America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies

By Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin
Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003. ISBN 0-631-22583-8. xvi + 369 pp., 101 illus., £17.99

A review by Elizabeth Abele, SUNY Nassau Community College, USA

With *America on Film*, Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin offer two introductory textbooks in one: an introductory film studies text as well as an introduction to American cultural studies. Though this double-focus may limit the depth it can give either discipline, the whole succeeds in being greater than the sum of its parts. Since the construction of race, class, gender and sexuality is an integral part of American film, the study of American film can provide an interesting mirror of America's evolving values--through the power of the Hollywood brand. Studying identity issues in American popular film is an excellent introduction for underclassmen to the critical examination of their cultural influences; Benshoff and Griffin's text provides an accessible guide for this work.

Geared toward early college students, though also appropriate for advanced high school students, *America on Film* is divided into five sections--"Culture and American Film"; "Race and Ethnicity"; "Class and American Film"; "Gender and American Film"; and "Sexuality"—with these sections subdivided into more specific chapters. The opening section provides a strong introduction to the history and structure of film for the novice film student. The most developed sections of the text are appropriately Part II "Race and Ethnicity" and Part IV" Gender and American Film." For the four identity sections, the text takes the time to define the less visible, more privileged positions of whiteness, maleness and heterosexuality. The chapters within these sections all trace the development of filmic images as well as the personal challenges of directors and performers of the particular identity position at hand. The strongest element of the text is the well-developed historical perspective provided by each chapter, clearly demonstrating that images of race, class, gender and sexuality are dependent on the specific historical and cultural moment that produced them.

Both film and cultural terms are highlighted in bold and then defined without jargon in the Glossary at the back. Each chapter incorporates a "Case Study," a brief exploration of a specific film to demonstrate the challenges of that particular representation. Concluding the chapter, are "Questions for Discussion," "Further Screening," and "Further Reading." Though the last two resources are an excellent study and teaching resource, the discussion questions tend to be simple and relate as often to superficial personal experience, rather than a tackling of the complex dynamics presented in the previous pages.

Overall, this book has a complicated relationship to Hollywood film. Though the authors focus on popular, mainstream film examples because of their cultural influence, they are often dismissive of Hollywood films in comparison to foreign or independent films that are guilty of their own stock representations. In one case, the authors characterize *To Wong Foo,*

Thanks for Everything as a Hollywood rip-off of *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, though *To Wong Foo* was in production before *Priscilla* was released.

Benshoff and Griffin consistently privilege the most negative readings of successful Hollywood films, ignoring the reality that a film may present a stereotype to gradually challenge and complicate it. For example, *Black Rain* (1989) and *Rising Sun* (1993) are characterized by Benshoff and Griffin as formulaic action films that present conventional stereotypes: "Japan is represented as an exotic locale full of shifty characters who threaten white Americans" (128). This description ignores the more complex reality that both films contain non-white American cops, Japanese characters with high integrity, and American cops under active investigation for ethical violations. Though these films may have been green-lit based on current American fears about the invasion of Japanese capitalism, these films gradually disrupt any sense of (white) American superiority.

Likewise, *The King and I* (1956) is criticized by the authors, for only hinting at a romance between the Asian king and the English governess—ignoring that the suggested romance is an American re-imagining of historic facts that the Thai people still find offensive. So is *The King and I* repressive because the romance does not go farther, or progressive because 1950s America could root for this romance, or culturally insensitive in its colonization of Thai history? Unfortunately, the authors prefer to characterize a Hollywood success as "bad" (or a marginalized film as "good") rather than to demonstrate how these oppositional readings can actively coexist.

In their discussions of film's success of a performer's career, the authors are also more likely to blame the prejudices of producers or audiences, rather than to consider the range of market and cultural factors involved. When the films that the authors believe present more progressive or complex identity constructions fail at the box office, like Buffalo Bill and the Indians (1976), Bulworth (1998) or Geronimo: An American Legend (1993), their failures are simplistically linked to their cultural risks, rather than recognizing that these films are generally not considered their filmmakers' best work nor were the films' stars at the height of their marketability.

This text is likewise pessimistic in discussing the careers of non-white actors. Though the authors are correct that there have yet to be any Native American leading men, Graham Greene, Wes Studi and Gary Farmer have in fact had varied careers as character actors, in Indian and non-Indian specific roles, and mixed-race actors like Lou Diamond Phillips, Jennifer Beals, Fred Ward, Val Kilmer, Keanu Reeves, Vin Diesel have found their ethnic indeterminacy to be as much an advantage as a disadvantage to their careers.

Overall, the authors do a remarkable job at presenting contexts for identifying and tracking the historical constructions of race, gender, class and sexuality, setting the stage for more complex class discussions. Despite my disagreements with some of their film readings or their conclusions, they successfully present a rich history, with references to hundreds of films. Some of my own community college students found their chapters on gender helpful to our discussion of screen images of American masculinity, and I plan to use *America on Film* as a required textbook for my fall Film & Literature class.

Shocking Cinema of the Seventies: The Decade that Humanity Forgot

By Xavier Mendik (ed.) with an Introduction by Michael Winner
London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2002. ISBN 1-903364-49-3. 224pp. £13.99 (pbk)

A review by Rebecca Feasey, Bath Spa University

Shocking Cinema of the Seventies is the first of a series of special edition book-formatted versions of the discontinued *Necronomicon* magazine. In a series of entertaining and informative articles, leading critics in cult cinema, horror and Hong Kong movies such as Leon Hunt (*British Low Culture: From Safari Suits to Sexploitation, 1998*) and Xavier Mendik (*Unruly Pleasures: The Cult Film and its Critics, 2000*) consider the social and cinematic issues which shaped the films of the decade. We are informed that depictions of violence, suffering, surveillance and alienation are dominant in films of the period, and therefore, that films such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *The Anti-Christ* (1974) stand as a mirror to the rapid cinematic and social changes of the era

Shocking Cinema is divided into three clear and coherent sections that take issue with "Hollywood on the Edge" "The Ethnic Other in Action" and "Seventies Horrors" respectively. With this in mind, the book is in a position to examine such diverse areas of interest as film stardom, the politics of conspiracy, the blaxploitation horror genre and the supernatural text. Although the essays in this volume cover a broad range of revered, shocking and enduring images of the 1970s from the mainstream disaster film (*The Poseidon Adventure*, 1972; *The Towering Inferno*, 1974), the dystopian science fiction text (*Soylent Green*, 1973; *The Omega Man*, 1971) and the Kung Fu Vampire film (*The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampire*, 1974), I would suggest that all contributions in the volume are informed by a distinction between the *Necronomicon* reader and the mainstream spectator.

The opening section of *Shocking Cinema of the Seventies* states that the text will provide an insight into the social, political and military terror that beset American cinema and society during the 1970s, by considering examples from "key genres of the era" (11). We are then informed that "what unites the following articles is an examination of the tension between the genuine dispossessed and underground 'voices' that these narratives seek to express, and Hollywood's attempt to limit and contain any social criticism of the issues under review" (11). From this estimation, I would suggest that the ways in which the authors position their work relies on and reaffirms existing cultural hierarchies. In other words, the authors' taste for these shocking films is based on a distaste for other movies and more particularly the tastes of those social groups with whom those films are associated. In the process, the authors set themselves up as privileged readers with special access to films against the "ordinary" film viewer.

As the authors routinely comment, the films that they like are those misunderstood, ignored or over-looked texts that fuse entertainment with social comment and art cinema. In this way, the authors present themselves as discerning viewers and address themselves to what is

presumed to be a discerning reader. They therefore emphasise the exclusivity and inaccessibility of many of the materials that they discuss. For example, Mark Sample makes "an innovative reading" of a previously marginal science fiction film (12), Benjamin Halligan states that *Zabriskie Point*, *The Last Movie* and *Two-Lane Blacktop* have remained misunderstood and forgotten for decades' (28), Steven Jay Schneider explains that "blaxploitation horror remains one of the most underappreciated and insufficiently theorised of cinematic subgenres" (106) and I.Q. Hunter informs the reader that "the revisionist experiments of Hammer's decline have tended to be overlooked and are well worth sympathetic re-evaluation" (138).

I would not necessarily recommend this title to those students or scholars who have an investment in the mainstream, but rather, would recommend this text to anyone interested in the period in question or the cult film, Kung-Fu or blaxploitation experience more generally. However, that said, I would then go on to suggest that even those readers overlook the introduction to this volume due to the fact that the one-time Cambridge law student-turned director-turned food critic, Michael Winner, penned the chapter in question.

In his article entitled "Urban Legend: The 1970s Films of Michael Winner," Xavier Mendik aims to positively reclaim the work of the British director by contextualising both his reputation and reception. Although Winner's own brand of shocking cinema has been repeatedly dismissed by the academy, Mendik seeks a positive reappraisal of films such as *Death Wish* (1974) as we are informed that "in the chaotic and a-moral environment of Nixon's America, Winner's films provide a fascinating document of a nation whose sense of moral and social boundaries have been destroyed" (72). One can only imagine that it is such a critical revision that encouraged Winner to write the introduction to the text. However, rather than add to the volume in any significant way, the opening chapter simply detracts from the overall tone of the book. Whereas Hunter, Xavier et al. offer the reader a useful and informative balance between academic engagement, scholarly analysis, contextual evidence and supporting textual details, Michael Winner merely uses the introduction to massage his own ego and to reclaim his own body of work from theoretical criticism.

For example, Winner informs the reader that his own film, *The Mechanic* (1972) is "a classic film noir the world over" (8) and that *Death Wish* remains the archetypal 70s movie "which is lectured about in American Universities, and one which in America is considered to have changed the whole direction of cinema" (9). However, before one suggests, as Robin Wood does, that Winner's films are evidence of the "worst-most offensive and repressive-horror film of the seventies" (219) Winner tries to negotiate such critical voices by adding that these films are "probably relegated to something less, by the British, who can diminish anything" (8).

At this stage I feel it I necessary to state that I am not in an way diminishing the volume in question… simply an ego-driven introduction to an otherwise enjoyable text.

Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure: The Operatic Impulse in Film

By David Schroeder
New York, London: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002. ISBN 0-8264-1536-9. 21 b&w illustrations, xii +372pp. $19.95 (pbk)
Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice: Cinema Soundtracks in the 1980s and 1990s
By Annette Davison

Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice: Cinema Soundtracks in the 1980s and 1990s

By Annette Davison

Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. ISBN 0 7546-0582-5. 10 b&w illustrations and 7 music examples, ix+211pp. £39.50 (hbk)

A review by Holly Rogers, Magdalene College, University of Cambridge, UK/ University College Cork, Ireland

The importance of these two recent books on film music--Annette Davison's *Hollywood Theory, Non-Hollywood Practice* and David Schroeder's *Cinema's Illusions, Opera's Allure*--cannot be overstated. Although appearing at first glance to offer two very different approaches to music in film, both texts nevertheless converge to form an interesting contrapuntal discussion of soundtrack. Their significance within the discourse of film lies not so much in theoretical content, but rather in subject matter: the compositional procedures behind scoring music for film. Until recently, film music theory occupied only a small and often neglected corner of cinema studies, with an alarming amount of authors from both visual and musical backgrounds considering soundtrack a mere functional "necessity": a suturing device at the service of the more predominant (and important) visual narrative.

While a fresh and very welcome influx of writing has begun to deconstruct this hierarchy, suggesting instead that film music can be both an important suturing device and a major narrational driving force, the new criticism has been underpinned almost exclusively by a single common denominator: the Hollywood mainstream tradition. Discourse has been concerned either with scores composed in the nineteenth-century symphonic style, or with the method of using pop songs to form what Kevin Donnelly has coined the "composite" film score (in his *Film Music*): the idea being that an attack on visual-based theory would be most successful if launched from within cinema's main canon.

But, as both Davison and Schroeder attempt to show, this is not necessarily the case. Sharing the views of many contemporary film music theorists, these authors tackle image-based film

theories head-on, insisting that the visual-audio hierarchy must be overturned; and yet, they do not attempt revolution from within mainstream practice, but rather focus on the many cinematic traditions that lie beyond Hollywood. Davison's departure is the most obvious, as she centres her discussion on those filmmakers who lurked at the hazy edges of feature film production during the 1980s and early 1990s: Wim Wenders, Jean-Luc Godard, Derek Jarman and David Lynch. Schroeder, on the other hand, avoids the issue of film genre all together, concentrating instead on films that have a strong relationship with opera; a starting point that allows him to begin with Hollywood cinema, but nevertheless requires a move into art-film as the discussion progresses.

The relationship between the Hollywood tradition and what she coins, "non-Hollywood practice" (a sensible alternative to the problematic term "avant-garde"), lies at the heart of Davison's work. Suggesting that soundtracks considered in institutional terms can shed light on compositional procedures, she attempts to show how the classical Hollywood score (from the 1970s on) functions as a form of dominant ideology, against which alternative scoring can assert itself.

Because her work focuses on films that share many of the traditional cinematic techniques of Hollywood, Davison uses the first half of her book to ground her arguments in existing Hollywood theory before she embarks on her critique, or rather, introduces her theory that scores themselves can act as a critique of conventional compositional procedures. Her first chapter explores the existing theoretical approaches to classical Hollywood scoring, before attempting to define the cinema—as both institutional system and aesthetic product —that she will later problematise. Chapter two reads as a history of the cinematic industry and successfully differentiates between the scoring tradition of the Studio Era and that of the more commercially driven post-1970s practice; chapter three traces some key theoretical approaches to alternative scoring and soundtrack practice through the writings of Eisenstein and Adorno and Eisler.

While the first half of Davison's book contributes nothing new to film music discourse, operating as it does as a summary of the subject's theoretical history, the second half presents a more interesting strain of thought. Divided into four chapters—each a case study of a specific film—part two offers various ways in which a soundtrack can critique classical scoring and soundtrack practice. Godard's Prénom: Carmen (1983), she argues, offers a "deconstruction of the relationship of sound and image proposed by the classical Hollywood film" (7) by using musical cues that do not creep in and out of the frame imperceptibly before and after visual cuts, but rather enter and exit loudly and abruptly. This, she claims, exaggerates Hollywood scoring practice to the extreme and reveals its artifice: it makes the soundtrack audible and this disrupts the film's illusion of reality (as soundtracks do not exist in real life).

If Davison's work on Godard appears at first read a little prefatory, her chapter on Jarman's *The Garden* (1990) succeeds in fleshing out her theories more thoroughly. *The Garden*, she suggests, also uncouples "the unity of the sound and image track" (71), this time by having characters mime in a deliberately bad way to famous songs. The soundtrack, which is constructed almost exclusively from real-world sounds that are never grounded in the image, compounds the resultant aural-visual split further and questions the perceived pre-eminence of image in film.

The chapters on Wenders, *Der Himmel über Berlin* (1987) and Lynch, *Wild at Heart* (1990), while continuing the exploration of aural-visual fissure, succeed in linking Davison's theories back to Hollywood, with the former equating (somewhat starkly) the two ontologically distinct realms depicted in the film—the mortal and the angelic—with classical scoring practices and alternative soundtrack respectively. She concludes with a call for a "negotiation or compromise" between the two, although the reader is left wondering if and how this could ever happen; and, indeed, after being persuaded by her earlier chapter on Jarman's film that alternative scoring can be afforded a freedom impossible in Hollywood practice, why we should desire a compromise in the first place? Davison appears on the verge of presenting an interesting deconstruction of the very binary (Hollywood and non-Hollywood) created in her work, but unfortunately leaves it the reader's imagination as to what this deconstruction may lead to.

Rather than concern himself with inter-institutional relations, Schroeder locates the basis of his approach in a musical rather than a filmic genre in order to trace the use of opera in cinematic history. His interest in the relationship between film and opera is nothing new; the comparison between film's music/image interaction and Wagnerian concepts of Gesamtkunstwerk and Leitmotiv has proved a popular approach among musicologists studying film from the outset. Although only recently problematised by authors such as Scott Paulin and James Buhler (both in Music and Cinema), who point out that Wagner's Leitmotivs, although often brief and salient in themselves, require a large musical canvas to take on any structural meaning beyond that of a signpost (a luxury rarely afforded the film music composer), this approach is no longer a viable one. Luckily, Schroeder acknowledges the problems of a film music/ Wagner analogy early on (8): an acknowledgement that allows him to proceed with an informed leitmotivic reading of King Kong later in the book. And yet, while he acknowledges the pit-falls of a film/ opera association, he suggests that Wagner, "who did not lack a large ego" (151), would have been delighted to be considered a major influence on the film world.

In six parts, Schroeder's book moves through a series of bite-sized case studies, charting film's multifaceted relation to opera throughout its relatively short life. Beginning with early Hollywood film and the work of Eisenstein before turning attention to (what Davison would call) the "non-Hollywood" filmmakers, such as Fellini, Fritz Lang, Herzog and Pasolini, Schroeder covers an enormous amount of historical and stylistic ground. Not only is his subject matter diverse, however, but so too his approach. Schroeder tackles the "operatic impulse in film" in various ways. A number of film scores are compared with various operatic models, evidence of an operatic approach to film by many directors is given (they "need not be sophisticated musicians, so long as they were sophisticated listeners" (7)) and an appraisal of cinema as a type of grand opera is offered: every conceivable aspect, one might conclude, of the ways in which opera and film can interact.

Schroeder's desire to disseminate and demystify opera by treating film as its "reincarnation" (4) is one of the book's greatest strength. *Star Wars*, he claims, coined "space operas" by George Lucas himself, drew heavily on operatic models: "[I]n fact, many kids without knowing it, first met Wagner on Saturday morning cartoons—and, they loved him" (2). In support of his argument, Schroeder points towards early cinema, where the musical genre provided a model for many early filmmakers, who "didn't know what to do" with the ingenious new invention, film (1): Demille's film adaptation of Carmen and the work of D.W. Griffiths are here mentioned in some detail (5-6).

Although the brevity with which Schroeder deals with each of his ideas sometimes prevents as thorough an analysis as one might hope—the book reads as a bit of a rush through history, with too little time spent on some of his more interesting ideas—it nevertheless allows him to move through film history unencumbered by genre, location or time. One theme that helps to unite the enormous subject is Carmen, who reappears in several guises throughout Schroeder's text, at the hands of DeMille, Chaplin, Preminger and, interestingly, Godard (whose reading of Prénom Carmen provides a nice counterpoint to that of Davison). As Schroeder says, "the book starts with Carmen and ends with her as well, although it certainly does not finish her off".

Neither Davison nor Schroeder aim their writing at the specialist musicologist, but rather at the wider film community. The result is a much-needed attempt to bring visual and aural theories together and the readability of both books goes a long way towards making such integration possible. Furthermore, both texts offer an exploration of genres sadly neglected within film music theory: hopefully, these works will set the ground for many more analyses to come.

Enfant Terrible!: Jerry Lewis in American Film

By Murray Pomerance (ed.)
Oxford University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-19-818293-7. 294pp. £50.00 (hbk), ISBN 0-19-925902-X. 294pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Kathrina Glitre, The University of the West of England, UK

Reactions to Jerry Lewis are usually extreme: according to cliché, the French adore his films, and Americans cannot fathom why. The fact that Lewis and Dean Martin were the biggest stars in the US in the early fifties is often forgotten, as is the genuine innovation and experimentalism of Lewis's film work, on both sides of the camera. This edited collection offers a valuable range of essays on his film career, with some discussion of stage and TV performances. The book boasts an impressive line-up, with contributions from established authorities like Shawn Levy and Frank Krutnik, and scholars such as David Desser, Leslie A. Fiedler, Lucy Fischer, Andrew Horton and J. P. Telotte. That such luminaries should be interested in writing about Lewis is perhaps surprising, but also telling. His position within American culture seems to be a source of fascination and repulsion – like watching a car crash. Not one contributor admits to actually liking his films, but Pomerance comes closest: "When I watch Jerry Lewis onscreen, I am often stunned to reflection and meditation. Moved to laugh or not, I see something startling and suggestive, even profound" (2).

The book has four parts, each focusing on a different dimension of the Lewis persona: the role Lewis has played in the lives of Fiedler and Levy; the multi-faceted onscreen personality of Lewis as star; the ideological and cultural meanings of Lewis's performances; and his self-described status as "total film-maker". This structure allows for different approaches, but also creates continuities, flowing through a variety of films and performances with minimal repetition. Pomerance has done a good job in editing and introducing the collection and the quality of the writing is consistently good.

In terms of critical and theoretical thinking, however, most of the articles seem to be treading water, rather than breaking ground. "Doubleness" emerges as the dominant paradigm: while it is certainly an important theme of the films (stemming from the partnership with Martin), a reliance on oppositional structures to theorise Lewis's work has drawbacks. Firstly, each writer identifies a different source of crisis. Thus, Fischer writes about the sick and healthy body, Krutnik about the "handsome man and the monkey" (Martin and Lewis), Dana Polan about labour and leisure, and so on. In most cases, the writer acknowledges there are other, simultaneous, dimensions to these tensions, but the reader is left slightly dazed by the sheer number of cultural anxieties Lewis seems to embody. Secondly, such oppositions are often reductive. For example, in a pertinent attempt to deal with changing public perceptions of mental disability, Mikita Brottman conflates mental disability with mental illness, and occasionally falls into "us" and "them" expressions (e.g., 131). Finally, oppositional models expect certain kinds of resolution: either the "good" side wins out, or a compromise is

reached between the two extremes. This expectation creates difficulties for Peter Lehman and Susan Hunt in particular. Despite recognising that *The Nutty Professor* offers a trichotomous notion of masculinity and that none of these types is presented as ideal (201), they find the resolution unsatisfactory, blaming this on Lewis's "inability to resolve the mind/body dichotomy" (205). But why should Lewis seek to resolve such a false dichotomy? The Lewis-directed films often refuse (rather than fail) our expectations in this way (the scene in *The Errand Boy*, for example, in which Morty/Lewis does not drop all the boxes he is carrying). As Barry Keith Grant notes (235-7), his films break with mainstream narrative conventions, and especially with realist traditions of unified identity. In this respect, oppositional models prove inadequate to the task of explaining the films' deliberate fragmentation of identity and narrative; there is more than mere "doubling" at work.

Grant argues that Lewis is an auteur precisely because "this lack of unity […] is fundamental to Lewis's vision" (237). Scott Bukatman, too, recognises that Lewis's persona precludes "the comfortable illusions of self-sustaining selfhood or any coherence at all" (191). This kind of disunity is undoubtedly why Lewis has held such a shaky position in the Hollywood pantheon, since it is all too easy to mistake disunity for poor filmmaking. It is a shame, then, that the opportunity to analyse Lewis's aesthetic is only partially grasped. Mention is made of such achievements as the large-scale cutaway set for *The Ladies Man*, and Polan writes very interestingly about ostentatious visual style as a marker of creative production in the fifties. Pomerance contributes a piece on language and linguistic power which begins to deal with sound in *The Errand Boy*, but the wider resonance and dissonance of sound in Lewis's work is relatively neglected. Perhaps most surprising, very few of the articles attempt to deal with Lewis's status as comedian. Polan's essay is one of the best, partly because he recognises "there may be a need to challenge the very premise of the question of funniness in relation specifically to the cinema of Jerry Lewis. […] whatever its comic effects his cinema is also an exercise in abjection, and often excruciating displeasure" (212). Certainly, the extremely uneasy relationship between comedy, pathos and abjection is crucial to the films and their reception. Landy wonders if the "negative reactions" by US critics indicates a "critical failure to properly identify the sources of Lewis's comedy" (61), but – although providing an illuminating account of American and European critical responses to Lewis – she does not quite manage to identify this source herself.

Enfant Terrible! is an engaging, stimulating book. Each essay illuminates a facet of Lewis's persona and work, to kaleidoscopic effect. As the pieces accumulate, a strong sense of the Lewis phenomenon emerges, creating a tantalising feeling that there is more to be said. But then, I like Jerry Lewis movies.

English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama since 1980

By Andrew Higson
Oxford University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-19-818293-7. 294pp. £50.00 (hbk), ISBN 0-19-925902-X. 294pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Aimée Stoffel, University College London, UK

Merchant Ivory is perhaps the most recognisable brand, as it were, of British heritage films that guarantee Art, Culture and Quality. However, they are simply one purveyor of the sort of fare that, as Andrew Higson argues, has become virtually synonymous with British national cinema since 1980.

English cinema was a dying breed in the early 1980s, but was revived by the success of both *Chariots of Fire* and *Ghandi* and, more significantly, by Merchant Ivory's *A Room with a View*. Higson's opening chapters provide a sweeping overview of British heritage cinema (alternatively called the quality costume drama, period films, or frock flicks) with a discussion of the key characteristics of the films that constitute the genre, how audiences have responded to them, the emerging critical debate, and finally the British and American production trends.

Higson successfully demonstrates that not only is the notion of "British" a construct, but so is that of heritage. While the films discussed are certainly British in their subject matter, it is significant that they are largely international co-productions. The Merchant Ivory team, for example, is composed of an American director, an Indian producer, and a Polish scriptwriter. In his closing chapter, Higson notes that outsiders are best able to "capture an authentic vision of the English national character," but also to "dissect it ruthlessly" (257). Furthermore, the generic identity of the film is pure pastiche; attempting to achieve authenticity often translates into a fetishism of impressions. The actors, too, many of who are heritage cinema "regulars", are simply performing a particular cultural identity.

In laying the groundwork, while he is very comprehensive, Higson treats rather superficially questions of genre and theme, providing mainly an overview of films released during this period and a survey of relevant critical commentary. However, he seems to labour over the terminology to be used and the rationale behind the choice of films for consideration. Unfortunately, the scope of the book does not allow for much more than this, but he is able to discuss in more depth the trends surrounding the production, distribution, marketing and exhibition of these films.

The case studies of both *Howards End* and *Elizabeth* deal in depth with the questions raised throughout the book, including issues of Englishness, national identity, class, gender and taste. While in the first four chapters Higson's critical voice is largely silent, it emerges forcefully in the first case study on *Howards End*. In terms of heritage, he discusses the film as both a "conservative, nostalgic representation of the old country" and as a "representation

of changing times". He also notes a tension between the "narrative critique of established national traditions and the visual celebration of elite cultures in a mythic landscape" that recurs in heritage films (149). He gives a particularly astute analysis of the film's title sequence, discussing the significance of the Derain painting that precedes the title, as well as the title itself, both of which display a tension between tradition and modernity.

While *Howards End* may be viewed as a more "traditional" heritage film, Elizabeth is a more mainstream version of period fare. The difference in this film is primarily its tone and blatant irreverence towards its subject matter: the Indian director, Shakhur Kapur, presents the film as "an irreverently postcolonial take on a core moment in English history" (200). Unlike *Howards End*, which was marketed primarily as a tasteful period film to a middlebrow, art-house audience, marketing efforts for Elizabeth deliberately played up the thriller elements in an attempt to win over a broader audience. Both films, however, featured prominently in such British tourist guides as *The Movie Traveller* and a *Film Fan's Travel Guide to the UK and Ireland*, inviting tourists to visit the many historic properties that dominate the mise-en-scène of both films and establishing cinema as a dominant influence in the tourism trade.

Throughout the book, Higson refuses to privilege one interpretation over another, regardless of the topic at hand. In the conclusion, he stresses that he has not attempted to give the impression that films have fixed meanings, and he admits that he has "resisted indulging at length in modes of analysis that suggest as much" (261). Nevertheless, the book is an excellent introduction to English costume drama and convincingly demonstrates the contribution such films have had to the revival of English cinema on an international context.

Genre and Contemporary Hollywood

By Steve Neale (ed.)
London: British Film Institute, 2002. ISBN 0-85170-887-0. 322 pp., 19 illustrations. £15.99 (pbk)

A review by Peter Hutchings, University of Northumbria, UK

When genre first became a significant focus of interest for film studies back in the 1970s and 1980s, the emphasis was very much on the idea of genres as regulatory or supervisory systems. A key assumption was that individual genres were knowable and definable, and that genre in general provided a space in which the relationship between filmmakers, film audiences and the film industry could be formulated and understood. In effect, genres functioned as bodies of knowledge that were shared, in some form or other, by all those involved in popular cinema.

If nothing else (and there is a lot more to it than this), *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood* shows how things have changed in genre studies since then. In particular, the idea of there being a close relationship between filmmakers and audiences has, to a large extent, been put aside. Instead all the contributors to the book tend to be more cautious and tentative than their genre-critic predecessors in their attempts to pin down the identities of genres and film cycles and the nature of audience responses to these. Genres emerge from this as fragmented and with their significance far from clear. There is also a greater sensitivity here to the idea that critics and academics are not impartial observers of genres but are themselves caught up in a process of genre definition and clarification. In this, *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood* clearly builds upon the insights of 1990s work on genre, and especially Rick Altman's groundbreaking book *Film/Genre*, in which the idea of genres as discursive constructs subject to multiple revisions and redefinitions by different groups received its most authoritative expression.

It is fair to say, however, that none of the contributors to *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood* engage with genre primarily in theoretical terms. Instead the focus is on the identification of culturally, socially and historically specific patterns observable within Hollywood product from the 1980s onwards. There are chapters on modern variants of "traditional" genres such as the western, the gangster movie, the war film, horror, and romantic comedy, as well as accounts of recent cycles such as the "ghetto action cycle" and adaptations of the novels of Jim Thompson and John Grisham. Regardless of the theoretical sources being drawn upon, it is likely that dealing with contemporary cinema in this way leads in itself to a sense of generic fragmentation. Films this close to us in chronological terms are difficult to view from a distance, and some of the chapters in the book seem overwhelmed by the sheer variety of types of film on offer. A key question in this respect that is raised by several of the contributors (although, given the book's pluralist approach, it never receives a single definitive answer) involves the extent to which this fragmentation is a quality inherent in Hollywood genre generally or something that is more specific to what has sometimes been called the "postclassical" period.

In his editorial introduction to *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood*, Steve Neale states that

> Genres can be approached from the point of view of the industry and its infrastructure, from the point of view of their aesthetic traditions, from the point of view of the broader socio-cultural environment upon which they draw and into which they feed, and from the point of view of audience understanding and response. Readers will find examples of all these approaches in this book (2).

This is certainly true, but some themes and approaches recur in the various chapters that make up the book. For example, a common response to what is generally perceived as the heterogeneity of contemporary generic cycles is to list generic variants without necessarily seeking to incorporate these variants into an overall generic system. This makes for an interesting contrast with a lot of 1970s work on generic definition for which variety within a genre was a problem that required explanation by reference to underlying structures and themes. However, in some instances in the book, this detailed listing of variants does not produce an enhanced knowledge of any genre (other than that expressed by an acknowledgement that there are lots of different types of films) but instead seems to lead us away from any sense of meaningful broader groupings of films. More productive is the idea that cultural, industrial and social changes have rendered difficult the operations of traditional genres such as the musical and the horror film. Here, and elsewhere in the book, notions of the self-reflexive and the post-modern pop up, and while several of the authors offer their own perspectives on these, the book as a whole, perhaps wisely, offers no consensual position.

As is the case with most edited collections, some of the chapters in *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood* are more interesting than others (although, to be fair, identifying which is which has as much to do with the interests of the reviewer as it does with the quality of the chapters themselves). For this reviewer, Sheldon Hall's admirably clear genealogy of the blockbuster, J. P. Telotte's clever account of the modern musical, Andrew Tudor's expert skewering of the concept of the post-modern horror film, and Thomas Austin's timely reminder of the unpredictability of audience response, all merit an honourable mention. The standout essay – for me at least – was Peter Stanfield's account of recent adaptations of Jim Thompson novels, an exemplary joining together of expert knowledge with an undoubted enthusiasm for its subject.

As a snapshot of both the present state of genre criticism and of trends and cycles in contemporary Hollywood, *Genre and Contemporary Hollywood* is effective and always interesting. However, after having read the book, one is left wishing for a more substantial introduction in which Steve Neale, accurately described in the book's blurb as "a world-renowned authority on film genre", could have reflected on some of the issues raised by the book as a whole. It is all very well to say that there are varieties of genre films and approaches to genre but unless this field of critical endeavour can be conceptualised and shaped, the danger is that one ends up swamped by local detail with little sense of what the bigger picture might be.

Ghouls, Gimmicks, and Gold: Horror Films and the American Movie Business, 1953-1968

By Kevin Heffernan
Durham, N.C., London: Duke University Press, 2004. ISBN 0-8223-3215 -9. 61 illustrations, viii+228pp. $22.95 (pbk)

A review by Rebecca Janicker, University of Nottingham, UK

The aim of this text is to place American horror films of the 1950s and 1960s within the broader context of production and marketing, as well as examining their relation to the wider industry, both national and international, during those decades. It does so by providing evaluative accounts of a range of technologies prevalent in the industry at the time, as well as describing typical plots, motifs and directorial styles, drawing on a wide array of examples and illustrating them with black and movie stills, advertisements and cinema posters. Brimming with plot synopses and including an appendix "Feature Film Packages in Television Syndication 1955-1968", this text serves as a reference guide as well as a critical work.

The chapter topics include the updating of the cinema of attractions with the introduction of technology such as 3-D and Psycho-Rama, Hammer horror productions, Poe adaptations and art house cinema, concluding with a nod to the blending of classic low-budget horror themes with big production values and advanced special effects in contemporary Hollywood (226).

The introductory chapter looks at the explosion in 3-D movies between 1952 and 1954, noting the tendency to decry such productions as "tedious linking scenes in-between gimmick shots of … hurled objects" (17). Heffernan uses House of Wax (1953) and Creature from the Black Lagoon (1954) as exemplars of the many changes taking place in the production and marketing of genre film. Chapters 2, 4 and 5 explore specific productions, including Terence Fisher's Hammer production *Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), Roger Corman's *Pit and the Pendulum* (1961) and Michael Powell's English-made art film *Peeping Tom* (1960).

Of particular interest is Chapter 3, which addresses concerns in the 1950s about subliminal advertising and, as a corollary, further fears about the ability of filmmakers and other agents of the mass media to wield the power of subliminal suggestion in their products. Anxiety abounded concerning the "seemingly hypnotic powers that advertisers wielded over the public" (74), and Heffernan cites Vance Packard's seminal 1957 work *The Hidden Persuaders* as an example of the public's increasing awareness of the dangers of the media. Feeling was that it might have been possible for studios and cinemas to manipulate audiences without their knowledge or consent, exploiting their emotions, behaviour and finances for financial gain. A surge of interest in "depth psychology" and in the subconscious thus had potentially horrific implications for audiences of the era, as well as for characters in horror

films that they watched, such as *My World Dies Screaming* (1958), in which the protagonist is forced to confront nightmarish repressed memories that turn out to be actual events from her past (73). The role of the subliminal is thus shown by Heffernan to have impacted hugely upon the popular psyche of the 1950s and 1960s, whether on or off the screen.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on wider trends and changes in film marketing and consumption, dealing with the growing phenomena of global marketing and television syndication respectively. Major studios began to realise that selling the more upscale, bigger budget pictures to overseas audiences, as well as to domestic, was required in order to make them profitable. Combined with the noted success of certain foreign productions with America moviegoers, this trend contributed to increased internationalisation of the movie market. Heffernan notes, "Finally, by 1960 all of the major studios had established lucrative corporation deals with studios in Great Britain or Europe" (136). The author gives a detailed account of the technologies used to bring low-budget film productions to the small screen, explaining how certain developments, such as UHF television stations, played a part in the increased demand for feature productions and syndicated programs in the 1960s.

Chapter 8 shows how the horror films of the late 1960s reflected "what had become a highly fragmented consuming public during a time of bewildering social change" (181). Cases here include *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), in which Heffernan notes that the eponymous Rosemary is an independent, educated, modern woman who is disempowered over the course of this traditional Gothic narrative which has been updated to take place in 1960's Manhattan. With Chapter 9, the author demonstrates how the controversial *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) was derided for taking horror productions to new lows of explicit violence and bleakness, culminating in the gunning-down of the hero.

Overall, this text achieves its goals in giving a detailed account of major changes, and reasons for them, in horror films and the American film industry during the 1950s and 1960s. At times the book appears to lean heavily upon explanations, facts and figures pertaining specifically to technology, and thus might benefit from more in-depth textual analysis.

Hollywood Flatlands: Animation, Critical Theory and the Avant-Garde

By Esther Leslie
London and New York: Verso, 2002. ISBN 1-85984-612-2. 13 color and 33 b&w illustrations, viii + 344 pp. $30.00 (hbk), $19.00 (pbk), £20.00 (hbk), £14.00 (pbk)

A review by D.K. Peterson, North Dakota State University, USA

Esther Leslie's approach and argument regarding modernism and animation is suggested by the book's cover depicting the famous handshake between Sergei Eisenstein and Mickey Mouse. The photograph both reinforces her claims reconsidering an assumed high-mass culture divide and reflects Leslie's focus on dialectal relationships between key cultural figures of the interwar period.

Leslie uses animation as her entry point for addressing modernist aesthetic, political, and cultural concerns. Between the 1920s and the 1940s, animation's status (as technology, art, commodity and cultural critique) was being debated by artists and intellectuals, including its potential to envision and enact social change. Leslie's work is invested in animation's potential "to redraw relations, and to propose something extraordinary—its own abolition, the abolition of the division between "high" forms and "mass" forms and, necessarily, the abolition of the social divisions that sustain cultural divisions" (vii). *Hollywood Flatlands*, then, is less a narrowly focused examination of early animation than a survey of intellectual interest in animation and animation's relationship to contemporaneous political and cultural developments.

The first chapter provides a whirlwind introduction to animation's history, noting its appeal to experimental artists who "found that cartoons touched on many things they wished to explore: abstraction, forceful outlines, geometric forms and flatness, questioning of space and time and logic…" (19). The second chapter, which typifies the book's dense, sweeping presentation style, juxtaposes these concepts with coexistent developments in and concerns of avant-garde and European intellectual circles: the economic and political conditions of Europe; Dada; the aesthetic visions of Walter Ruttmann, Hans Richter, Paul Klee, Piet Mondrian and Alexander Rodchenko; Benjamin's optical unconscious; Marxism; and Ruttman's, Benjamin's and Siegfried Kracauer's interests in depictions of technology and urban conditions.

Subsequent chapters are loosely organized to follow animation's abandonment of aesthetic experimentation and radicalism. These chapters continue Leslie's multilayered consideration of various technological, economic and political influences but unifies discussions around key intellectual figures and their writings: Benjamin on technology, urban conditions and modern life; Leni Reifenstahl and Disney's appeal for Nazi Germany; Theodor Adorno's critiques of the cinema; Kracauer's assessment of animation's emphasis on realism and the rational; Eisenstein's interest in sound and color; and Johann Wolfgang Goethe's color theory.

Interspersed throughout are details about Disney's work with Igor Stravinsky and Oskar Fischinger, nationalism and animated fairy tales, comparisons between Mickey Mouse and Charlie Chaplin, Hollywood labor strikes and unionization and Henry Ford's influence on studio operations. As this coverage suggests, *Hollywood Flatlands* is contextually rich even if the book's breadth, despite the careful presentation of materials, occasionally causes it to read like a primer on its varied components.

While Leslie is concerned generally with animation, the book's focus reflects that much of the critical interrogation of animation was concerned predominantly (and perhaps unsurprisingly) with Disney. Leslie balances various responses even as the book's narrative clearly reveals her position that Disney derailed animation's potential. Early *Mickey Mouse and the Silly Symphony* shorts of the 1920s and 1930s are cited as evidence of animation's radical nature before she concentrates on the more guarded and critical assessments following the studio's shift to naturalized idealism and its reinforcement of cultural norms, exemplified by *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). This chronology emphasizes the studio's domination, all but erasing animation' s revolutionary origins in a transformation completed by the time of Disneyland' s opening in 1955. In retelling of animation history as Disney's history, Leslie slyly argues that animation's surrender to the status quo has ignored the radical possibilities modernist thinkers perceived in the medium.

Benjamin is a strong presence throughout *Hollywood Flatlands*, on whom Leslie is an expert, and the book's third chapter develops around his writings. Others have written on his interest in cartoons and Mickey Mouse, but Leslie provides a nuanced discussion of the relationship between these texts and his examinations of art, technology, and modern life. She discusses Benjamin's early position that cartoons have the ability to employ and imitate the technology that alienates individuals, providing mass audiences with redemptive moments and therapeutic ally generating collective laughter. Particularly useful to Leslie's overall argument is her discussion of Benjamin's shifting claims about cartoons over three versions of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In the essay's first version (1935) the section on the optical unconscious, where Benjamin speculates on film's ability to mediate harmonious relationships between humanity and technology, was titled "Mickey Mouse." The second version includes reservations about the inherently revolutionary nature of animation. Leslie speculates Benjamin's dialectical argument emerges in this version partly due to Disney's increasing conservatism and partly to exchanges with Adorno and Max Horkheimer, whose positions on Disney were less optimistic. The third version excises even these references, responding again to Disney's development and cultural critics. Leslie's sustained engagement with Benjamin's emergent ambivalence about cartoons' utopic possibilities mirrors her own and grounds her claim of the need to reconsider animation's relevance.

Hollywood Flatlands reopens conversations about animation's future by examining its past. This survey carefully and coherently integrates modernist aesthetic and social concerns of those who anchor the book's discussions, especially Benjamin, Adorno, and Eisenstein. She convincingly views animation and popular culture as engaged in similar issues, even if the ambitious scope sometimes interferes with furthering Leslie's argument. And a minor point: the book's initial premise, that postmodernists have denied the connections between modernist concerns and popular culture seems an odd and perhaps untenable claim when considered from within animation studies. What is memorable and valuable about Hollywood Flatlands, though, is its commitment to an alternative trajectory for animation, one that recalls Benjamin's early vision. In this book Leslie offers the compelling and even radical argument

that while the medium has yet to fulfil its potential, it may yet expose and oppose oppressive social and economic conditions.

New Queer Cinema: A Critical Reader

By Michelle Aaron (ed.)
Edinburgh University Press, 2004, 320 pages ISBN: 0748617256 (pbk)
Queer Cinema: A Film Reader By Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin (eds.)

Queer Cinema: A Film Reader

Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin (eds.)

NY and London: Routledge, 2004, 256 pages, ISBN: 0415319870, Paperback

A review by Sarah Gamble, University of Edinburgh

As the market for collections for queer film studies work grows, we can expect to see more volumes like the ones about to be investigated here. *New Queer Cinema*, a loose term for a group of early 1990s films directed by gay/lesbian directors, taking queerness as a governing motif, and specialising in an "unapologetic" and usually confrontational treatment of sexuality, looks set to become the next mini-movement under the critical knife. It's both a relatively coherent and attractive body of work: finally, these critics seem to say, queer films that don't apologise for their subject matter even before the film begins. In addition to its treatment in the volumes below, B. Ruby Rich is also at work on a study of *New Queer Cinema*, and more may follow, but Michelle Aaron has gotten there first. In her introduction to *New Queer Cinema*, Aaron sets the tone for the volume, which is evaluative: what was *New Queer Cinema*, what did it mean, if anything, and what happened to it. As this is the first full length treatment of the films as a group, one expects and receives a certain level of justification for the subject matter – why *New Queer Cinema*, is there enough of it to justify a collective title, etc. Aaron's introduction focuses on answering these questions and is generally successful, though occasionally makes generalisations such as "The female delegates [to *New Queer Cinema*] and those of colour were added in haste and retrospectively" that are somewhat reductive of the complexity both of the collection and its source material.

All the essays in this volume are worth reading, but some stand out as particularly skilful exercises in interpretation. Among these are the two "case studies" of Todd Haynes, director of 1990's *Poison and Gregg Araki*, director of 1992's *The Living End*, both of whom are usually identified as central to the New Queer project. Michael DeAngelis's look at Haynes emphasises the way in which Haynes' work queer mainstream cinematic narratives, focusing on Haynes' short video *Dottie Gets Spanked* (1993) and *Velvet Goldmine* (1998). And Glyn Davis's examination of Araki's use of camp fills a significant gap in the critical work on Araki's aesthetic, most of which has focused on Araki's use of "garage chic" and teen culture without addressing the issue of "queer camp" which, for Davis, is distinct from "gay camp" in that it is less recuperable by mainstream culture. DeAngelis and Davis's essays stand out in a very respectable collection of work as being particularly nuanced studies of directors whose

relative mainstream success (relative, that is, to other New Queer directors) has generated a stack of critical work often lacking the inventiveness Araki and Haynes themselves demonstrate.

An essay also useful but somewhat more problematic is Monica Pearl's "AIDS and the New Queer Cinema", one of the first essays of the volume. The essay's documentation of the linked history of *New Queer Cinema* and AIDS delineates an important part of *New Queer Cinema*'s history, but central to Pearl's argument is the notion that "what was experienced, since at least the Stonewall riots of 1969, was disrupted with the advent of the AIDS crisis" is problematic or at least contentious. It is unclear whether or not this assertion is based upon a sociological reading of gay-identified people between 1969 and 1981 or upon specific cultural productions, i.e. literature, theatre, or cinema, but either way it needs more qualification than Pearl gives it in this essay.

Nonetheless, this is a relatively minor objection in an otherwise interesting collection of work. Overall, the book is a success: though there is a certain amount of repetition throughout (surely we don't need that many explanations of B. Ruby Rich's seminal but straightforward essay on the subject, particularly when the original is included?) the volume is valuable because it redresses a lack in critical theory on *New Queer Cinema*, and does so thoroughly and thoughtfully, with great care for its subject.

Another welcome addition to the field of queer cinematic thought is the recent *Queer Cinema: The Film Reader* (2004), edited by Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin. Benshoff also contributed to the Aaron volume above, with an able essay on spectatorship and Anthony Minghella's *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999) that investigates the film's debt to New Queer Cinema, and the affect increased queer visibility has (or hasn't) had upon mainstream audiences. Benshoff and Griffin's reader addresses a broader terrain than Aaron's does, being concerned with queer theory and cinematic sexuality generally. Part of the Routledge "In Focus" series of film readers which are geared towards students on film and cinema studies courses, this reader reprints some of the most significant work of the past 20 years in queer cinematic theory, including seminal essays from luminaries such as Richard Dyer, Thomas Waugh and Alexander Doty, (and also the same Rich essay included in Aaron's collection). More historically minded than *New Queer Cinema, Queer Cinema* is able to look at its subject in a slightly more measured way than the Aaron volume is; though Benshoff and Griffin address New Queer Cinema, they are able to place it in a broader context of queer film and criticism that gives their reader a perspective somewhat lacking in the Aaron, perhaps inevitably given its narrower focus and the recent nature of most of the essays and the material.

Benshoff and Griffin have split their collection into thematic sections with an eye to university courses, and "Auteurs", the first section, stands out as an excellent selection of texts dealing with queer auteurship. Doty's essay on Dorothy Arzner and George Cukor is a thoughtful look at the limits of auteurism and the affect Arzner and Cukor's queerness might have upon queer readings of their work. Thomas Waugh's "Physique Cinema, 1945-1969: Hard to Imagine" is a fascinating look at what Waugh calls "a unique and somewhat arcane body of work" that is especially valuable as it focuses on a body of film produced more or less directly with a gay audience in mind, unlike most studies of this period in US film history which generally focus on queer moments in or queer readings of mainstream, heterosexist Hollywood cinema. And Andrea Weiss's essay on lesbian independent cinema

from the 1970s and 80s is a readable, informative piece, though rather more descriptive than explanatory.

One other essay stands out as an especially fun read with some great ideas behind it: Richard Dyer's "Queer Noir" is eminently readable and highly insightful. Dyer explores the queerness of film noir as a genre ultimately about uncertainty, an uncertainty that utilises cultural notions of homosexuality to foster a diegetic aura of ambiguity. Dyer's prose is as ever a model of critical clarity and good humour, and this piece is undoubtedly one of the highlights of the collection.

Comparing Benshoff and Griffin to Aaron is rather unfair, as they set about doing different things. Benshoff and Griffin have time on their side, and a selection of essays that have for the most part stood its test and stayed fresh and interesting. Not all the essays in Aaron's collection will end up marked as "seminal" but there is a greater sense of exploration and uncertainty in *New Queer Cinema* that makes it a laudable project and invigorating reading. Worthy contributions both.

Screening the City

By Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (eds.)
London and New York: Verso, 2003. ISBN 1–85984–690–4 (hbk)/ 1–85984–476–6 (pbk). 33 illustrations, vii + 312 pp. $20/£14 (pbk)

A review by David B. Clarke, University of Leeds, UK

This is, to the best of my knowledge, the third edited collection devoted purely to the relationship between cinema and the city, and the second to be edited by the editorial partnership that previously gave us *Cinema and the City* (Blackwell, 2001). The other volume in this vein is my own *The Cinematic City* (Routledge, 1997), which dates from a time that saw the release of a number of related volumes, notably Charney and Schwartz (1997) and Penz and Thomas (1997). Arguably, *Screening the City* feels rather more like *The Cinematic City* than the editors' previous collection. It pays less attention to what Shiel and Fitzmaurice formerly designated as "film in space" (in essence, the political economy of film), and focuses primarily on "space in film." As the latest addition to this area, the volume contains many interesting and enjoyable essays. The cover endorsement by Mike Davis—describing the book as "A wonderfully fresh and kaleidoscopic examination of the strange alchemy between celluloid and asphalt"—over-eggs the pudding somewhat in terms of the collection's novelty. Nonetheless, there are some "fresh" elements to this volume.

The book is divided into two roughly equal parts, topped and tailed by an editorial Introduction and a lucid and wide-ranging "Coda" by John Orr. Part I, "The Modern City: Central and Eastern Europe," consists of six chapters; Part II, "The Post-modern City: North America," contains seven. The stated intent of this division is to draw attention to "both the continuities and discontinuities which may be detected between urban experience and its cinematic projections in each of those historical and geographical contexts" (page 10). I will return to this in due course to enter a note of criticism, but let me first attempt a more broad-brush evaluation of precisely what this collection adds to the literature.

First, it provides a particularly pleasing level of engagement, as in the opening "double whammy" focusing on Walter Ruttmann: by himself in Chapter 2, by Martin Gaughan; and with equal billing given to Dziga Vertov in "Uncanny Spaces" by Carsten Strathausen (Chapter 1). The elements of synthesis and re-evaluation in both chapters—including, in Gaughan's case, a reassessment of Wolfgang Natter's (1994) argument (which, pace Natter, aims to give Kracauer as much credence as Benjamin)—makes for interesting reading. The same qualities are evident across many other chapters, such as Peter Jelavich's eye-opening chapter on Piel Jutzi's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (Chapter 3), Jessie Labov's account of Kieÿlowski's *Dekalog* (Chapter 6), and Matthew Gandy's engaging analysis of "Allergy and Allegory in Todd Haynes' [Safe]" (Chapter 12).

Second, the volume provides some useful exemplification of recent tendencies in film theory that are largely absent in earlier volumes on this theme. Particularly notable here are Paul Gormley's piece on "The Affective City" (Chapter 9), which brings together *Menace II Society* and *Pulp Fiction* in a convincing analysis of the presence of "black bodies in urban

milieux" (page 186), making use of both Deleuze and Massumi; and Darrell Varga's essay on the "Deleuzian experience of Cronenberg's *Crash* and Wender's *The End of Violence*" (Chapter 13). Equally rewarding is Paula Massood's deployment of Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope to theorize African-American filmmaking (Chapter 10). Nonetheless, there are also a number of chapters that remain tied to notions of film as representational rather than transformational, which sit a little uneasily alongside the more Deleuzian offerings. This tension could have been taken up as an opportunity for an alternative way of organizing the collection. In a related vein, there were some perplexing conceptions at work in certain chapters. For instance, I have always understood post modernity to be about a loss of nostalgia for modernity. Mark Shiel's otherwise interesting contribution (Chapter 8, "A nostalgia for modernity") strikes me as primarily an analysis of a continuing modern tendency rather than anything else. Whilst this is consonant with what we are told about modernity and post modernity in the Introduction, I am not convinced that it amounts to a credible conception of the post-modern.

Finally, I think I am right in suggesting that animation makes its first appearance in a book on the cinematic city—in David Sorfa's engaging study, "Architorture: Jan Švankmajer and surrealist film" (Chapter 5), and Tyrus Miller's enlightening piece on the Quay brothers' animated film of a short story by Bruno Schultz, *The Street of Crocodiles*. The surreal qualities of the modern city have, perhaps, been somewhat overshadowed by the hyper real qualities of the post-modern city. Consequently, it is valuable to find in this volume an exploration of the relations between montage and surrealism that suggests certain hidden connections with the kind of mobility posited by the Deleuzian notion of "any-space-whatever" discussed elsewhere in the book. There are, of course, many other intriguing and only partially developed connections that suggest themselves throughout the remaining chapters. This is, perhaps, the appropriate point to develop the note of criticism previously intimated.

The editors' sectionalization was, for me, the most problematic feature of this volume. Whilst I am more than sympathetic to the difficulties editors face in organizing disparate material into coherent collections, both the conception of modernity and post modernity as distinct diachronic periods, and the questionable implication that these map relatively easily onto particular parts of the world (through film, in this instance) made this ordering strategy doubly problematic. Moreover, the opening sentence (page 1) makes the rather bizarre claim that "This book examines the relationship between the cinema and the city within the terms of the modernism/postmodernism debate which has animated critical discussion and analysis of culture and society since the 1960s." Fortunately, this odd assessment of modernity and post modernity does not get in the way of the arguments made in some excellent individual chapters. Nonetheless, it may have been more profitable to bring out the tensions between different approaches, which arguably animate this volume more than the tensions of historical geography the editors try to impose.

The Cinema of Kathryn Bigelow: Hollywood Transgressor.

By Deborah Jermyn and Sean Redmond (eds.)
London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2003. ISBN 1-903364-42-6. vii + 232pp. (pbk) £14.99; ISBN: 1-903364-43-4. (hbk) £42.50

A review by Kate Adams, University of Hull, UK

This collection is an impressive and wide ranging study of Kathryn Bigelow's work, and an important addition to the rather small body of work, which focuses on women directing film. Its greatest strength is that, though a number of the essays recognise the role that gender inevitably plays in relation to audience or critical reaction, the collection does not overplay the importance of Bigelow's gender. Jermyn and Redmond highlight the importance of retaining that equilibrium in their introduction, as they frame the book as being guided by feminist impulses yet go on to reframe that in Bigelow's own resistance to being perceived as a female or feminist director.

Later, in her chapter on *The Weight of Water*, Deborah Jermyn also addresses the often failed attempts to appropriate Bigelow's work to feminist ends and the criticism it engenders for its ambiguous representations of women and complicity with male voyeurism. This balances out the focus on gender further, which in many essays is concentrated particularly on the transgressive aspects of Bigelow's gender representation. Jermyn critiques the desire to seek out positive representations of women or a "female sensibility", and instead celebrates their ambiguity, thus locating Bigelow's transgressive quality in her refusal to make justifications for women in her work.

The notion of Bigelow as transgressor, as the title of the book suggests, is central to the collection and gives it a good sense of coherence considering the range of approaches taken in the essays. The three elements contributors most consistently picked out as carrying this disruptive force, are these ambiguous representations of sexual and gendered identity; the blurring of genre boundaries; and the representations of counter cultures as desirable alternatives. These elements and many of the devices Bigelow uses are about difference uncontained, whether it be cultural, sexual or generic identity, and the most striking essays in this collection are those which begin to get to grips with this.

In this vein, Robert T. Self offers a fascinating examination of the instabilities generated by the interplay between ambiguous representations of gender and authority in *Blue Steel* and thus the film's critique of the narrative structures in which it plays itself out. Steven Jay Schneider and Sara Gwenllian Jones both argue for a more positive, radical reading of the vampire culture of *Near Dark*, though from different perspectives, and likewise, Sean Redmond makes a convincing argument for the transgressive force of *Point Break*. He draws our attention to the intrusion of body genre into action film; the further intrusion of homoerotics into that; and the eventual rejection of the dominant hegemony in favour of the sub cultural alternative.

Other high points in the book are the interview which begins the collection and gives an insight into the technical and aesthetic experimentation that runs through Bigelow's work; Steven Shaviro's excellent discussion of vision and affect in *Strange Days*; and the attention Robynn Stilwell gives to the musical scoring in Bigelow's first three features.

The book is organised into two parts. The chronologically ordered first section, subtitled "Bigelow's Moving Canvas", is coherent and held together by the strong introduction and clear through-line. However, the second section, which focuses entirely on Bigelow's controversial film, *Strange Days*, interrupts that coherence, as its introductory chapter by Romi Stepovich seems to break the continuity which runs into the later essays by Steven Shaviro and Christina Lane. Stepovich's essay offers a valuable insight into the films production and distribution, but given its introduction as an essay which contextualises those that follow, it seems incongruous as a precursor to the essays by Shaviro and Lane. Both continue the thread of the argument that runs through most of the collection, with Shaviro proposing that the camera in Strange Days constructs two alternative gazes in the film, which draw the nature of cinematic gaze into question; and Lane exploring the respective inputs of Bigelow and Cameron and the ways in which we can see Bigelow as auteur in the more seditious elements of the film.

The final essay in the collection, "Rescuing Strange Days: Fan Reaction to a Critical and Commercial Failure" by Will Brooker, explores the reaction of fans attempting to reclaim the film. The psychology of fan response and their desire to claim cult status for the film is interesting, as is the realisation that part of this process involves the displacing of Bigelow as auteur in favour of Cameron. The essay also sits well following on from Stepovich's essay at the beginning of this section. However, as with Stepovich's essay, it sits outside the discussion that dominates the rest of the book and seems a peculiar way to draw things to a close. As a result of this, and due to the lack of a concluding chapter, the sense of the coherence of the essays as a collection diminishes towards the end.

This is unfortunate, as while the collection would benefit from drawing together the considerations, which are variously addressed by its contributors, it assembles a selection of compelling arguments for Bigelow's status as transgressive auteur, and maintains an awareness of the problematic nature of the labels that can and often are applied to her work. On the whole, the book generates a sense of knowing what it wants to do and doing it.

The Fellini Lexion

By Sam Rohdie
London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2002. ISBN 0 85170 934-6 pbk, ISBN 0 85170 933-8 hbk. 51 Illustrations, 159 pp. £ 10.86 (pbk), $ 19.95 (pbk)

A review by Bruce Williams, William Paterson University of New Jersey, USA

For the academic expecting traditional Fellini scholarship, Sam Rohdie's *Fellini Lexicon* may disappoint. For the academic or film enthusiast seeking a refreshingly original approach, the work opens horizons to new and innovative perspectives both on the Italian director and on film as a broader cultural phenomenon. Rohdie's book is an intricate mosaic of careful insights, rich associations, and historical anecdote, and reveals the acumen of a most seasoned film scholar. Of special consequence is that Rohdie's critical discourse is indeed Felliniesque and facilitates the reader's entry into the director's universe of play and superimposition. The author, in his introduction, outlines a set of procedures that govern his work. He stresses that the rules of the lexicon are that:

1. There is no order of reading or writing save the alphabetical (the arbitrary);

2. Entries are about function;

3. Entries are brief;

4. There is no attempt at comprehensiveness. (1)

Interested in the process of the formation of a "web of intricate relations," Rohdie sets out not to "determine what Fellini thinks," but rather to "specify how his films work" (1). The individual entries, he stresses, are "points of adhesion and dispersing, condensing, then spinning out" (1).

Fellini Lexicon is divided into thirty-nine entries which deal with thirty-two discrete topics or people--several topics such as "television," "Rossellini," and "citations" have more than one entry, hence the numerical discrepancy. Each entry in turn is not organized as an essay, but rather, is a nexus of associations, where one insight leads to another and to another. With the exception of four entries, all are cross-referenced, a few in a somewhat logically-connected matter ("grace" is linked to "angels,"), but most through a complex mechanism of evocation ("documentary" is cross-referenced with "werewolf"). The result is a work which reads either alphabetically, taking the entries in printed order, or through a myriad of paths from reference to reference. This crossing of logical barriers reflects what Rohdie writes about film as a medium in the entry "Clowns 2."

Film is a descent and leap into another world, across a barrier into what can be imagined and dreamt and remembered" (33). Describing Fellini's place in film, Rohdie asserts: "Like

Orpheus, like Cocteau, like Welles, Fellini often descended into another world peopled with his and others' dreams and memories (31).

(And this observation is the fruit of a discussion of Frou Frou's death in "I Clowns"!)

Much of the book is devoted to anecdote. We learn of Fellini's respect for Marcello Mastroianni's "availability" and his trepidation at meeting Anita Eckberg. We are reminded that Fellini died on his fiftieth wedding anniversary to Giulietta Masina and are informed of the importance of the comic strip to the colour and design of *Giulietta degli spiriti*. Yet never is mere anecdote the focal point of an entry. Personal information on Fellini's relationship with Masina leads to broader abstractions about Masina as wife in *Giulietta degli spiriti:*

Masina as a wife is a wife excessively, to exasperation. The deformation explodes the conventions of the role and takes wifeliness outside the realities conferred on it by convention. Masina becomes an extra, super-ordinary wife, as if amazed at finding herself where she is. Wide-eyed, she is as fantastic as when she is a clown.

This is the special beauty that Fieschi noticed, touched by innocence and magic and a sense of wonderment. (63)

Likewise, a discussion of Eckberg's roles in four of Fellini's films segues to broader abstractions. "To play oneself is to play with the images of oneself" (7), and later, "Anita in Fellini's films is without personality, character, or identity. She is an image, a projected presence, a dream. It is not she who is there but our wishes in her guise, our perspective which she embodies" (8). Throughout the entry on Anita, Rohdie meanders to related observations on sexually-attractive women in Fellini. He observes that these, in contrast to the directors "meagre, sweet angels," such as Gelsomina, Cabiria, and Paola, are "luscious giants."

Such women transform their admirers into children and it is men as children who have created these women and imagined them as mother and whore. The men are ludicrous baby Oedipi not concerned with a father to murder but enthralled at a mother to fuck (10).

Rohdie extends his associative matrix well beyond the confines of Fellini scholarship and reaches the domains of film history and theory. Following a brief entry on "Citation," in which he quotes Sadoul's observation on referentiality in *Giulietta degli spiriti*, a second "Citation" entry focuses on Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky. This entry looks not only at Shklovsky' s work as critic, but moreover, as author of *Zoo*, or *Letters Not about Love*, a meditation on exile, which was modelled on the twelfth-century letters of Abelard and Héloïse. In this case, the literary discussion travels full circle, and the entry ends with an anecdote of Rohdie's actual meeting with Shklovsky on the occasion of a mid-1970s interview with the theoretician by the editorial board of Screen. Ironically, far more insights regarding citation per se are found in entries on "(The) Beyond" and "Television 1", Rohdie stresses that "citation is a resurrection and also a passing to a beyond" (15). He subsequently clarifies this and cycles back to Fellini:

Citation in film has another dimension.

There is a time gap in every image because the image records what is no longer and has passed. The image is the remnant of the passing. In that sense every image is a citation of a reality that has passed. To cite is to resurrect.

Fellini resurrects images, spectacles, what is already a representation, already an image, and he does so by exaggerating the original. (134)

Fellini Lexicon, through its intricate web of evocation, is a meditation on those figures in cinema revered by Fellini, on those revered by Fellini amateurs, and on cinema itself. In a lengthy discussion of Chaplin, Rohdie discusses the director as artist and "Charlie" as "pastiche."

In fact, it is the relationship between the two, between person and clown, reality and mask, inventor and invented, that is the appeal of Chaplin's films...Charlie who improvises is the inspired improvisation of Chaplin. (20)

Such astute insights punctuate discussions on other directors (Pasolini, Godard, Bergman, Brakhage) and on film theoreticians (Bazin), but in no instance do these become pedantic. Rohdie's commentary allows other films to resonate within the discussion of Fellini and to engage in a rich dialogue with Amarcord or E la nave va. In a particularly evocative passage, Rohdie discusses Marguerite Duras' *India Song*, and explores the process whereby the narrative is told from a distance over images in which the "characters are shadows of themselves belonging elsewhere" (78).Asserting that the gap between sound and image is "unbridgeable," Rohdie describes the power of the film:

It appears as if the present does not exist except as a place to recall images of the past but these images have no connection to the present. Thus the past though evoked in the present has itself no present into which it extends and the present that is evoked cannot reach a past to relate to.

The film is a pure film of time and its power is extraordinary. (78)

Rohdie continues the discussion on Duras by recalling his recent viewing of the director's Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert. Describing the absence of characters, figures, action, and movement, he argues that connotations are further strained and more distanced than in *India Song*.

The present is emptied out but so too is the past. All that remains are ghostly voices evocative of a past which cannot be seen and images of the ruin of the present ... India Song suddenly seemed overstated. (78)

Such is the nature of the critical discourse of *Fellini Lexicon*. Associations branch out, resonate with each other, and return to the dual sources of Rohdie's inspiration – Fellini and film. The work's mosaic allows for multiple readings and evocations, yet these are always reconciled within Fellini's playful realm of memory and citation, fantasy and imagination.

In the Fellini system differences illuminate each other, are reconciled. The system is composed of desires and dreams and creates a harmony (60).

The same can be said of Rohdie's book.