into bingo halls forty years later (170).

Thus, both these thoughtful and well researched studies conclude that while movie theatres are inextricably a part of the cultural geography and local politics of the cities in which they are found, unlike equally significant buildings such as department stores or government headquarters, they continue to exert a very personal and emotional sense of identity with the individual as movie-goer and citizen alike.

The Whisper of Leaves

By Craig Smith
Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8093-2480-6. 355 pp, $14.00 (pbk)

A review by Kenneth R. Morefield, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA, USA

Given the facts that Craig Smith received his Ph.D from Southern Illinois University, that *The Whisper of Leaves* is published by the same university's press, and that the bulk of the novel takes place in a fictional Southern Illinois university town, a reader might be excused for expecting a murder novel with a distinctive and informed local-color setting. What is surprising, and disappointing, about the novel, however, is how generic the whole exercise feels.

It is somewhat of a cliché that the academician and the detective are parallel figures, each hunting through obscure facts and contradictory narratives to discover (or construct) a unified truth. The academic hero of *The Whisper of Leaves* is Josie Darling, an Instructor of English who returns undercover to Lues State University where her mother, Josie Hazard, was murdered years earlier. Shortly after she arrives, Josie begins receiving anonymous notes threatening violence.

One of the difficulties of the genre is providing enough suspects to keep the readers guessing. Smith rounds up all the usual suspects: the abusive ex-husband, the sleazy night-club owner, the corrupt small-town sheriff, the office lothario, the drunken frat boys, the slutty sorority sisters, the patriarchal grandfather with tenure, the militant lesbian. None are developed beyond the label stage, but the rote nature of the mystery strand of the plot would be forgivable if the academic strand was crafted with greater detail. Mystery is often used as a plot hook for vehicles that are examinations of culture. The police procedural is more about the psychology and workings of a job few ever experience. The amateur detective story often provides a pretext for a documentary introduction to another world. When the setting is fresh and new, such as in Chesterton's Father Brown series or Kemelman's Rabbi Small series, the resulting insight into the subculture portrayed often compensates for the rigidly formulaic nature of the genre. Lues State, however, is neither new nor particularly fresh. Josie Darling's colleagues banter over beers and bicker over tenure as they share gossip about one another. In between calling her brilliant, matronly mentor who encourages Josie (from a wheelchair, no less) to stare down her demons, Josie holds copious office hours with brilliant-but-lacking confidence adult female students, befriends geekish office boys who like her because she's tough yet fair, and spools through mircrofilm at the campus library, using her prodigious research skills to connect a series of grisly murders over a twenty year history. We know her research skills are prodigious because Josie's mentor tells us so, *ad nauseum*, but they seem to consist of writing out a time line and checking out the fantastic theory that violent serial killings in a small rural town might be connected.

The Whisper of Leaves was previously released in England under the title *Silent She Sleeps*. The American edition, while getting a new title, retains some shoddy editing. We learn that Josie "like everything she saw," that her mother may have been "stranged" to death, that one of her coworkers is "like a kid a candy store" and that someone's memorial service was "panned for this afternoon." While the sheer number of editing errors is more embarrassing than anything else, they do promote the impression that the manuscript has not received a lot of careful attention from either the author or the publisher. The point-of-view jumps from character to character frequently in the first half, settles on Josie throughout most of the middle, and then shifts to the killer's perspective at the end. Yet while the characters are given vocal ticks and are described differently, their thoughts are written in much the same tone and language. In one awkward passage early in the novel the narrator addresses the reader as "we", a stylistic device that is not maintained or revisited elsewhere in the novel.

The Whisper of Leaves has no visible connection to film studies -- yet the genre lends itself to film adaptation, and in this case, those specializing in film may find some (if limited) interest. If this novel had been written a little more satirically, it could have been a cross between Jane Smiley's *Moo* and *Deliverance*. Instead, the graphic nature of the crimes and the paint-by-numbers characters make it read like a novelization of an "R" rated *Murder, She Wrote*.

Underground U.S.A: Filmmaking Beyond the Hollywood Canon

By Xavier Mendik and Steven Jay Schneider (eds.), with Foreword by Lloyd Kaufman
London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2002. ISBN 1-903364-49-3. 224pp. £13.99 (pbk)

A review by Rebecca Feasey, Bath Spa University, UK

Underground U.S.A: Filmmaking Beyond the Hollywood Canon is the first of several texts in the "AlterImage" series, a series which aims to integrate theoretical work in the field of cult, horror, avant-garde, exploitation, alternative and experimental cinema with critical and production accounts of film and its audience (12). This first title combines a set of specially commissioned articles from leading film theorists, journalists, exhibitors and directors in the field including Jonathan Crane (*Terror and Everyday Life: Singular Moments in the History of the Horror Film*, 1994), Joan Hawkins (*Cutting Edge: Art Horror and the Horrific* Avant-Garde, 2000), Sara Gwenllian Jones (*Fantastic Cult Television*, 2002) and Steven Jay Schneider (*Dark Thoughts: Philosophic Reflections on Cinematic Horror*, 2003).

In the introduction to this volume, Xavier Mendik points out that very few academic texts have been produced which critically explore the American underground scene. We are then informed that that those few volumes that do examine this marginalised area of film studies have restricted themselves to looking at a range of cult texts as specific case studies, without taking into account the various modes of production, distribution, exhibition and audience reception that such a study should embody. From this perspective then, we are told that this volume adds to existing work in the field by providing suitable methodologies which examine the "historical, economic and cultural emergence of a range of film experiences beyond the mainstream" (2). *Underground U.S.A.* does offer an invaluable addition to the field, due in part, to the fact that the text covers such various and diverse strands of American underground cinema as "a powerful and subversive medium functioning through a fragmentation of official modes of production and distribution" (2).

Although I am not suggesting that this book represents the whole of the underground film experience, the text does in fact offer an important strategy for examining a range of auteurs, icons, films, film cycles and genres that have been "typically dismissed, belittled or ignored by established film culture" (2). *Underground U.S.A.* takes issue with films as diverse as *The Gore Gore Girls* (1972) and *American Beauty* (1999) and genres that span the sexploitation text to the snuff film. However, what unites the articles in this volume is "the belief that the American underground is a vibrant domain that defies the broad classifications of mainstream cinema." In this respect, many critics in this volume view the underground film scene as "a space where art house stands shoulder to shoulder with spectacle-based atrocity, and where experimentation is a regular feature of exploitation" (2).

While all of the articles in the book are well-written and thought-provoking, I would recommend readers to pay particular attention to those articles that take issue with the representation of sexuality and graphic nudity in the underground canon such as Gorfinkel's

work on taste and aesthetic distinction, Sargeant's research on voyeurism and sadistic transgression and Bowen's work on the violent eroticism of what he terms the "roughie". The work on the sexploitation film is interesting in terms of a discussion of taste formations and cultural distinctions, but more importantly (in terms of the aim of this book), the sexploitation film is interesting due to the fact that such films provide a "shadow history to cultural and social events" of particular historical periods. Such work will, in time, encourage further research to explain the social, sexual and political representations of such underground U.S.A. filmmaking beyond the Hollywood canon.

I would strongly recommend this title to anyone interested in the avant-garde, experimental cinema or the cult film canon. Such readers may also be interested to learn that further editions of the "AlterImage" series are available from both the editors and the publisher with each specially-themed edition containing 12-15 key academic articles alongside shorter critical accounts and interviews with cult filmmakers and exhibitors (12).

Young and Innocent?: The Cinema in Britain 1896-1930

By Andrew Higson (ed.)
Exeter, Devon: University of Exeter Press, 2002. ISBN: 0 85989 717 6. 33 Illustrations, xi + 420pp. £25.00

A review by Jessica Brent, Columbia University, USA

Alfred Hitchcock claimed that he directed the silent version of *Blackmail* in 1929 as if it were a talkie -- and indeed his presumption turned out to be justified, since it became his first sound film. But that teleology in which the silents inevitably and seamlessly lead to sound and narrative cinema has been questioned by many film historians who, instead of treating the silent period as a primitive, embryonic form, view it as a different creature altogether with its own properties, problems, and pleasures. This refreshing approach has produced significant studies of American, French, and German silent cinema, but strangely, British film of this period has often been dismissed or overlooked. *Young and Innocent? The Cinema in Britain 1896-1930*, edited by Andrew Higson, Professor of Film Studies at University of East Anglia, seeks to fill this gap with a collection of essays (many of which emerged from the 1998 International Conference on British Cinema) that address an impressively broad range of topics related to the British silent era.

Although each essay is somewhat self-contained and idiosyncratic, two recurring themes emerge and help unify the collection: the general instability and nonstandardization of the silent period, and the persistence of spectacular, nonnarrative forms. These qualities are admirably reflected in the aim of the book itself, which as Higson states in the introduction, seeks to depart from the "teleological sense that cinema can only be understood retrospectively in relation to what it would become" (2) -- i.e. classical Hollywood narrative cinema -- and to view early British film in its unique cultural and historical context. In particular, as the title of the book suggests, the authors question the assumed naïveté and innocence of the silent period.

Simon Popple, for example, looks at topical films about the Boer War alongside other forms of visual culture such as photography and music hall entertainment, demonstrating that "actuality" was often mingled with patriotic propaganda. Generic boundaries, then, were not quite as established as one might suppose during this early period, and far from being the predominant source of entertainment, film was viewed as just one among many facets of British popular culture. Indeed, as several essays in this collection make clear, early cinema was not taken very seriously in Britain -- a fact that may have contributed to its relative neglect amongst film historians. In a particularly fascinating essay, Nicholas Hiley reveals that in the early 1910s investors considered the permanent film hall a risky speculation, believing that cinema was merely another passing craze.

That sense of transience and uncertainty about cinema's identity can also be seen in the essays that look at the formal peculiarities of early film. In a close analysis of Cecil Hepworth's

Alice in Wonderland (1903), Andrew Higson shows that the director relied on the textual knowledge of his audience to make sense of his rather episodic adaptation, thus creating a discrepancy between spectacle and story. This non-narrative quality of primitive cinema, or what Tom Gunning has called the "cinema of attractions," persisted throughout the silent period despite developments in continuity editing and the establishment of the feature-length film. For example, Jenny Hammerton argues that cine-magazines, quasi-newsreels addressed to a female audience, existed "outside the exigencies of narrative justification," thus enabling "playful experimentation" (172); and Alex Marlow-Mann writes about the redundant structure and spectacular emphasis of British serial films. Along similar lines, Jon Burrows provides an insightful revaluation of the 1911 film *Richard III* by demonstrating that the actors' gestures, which critics generally dismiss as chaotic and melodramatic, in fact correspond to the pantomimic style -- a non-verbal, visual mode of expression that translates "speech [. . .] into a different realm of broadly symbolic *action*" (87).

Burrows also reveals that Shakespeare films were not necessarily indicators of middle-class taste, but were often aimed at working class audiences. Other articles take up this important question of audience as well, such as Lisa Sanders' illuminating essay on the presence of women in the theaters, and the concomitant anxiety surrounding the connection between audience behavior and suggestive film content. In addition, *Young and Innocent?* places early film in its collaborative context with essays on musical scoring (reminding us that silent films weren't viewed silently), and screenwriting (reminding us that directors didn't make films by themselves). Two excellent essays on Ivor Montagu and the Film Society account for how the British came to take cinema seriously in the mid 1920s. As they formed their own critical language and aesthetic theory, eventually British directors like Hitchcock were able to create a national cinematic style that combined their penchant for novelistic representations of everyday life with the avant-garde techniques of international filmmakers.

While the majority of the essays in this collection contain fresh and informative observations, at times the book's approach is too heavily weighted toward factual detail rather than imaginative interpretation. One particular essay, however, stands out to this reader in its ability to merge history with aesthetic response: Michael Williams' piece on Ivor Novello. Williams observes that the juxtaposition of Novello's classical features and agonized expression embodies a Nietzschean tension between Apollonian reserve and Dionysian "brutality"(260) -- a tension felt acutely during the post-war period when Novello became a matinee idol. Williams proposes that the traumatic effects of the war are implicitly connoted by Novello's body "to the extent that he stands as an ambiguous polysemic composite, simultaneously the 'calm, classic' hero and the 'bitter revelation' that exposes 'debased despair'" (267). This perceptive analysis thus provides an historical framework for a cinematic aura that is in its very nature unspeakable. Perhaps the essay's only fault is that it coyly evades addressing Novello's homosexuality; indeed, it must be said that queer theory is remarkably absent from the book as a whole.

But if there are any lacunae in *Young and Innocent?*, they are generously compensated for by the final section of the book, which includes comprehensive guides to bibliographical and archival sources on British cinema from 1896-1930, as well as an extensive bibliography of British cinema before 1930. Establishing a solid foundation for future studies of the British silent era, *Young and Innocent?* is not only an excellent collection of essays, but also an invaluable resource for scholars of early film.