Hollywood Abroad: Audiences and Cultural Exchange

By Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (eds.)
London, British Film Institute 2004. ISBN: 1-84457-018-5 (hbk), 1-84457-051-7 (pbk). 164 pp. £16.99 (pbk), £50 (hbk)

A review by Martin Barker, University of Wales, Aberystwyth

This is the fourth in a line of excellent books to have come out of two conferences held in London, on Hollywood and its audiences. This fourth collection deals specifically with the reception of Hollywood films in some very different counties and cultural contexts. The quality and the verve of the essays in here (they are all, without exception, beautifully written) is testimony to the rise and the potentials of the new historical approaches to audiences (which has, I am pleased to see, sedimented into some on-going cross-cultural research projects on local film exhibition histories). I recommend this book, unreservedly. Its contributors demonstrate so well the potential for many kinds of archival research to extend our understanding of film reception.

In here you will find essays on the reception of the phenomenon of Hollywood, and sometimes of specific films, in contexts as different as a mining town in Australia in the 1920s (Nancy Huggett and Kate Bowles), in and through an upmarket Japanese cinema in the aftermath of Japan's defeat in 1946 (Hiroshi Kitamura), in colonial Northern Rhodesia in the period leading up to independence (Charles Ambler), and in and around the rising nationalist movements in India in the 1920-30s (Priya Jaikumar). It is important, in understanding this book, that we pay attention to the specificities of these contexts. At one level, the strength of these essays lies in the very insistence on detail, difference and local factors. Again and again, through this book, you will meet well-based challenges to claims about ‘cultural imperialism' and ‘Hollywood' as mechanisms of American penetration and domination.

In fact, some of the essays reveal a glorious paradox in here. In the Northern Rhodesia case, for example, it was the colonial administrators and their censors, for instance, who sought to control the flow of Hollywood films among the African population -- because such imagery would surely prove too exciting to their primitive souls. In India, equivalent complexities meant that while the British administrators sought to stem the influx of those films that might ‘inflame' nationalism, middle class nationalists criticised, and in some cases sought to ban, those films which were seen to portray the Orient negatively. What perhaps is striking is the *overtness* of the ideologies. You won't find here the mealy-mouthed moral disguises of contemporary objections to Hollywood films -- in these cases the politics are out in the open. Perhaps not always -- Mike Hammond's study of the reception of *Civilisation* in Southampton in 1917 reveals the negotiations managed around the possible ‘pacifism' of this film, in a time of war. (Hammond's essay, by the way, uses the device of a fictionalised story of a viewing by a courting couple, and how they might have seen and responded to the film -- interesting, not sure.)

Another direction that this book takes us, is into the ways in which cinemas can be embedded within the local terrain, and their exhibition practices rooted in a ‘reading' of the local culture. Anne Bittner writes well of the emergence of a ‘balanced show' in one cinema in Adelaide, Australia in the 1920s -- one which incorporated its community even to the point of including local child performers. Again, it is the specificity of the research that allows her to conclude, convincingly, that "The Australian conditions of reception allowed the audience to negotiate the American films" (61). Nezih Erdogan's study of Turkish reception of American films in the 1940s displays a broader, but similar pattern, in the creation of a cult around ‘our star' Turhan Bey, whose period of fame (and brief affair with Lana Turner) in Hollywood allowed Turkish movie writers to effect a "fictional Turkification" (131) of Hollywood. Through Bey, they could ‘own' it for a while.

The book has a characteristically trenchant, if brief, introductory essay from Richard Maltby, who reminds us of the complexities of the historical relations between ‘Hollywood' and ‘American national culture'. Far from the studios' output constituting some readily accepted version that was comfortably exported to the rest of the world, cultural critics and politicians have repeatedly complained about the impact of these images of America abroad. "A well-established tradition of American intellectual pessimism has … bemoaned the absence of a clearly identifiable American national culture and held Hollywood and other forms of commercial popular culture responsible for the lack" (5). From a conservative American end, then, the strong claims about ‘Americanisation' have often looked bleak and worrying. When set in the context of highly critical African audiences who will play out Westerns, while rejecting film images of Africa as patronising, and of white people as proof of their moral degradation, or in the context of Australian miners engaging in communal Jaffa-rolling while watching the latest imports, the notion of ‘active audiences' clearly is insufficient.

Yet I would argue that the very strengths of these essays are also their potential limitation. In celebrating local-ness, and incorporation into lived culture, there is a surprising tendency for that culture and its members to become blurry. At their best, this is not so, and that is when –- as in the case of India –- local conflicts make clear that there are competing definitions of the situation. Otherwise, there is a risk that having moved away from the singular figured ‘audience' of film theory, a new kind of massification could set in. Costa de Beauregard and Stokes write very interestingly about the success of American films in France after World War 1, and argue effectively that the uptake was a positive reception, rather than an imposition. But doesn't the term ‘audiences', for all its plural form, become amorphous in comments such as theirs that "*Les Mysteres de New York* showed French audiences what American cinema could do in terms of entertainment"? (27). If we are to get the greatest benefit out of this surge in historical studies, I believe that there needs to be dialogue between these kinds of historical research, and the more sociologically and culturally driven research which would insistently ask: which ‘audiences' were these, exactly?

My other criticism is connected. It concerns the very essay-istic nature of this book, which can sometimes produce gestures which frustrate. Again just one illustration: in his excellent essay on young Belgian audiences' attitudes to different national cinemas, Philippe Meers quotes an eighteen year old Flemish girl expressing her preference for American over Belgian (or other European) films: "In Dutch, it often does not give such a real impression, it seems more real when I watch an American film" (168). Meers argues that this is a linguistic choice, a preference for American English as a specially ‘filmic language'. That might be right. But it could also be read as evidence of successful Hollywoodisation. Because that is all we hear

from this young woman, the argument cannot proceed. The very turn to detail can sometimes look like a loss of method.

I certainly don't want to overplay these criticisms. I wholeheartedly welcome this book and the turn that it embodies. Here you meet *actual* audiences, as against figurative ‘spectators'. Here, time, place, local culture and history are all at play within the uses made of film.

Africa Shoots Back: Alternative Perspectives in Sub-Saharan Francophone African Film

By Melissa Thwackway
Oxford: James Currey, 2003. ISBN 0-85255-576-8. x + 230pp. £16.95 (pbk)
African Film: Re-Imagining a Continent By Josef Gugler

African Film: Re-Imagining a Continent

By Josef Gugler

Oxford: James Currey, 2003. ISBN 0 – 85255 – 561-X. xiii + 202pp. £14.95 (pbk), £40 (hbk)

A review by Martin Stollery

English language scholarship on Sub-Saharan African cinemas has steadily expanded since the early 1990s, when Manthia Diawara's *African Cinema* (Indiana University Press, 1992) was the only single authored book exclusively devoted to this topic. Now, the study of African cinemas has a canon, established debates, and a small academic foothold. Thwackway's *Africa Shoots Back* builds incrementally upon existing debates and identifies recent films worthy of admission to the canon. Gugler's *African Film* superimposes two different approaches to its topic. The authors' affiliations account for certain differences between their approaches. Thwackway has a British doctorate in Francophone African film; her book belongs to the established tradition of English language film studies scholarship on African cinemas. Gugler is a sociologist who has branched into teaching African literature and film; his book combines sociological insight with a focus on literary adaptation.

Africa Shoots Back's subtitle is *Alternative Perspectives in Sub-Saharan Francophone African Film*. Previous books ostensibly covering all Sub-Saharan African cinemas typically pay less attention to Anglophone and Lusophone than to Francophone films. This is because of the latter's acclaim and accessibility within Western Europe and North America. *Africa Shoots Back* underlines its exclusive concentration on films from Francophone Africa. The subtitle also refers to film rather than cinema(s); the book is primarily concerned with texts rather than production, distribution, and exhibition. Production and distribution have been thoroughly covered in previous books on Africa cinemas, and do not require extensive reiteration. The introductory chapter includes a summary discussion of production and distribution and brief update on recent developments. *Africa Shoots Back*'s main interest is in theoretical paradigms, film analysis, and categorisation.

Thwackway begins by rehearsing some familiar debates. She warns against Eurocentric critical approaches, and interrogates the relevance of postmodern and postcolonial paradigms to African film. Theoretical issues of cultural identity, representation, and voice, link to a discussion of African films that challenge Eurocentric histories and Western media representations of Africa. This project used to be epitomised by films, such as *Sarraouina* (Med Hondo, 1986) and *Campe de Thiaroye* (Ousmane Sembene, 1988), which narrate alternative African perspectives on colonial confrontations. Thwackway argues that the project has broadened in recent years with the emergence of more personal, meditative, 'memory-history' films such as *Afrique, je te plumerai* (Jean-Marie Teno, 1991) and *Asientos* (François Woukoache, 1995). These later films strive to retrieve African histories and memories, and challenge Western media representations of Africa, but the difficulties associated with doing so are more explicitly marked. *Asientos*, for example, ponders the problems of representing the slave trade, "a 'lost' period that has left little visual documentation and even fewer testimonies from enslaved Africans, and whose sites are gradually being eroded" (109).

Thwackway suggests that elements which might be perceived as avant-garde in films such as *Afrique, je te plumerai* and *Asientos* can also be related to traditional African narrative techniques. The longest chapter in *Africa Shoots Back* explores the relationship between traditional orature and African film. It contains a useful, detailed inventory of the different types and aspects of traditional tale structure reflected in contemporary African film. This chapter does not, however, surpass the best work on this topic, Manthia Diawara's classic essay on *Wend Kuuni* (Gaston Kaboré, 1982). It has relatively little to add to Diawara's analysis of the selective transformation, rather than just incorporation, of particular types and aspects of traditional tale structure in progressive African films.

A chapter on films about African immigrant experiences in Europe identifies two waves. The first dates from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, the second from the 1990s onwards. Differing perspectives on racism, returning to Africa, and interracial relationships in each wave are explored. This chapter highlights the similarities and differences between films as diverse as *La Noir de*...(Ousmane Sembene, 1966) and *Le Cri du Coeu* (Idrissa Ouedraogo, 1994). The topic of African immigrant experiences is frequently encountered in recent films, partly because many younger African film makers are now based in Europe. Thwackway's identification, analysis, and brief history of this category of film is her most original contribution to scholarship on African cinemas.

A final chapter on women and film profiles the work of Safi Faye, Anne Laure Folly, and Fanta Régina Nacro. Faye's films, from the early *Fad'jal* (1979) to the recent *Mossane* (1996), are a constant reference point throughout the book. The chapter on women and film also analyses *Finzan* (Cheick Oumar Sissoko, 1989) and *Taafe Fanga* (Adama Drabo, 1997), two films directed by progressive Malian male directors.

The book concludes with eight director interviews that elaborate on certain films and issues addressed in preceding chapters. Director interviews are often used, sometimes naively, in studies of African film, in an attempt to avoid misrepresentation and allow marginalised voices to be heard. *Africa Shoots Back* does not stake a claim to a radically new approach to the study of African cinemas. Its main strength lies in its refinement and updating of established debates through references to recent films.

Gugler's *African Film* is more eclectic. It discusses a reasonably balanced yet inevitably selective spread of Francophone, Anglophone and Lusophone films. Rather than rehearse existing film studies debates, different approaches to African film are broached. As in *Africa Shoots Back*, emphasis is placed upon the film text rather than cinema as an institution involving production and distribution. There is, however, a concerted attempt in *African Film* to understand films in relation to African historical and sociological contexts. Sections on 'Recovering the African Past', 'Fighting Colonialism', 'The Struggle for Majority Rule in South Africa', 'Betrayals of Independence', and 'The Exploited and Neglected Peasantry' begin with succinct discussions of these broad topics. Chapters analysing individual films open with outlines of their specific historical and sociological contexts.

This approach avoids the danger of generalisation that always threatens books taking a wide-ranging approach to sub-Saharan African cinemas. It provides an effective teaching aid, since many North American and European film students have scant prior knowledge of African histories and social structures. Occasionally, the historical contextualisation simply notes incorrect period details, but more often it is highly pertinent. Gugler lists some historical and sociological topics rarely addressed in African films: "virtually no attention has been given to contemporary ethnic and religious conflicts, the ill-fated attempts to introduce socialism on the continent, and the civil wars that have ravaged a number of African countries" (7). This passing insight is typical of *African Film*; it is not fully developed, insofar as possible reasons for these oversights are not elucidated.

Gugler's other main interest, which partly determines his selection of films, is in literary adaptation. Apart from studies of Ousmane Sembene's literary and cinematic work, there has been little discussion of adaptation in more general terms. It has been occluded by the prevalent concern with links between traditional orature and African film. Scriptwriting and script development have similarly been overlooked, partly because many directors write their own scripts, so these topics tend to get subsumed within discussions of authorship.

Gugler's book explores literary adaptation to the extent that its title, which refers only to film, is misleading. Some chapters, such as those on *Kongi's Harvest* (Ossie Davis, 1970) and *Fools* (Ramadan Suleiman, 1997), discuss literary sources in greater detail than the films, especially when the source is prestigious. Changes in narrative structure, character, and dialogue brought about by adaptation are examined, as are song lyrics in film versions. Gugler has little to say, however, about cinematography, editing, or mise-en-scène. The exploration of adaptation is most astute when audiences are considered. An excellent chapter on *Xala* (Ousmane Sembene, 1974) accounts for significant differences between novel and film in terms of substantially different target audiences.

With rare exceptions, such as Brian Larkin's essays on Nigerian audiences for Indian films, the diverse experiences of African audiences watching foreign films have barely begun to be studied in any detail. This topic continues to be sidelined by dismissive references to "second and third rate" (14) foreign films in *Africa Shoots Back*, and to the distribution of "packages of inferior films" (4) in *African Film*. On the other hand, both books acknowledge the importance of African films being widely seen by African audiences. The more sustained interest in this issue in *African Film* is far from the systematic analysis that is required, but Gugler's book does at least raise some questions that could usefully be further pursued in future studies.

Given that many African films are blocked from reaching large African audiences, studies that look in detail at the distribution and exhibition of those that do break through would be welcome. Neither Thwackway nor Gugler do this, but Gugler pays close attention to casting as a potential point of appeal for African audiences. Olivier Barlet broached this topic, from a production perspective, in his book *African Cinemas* (Zed Books, 2000), where he noted the absence of a star system, the prevalence of non-professionals, low wages, and the tendency to highlight directors rather than actors in film promotion.

The recognition value of certain actors for African audiences is nevertheless important. Gugler notes the presence of renowned actor Balla Moussa Keïta, familiar from other films as well as theatre and radio, in *Finzan*, which attracted large Malian audiences. Sotigui Kouyaté, whose credits include *Genesis* (Cheick Oumar Sissoko, 1999), *Keïta* (Dani Kouyaté, 1995), and *Sia -- The Dream of the Python* (Dani Kouyaté, 2001), is cited more often in *African Film*'s index than his son, director Dani. Music star Papa Wemba's contribution to the success of *La Vie est belle* (Benoît Lamy and Mweze Ngangura, 1987) is emphasised in the book's final section, 'Between the African Mass Market and International Recognition'.

African Film acknowledges the recent boom in Nigerian and Ghanaian video films that are already popular in their domestic markets. Gugler identifies several strategies other African film makers have recently adopted in the ongoing struggle to reach both African and international audiences. These are often conceived as opposing, monolithic blocs, but each will contain fractions within them whose tastes may in some respects overlap. One strategy is African adaptations of 'universal' narratives in films such as *Genesis*, where 'Old Testament fratricidal conflict' is relocated to the Sahel, and *Karmen Geï* (Joseph Gaï Ramaka, 2001), which transforms the Carmen story that, "in its various permutations, has gathered a large following over more than a century" (179). Another is the referencing of transnational genres. *Kini and Adams* (Idrissa Ouedraogo, 1997) is proposed as an African variant of the buddy film, and the influence of the Western as well as popular Indian films on *Tableau Ferraille* (Moussa Sene Absa, 1997) is noted. None of these observations are followed through, but some of them deserve to be.

Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema

By Pam Cook
London: Routledge, 2005. ISBN 0-415-18375-8. xiii+246 pp. £17.99 (pbk)

A review by Paul Grainge, University of Nottingham, UK

Screen studies has taken memory to its heart in recent years, an encompassing term for a range of critical projects that have sought to examine the relation between past and present through, and in relation to, the institution of cinema. This has given rise to stimulating work in a number of sub-fields; it has given new life to psychoanalytic explorations of fantasy and trauma, it has generated ranging ethnographic enquiries into audience reminiscence, and it has invigorated debates about the productive tension of history and memory in cinema's textual apprehension of the past. It is the last of these debates that especially interests Pam Cook in *Screening the Past*. In focusing on the "questions and challenges presented by the preoccupation with memory, history and nostalgia in contemporary cinema" (199), Cook seeks to navigate a path through critical debates about the role of cinema in mediating history. While she does not explicitly align herself with the post-modern historiography of Robert Rosenstone, Linda Hutcheon and others, she is ultimately sceptical of those who would suggest that cinema disconnects people from the historical past, investing instead in the critical possibilities of memory and nostalgia, and the broadly defined memory film, to draw out the discursive complexities of the past as it is made and remade in the present.

Rather than a determined critical project about memory and nostalgia, the book is, instead, a collection of previously published essays, some of which deliberate specifically and interestingly, on questions of memory and the past, and others where such issues are at best implicit. The book is organised in five parts. The first of these, ‘Reviewing the Past: History, Gender and Genre,' contains three of Cook's essays (from 1978, 1988 and 1999) that are loosely joined by their interests in how women feature in typically male genres, analysing film noir, the Western and low-budget exploitation. Individually, each chapter has things to say about textual and genre histories but the major point, for Cook, is in placing the essays together, principally as a means of reviewing the *critical* past. In seeking to "reveal connections as well as disparities between theory and history, and between the 1970s and now" (24), the first section is suggestive of the book's working method -- to interlace questions of memory in film with the memory of film studies itself, read in this case through the author's own stake and trajectory in its disciplinary becoming.

The following sections reverberate themes of memory and nostalgia in different ways, reflecting Cook's rich body of scholarship in the last three decades, especially as it has come to focus on questions of melodrama, costuming and feminist film criticism. Part Two, ‘Memory in Popular British Cinema,' is specifically concerned with melodrama and the women's picture, with essays on Gainsborough women's pictures of the 1940s and on specific films such as *Mandy* (Alexander Mackendrick & Fred Sears, 1952) and *I Know Where I'm*

Going! (Powell & Pressburger, 1945). While Part Three is disparate in its concerns with 'Stars, Iconoclasm and Identification,' reprinting an interview with Sally Potter and containing two essays on the politics of gender identity within Hollywood film, Part Four looks specifically at the work of Martin Scorcese, examining films such as *Raging Bull* (1980), *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), *Cape Fear* (1991), and *The Age of Innocence* (1993) under the capacious heading of 'Postclassical Nostalgia.' Finally, Part Five constellates themes around 'Costume and Identity,' addressing fashion and sexual display in 1950s Hollywood as well as examining performative issues of replication and pastiche in, respectively, *Dance with A Stranger* (Mike Newell, 1985) and the work of Kathryn Bigelow. *Screening the Past* moves in different critical directions but each section is underwritten by a stock-taking impulse; the book is in many ways less concerned with debates that emerge from 'memory studies' than with mapping the 'intellectual and cultural journey' of film studies criticism.

It is perhaps no surprise that a generation of film scholars who cut their critical teeth in the 1970s have been especially drawn to memory and nostalgia as organising terms. Paradigmatic shifts in the field, responding in part to key transformations in global media culture, have encouraged much rumination about the passing of time. This is not a book that harks back to a critical golden age, however, or that is especially wistful. Consistent with her analysis of memory and nostalgia in cinema, Cook is inclined to see the past-present relation as necessarily dialogic. It is in this respect that each part of the book is marked with a pithy introduction that situates a debate within film studies, and that draws out the interrogative significance of particular texts and methodologies for questions of history, memory and the past. In many ways, the introductory sections, and a general chapter called 'Rethinking Nostalgia,' is where Cook's engagement with memory debates really takes place. Unfortunately, these are all too brief and engage rather loosely with the current scholarship on memory and nostalgia. This does not mean to say that many essays included in the volume to do not have verve, or that Cook's intellectual journey is not, in itself, a fascinating tour. Simply, that her new work on Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood For Love* (2000) and Todd Haynes' *Far From Heaven* (2002), and previously unpublished essays such as 'Memory in British Cinema: Brief Encounters,' signal the possibility of a more sustained and purposeful examination of memory and nostalgia in cinema than is currently offered. The book is suggestive on many levels, but is also at times caught between its conceptual investment in memory and the critical impetus to organise and review a particular body of scholarship. The two strands are connected, and sometimes achieve an illuminating resonance, but one is also left wondering whether certain inclusions in the book are not testing the discursive elasticity of 'memory and nostalgia' a little too far.

The Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski: The Liminal Image

By Joseph G. Kickasola
Continuum: New York, 2004. ISBN 0-8264-1559-8. 332pp. £12.99 (pbk)
Edward Yang By John Anderson

Edward Yang

By John Anderson

University of Illinois Press : Urbana, 2005. ISBN 0-252-07236-7. 128pp. £11.95 (pbk), £25.95 (hbk)

A review by Corin Depper, University of East Anglia, UK

It is more than a decade since Tony Rayns mentioned, in the course of a *Sight and Sound* piece on Krzysztof Kieslowski's final movie *Red* (1994), the admiration Kieslowski had for the work of Taiwanese director Edward Yang, with Rayns describing both men as making films that explore, "that inexplicable terrain where the aleatory becomes objective chance and lives intersect as if fulfilling some higher design." (Rayns, 1994: 10) Therefore, although perhaps not two directors whose work one would instinctively link, it is not altogether surprising that these studies, Joseph G. Kicasola's *The Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski: The Liminal Image* and John Anderson's *Edward Yang*, share a certain similarity of approach –- a relatively unabashed *auteurism*, and a stab at contextualising their work within wider cinematic and cultural trends –- that makes a comparison instructive. Indeed, both writers seem nostalgic for a tradition of art cinema that they perceive as close to extinction (at least in the U.S., from where both hail), and both view their respective subjects as artists whose work carries an almost explicitly moral address; a sense enhanced by the privileged status both authors give to the voice the two directors.

Scholarship on Kieslowski has continued apace since his death in March 1996, and although it is perhaps still too early to speak of a distinct ‘Kieslowski Studies', there is now a sizeable corpus, of which the work of Paul Coates, Emma Wilson, and Annette Insdorf (Coates, 1999; Insdorf, 1999; Wilson, 2000) stands out as being the most concentrated and critically acute, with Slavoj Zizek's *The Fright of Real Tears* (BFI, 2001) adding a typically eccentric counterpoint. To this list, Kickasola's book may be added, as it represents perhaps the most concerted attempt thus far to cover the entire Kieslowskian oeuvre in a single volume. Indeed, in its range and scope it serves as a useful summary of much of the work of the last decade as well as providing a number of new avenues of interest to add to the debate, and ultimately reinforces Kieslowski's position as the talismanic European filmmaker of the 1990s.

This attempt at comprehensiveness means that Kickasola devotes as much space to the early Polish films as to the later co-productions: something only previously attempted by Monika Maurer in her pamphlet-sized run through of the highs and lows of Kieslowski's career from a few years back. (Maurer, 2000) This in itself is praiseworthy as there has been a tendency amongst scholars to split into two camps, with one side bemoaning Kieslowski's slide into a perceived one-size-fits-all Euro-humanism post-*Dekalog* (1988) (the ten-part series made for Polish television based on the tenets of the Biblical commandments), and the other skirting lightly over the early features linked to his documentary work and the 'Cinema of Moral Concern' (has there ever been a more off-putting name for a film movement than this?), in favour of the later films of the *Three Colours Trilogy* (1993/4). Kickasola, to his credit, is keen for some form of rapprochement between the two camps: stressing that even in his earliest features Kieslowski was never a sober realist, highlighting instances of symbols and images that will crop up in more stylised form later in his career; yet managing to maintain his credentials as a documentarist in a film as swooningly oneiric as *The Double Life of Véronique* (1991). Of course, similar arguments have been advanced in relation to all the great directors of art cinema, from Bergman and Fellini in the 1950s and 60s through to Kusturica and Angelopoulos today (indeed this tension may seen as *the* essential characteristic of art cinema), but here it is made to take on a particular pertinence, for Kieslowski's move from documentary to fiction is seen as much as a moral as an aesthetic decision.

Central to Kickasola's argument then is his titular notion of the 'liminal image', and it is worth explaining this concept in detail for it lies at the heart of his analysis. He defines such images as being those that, "convey various thresholds to the metaphysical in human experience. They also create a general context of metaphysical possibility throughout [Kieslowski's] films." [38] Examples cited by Kickasola include the focus Kieslowski places on hands, on faces, and on certain objects that are dwelt on almost fetishistically by Kieslowski's characters and his camera. As well as bearing a remarkable similarity to Rayns' view, Kickasola's notion can be seen as another reformulation of the idea of excess, of images flowing beyond the spatio-temporal constraints of narrative concerns to attain a degree of abstraction -- and ultimately transcendence. This mode of analysis pushes Kieslowski towards a more overtly theological interpretation than has been made to date and Kickasola is keen to differentiate his approach from the psychoanalytic and postmodern stance taken by Wilson [16]. The subject of Kieslowski's use of Christianity is thorny, and one that the director himself (never exactly the most garrulous of men in interview) was particularly wary of, even on one occasion regretting that the necklace worn by Julie in *Blue* (1993), and which plays a significant symbolic role in the film, was a crucifix. Although an entirely secular interpretation of Kieslowski would be hard to sustain, Kickasola sometimes seem a little over hasty to turn to an explicitly Christian reading of the films. This is all the more surprising given his readiness to acknowledge the polysemic nature of much of Kieslowski's symbolism, especially the colour symbolism of his final trilogy. Clearly, the symbolic pool of Polish culture is almost inevitably Christian and Catholic, but Kieslowski, who drew on it throughout his career, repeatedly questioned the usefulness of such symbols to contemporary culture, and perhaps one of the challenges he faced in his work was precisely the creation of a polysemic symbolism in a culture defined by symbolic rigidity (first religious, then socialist), and in a medium he perceived as being dogged by literalism. Kickasola's focus on these liminal images is linked to a larger phenomenological account of the films that uses the Husserlian notion of 'bracketing' experience (the epoché) as a way of exploring how such images are able to transcend their context, and is suggestive of the means by which a polysemic symbolism may be created: as images move from indexicality to abstraction,

Kieslowski probes the essence of cinema's capacity to record these moments of transformation.

Yet the way Kickasola structures his study seems rather curious. The slightly clumsy title of the book, with its two definite articles, suggests a bifurcated approach, with an attempt to develop a very specific reading coupled with a more generalised account of Kieslowski's career. Indeed, this is rather borne out in the book, where a theoretically complex first section gives way to a rather more conventional analysis of the films' narratives in the lengthy second section. Although Kickasola attempts to explain this away in the introduction by suggesting that the first section provides the reader with the tools to then unlock the analysis in the second, there is a sense that he intends this to be both *the* book on Kieslowski, effectively a compendium of interpretations, whilst also aiming to develop a more nuanced and critically astute work. A bolder approach, and one more in keeping with his initial aims might have jettisoned some of the more familiar interpretations (which would not necessarily have narrowed the focus), in favour of a redoubling of effort on how specific moments of liminality can be traced across the entire body of work. In this respect, the use he makes of phenomenology approach seems somewhat underdeveloped, and he never pushes his theoretical tack in the direction of, say, Vivian Sobchack who, taking her cue from Merleau-Ponty, developed a comprehensive phenomenological account of film. (Sobchack, 1991) Perhaps then, Kickasola might have viewed Kieslowski's work as a starting point in the development of a new direction in cinematic phenomenology: one that is attuned to the capacity of certain images to attain independence of narrative whilst remaining part of an underlying structure; and one that is capable of exploring what happens, in the minds of spectators, to these images once their capacity for abstraction and transcendence has been realised, effectively a phenomenology that is able to deal with the aftermath as well as the experience of the cinematic image. Nevertheless, in spite of these caveats, this remains a consistently engaging study, undoubtedly opening new lines of analysis, as well as communicating, with some eloquence, the almost uncanny power of Kieslowski's films.

By contrast, scholarship on Edward Yang still remains in a rather nascent state, despite being one of the driving forces behind the New Taiwanese Cinema of the early 1980s and now one of the most widely acclaimed directors working today, with Anderson's book being the first full monograph to be published in English. As such, its role is somewhat different from Kickasola's as it needs to establish a clear sense of Yang's work to date, given that his films are, with the exception of *Yi Yi* (*A One and A Two*, 2000), which won him a best director prize at Cannes as well as numerous critics awards, still comparatively little seen outside of the festival circuit. To this end Anderson provides a very detailed analysis of each of Yang's films from his first feature, *That Day, On the Beach* (1983), through to his epic account of teenage gangs in 1960s Taipei, *A Brighter Summer's Day* (1991), and culminating with *Yi Yi*, a film that matches even Renoir's *La règle du jeu* (1939) in its breadth of vision and insight. However, one practical omission from Anderson's book is a supplier of tapes and DVDs, (at present only two of his films are commercially available in the U.K. and U.S.) as establishing a reliable source of primary material is essential in the cementing of critical reputations.

As Anderson stresses, Taiwan has produced far more than its fair share of world-class filmmakers in the last two decades: in addition to Yang, Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Tsai Ming-Liang are both mainstays of the international festivals, and Ang Lee (who curiously goes almost unmentioned here) has carved an idiosyncratic niche that has seen him equally at home in Asia and Hollywood. Anderson situates Yang within the context of Taiwan's rapid economic growth in the post-war period, and its difficult position as a bargaining chip

between the U.S. and the Chinese mainland – with the historical significance of Japan adding a further complexity to the mix. However, in this account his early cinematic influences are all Western (in both senses: Yang's first cinematic memory being the William Holden Western *Escape from Fort Bravo*, (John Sturges, 1953)), and Anderson makes little mention of Taiwan's film history before the emergence of the New Wave. As Anderson points out, Yang's route to filmmaking was rather circuitous, training an as engineer (a career choice he followed in accordance with his parents' wishes) before working in America for several years, only deciding on a film career (following a false start in the film programme at the University of Southern California), after a chance encounter with Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, Wrath of God* (1972) in the late 1970s.

His return to Taiwan at the start of the 1980s coincided with a time of political and social upheaval for the island, and his early work is seen as a response to these immediate concerns. In Anderson's conception, this environment was one out of which the filmmaker was shaped, but ultimately had to transcend to reach artistic maturity; this critical tendency is, of course, a hallmark of auteurism, and the entirely laudable enthusiasm in Anderson's writing does at times result in a somewhat blunted critical edge. This tendency reaches something of an apotheosis at the culmination of the book where a lengthy interview, constructed out of a number of encounters, fades out and leaves us alone with Yang's voice for several pages. This closeness to Yang does provide very valuable information about his working methods, but at times the slightly hagiographic tone means that Anderson's own insights are slightly lacking. Demonstrative of this tendency is the way he skates over the schism between Yang and former friend and colleague Hou Hsiao-Hsien (who acted in Yang's 1985 film, *Taipei Story*), which is dismissed very lightly, but points to a marked aesthetic change in the two directors' work, and which may have been explored in greater detail, especially given their historical importance to the history of Taiwanese filmmaking.

What Anderson only really touches on though is a wider sense of a pan-Asian cinematic renaissance, which is perhaps a little outside the scope of this book, but nevertheless sets the scene for Yang's achievements. However, the just-published study *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema*, (Hong Kong University Press, 2005), and the recent *Once upon a time in China: A guide to Hong Kong, Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese Cinema* (Simon & Schuster, 2003), should both provide a much greater level of contextualisation than is possible in a single monograph. That said, Anderson has produced a concerted attempt to raise Yang's critical profile, and succeeds admirably in exploring his most resonant theme, the anomie produced by the clash between Taipei's status as a quintessential postmodern metropolis and the fading memories of a much older culture; something evoked most precisely in the title of Yang's black comedy from 1994: *A Confucian Confusion*.

A Hard Day's Night

By Stephen Glynn
London, New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2005. ISBN 1-85043-587-1. 14 b&w illustrations, 102pp. £9.95 (pbk)
Brighton Rock By Steve Chibnall

Brighton Rock

By Steve Chibnall

London, New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2005. ISBN 1-85043-400-X. 22 b&w illustrations, 130pp. £9.95 (pbk)

A review by James Leggott, University of Northumbria, UK

The Tauris British Film Guide series, launched in 2003, has quickly proved itself as a worthy rival to the BFI's more established Classic guides. They have considerable value as teaching aides, as well as an appeal to a wider readership, and these two recent additions to the series by Steve Chibnall and Stephen Glynn are no exception.

Glynn begins and ends his lively study of Beatlemania in the making by locating *A Hard Day's Night* (Richard Lester, 1964) within the tradition of the British pop musical, a cycle that had moved from low-budget quickies like *The Tommy Steele Story* (Gerard Bryant, 1957) to the glossier Cliff Richard vehicles of the early 1960s. For Glynn, the Beatles' debut movie ushered in a middle phase in which the status of pop fame and the media images that promote it were increasingly problematised. The ‘mature' pop musical also had a propensity for the sacrificing of conventional narrative, which inevitably resulted in a decadent final phase, typified by Godard's *One Plus One* (1968) and Cammell and Roeg's *Performance* (1970). But, of course, whilst ultimately condemning the pop musical to a "shrinking maze of referentiality and psycho-political pretension" (91), *A Hard Day's Night* also created the template for the modern pop video format. Glynn is not alone in pinpointing the ‘Can't Buy Me Love' sequence as the moment of ‘breakthrough', freeing forever the musical number from its generic restrictions. The film's financial success also helped to sustain American investment in British cinema for the remainder of the 1960s.

That it would prove to be both progenitor and executioner (at least as far as the traditional pop musical was concerned) is one of the film's many ironies. Indeed, everywhere Glynn looks he finds paradox and duality. For all Richard Lester's stylistic and editing innovations (concurrent filming from multiple angles, non-diegetic musical sequences, documentary footage woven into the staged material, etc), there's an obvious debt to Hollywood convention; when Lennon suggests, tongue firmly in cheek, that the band does "the show

right here", he's evidently "having his generic cake and eating it" (66). Furthermore, the film's musical numbers are constantly mediated through viewfinders or control-room monitors, thus creating a traditional backstage musical, yet one set in the white heat of technology.

This ‘doubleness' is everywhere, not least in the title of the film itself: typically recognised as one of Ringo's on-set malapropisms, the phrase may well have originated in a poem from Lennon's *In His Own Write* (1964). If so, it's not the only in-joke that fosters both complicity and distance. Take the constant, un-motivated gags about Wilfred Brambell's character (Paul's 'other' Grandfather) being 'clean'. We can explain this away as a knowing *Steptoe and Son* (Cliff Owen, 1972) reference, but Glynn observes that Alun Owen's screenplay predates the casting of the familiar television actor. The threats made by Norman Rossington's character to reveal the ‘truth' about John –- taken together with the curious amount of homosexual innuendo associated with him throughout the film -- invites even greater speculation, particularly in light of the rumours surrounding his relationship with Brian Epstein. John is also linked with the only drug reference in the film, but once again there is duplicity, for the Coke bottle he pretends to snort turns out, on close inspection, to be Pepsi.

Glynn's nuanced analysis draws attention to many such ironies in the film's portrayal of the Fab Four. Very much the antithesis of the down-trodden working-class heroes of the New Wave, these successful, jet-setting Liverpudlians are in fact defined by their classlessness. However, cocooned within a middle-class arts and media environment, and trapped within an endless cycle of ‘rooms and cars', they are prisoners of a kind. Like the protagonists of the social realist narratives, they are prone to take pot-shots at authority, but are ultimately revealed as biddable and conformist.

The same accusation of duplicity could be thrown at the film itself, which acknowledges its own exploitative status whilst at the same time satirising processes of commodification. *A Hard Day's Night* succeeds in promoting the band as a united front, yet simultaneously individualising its members. Lester's deployment of Pop Art strategies, such as the freeze-frames of George during a press conference, are reminiscent of the techniques of Andy Warhol, in the way they celebrate the packaged product at the same time as championing the variation within standardisation.

Glynn is troubled by the film's ambivalence to the inherent paternalistic ideology of the musical film. The inarticulacy and passivity of the (mostly) female fans points towards the maintenance of traditional power roles, but this is problematised by their considerable power as consumers. Still, Glynn concludes, a touch gloomily, that "despite its' proclaimed –- and widely publicised –- stylistic innovations and thematic insurrections, (the film) could serve only to reinforce the dominant patriarchal ideology and to promote its burgeoning multinational economic interests" (81). The precise relationship between the Beatles and their fans is not so easily pinned down. As Glynn argues, *A Hard Day's Night* reiterates how "the reality of the Beatles escapes the medium: our consumption is only of a symbol, mass-produced at so many removes that only belief can confer authenticity" (49).

Put like this, *A Hard Day's Night* can be seen to engage with questions of faith just as much as *Brighton Rock* (John Boulting, 1947). In his assessment of the 1947 film, Steve Chibnall declares Greene's original novel to be "one of the outstanding achievements in twentieth century literature" (8). This "taxing biblical anagram" (74) is fuelled by Greene's delight in the "paradoxes of faith and morality, a bizarre heroism in sin, and a perverse glamour in the fallen world" (7). But whereas *A Hard Day's Night* –- a film intended as no more than a cash-

in on a passing fad –- is enriched by its playful ‘doubleness', the Boultings' adaptation suffers from its smoothing over of the complexities of Greene's source work. Chibnall makes a persuasive case for the movie translation as not only reductive but wrong-headed.

However, he is not unaware of the constraints faced by the various creative personnel involved in the adaptation process. Nor does he find the film devoid of merit. For example, Richard Attenborough is praised for the "sullen intensity" (110) he brings to the role of the psychotic Pinkie, a contradictory figure of both fear and fascination, with a face that is at once "brutal and angelic: the face of a sadistic choir boy" (58). Careful attention is also paid to the famous sequence in which the hapless Spicer slips to his death from an uneven balcony. In the way it uses an act of murder to showcase Boulting's directorial talents, this scene anticipates the emergence of a horror cinema in which graphic killings are staged like production numbers in a musical. Such set pieces alone render *Brighton Rock* worthy of serious attention, but this is not to suggest that the film lacks dramatic or visual coherence; Chibnall notes the repetition of certain gestures, shots and situations (an example being the repeated grabbing of Rose's wrist by other characters).

And yet, for all that is gained by the book's voyage to the screen, much more is lost:

At first sight, *Brighton Rock* might seem to have been approached with a greater fidelity than most (literary adaptations), but its translation to the screen bears the subtle traces of a vision that was not the author's own, and a process of abridgement that was driven by the conventions of popular cinema rather than the need for greater understanding. (110)

Chibnall gives a lucid and extensively researched account of the complex genesis of the movie, and of the varying degrees of input made by Greene, Frank Harvey (the writer of the stage adaptation), Terence Rattigan, the Boultings and the censor. He also laments how the cutting of around five scenes for the sake of brevity caused the film to lose some of its "moral and intellectual depth" (51). A longer opening sequence, for example, did more to establish characters, relationships and motivations. The loss of a scene of dialogue between Rose and Pinkie, in which they discuss their shared slum origins and their attitudes towards religion, is particularly felt, as it marks the difference between an ‘entertainment' and something of greater spiritual and intellectual profundity. For Chibnall, the theological core of Greene's story is lost, as is any understanding of the social roots of Pinkie's misanthropy.

There are other losses and misjudgements. Pinkie's death scene settles for the safety of genre convention, and muddies the motivation for his suicidal jump. More troublingly, the film does not go far enough in its translation of one of Greene's central themes: the gulf between a sense of human justice based on right and wrong, and a divine justice linked to ideas of good and evil. Subsequently, the film fails to inspire our contempt, as Greene intended, for the righteous Ida, who intervenes to ensure that justice is done, yet has no true conception of the "eternal struggle in which Pinkie and his bride are engaged" (95).

Chibnall concedes that *Brighton Rock* was "overwhelmed by its times" (111), with Greene's pessimism inappropriate to the project of post-war reconstruction. But the author's religious faith was also anathema to the Boultings and their secular understanding of social redemption through individual action and benevolent organisation -- the state of the nation interested them far more than the state of humanity. Yet, somewhat paradoxically, it was the "socially idealistic" (113) Boultings who appear to be responsible for the jettisoning of *Brighton Rock*'s critique of social conditions.

Chibnall has less to say about the afterlife of this British *film noir*. In a brief closing paragraph, he makes a passing reference to the recent wave of British gangster movie, and speculates, tantalisingly, on how Greeneland has become the "mental antidote to Blair-ite optimism" (115). But whereas Glynn devotes a significant part of his study to pinning down the enduring cross-generational appeal of *A Hard Day's Night*, Chibnall seems underwhelmed by the continuing popularity of *Brighton Rock*. Audiences, it would seem, have been far too merciful to a movie which he clearly regards as a missed opportunity.

Film Genre Reader III

By Barry Keith Grant (ed.)
Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2003. ISBN 0-292-70185-3. 94 b&w illustrations. xx + 636 pp., £23.00 (pbk)

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

This is the third edition of Barry Keith Grant's essay collection on film genres and genre studies. Like the previous two, *Film Genre Reader III* is unified by its interest in the development of genre studies and in how genre films are culturally-embedded and influential texts. Although it features just three new essays and an updated bibliography, this edition strengthens the anthology's design as a solid overview of genre and its study, one which is particularly useful for the undergraduate film course.

Grant's introduction briefly traces how genre studies operates in relationship to other critical approaches; genre studies and auteur theory emerged at approximately the same period but it was not until formalist, ideological and mass-culture approaches to film became popular that genre criticism was rediscovered and embraced. Grant's claims about genre are broadly painted: first, the study of genre can contribute to investigations of race, class, gender, sexuality and audience reception and second, it may act as "a locus of the overlapping but often separate concerns of auteurism, Marxism, semiology, structuralism, and feminism" (vii). Both points are well-taken, even as the latter tends to overstate the discrete nature of these approaches as well as the integrative potential of genre studies. Given his claims and the breadth of essays included, one wishes Grant would have provided a lengthier introduction that addressed more fully recent concerns for genre studies and the anthology's choice of essays.

Film Genre Reader does not offer, nor claim to represent, an exhaustive history of genre criticism. It functions instead as a sampling of genre criticism and methodological approaches, with thirty-one essays divided into two sections. The essays found in Part One, "Theory", concentrate on issues of genre study while those included in Part Two, "Practice", primarily focus on approaches and applied genre criticism. The structure works fairly well, although some essays in the "Practice" section might just as easily have been placed under "Theory".

Part One's roughly chronological presentation conveys *Film Genre Reader*'s interest in the issues and challenges central to genre studies. Several scholars actively working with genre theory are present, including Andrew Tudor, Rick Altman and Steve Neale. The essays move from early ones that attempt to define and distinguish genres to later ones which re-examine notions of genre formation and categorization. Examined together, the "Theory" essays are as useful in presenting recurrent ideas and concerns found in genre studies as they are in terms of their individual insights. Most obviously, the essays tend to reflect and respond to Tudor's understanding of genre as a culturally defined and consensual set of relationships -- one taking place between culture audience, films, and filmmakers -- and which demonstrates a

common set of conventions. What is meant by conventions, significantly, varies. Edward Buscombe distinguishes between a film's "outer forms", or iconography, and its "inner forms", or themes, to articulate the relationship between form and content. Altman's approach balances semantic (common traits) and syntactic (constitutive relationships) elements, or conventions, as part of his emphasis on the discursive nature of genres; his essay is one of the section's strongest because of its nuanced consideration of generic categories and genre development. Read together, these essays reveal the challenges of definition and categorization inherent to genre study.

Many essays are engaged in ideological criticism or speculate on the audience's relationship with genre. Judith Hess Wright, Jean-Loup Bourget, Robin Wood and Barbara Klinger all offer ideologically-driven investigations. Of this section's essays, Wright's treatment of genre, ideology and audience is the most predictable. Wright sees genre films as conservative and a reassertion of dominant ideology, and she claims their use of conventions relieves the social anxieties caused by cultural-political tensions. In contrast, Bourget views genre films as potentially subversive because of their ability to play with conventions, disrupt audience expectations and expose dominant ideology. In "Ideology, Genre, Auteur", Wood agrees with Wright that American capitalist ideology is not coherent but contradictory; yet Wood also believes genre films are grounded in contradictions that can be shaped by individuals, auteurs and audience members. Klinger concentrates on a "progressive genre" of films capable of subverting ideological norms while appearing to support them.

Essays more directly concerned with genre films' effect on and relevance to audience members tend to discuss audience in general or highly individualistic turns. Thomas Schatz and Thomas Sobchack offer a ritual approach to genre, seeing film genres as emerging and evolving to address social needs and cultural concerns. Schatz takes a structuralist approach, using myth to discuss film's functions. For Sobchack, films reinforce communal values and he compares film genres to classical structures. Grant, in contrast, speculates on how individual audience members' experiences with and expectations might inform genre criticism. Richard De Cordova calls for a methodology that addresses performance and its impact on audience understanding of and expectations for genre films.

The section's last essays, by Linda Williams, Neale and Janet Staiger, illustrate the vitality of contemporary genre studies. Williams reconsiders genre and generic transformation. Her examination of horror, melodrama and pornography as "body genres" is informed by feminism and gender studies, approaches which are underrepresented in the anthology. Neale summarizes recurrent points found in genre criticism before arguing for empirical, historical and industrial research that considers films as aesthetic commodities. Neale also characterizes genres as processes that may be "dominated by repetition, but [which] are marked fundamentally by difference, variation, and change" (171). This latter perspective is echoed in Staiger's newly-included essay, "Hybrid or Inbred: The Purity Hypothesis and Hollywood Genre History", challenges assumptions about genre stability and its transformative qualities as part of its rejection of genre purity and complication of genre hybridity.

Part Two's "Practice" section covers a number of mainstream genres, including among others the musical, the epic, horror, melodrama, the war film, and the teen film. The number of genres covered attempts to offer diversity and balance, although the western, the gangster film and *film noir* receive slightly more representation. Included are several essays, including Paul Schrader's "Notes on *Film Noir*", Tag Gallagher's "Shoot-Out at the Genre Corral", and Maurice Yacowar's "The Bug in the Rug", all known for their focused, single-genre

investigations. The anthology's second section complements the first -- extending, challenging, and offering alternative approaches to genre study -- in a dynamic that moves beyond the section titles' implied theory-practice model. As one example, Gallagher's work with Westerns challenges the ideas genre evolution and engages with questions of genre stability and change found, respectively, in Schatz and Staiger. Similar concerns are addressed in John Cawelti's essay on *Chinatown* (Roman Polanski, 1974), with its claims of genre exhaustion and interest in genre transformation.

As with the first section, the essays collected for Part Two represent different approaches to and investments in genre. All the essays have their strengths but some, in addition to those mentioned above, are particularly interesting in their contribution to genre studies as well as for their analysis of specific genres: David Shumway's erudite treatment of the ideology of romance and the screwball comedy; Chris Straayer's clear identification of the temporary transvestite film, with its compelling consideration of gender, desire, sexuality and spectatorship; and Jane Feuer's astute analysis of self-promotional mythmaking in the self-reflexive musical. Also worth noting are the two new essays. Timothy Shary's "Teen Films: The Cinematic Image of Youth" identifies teen film's sub-genres and contextualizes them within the emergence of youth as a distinct age group. In "Global Noir", David Desser contemplates neo-noir and its various sub-genres of neo-noir, addresses cross-cultural influences and speculates on noir's implications as a transnational genre. Dresser's focus on genre's international contexts is a particularly welcome addition; even though the reader's scope is consciously limited explicitly consider American cinema, it nicely suggests the potential of genre studies for theorizing about global cinema.

Film Genre Reader III lives up to the high expectations set by its predecessors, providing an accessible and relatively comprehensive look at genre studies. The anthology's consideration of the advantages and challenges of genre studies, as well as its inclusion of various film genres and methodological approaches, presents a pedagogically-useful overview. One small criticism: while its contents are already quite broad, more attention could have been given, particularly in the "Theory" section, questions of reception or spectatorship or to interplay between genre, American and national cinemas ("Bollywood" or Hong Kong action films come to mind). Of course, one can always fault an anthology for its omissions, and what is overlooked tends to reflect the reviewer's interests as much as any absence. The third edition's additions are well-chosen contributions and *Film Genre Reader III* demonstrates its continued commitment to re-evaluating the assumptions, practices, and directions of genre studies.

The Dolby Era: Film Sound in Contemporary Hollywood

By Gianluca Sergi
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004. ISBN 0-7190-7067-8. 7 illustrations, viii + 209 pp. £14.99 (pbk), £49.99 (hbk)

A review by Jay Beck, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois, USA

In his recent book, *The Dolby era*, Gianluca Sergi directs our attention to one of the most over looked and under appreciated aspects of cinema: film sound. Following in a line of recent scholars who seek to fill the gap in decades of film scholarship that regularly ignores the contribution of sound to cinema, *The Dolby era* serves as a welcome reminder that contemporary film is an audio-visual art and that film sound provides a level of meaning that is at least equal to the visual information of cinema.

By selecting the period of film sound's technological revolution since Dolby Stereo's introduction in the late 1970s, Sergi uses the increasing interest of audiences and consumers in sound technology as an opportunity for unlocking the intricacies of sound construction. Starting and ending the collection with the phrase, "sound matters", the book tackles three large areas in the field of film sound studies: contemporary film sound history and the centrality of Dolby technologies, the work of sound practitioners and specialists, and the need to expand the awareness of sound and its function within film studies. Sergi's focus is split between the first and second areas while using the call for film sound studies as a guiding motivation throughout. *The Dolby era* attempts to chronicle advances in film sound and their subsequent usage in contemporary cinema, as well as integrate sound practices and academic scholarship. While such an approach is very valuable, Sergi is only partly successful in achieving all of his goals.

In the first section, ‘Film sound in the Dolby era', Sergi explores what he calls "the Dolby phenomenon" through both historical research and first-hand interviews with the creators of Dolby sound technology. Audio engineer Ray Dolby founded Dolby Laboratories in 1965 to develop and apply his unique noise reduction technologies to a variety of magnetic media. Starting with professional audio equipment and eventually branching out into noise reduction for cassette tapes, video recordings, and even FM radio, Dolby turned his attention to the severe limitations of the monophonic optical soundtrack –- the standard of film sound since the late 1920s. Sergi chronicles the development and implementation of Dolby Stereo by relying principally on documentation developed by Dolby Laboratories and interviews with Ray Dolby and senior vice president Ioan Allen. This history of Dolby technologies is an important first step in writing a previously unheard history of both the question of technological advances and their integration into the film industry.

However, while Sergi provides a smooth historical account of how Dolby Laboratories have ascended to their position as, arguably, the most important developer of cinema and

television sound technologies, the fact that he refrains from probing the veracity of the research materials or interviews does bring up several historiographic concerns. Both the history of contemporary film sound in the first chapter and the interviews present a complex view of technological changes from the perspective of Dolby Laboratories. But the view is one-sided. Mention is given to other sound technologies -- like digital competitors SDDS and DTS -- but these are merely to position them within the dominant narrative of *The Dolby era*. This leaves questions regarding concurrent histories of technological development and their potential influence or impact on cinema sound.

Sergi's other major focus is examining the work of sound practitioners and attempting to integrate their work with both film theory and reception. He accomplishes this in two ways. First, he provides a summative survey and analysis of the state of sound studies in a chapter entitled ‘Critical reception of sound'. Second, he offers two detailed interviews with contemporary sound practitioners -- supervising sound editor Bruce Stambler and re-recording mixer Gary Rydstrom -- along with a chapter providing "suggestions for sound analysis." Sergi's critical reception of sound eloquently demonstrates how sound has been relegated repeatedly to the margins of film scholarship. Through a detailed reading of several early sound theories, Sergi identifies a distinct trend to formulate sound as ‘lack' or an incomplete element added to the already complete image. As Sergi rightly points out, this was not just a trend among early film theorists who were lamenting the loss of the art of silent cinema, but one that continues in the work of even the most revered film scholars. Sergi argues, "most scholars have been unable or unwilling to take that all-important step that would help suture the artificial dichotomy of image versus sound" (85). The result is sound existing in a ‘film ghetto' both in terms of its academic treatment as well as its professional acknowledgement.

This latter point is articulated in the interviews with Stambler and Rydstrom, who usefully illuminate the difficulties sound practitioners face within the Hollywood system. There is an ongoing misconception, perpetuated by Hollywood's industrial practices, that film sound is a ‘technical' occupation. Initiated by the Academy Awards' designation of sound as a technical category, this industrial bias is maintained, as Rydstrom points out, through the Director's Guild of America's control over film credits (179). Condemned to this technical ghetto for the sake of maintaining the illusion of the director as auteur, sound practitioners also face an additional restraint in being one of the last items added to a film's budget. Even though all films require time in post-production, it is generally the sound department that suffers if a film goes over budget. As Stambler notes, the rising cost of filmmaking has forced more producers to reduce the time available in post-production, thereby increasing the pressure on his team to provide the same quality work with an accelerated schedule (122).

The area where Sergi strongly advances the field is in his chapter "Tackling sound: suggestions for sound analysis". Here he provides a series of thinking points designed to integrate sound analysis into the regular textual analysis of films. The first part of the chapter offers suggestions for academics to adjust their established attitudes toward sound. Examinations of audiences, research, budgets, technology, creativity, sound/image relations, and filmmakers are put forth to gently remind scholars that sound practices are much more of an art than a technique. Specifically, Sergi hopes to make the reader aware of the complexity of the creative effort of sound practitioners and how the standard vocabulary of film studies is rather ill-suited to evaluate their contributions.

The second part of the chapter investigates the concept of sound design as "the process of arranging sound objects and spaces to produce an overall effect" (145). In this part Sergi implores the reader to embrace "a more organic approach" to understanding sound by examining its function along with all of the other elements of cinematic construction. He discusses the concept of "orchestration," or the balancing of all of the elements in the sound mix, along with contrast, focus, and definition as methods for understanding the function of sound as part of a larger narrative system. It is here that he brings in the theories of two of film sound's most cogent spokespersons -- Walter Murch and Randy Thom -- and expands their thoughts on how the articulation and spatialization of sound functions in modern soundtracks. As a final summary of these points, Sergi offers a brief analysis of how Thom's close working relationship with director Robert Zemeckis on *Forrest Gump* (1994) aided both the meticulous construction of the film's soundtrack and its seamless integration into the story being told.

While such industrial examples are very valuable, missing in Sergi's book are the more complex connections between the history of film sound technology and the development of new sound practices. Although it is clear that Dolby Laboratories achieved a position of extreme significance due to their multiple cinema sound technologies, Sergi tends to restrict his analysis to *how* the technology was developed and implemented rather than *why*. By doing this he creates a teleological argument that assumes intentionality on the part of Dolby Laboratories to radically reconfigure cinema sound and audition. Despite his emphasis on bridging the gap between film practitioners and scholars, Sergi occasionally misses opportunities to interrogate how Dolby Stereo was developed relatively autonomous from the long-term needs of sound practitioners.

For example, his first chapter demonstrates that the application of Dolby noise reduction technologies to film was an extremely slow process. After successful early tests of the Dolby noise reduction system on the four-decade old monophonic optical soundtrack, the corporation encountered a ‘brick wall' of resistance from exhibitors. In his interview, Ioan Allen explained that it wasn't until they had "‘kluged' together a matrix system" to provide concert ambiance for the film *A Star Is Born* (Frank Pierson, 1976) that the company was able to meet with some success (99). Allen's word choice here is particularly telling because it reveals that the corporation did not have a grand design for the technology and they were more interested in accommodating the immediate needs of filmmakers rather than actively theorizing the myriad functions of cinema sound.

Moreover Sergi's reliance on documentation from Dolby Laboratories prevents him from complicating their ‘official' history. With the advent of Dolby Stereo in 1975 and its subsequent use on films like *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Steven Spielberg, 1977), Sergi posits the technology's future growth on the success of these films. While this is most likely the case, he does not differentiate between the effect of audiences hearing the film presented on 70mm magnetic Dolby Stereo -- a format virtually identical to the six-channel sound available on roadshow prints since the 1950s -- and theatres showing it in matrixed 35mm optical Dolby Stereo. In addition, it was a regular practice for theatres to advertise that the prints were encoded with Dolby Stereo while projecting them in mono without decoding. With all three possible formats being promoted under the name Dolby Stereo it stands to reason that the reception of the technologies was complicated by the radically divergent sound of each format. What emerges from this example is an intricate web connecting the varied capabilities of the technologies, aesthetic

demands on the part of the filmmakers, resistance from exhibitors, and the expectations of audiences that is absent in Sergi's history.

The primary criticism of *The Dolby era* is that Sergi tries to address issues of technological history and sound practice, while simultaneously making a call for rethinking film studies, all within a relatively brief 200-pages. The book provides a valuable survey of issues surrounding film sound, most importantly offering a variety of thinking points to activate scholarly awareness about the subject, but its ambitious scope precludes the inclusion of the methodological and textual examples that are needed for incorporating sound analysis into regular academic discourse. While there is more that still needs to be done to make sound studies a regular part of film studies, Sergi's book is a positive step in demonstrating that "sound matters."

100 American Independent Films

By Jason Wood
London: BFI, 2004. ISBN 1-84457-006-1. 263 pp. £13.99 (pbk)
After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age By Millicent Marcus

After Fellini: National Cinema in the Postmodern Age

By Millicent Marcus

Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8018-6847-5. 432 pp. £16.50 (pbk)

A review by Glen Jones, Staffordshire University, UK

Jason Wood's pocket-sized book *100 American Independent Films* acts something of a quick guide and reference to that body of films produced in the USA that stand outside or on the periphery of the primary institution of film production, distribution and exhibition: Hollywood. American independent films, the ‘indie', according to the back-cover sleeve notes "now have an increasingly pervasive influence on contemporary European cinema and mainstream Hollywood".

The book by and large achieves its aims. By offering a "concise selection" (also taken from the back-cover sleeve notes) culminating in an "informative map" of this sometimes highly controversial, strongly debated, richly engaging element of American film culture. Woods' account serves as a short, ‘snapshot' into the American independent film sector most useful to those readers wishing to have a more gentle introduction. Certainly it is a book that is accessible, easily readable and free from the dense academic writing that sometimes blights texts. But some critics could argue with some validity (but not shared by this author) that it may be too ‘light' and too diluted in its academic density regarding the accounts of the films Wood has had called "the hot 100" (2).

With the definition of ‘independent' film being such a difficult concept to define Scott McGehee and David Siegel (writers-producers-directors of the award-winning film *Suture* in 1994) have been enlisted to write a preface that attempts to do just that; offer few personalised ‘ground rules' that help identify an independent film. Therefore the set of ten ‘rules' that the writers have "culled" (preface XI) in order to help the reader distinguish the films listed from more mainstream fare helps identify and, in some ways, ‘buttonhole' the independent film. It also helps to recognise any other films or directors the reader may come across in later viewing, readings and deliberations about the independent sector in the USA.

Although this book is not a ‘heavyweight' academic text and therefore not really lending itself to some of the more critical discourses on the American independent film, it would have been an interesting but perhaps highly contentious discussion to have included directors

Steven Spielberg and George Lucas in the list of independent directors! These two filmmakers are arguably the only ‘real' independents working in American film today especially as they self-finance, produce and direct almost any film they wish to.

Wood carries on in similar vein by posing the question "so what is an American independent film?" in the very first sentence of his introduction (1). He informs the reader that the criteria used in his selection of films centres around the book written by Jim Hillier, *American Independent Cinema: A Sight and Sound Reader,* in 2001. Here the focus upon the independent film is viewed as primarily economic and aesthetic. However, the other consideration Jason Wood cannot ignore is his ‘personal preference' (Introduction, 2) that is thrown in for good measure. And there is nothing wrong in that. This may go some way too in explaining why Wood includes such films as *Candy Mountain* (Frank & Wurlitzer), a French/Canadian/Swiss production in 1988. *Or F for Fake (Verites et mensonges)*, a French/Iranian/West German production in 1973, although, admittedly, directed by Orson Welles, who never lost his independent spirit even when losing the support of the Hollywood studios.

That minor criticism aside Wood does include some great movies from the independent stable. Such films as *Blood Simple* (Coen Brothers, 1983), *Boyz N the Hood* (John Singleton, 1991) and *Reservoir Dogs* (Quentin Tarantino, 1991), to name but three, along with many others are all worthy inclusions and have rightly established a place in independent film history.

Documentary filmmaking, arguably the only ‘true' form of independent film making, is also rightly included. Films such as *Hoop Dreams* (Steve James, 1994), *Roger and Me* (Michael Moore, 1989) and *The Thin Blue Line* (Errol Morris, 1988) add a further dimension and *gravitas* to the list compiled by Wood. Certainly the independent spirit inherent within these documentaries, along with the hard-hitting and controversial content, qualifies and underlines their entry.

Wood's introductory chapter in this book quite impressively informs the reader of the rationale behind the inclusion of some films and directors at the exclusion of others. He readily admits that the "boundaries have blurred" (2) between the indie and the mainstream. This is complicated even further by some directors such as Soderbergh, Tarantino and Spike Lee, for example, crossing of ‘the divide' in order to pursue their own projects but with, one would assume, added ‘interference' and financial backing from the studios. He also pays reference (9) to those studios, Miramax and New Line, that began operations as an outlet for the independents only to become the ‘independent' arm of Disney and Time Warner respectively which obviously raises questions around the whole concept of independent film making.

In his introduction, Wood does appear to ‘flag up' key films and directors who for the author at least underpin the American independent film movement. Quoting John Pierson, the release of the film *She's Gotta Have It* (Spike Lee, 1986) is "a pivotal moment in both contemporary American independent and African-American cinema" (4). Similarly *Sex, Lies and Videotape* (Steven Soderbergh, 1989) signalled "another year when ‘it all changed'" (8) and this particular film according to Jim Hillier "represents the total assimilation of American independent cinema" (9). Likewise, John Cassevetes, is the "pioneering forefather" of the independent movement (5) and his film *Shadows* (1959) is "a benchmark work" (5). Strangely, Wood does not mention *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song* (Melvin Van Peebles,

1971) in this introduction, although it does make the "100". It is recognised as something of a watershed movie in Black-American independent cinema.

Furthermore, Spike Lee has described Van Peebles as "the Godfather of modern Black Cinema". But as Wood admits the task of which films to choose and then rationalising the choices was "an intimidating task" (2).

The heart of this short guide through American independent films is however ‘the list'; those ‘hot' 100 films that Wood suggests epitomise the movement. The book starts with *Angel City* (Jon Jost, 1977) through to *Killer of Sheep* (Charles Burnett, 1977) and ending with *You Can Count On Me* (Kenneth Lonergan, 2000) by way of *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, 1968).

The short, personalised accounts afforded to each film are concise, succinct and very informative. It all constitutes a most enjoyable read. They all include a plot synopsis along with an added bonus of cross-references to other films. Also included are the names of the films' producer, editor, main cast etc. There is some very interesting commentary by the author. For example, the reader is informed that *In the Company of Men* (Neil LaBute, 1997) was "partly funded by an insurance settlement following a car accident" (111). Similarly, the directors of *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez, harnessed "the phenomenal power of the Internet as a marketing tool-the directors created a website to perpetuate the impression that the film was a documentary." (22-23).

The author, James Wood, is undoubtedly well informed and his passion for films of this ilk does indeed shine through. The book is however necessarily restricted in its address and discussion of some of the central core questions surrounding the indie. For example, topics that could be expanded upon e.g. the role of the actor in the recognition of an independent or exploration of alternative ideologies to the dominant ideas in society are passed over. But this is not to detract from the book that is more than a useful adjunct to the more ‘weightier' tomes available on this area of film studies. Overall, *100 American Independent Films* is a most agreeable guidebook toward this important sector of filmmaking in the USA.

Millicent Marcus has written a very articulate, erudite book that has at its heart a romantic, one could even suggest, passionate engagement with Italian cinema. It *is* a long read with a very useful and informative synopsis of the films cited towards the back of the book as well as supplementary notes on each chapter. There is a still from each film included (on occasion more than one). The cover shows a still from Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* (1997).

The author addresses a view she points out and as espoused by Daniel Singer and others that the demise of director Frederico Fellini signalled "the virtual death of Italian cinema" (3). She acknowledges that Fellini has a place in film history *per se*, and his importance to Italian cinema along with Rossellini, Visconti, de Sica *et al*, is assured especially as "Fellini stands for a time when filmmaking mattered", (3). But his specific legacy to Italian cinema, "filmmaking *alla grande e all'italiana*", (3), is continued. She argues throughout the book, that such contemporary directors as Giuseppe Tornatore and Roberto Benigni, can be regarded as new Italian ‘auteurs' despite an era of post modernism which has heralded the ‘death of the author' (6).

Marcus argues that if nothing else, Italian cinema has shown great durability, similar to other national cinemas, and despite Fellini being the 'last great Italian auteur' (3), Italian film has

increased its quality and quantity through those directors mentioned above as well as others (7).

Marcus throughout this book consistently articulates her argument against the question of how has Italian national cinema fared in this so-called postmodern age? A time when, amongst other things, clear cinematic representation of 'the nation' is blurred and is less distinctive than, for example, post WW2. For Marcus "the indigenous dreams and utopias" (5) so evident within Italian cinema were exchanged for "ersatz ones from abroad" namely Hollywood. As a consequence Italian films suffered (6). Deregulation, for example, undermined "the political, social and cultural lines of identity" which began to disappear (7).

However, Marcus revisits the metaphor evoked by the film community in Italy in 1988. They refer to Italian cinema, as they attempted to define the "contemporary state of the medium" was like "the archipelago…fragmented pockets of creativity". She attempts then "to navigate that archipelago, stopping on various islands to examine what they bring to the map as a whole" (9).

As she successfully embarks on a written exploration of 'the islands' Marcus also in some ways offers an address and a rebuke to those writers who partake in the perceived "death of scholarship on Italian cinema" in favour of Hollywood (9). Her aim then is to "legitimise the new cinema" (10).

In the first section called 'Looking Back' Marcus constructs "a model against which contemporary film practice can be measured" (10). Hence, she informs the reader, her choice of films to analyse is preceded by two Italian classics *Paisan* (Roberto Rossellini, 1946) and *Bellisima* (Luchino Visconti, 1951). Her essays on the films *The Last Emperor* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1987), *Three Brothers* (Francesco Rossi, 1981) and *To Die for Tano* (Roberta Torre, 1997), for example, follow and are also put into different sections/categories. For example, the films above are included in 'Italy by Displacement', 'Family as Political Allegory' and 'Postmodernism; or, the Death of Cinema?' respectively.

In Chapter One then she explores Italian national identity through a "means of montage" (15). A reading of *Paisan (Countryman*), as mentioned, leads Marcus to conclude that "a national reference and aesthetic self-consciousness (are) brought into…perfect balance" that leads to a composition of Italy, through montage, to be composed in the viewers' minds (16). Furthermore, in the film *Bellisima*, the author argues that this film was not the "end of the 'poetics' of neorealism" but signified "a redirection of it" (39). Indeed, she maintains that this film signalled the " necessary prerequisite to the rebirth of a cinema of national reference". In director Visconti there was a director who "revealed the considerable power of the cinematic apparatus to serve as an instrument of cognitive and moral transformation…in order for the medium to reclaim its former status…" (58).

Marcus' reading of *The Last Emperor* is detailed and eloquent. She firstly raises the question of how this film could be 'Italianised' (61)? What is it about this film that could be identified as relating to Italy and Italians especially when, on first viewing, this is a film about a deposed Chinese Emperor! However on further reading and analysis Marcus begins to unravel this anomaly and writes a very persuasive discussion on how this film *is* Italian with director Bertolucci being 'the key' to this assertion.

It is Bertolucci, explains writer and film critic Alberto Moravia, and quoted by Marcus, who underpins the story (which on the surface is about deposed Chinese emperor, Pu Yi) with "the ideological roots in post-war Italian politics". Therefore "*The Last Emperor* is more about Italy than China" (62) or, more simply expressed, "Italy by displacement" (10). Furthermore, the theorising of Edward Said, Marcus suggests, is utilised by Bertolucci and thereby offers a somewhat 'orientalist approach' that can be applied to post war Italy (62).

Marcus informs the readers of her book that the film, Salvatores' *Mediterraneo* (1991), works on many different levels as it refers to not only post-war Italian cinema but also neo-realism and *commedia a l'italiana*. The author's reading of this film is about "flight from the here and now" (76). The small island the Italian soldiers find themselves marooned and occupying becomes the place where the films director "offers a pretext for the exploration of a cherished utopian dream" (11) and yearns for an "idealised national self" (76).

Consequently, Marcus argues that this film engages with the audience by manifesting in them a utopian wish: to unite Italian life into 'one' thus moving away from a fragmented, post-modern contemporary society. In some ways a view that is replete with nostalgia and a yearning for a time that seems a long time gone in most, if indeed all, Western societies?

There are one or two criticisms however that readers of this review may wish to ponder, discuss and find something credible in them or dismiss them as out of hand.

The title of the book is slightly misleading. Despite having "Fellini" in its title, which might give a clue as to its content, it does not specifically state that the book concentrates upon Italian cinema. Hence Marcus appears to be offering her perspective of the 'neo-auteurs' of Italian cinema and analysis of their films to scholars and academics of Italian cinema. Certainly her depth of knowledge and depth of analysis suggests this. Consequently, some knowledge of the films cited (and Italian cinema) is advantageous. She also assumes that the reader understands some Italian. She writes that Francesco Rosi's "*Cadaveri eccellenti* (1975) title speaks for itself…" Not so to this reader I'm afraid.

One of the most controversial and discursive points regarding discourse about 'postmodernism' is that of '*simulation*' as theorised by Baudrillard. "It is a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself" (6) hence the concept is not an easy one to grapple with. Marcus' concise 'explanation' and summary is, without doubt, one of the best I have read.

However, one of the consequences of this particular post-modern era or 'age' for contemporary film is that everything we see on the silver screen is 'borrowed' from other films and directors; nothing is original and is, in fact, a 'pastiche'.

One of the greatest exponents of this is Quentin Tarantino who has utilised his immense knowledge of films to produce and direct his own critically acclaimed '*oeuvre*' of 'pop' films. Without wishing to sound critical or disparaging one could say he is something of a 'magpie' director.

Post-modern theory then, when applied to film, suggests that directors have been influenced to a greater or lesser degree by other films and directors as stated. Therefore, the above theoretical perspective undermines, without going into any real great detail here, 'auteur' theory and their respective films. Millicent Marcus, on the other hand, argues and produces

admittedly a strong case for recognition of ‘auteurs' in Italian cinema as mentioned previously.

The point made here is that in almost all of the Italian films she focuses upon she at some point draws upon other films and directors that have influenced their Italian counterparts in some way or other. This perhaps weakens her position a little?

For example, she writes that Maurizio Nichetti's 1989 *The Icicle Thief* "whose very title in both Italian and English announces its investment in the earlier work. Nichetti's post-modern perspective adds considerable irony to his treatment of *Bicycle Thief*…" (216). The assertion that the film (*The Icicle Thief*) is a post-modern ‘take' upon *Bicycle Thief* directed by Vittoria de Sica in 1948 by a member of the new wave of Italian auteurs is somewhat problematic.

Similarly, Roberta Torre's *To Die for Tano* (1997) has a scene in which "the wake, festooned with neon crosses, is reminiscent of the catholic kitsch of Baz Luhrmann's 1986 film *Romeo+Juliet*" (248). Or "in framing his film as the childhood reminiscence of an adult speaker, Benigni aligns *Life is Beautiful* with the Taviani brothers' *Night of the Shooting Stars* (1982)" (270).

The auteur aligned with post-modern cinema, one could argue, make strange bedfellows. These criticisms aside the book is meticulously researched and is a rewarding read. Millicent Marcus is a gifted academic writer and scholar who with "the warmth of her prose", as Dudley Andrew states on the back sleeve, "…fondly evokes what remains the most marvellously human of national cinemas."

Filmography of Social Issues: A Reference Guide

By Charles P. Mitchell
Westport, Connecticut, and London: Greenwood Press, 2004. ISBN 0-313-32037-3. x + 318 pp. £28.99 (hbk)
The War Film By Robert Eberwein (ed.)

The War Film

By Robert Eberwein (ed.)

New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2004. ISBN 0-8135-3497-6. 240 pp. £16.95 (pbk)

A review by John Saddington, University of York, UK

Charles P. Mitchell's book, in A-Z format with a good index, is undoubtedly interesting, though perhaps one that could more accurately be described as a Filmography of *Anti*-Social Issues. It is arranged around twenty social themes, including addiction, child abuse, hate groups, and violence, as well as more positive themes such as civil rights, environmental issues, and women's rights.

Some justification of the social issues covered is provided, namely that they are an "attempt to represent the principal concerns that interest, affect, worry, and often divide the public" (3). This is a brave statement because the author is immediately vulnerable to criticism along the lines of 'which public?', 'how has this been clarified?' and 'why not X?' (where 'X' refers to a social theme close to the heart of the reader but not included in the book). The answer to the first question is, undoubtedly, the American public as the book is skewed towards American films and audiences, confirmed by Mitchell in the introduction: "[t]he entries are all English-language films, primarily American, but also including a few selections from Great Britain and Australia" (2).

In response to the second question, there is no mention of any testing or research that might have been done to ascertain that these really were the twenty social issues that most interested, affected, worried and divided the public. Maybe Mitchell followed a number of news reports in the newspapers and on television news channels and took his steer from those, or maybe he just felt able to speak on behalf of the public given his background in film teaching and library management. As with all lists based on personal selection, there will, by definition, be examples that are not included. In terms of this book, though we could speculate about what has been omitted, I believe that those selected here seem reasonable, though I would be interested to know why *war* and *public health* have been overlooked as they are both issues of enormous importance to America and the rest of the world in the 21st

Century. However, the most interesting feature of the book is not the list of categories, but the films that fill out those categories.

Mapped onto the twenty social issues are a hundred films; for each film entry there is a general overview, a plot synopsis, and some concluding remarks in a critique. Some details of cast and crew are also provided, as well as technical information such as the American Rating for the film, whether it is in colour or black and white, and the length of the film. The general overview sets the scene for the film by offering some context within which it was produced or released. The plot synopsis is of a format and standard similar to the *Monthly Film Bulletin* or *Sight and Sound*; and the concluding remarks are usually part-critique, part-interesting film facts.

The hundred films included cover seventy-two years of cinema: the earliest is the 1930 film *The Divorcee* (Robert Z Leonard, uncredited) and the latest is *Green Dragon* (Timothy Linh Bui) dating from 2001. There is overlap between the categories; for example *Pump up the Volume* (Allan Moyle, 1990) is described as dealing with censorship, suicide/depression, homosexuality, and education/literacy. The list of films appears to be unusual and intriguing as they are not the ones that automatically spring to mind. For example, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Robert Mulligan, 1962) and *Gandhi* (Richard Attenborough, 1982) are not included, despite there being the category Racism/Civil Rights. The social issue of Addiction does not include *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996). There is no space for *Goodfellas* (Martin Scorsese, 1990) or *A Clockwork Orange* (Stanley Kubrick, 1971), even within the Violence/Gangs theme and so on. What this leads me to conclude is that while the list *can* be criticised for being unusual and not including the films that might be on the reader's own list that is exactly the reason it should be praised: for providing a different set of films to ones that the reader is already aware of.

What makes this book a useful addition to the reference collection of a film scholar or library is the idiosyncratic nature of its entries, due to the selection of one scholar rather than a group or editorial team. There is a large number of films from the period 1930 to 1959 (twenty-seven out of a hundred) which is extremely helpful for the researcher investigating particular themes or issues across time as these can be films for which it is difficult to readily find detailed information.

To conclude, Mitchell's *Filmography of Social Issues* is a reference book produced from one scholar's perspective and it works well. For the reasons mentioned above it is not reasonable to criticise the selection of themes or films, but I would suggest that maybe a hundred films is not enough and that if this book gets revamped and reprinted it might include more. It is a book that is well presented and will be useful to many film researchers.

The War Film, edited by Robert Eberwein, is a collection of thirteen articles, all previously published either in journals or other books, organised around four sections: genre, race, gender, and history. There is little justification offered for this quaternary of topics, other than to mention in passing that a chronological approach was briefly considered before being abandoned in favour of the four themes used. An aim of the book, according to the publisher's blurb on the back cover, is for it "to become a classroom favourite". Will it succeed? That question will be answered following an overview of the articles included in this anthology.

In the first theme, '*genre*', the three articles identify and discuss war film genre conventions. Andrew Kelly's article on 'All Quiet on the Western Front' and Jeanine Basinger's essay on 'The World War II Combat Film' discuss World Wars I and II respectively, each commenting upon key elements common to many war films; these range from brutality, suffering and betrayal to stock characters such as 'the hero', 'the noble sacrifice', and 'the comedy relief'.

The third essay in this section, 'Auterism and War-teurism: Terence Malick's War Movie' by Dana Polan concentrates on Malick's return to the cinema after a lengthy absence with his World War II film *The Thin Red Line* (Terence Malik, 1998). Polan draws not only comparisons, but also distinctions, between Malick and other (as popularly conceived) auteur directors who have tackled the war film: Kubrick, Coppola, Stone and de Palma. It is an interesting piece, which emphasises the intensely personal touch revealed in the war films by these directors.

The second section, *race*, again comprises three articles, two of which focus on individual films, *Glory* (Edward Zwick,1989) and *Home of the Brave* (Mark Robson,1949) respectively, while the third casts a wider view: 'Represented in the Margins: Images of African American Soldiers in Vietnam War Combat Films'. In this essay, Brian J Woodman provides a detailed analysis of the misrepresentation and stereotyping that occurs in Vietnam War films. He uses five films as case studies (*The Green Berets* (Ray Kellogg and John Wayne, 1968), *The Boys in Company C* (Sidney J Furie, 1978), *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979), *Platoon* (Oliver Stone, 1986) and *Hamburger Hill* (John Irvin, 1987)) and charts a path whereby black characters gradually move from the extreme margins to occupying more central roles.

The third section of the book, *gender*, is composed of four articles. Geuric De Bona examines the studio interference and production problems that beset Huston's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951). Susan Jeffords focuses on the Rambo films and the American President Ronald Reagan and describes how a number of incidents that occurred during Reagan's Presidency can be rooted in events within the Rambo Trilogy. Jeffords principal theme is that Reagan's message was that he (and Rambo) represented a time when things -- and men -- were tougher and they knew how to act decisively if threatened. America had gone soft and the answer was to be found in Reagan/Rambo.

Tania Modleski's article, 'Do We Get To Lose This Time? Revising the Vietnam War Film' looks at the way that gender, and in particular feminine values, are represented in films such as *Dogfight* (Nancy Savoka, 1991), *Jacknife* (David Hugh Jones, 1989), and *Coming Home* (Hal Ashby, 1978). The fourth essay in this section is by Yvonne Tasker and is an interesting piece which examines the types of roles that female soldiers occupy in the war film, with *Courage Under Fire* (Edward Zwick, 1996) and *G.I. Jane* (Ridley Scott, 1997) featuring prominently in her analysis.

The final section of the book, *history*, deals "with the relationship between war films and history, especially how a real or narratavized [sic] past becomes a way of commenting on the present" (12). Mimi White's article, the first in this section, addresses the issue of films idealising the past using two films as case studies, *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (Connie Field, 1980) and *Swing Shift* (Jonathan Demme, 1984). Albert Auster's article, '*Saving Private Ryan* and American Triumphalism' constructs a compelling argument which suggests that World War II films such as *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998) help to support America's belief in its righteousness and own good, noting that "World War II has

become the indispensable symbol of American patriotism, virtue and triumph" (212). By harking back to the war against Fascism and pushing to one side some of the other more dubious armed forays that America has involved itself in, a feeling of triumphalism can prevail.

Appropriately enough, the thirteenth and final essay in this book deals with two of those forays that do not quite compare to the fight against Nazism: Somalia and Vietnam. Thomas Doherty focuses on *Black Hawk Down* (Ridley Scott, 2001) and *We Were Soldiers* (Randall Wallace, 2002) in an attempt to understand how post 9:11 audiences might understand war films, with the attacks on America so fresh in their minds.

I firmly believe that this book is a very useful collection of articles and would recommend it to film scholars with an interest in English speaking war films. It is nicely presented with a number of photographs and a decent index. Despite an example of careless editing in the introduction, Robert Eberwein has gathered together a rich collection of articles. To return to the publisher's blurb -- will it "become a classroom favourite"? -- I believe that it will.

Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China

By Shujen Wang
Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003. ISBN 0-7425-1980-5. 15 illustrations, xviii+234pp. £ 24.99 (pbk)

A review by Jonathan Stubbs, University of East Anglia, UK

Recent visitors to East Asian countries may have been struck by the widespread availability of pirated Hollywood films, often on sale in optical disc format just days after their release in Western theatres and at the fraction of their legitimate retail value. In *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China*, Shujen Wang provides a valuable range of contexts, both theoretical and practical, for understanding and studying this phenomenon.

As paradigm of globalization at work, film piracy offers an enormous amount to grapple with. Through it, commercially sensitive Western products are hijacked and transformed, taken across borders and repackaged for audiences who may never have been intended to experience them. Moreover, the ‘digital revolution' has effectively freed moving images from their medium: copy a DVD onto a hard-drive and anyone can produce and distribute unlimited, identical copies. In this way, the spatial and temporal boundaries that Hollywood enforces through international day-and-date releases, windowing practices and regional coding are rendered futile. Obstacles posed by state censorship and trade restrictions are equally ineffective. In 1962, almost a year passed between the premiere of *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean) in Britain and its release in Australia; today the time-lag would be a matter of days. In this new environment, the speed at which a product can be delivered will, above all else, become "the ultimate determinant for global success" (74).

Although Wang's analysis is expressed in tinder-dry sociological language, her grasp of such implications makes *Framing Piracy* an engaging read. She identifies her work as an effort to "move beyond a tendency in existing literature to treat global production and local distribution as isolated phenomena" (3). The global/local nexus has indeed been a longstanding element in the mantra of academic globalisation, but as Wang rightly points out, it means little if the specific processes that fill the gap between them are not also explored. This focus also allows Wang to address the one of the great blind spots in film studies: distribution. It has become commonplace to emphasise the tremendous importance of distribution, but while the study of film production still dominates the field and film exhibition becomes an ever more appealing topic, film distribution remains elusive. As Wang suggests, Hollywood's ability to control its global delivery and distribution outlets is central to its global dominance. Piracy is thought to cost the American film industry around $9 billion each year; it has the potential to undermine Hollywood's hegemony and transform the global balance of power (73).

Wang's specific attention to the development of film piracy in Greater China is also productive. Mainland China is now the world's largest market for illegal goods and is thought to account for 20% of all global media piracy -- more than any other single territory (74). This can be attributed in part to the fact that China has, potentially at least, the world's biggest market of any kind, but the country's underdeveloped local production industry and the strictures of state censorship should also be taken into consideration. In addition to providing a fertile market for piracy, China has also proven to be an appealing production and export base for illegal material. Wang attributes this to the nation's large and cheap labour base, its long coast and shared borders, and its "uniquely hybrid and ambivalent politico-economic-cultural system" (47).

The triangular trade between the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan has also proven crucial to the development of film piracy in China, just as it has to Chinese economic growth in general. As Wang suggests, the "Greater China Economic Circle" is also a "Greater China Piracy Circle" (85). Taiwan in particular, a country with no real political power and little recognition from the global community, has proven a crucial pirate export/import hub and production base. In this way, piracy has allowed an isolated state to attach itself to larger regional players and global trade regimes (164). Greater China's illegal economy, it seems, has shadowed China's legitimate economy in its growth and globalization. It seems ironic, therefore, that the more China is able to align itself with Western governments and markets, particularly after its ascension to the World Trade Organisation in 2001, the greater the external pressure to crack down on domestic piracy.

In order to understand film piracy it seems essential that the role of the consumer should be examined. Why do individuals buy and watch pirated films? Would their viewing experiences be the same if they saw films though legitimate means? Are they the passive dupes of economic and political circumstance or are they actively seeking to circumvent state and/or film industry controls? However, in this area Wang's analysis is much less developed. Her field work in China and Taiwan includes interviews with a variety of pirated film consumers. The small amount of this material reproduced in the book indicates that these individuals are economically motivated and largely self-conscious about their activities, but it tells us little else. Having presented this data, Wang asks, "do I then dare to suggest that the consumers' complicity in piracy, especially in developing countries, is in some cases a form of self-empowerment?" (37). It seems as though a lively discussion might follow, but sadly Wang does not dare to follow it through.

It will take years, perhaps even decades, to fully understand the impact of film piracy on global film culture. It remains a real possibility that the spread of piracy through the internet will undermine Hollywood's legitimate distribution networks to the extent that their production has to be scaled back. On the other hand, film piracy may have the opposite effect by hurrying the studio's adoption of more effective digital distribution methods and actually extending their global reach. Clearly, there is much more work to be done. However, in *Framing Piracy*, Shujen Wang has done great deal to get this ball rolling.

British Cinema of the 1950s: The Decline of Deference

By Sue Harper and Vincent Porter
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-19-815934-X. 32 illustrations, xi+409pp. £65.00 (hbk)

A review by Melanie Williams, University of Hull, UK

One thing needs to said from the outset: it's a great pity that this book has only been issued in a prohibitively expensive hardback edition because it's one of the most notable and useful books on British cinema to be published in recent years and its findings ought to be readily available to as large a readership as possible. Sue Harper and Vincent Porter have produced the first exhaustive overview of the British film industry during the 1950s, a decade that saw immense changes in patterns of film production, exhibition, and consumption. Traditionally in British cinema histories, the fifties has been depicted as one of the least interesting eras with not much to offer except a parade of stolid war films and tepid comedies. Recent scholarship such as Christine Geraghty's *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and the New Look* (Routledge, 2000) and Ian Mackillop and Neil Sinyard's collection *British Cinema of the 1950s: A Celebration* (Manchester University Press, 2003) has complicated this unfair picture somewhat, and argued the case for the 1950s as one of the more complex periods in the history of the national cinema, a time of flux and uncertainty rather than smug self-satisfaction. Harper and Porter concur with this revisionist view, describing British film of the 1950s as above all else "an *anxious* cinema" (272), and arguing that,

"the 1950s industry was a battleground in which different factions -- in finance, in class politics, in gender representation, in technology -- struggled for dominance. It was not a dull period in which only war or comedy films were made, but a dynamic and often confusing period in which new and old methods fought, often to the death" (2).

One can get an idea of the sea-changes that occurred in British cinema during this period just by looking at the difference between the films that topped popularity ratings at either end of the decade: in 1950 it was *The Blue Lamp* (Basil Dearden), the respectful police drama, featuring Jack Warner as P.C. George Dixon, everyone's favourite bobby; by 1961, the most popular film was *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960), in which we follow the rebellious progress of the working-class Don Juan ‘out for a good time', Arthur Seaton, played by Albert Finney, one of the new breed of actors with provincial voices and proletarian vigour to match. Here is vivid evidence to support Harper and Porter's thesis that British cinema of the 1950s saw ‘the decline of deference', as older structures of feeling harking back to wartime consensus were usurped by newer, more individualistic, and youth-orientated cultural forms, mirroring wider social changes taking place in British society at the time. As the cinema audience became increasingly constituted by younger and choosier cinemagoers who "were no longer prepared to allow the likes of Michael Balcon and J. Arthur Rank to preach to them" (264), those film companies who could not move with the times faltered and dwindled while those who were able to keep pace flourished. There is a

striking contrast between the fortunes of studios which had previously held great cultural capital, like Ealing, that lost their way in the fifties, and others such as Hammer and Anglo-Amalgamated, previously dismissed as small-time second-raters, who went from strength to strength. Within a relatively short period, everything in British cinema had changed irrevocably; it is Harper and Porter's mission to examine and unpick exactly when and how and why these changes came about.

To this end, the authors make extensive use of a broad range of hitherto under-explored archive material encompassing memos and minutes from meetings at the Board of Trade and the Treasury as well as other material gleaned from the Public Record Office, internal studio documents, market research surveys, obscure personal papers and memoirs, interviews with industry professionals, and film-related publications ranging from trade paper *Kinematograph Weekly* to fan mag *Picturegoer*. Indeed, one of the most impressive things about this study is the breadth and depth of its original research, and its attempt to cover all aspects of the period's film culture, especially those usually neglected by researchers. However, one area they leave well alone is fifties film criticism, arguing that the critics -- a "self-appointed minority of articulate individuals" -- very rarely "represented any views but their own (or possibly their editor's)" (2); perhaps subtly and obliquely critiquing the prominence usually accorded to this kind of material in Film Studies. This little hint of provocation is followed by their own statement of intent: "this is an *industrial* study -- an analysis of the ways in which film organisations grappled with changing circumstances" (2). They continue: "Too often the analysis of film texts has proceeded as though they can be simply plucked out of the cultural ether, rather than being products that have to be financed and marketed" (3).

By contrast, Harper and Porter want to emphasise that "the economic base *sets the agenda and limits the parameters* of film culture in our period, which was acutely predicated on funding crisis and government intervention" (3). Because of this, their book is organised around institutions rather than individual agents; this is not a cinema of directors or stars but of government initiatives, studios and production companies. Hence, there are chapters on each of the key companies of the period; the Rank Organisation, Ealing Studios, the Associated British Picture Corporation, British Lion and Hammer, in addition to chapters dealing with American-British productions, independent producers including Herbert Wilcox, Sydney Box and Mario Zampi, as well as difficult-to-categorise units such as the government sponsored experiment Group Three and the arty mavericks of the Free Cinema movement, antecedents of the New Wave. Each chapter provides a cogent, well organised account of the fortunes of the company or topic it deals with as well as containing a wealth of background material (often in the footnotes) that make this book an indispensable reference resource for anyone researching any aspect of this era in British cinema.

The book's first chapter, entitled ‘The Politics of Production Finance', is one of the most challenging but also most essential to their project, laying out some of the key economic determinants of 1950s film culture. It's not always an easy read, by the very nature of its rather dry subject matter, but it is admirable in its clear and thorough elucidation of complex policy and legislative issues and in the way it manages to breathe some life into the vicissitudes and internecine quarrels of an organisation like the National Film Finance Corporation.

Other more general chapters discuss the impact of changing censorship regulations (including the introduction of the ‘X' certificate) upon the cinema of the time, building upon the valuable work carried out by Anthony Aldgate on this area, and the topic of visual style in

1950s British cinema, giving due credit to the important contributions made in this field by art directors, production designers, costume designers and cinematographers as well as directors. A final chapter looks at the other side of the equation, moving from the production of films to their reception by audiences, and tries to pin down exactly who saw what, when, how often, and whether they enjoyed it or not, making excellent use of the available material on profits returned by individual films, box-office figures (often haphazardly and impressionistically gathered but well used here), magazine popularity polls and fan letters. Perhaps one day, we might see somebody attempt for the 1950s, an oral history investigation of the kind carried out by Annette Kuhn with cinemagoers of the 1930s in her book *An Everyday Magic* (I. B. Tauris, 2002) which would be a superb addition and complement to the information on audience preferences here.

My only -- admittedly minor -- misgiving about this book is that in comparison with its peerless empirical archival research its aesthetic analysis is less convincing. This is because there's simply not enough room in the book for the kind of expanded discussion of individual films required to fully substantiate its brief value judgements. The book's priorities lie elsewhere. But coming after their decision to eschew film critics' reviews for representing nothing but their own views, it seems rather odd to find subjective opinions on various films sprinkled liberally throughout the text. Reading of a film as beguilingly inventive as Ealing's thriller *Nowhere to Go* (Basil Dearden & Seth Holt,1958) being impatiently dispatched for resembling "a poor American B-feature, with clumsy plotting and incoherent protagonists" (71), one feels like an injustice is being done. Similarly, the brisk dismissal of designer Jim Morahan's work on Mrs. Wilberforce's lopsided house in *The Ladykillers* (Alexander Mackendrick, 1955) as "uninspired, since it was conceived around a single running gag which was worked to death" (203) seems insensitive to the film's distinctive look, and a main set which has much more to it than wonky paintings. But this really is a slight quibble: in all other respects, this is an exemplary piece of film scholarship, rigorously researched and always lucidly written, shedding much-needed light on a previously under-researched area of British cinema history, when films reflected "the fears and fascinations of a society that both looked back with pride to the nation's military and social achievements in the Second World War and sought to negotiate the social and cultural challenges posed by the emergence of a consumer society" (243). Here's hoping the paperback comes out soon…

Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience, 1945-2001

By Daniel J. Goulding
Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2002. ISBN 0-253-21582-X. 83 illustrations, xiv+285pp. £ 14.50 (pbk)

A review by Ljiljana Saric, University of Oslo, Norway

Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience, 1945–2001, a revised and updated edition of Daniel L. Goulding's book first published in 1985, is a result of the author's more than a quarter of a century of involvement in studying and writing about the cinema of the former Yugoslavia and its successor states. This new edition of *Liberated Cinema* has been expanded to complete the overview of the development of the *new Yugoslav cinema* of the 1980s and to deal with film developments that have taken place in the former Yugoslavia's five successor states since the break-up in 1991. This revised edition also includes an expanded and updated bibliography as well as a new selected filmography of significant feature films produced in Yugoslavia and its successor states from 1941 through 2001.

The primary focus of Goulding's study is a socio-cultural, thematic and critical analysis of the most significant feature films produced in the former Yugoslavia and its successor states after the end of the Second World War. Although the emphasis is on fiction feature films, developments in the fields of animated film, news film, short and documentary film, and amateur film are commented upon to some extent since they reflect or anticipate new directions and thematic perspectives found in feature film production. Goulding places film developments within the context of film economics, state subsidies and changing patterns of political control. The critical and thematic discussion of films and film trends is developed in relation to the analysis of changing patterns of funding, organising and managing film production, distribution, exhibition and trade. An overview of the development of Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav film culture –- i.e., film theory and critics, film journals, film festivals, the formation of artistic schools and aesthetic movements –- is provided as well. There is also reflection upon the relation of these film trends to changing patterns of political and ideological control.

The evolution of the cinema of Yugoslavia and its successor states after the Second World War is conceptualised as falling into five broad periods of development. Following this, the book is organised chronologically into seven chapters. The first chapter, ‘Establishment and Evolution of a National Cinema, 1945–1950', deals with the period of strict party control very similar to the Soviet model of hierarchical and centralised organisation. In this period, films were often technically simple and served propagandistic and heuristic purposes reflecting the aesthetics of nationalist realism. The author defines this as a moderate variant of the Stalinist-Zhdanov socialist realism dogma. The films were thematically devoted to idealistic glorification and confirmation of the War of Liberation and its heroes, especially of Josip Broz Tito as its leader, and to the reinforcement of revolutionary spirit and heroic struggle to construct a new socialist state built on the ruins of war. However, even in this period, some

Storytelling in Film and Television

By Kristin Thompson
Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard Univ ersity Press, 2003. ISBN 0-67401-063-9 (hbk), ISBN 0-67401-087-6 (pbk). 4 illustrations, xiii + 172pp. £26.50 (hbk), £12.95 (pbk)

A review by Jesse Schlotterbeck, University of Iowa, USA

Kristin Thompson sets up *Storytelling in Film and Television* as a corrective project, written to remedy inadequate scholarly attention to the narrative complexity of television programming. This four-chapter study, adapted from a lecture series, ironically functions like a television program itself in that each chapter may be read as a stand-alone or as part of a complimentary sequence. To quickly state the central focus of these four chapters before discussing them in more detail, this study focuses on Raymond Williams' concept of flow as a dominant but inadequate method of reading television, screenwriting in theory and practice, the prevalence of adaptations in both media, and finally, the case for an ‘art television'.

At the outset, Thompson establishes ‘aesthetic analysis' as her primary area of focus, eschewing social, ideological, or production-oriented approaches that are more adequately represented in television studies (3). Although ‘aesthetic analysis' connotes attention to the visual dimensions of these media, Thompson's purview is, in fact, more accurately stated by the title of her book, storytelling. Fitting this description, Thompson devotes much more attention to broad components like script writing and narrative structure as opposed to distinctly visual elements like shot composition or editing. Another initially unclear aspect of this study, because its title implies that both media will be studied equally is that television, in fact, is a much clearer point of focus than film. This is surprising, perhaps, given that Thompson's background is in film studies. In *Storytelling in Film and Television*, Thompson self-consciously treats this comparative subject as a film scholar entering television studies, testing out the disciplinary standards of the more familiar medium on the newer one in order to establish where these media converge and where they remain distinct. Though Thompson finds some areas that suggest media specificity instead of overlap -- such as the importance of the director versus the writer -- she remains unequivocally clear on the fact that these forms have more in common than the inapt autonomy of film studies and television studies would imply.

As an established scholar in a field that was defined as a scholarly subject predominantly in the last thirty years and under considerable scrutiny, Thompson is interested in the place of television, a medium met with even greater resistance and disdain than film, in academia. She opens her first chapter with a consideration of the variables working against the serious textual study of television. As opposed to film scholars who could generally be said to take pleasure in the medium they study, Thompson finds a base-level expectation in television studies that scholars ought not to like their own object of study. A great number of television studies texts, as a result, share a moralistic precept that the medium is a harmful, negative social influence unworthy of close textual readings. The foremost theoretical concept that justifies scant attention to the specifics of television programming is Raymond Williams' idea of flow. According to this concept, specific textual analysis is fundamentally at odds with the

basic nature of television programming, which is designed to draw the viewer into a relatively seamless, scarcely differentiated stream of content, not just a particular programme. Thompson argues that television studies' attention to flow rather than discrete texts stands at odds with the typical consumer's experience. She argues that Raymond Williams mistakes that the "characteristic organization" of television scheduling for the "the characteristic experience" of the viewer when, in fact, breaks in programmes are commonly treated as interruptions, not continuous parts of the programme, and television viewers routinely tune-in not to 'the flow' but a specific programme (7).

In the following chapter, Thompson lays out the case for a text-centred approach to television programming. She suggests that established methods of understanding film narratives, concisely illustrated with a reading of *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), may be effectively applied to television programmes. Thompson demonstrates how television programmes, like feature films, may be read as possessing a similar three or four act structure with multiple narrative threads and similar modes of communication (such as deadlines, motifs, dialogue hooks, and staggered plot resolution). Though Thompson opens the chapter by outlining similar narrative strategies between film and television, she also outlines differences in screenwriting for each media. For instance, the use of repetition is essential in tele-play scripts in order to explain basic plot points to viewers who have missed some of the programme or season. This is, in fact, a reasonably difficult requirement since the programme must also interest more devoted viewers. Repeated information must be presented subtly and appear natural or else devoted viewers will become bored. Such delicate handling of repeated information is, obviously, not as relevant for film writers, who may assume that each consumer will view the entire picture.

An important inclusion in this section is the analysis of how-to writing manuals more often studied by industry hopefuls than academics. Though these guides are scarcely studied by television scholars, Thompson writes that such manuals are central to an understanding of television programming, which demands a tremendous volume of material -- twenty-five episodes for a standard programme and as many as 260 episodes for certain soap operas. Though such guides exist for feature filmmaking, the study of these manuals is even more important in reference to television. While directors are commonly cited as the central artistic figures in filmmaking, writers are more often credited as the primary architect in the development of a television programme. Thompson cites *Hill Street Blues* producer Steven Bocho and Steve Chase, who developed *The Sopranos*, as writers that received much greater attention than episode directors.

In the third chapter, Thompson studies the phenomenon of adaptation between film and television -- to cite a few examples: TV-to-film (*Batman* (Tim Burton, 1989), *Star Trek* (Robert Wise, 1979), *The X-Files* (Rob Bowman, 1998), *Twin Peaks* (David Lynch, 1992)) and film-to-TV (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Indiana Jones, M*A*S*H*). Thompson attributes the prevalence of adaptation in both media to television, which has exponentially increased the demand for dramatic programming since the broad-scale proliferation of cable channels in the 1980s. Thompson argues that this demand has not only influenced what programmes these media share, but their narrative structure:

The circulation of plots among media [in the form of sequels, spin-offs, or serials] reflects… an important change in our conception of narrative itself— and specifically a loosening of the notion of closure and the self-contained work of fictional art. That change has been due, in large part, to television (76).

In the final chapter, Thompson tests out the applicability of another well-worn film studies concept to television, the ‘art cinema', first outlined by David Bordwell in the 1979 *Film Criticism* article ‘The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice'. With David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* series as her centre of focus, Thompson, again, makes the case for text-centred analysis in the study of ‘post-modern' television, where more generalized approaches, whether industry (scheduling strategy) or viewer centred (channel changing) are more typical. Thompson notes in *Twin Peaks* a number of similarities to Bordwell's ‘art cinema': "a loosening of causality, a greater emphasis on psychological or anecdotal realism, violations of classical clarity of space and time, explicit authorial comment, and ambiguity" (110).

Thompson briefly considers a handful of other programmes as ‘art television', including *The Simpsons*, which features a flurry of cultural references, intentionally inconsistent characterization, and considerable self-reflexivity about television conventions and the status of the programme as a television show. (138-140) Thompson concludes this section with a questionable statement: "I have looked here only at examples that have appeared on network television, but the expansion of cable, with its ability to address niche audiences, will undoubtedly provide new instances [of ‘art television']" (140). An analogy to the marketing of independent and foreign films, supposedly expanded by the growth of the video rental sector in addition to cable channels, would be relevant here. As revealed by James Schamus in *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (Routledge, 1998) these markets failed to create the expected increase in demand for diversified products; blockbusters still represent the most bankable commodity for the major studios. There is little reason to expect that cable channels would not follow suit and rely on spin-offs of proven, often uncreative commodities, such as reality television programmes or mainstream-style sitcoms.

The generic scope of this study may also be more limited than Thompson admits. She writes that examples of programming will be drawn "from well-regarded, popular programs, I have done this not because I intend to offer you a ‘Masterpieces of Television' approach, but rather because I want to look at programs that might be considered normative in their uses of narrative technique" (2). Thompson's examples, however, do not fall far from the fray of programmes already respected by many academics such as *The Sopranos*, *Hill Street Blues*, and *Twin Peaks*. Programmes more popular with fans than scholars, like *Friends* or *Cheers*, which, no doubt, would certainly be considered "the sorts of programs an aspiring screenwriter might be given as models of how television should be done" -- Thompson's stated criteria for the selection of examples -- are given less attention.

Though Thompson would likely disagree with this statement, her study demonstrates that the definition of a ‘classical narrative structure' in television is potentially even more difficult than with film. While Thompson, along with David Bordwell and Janet Staiger, successfully outlined the basic components of storytelling in mainstream cinema, there is no equivalent to the classical Hollywood film with television. Though fictional sitcoms and dramas loom large in television programming they are flanked by popular news programmes, reality TV shows, documentaries, sports programmes, game shows, and so on. In short, fictional storytelling does not have the prominence nor as clear cut a dominant paradigm in television as in cinema. The programmes that Thompson studies -- pre-recorded dramas, sitcoms, and mini-serials -- in fact represent only a slice of television programming, making her direct engagement with television theories (such as ‘flow') that purport to look at programming in total problematic.

Nonetheless, these criticisms do not represent inherent flaws in the study and could have been amended by simple qualifications. Thompson even usefully calls attention to a tendency of film and television scholars to criticize authors in their field for usefully limiting their area of focus, labelling this counterproductive phenomenon the "but-you-didn't-do-*x* syndrome" (5). Thus, topics such as the role of sound design or shot composition and editing (as opposed to narrative structure) in television programs and films, while noteworthy omissions, are also more than excusable in a 140 page work on an understudied area.

Throughout *Storytelling in Film and Television*, Thompson maintains a conversational tone. Thompson's use of clear language and careful explanation of all theoretical ideas compliment her observation that those who study television and film have not collaborated as often as they should. Instead of flaunting specialized knowledge, this study is more interested in the populist capability of these fields. *Storytelling* is coherent not just for television or film scholars but for the average, interested reader. This work stands as a concise and readable inroad into the comparative study of film and television.

Marxism and Media Studies: Key Concepts and Contemporary Trends

By Mike Wayne
London: Pluto, 2003. ISBN 0-7453-1913-0. 289pp. £15.99 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk)

A review by Harri Kilpi, University of East Anglia, UK

Mike Wayne has written Marxism and Media Studies "in the hope that there are people out there studying media who are increasingly looking for more radical approaches to their subject, searching that is for ways of making sense of the media and culture which really get to the roots of why things are as they are" (4). Although "key concepts" of the subtitle might lead one to think that this is an introductory book, the root words implicit in Wayne's call to arms are ‘radical', ‘theoreticised' (and thus sometimes demanding and difficult) politically committed, ‘total' analysis of media. Although Marxism has been panned and ridiculed and placed in the history of theory curriculum, Wayne argues forcefully, yet subtly, for its re-evaluation and sets his case well for the rest of the book.

The first two chapters are devoted to the introduction of basic Marxist concepts such as capital, labour, labour power and surplus value, and their dependence on the economics is highlighted by contrasting this type of analysis to the more status and habitus centred sociological approaches. Wayne connects the seemingly old-fashioned concepts to the working environments of the 21st century through the discussions of petit bourgeoisie, white collar work, and especially cultural workers who, in his analysis, inhabit an ambivalent area between the privileged owner classes and the purely exploited working classes. The subversive possibilities that these positions open are exemplified by the open source software movement and decentred file sharing communities (P2P). However, Wayne produces sensible caveats, which stress the continuities of capitalism, such as accumulation and tendency towards crises of overproduction (dot.com crash) under the heady rhetoric New Media and the ‘New Economy' that is supposed to underlie it.

In Chapter Three, Wayne applies the Marxist apparatus to the post-war developments of Hollywood and connects these features to the overall trends in capitalism during the same era. The oligopoly of the studios, the multidivisional diversification, the outsourcing of their production and the flexible, post-Fordist accumulation are summarised in lucid, compact fashion. This leads to a powerful argument about the ‘appearance-form' of plurality: branded goods, whether films or sneakers, project a superficial image of plurality because of their varied production methods and origins.

This tends to hide the fact that capital, which makes and moves these goods, is still centralised and accumulative, much in the same way as presented in the older Marxist analysis. Disney is quoted as a prime example of a diversified multi-media conglomerate, while the decline of the British public service broadcasting is briefly recounted in order to bring out the detrimental consequences of neo-liberal policies on this part of the public sphere. Although Wayne's argument proceeds well, in a media studies book one would have

expected some visual evidence as well, but apart from abstract figures, there are no illustrations. The same line continues in Chapter Four, which is devoted to the state and media. Again, Wayne picks apart both the neo-liberal fantasy (that market forces are somehow apolitical) and the social democratic or welfarist ideal (that state is somehow outside the market forces and can control them from that position), but discussion starts to veer towards more abstraction.

The payoff comes, however, in Chapter Five, which in a way draws together the different levels of discussion visited in the previous chapters. Media texts, practices, industries, state and Marxism are theorised through the refined version of the much-maligned base-superstructure model. Wayne sensibly discards the reductionist, vulgar-Marxist economic determinism and refines the analysis of the superstructure to several different levels, which, despite their eventual nesting in the capitalist mode of production, retain their varied profiles. These work as proximate causal frameworks for the media texts at different stages of their production. Starting from the text and going through the production process and context, via industry and state, to the modes of economic development and finally to the capitalist mode of production, Wayne approaches these different levels as widening, causal contextualisation, remembering to stress the 'fuzzy edges' and the straddling categories that he is using. Although this analysis might seem self-evident or well-known, Wayne's model brings to focus many (for instance) film historical practices, that are usually only heuristic, half-theorised and vaguely defined. What is more, his analysis seems a lot clearer and more intuitively correct than Jameson's, which he quotes during the course of the chapter. The only minor glitch is the fact that Wayne decides not to apply the model in a sequential (from the text outwards) fashion when he dissects the reality TV show *Big Brother*. Yes, you can start from the middle of the model and work to both directions, and that might even help dispel some fears about its residual reductionist linearity. But it would have been more educative to see those widening contextualisations at least once in a clear procession from top to bottom, even though it might have smacked a bit formulaic. Otherwise the chapter stands out as the most rewarding part of the book.

In the next chapter Wayne switches towards cultural studies and more theoretical concerns. He presents a powerful -- and to my mind always timely -- critique of the assumptions (still) underlying much of the theorising around media. In particular, Saussure's ahistoricity, linguistic determinism and discourse theory's problems with concepts (such as conventionality and arbitrariness), are critiqued from a realist and materialist position. For example, the fact that twenty-two different Inuit words for snow

can be translated into different adjectival descriptions of snow watery, wet, light, soft, blowing, etc.) actually suggests that they do not have a linguistic universe that 'sees' snow differently and which causes them to experience snow differently. What they do have is a greater material need to differentiate snow on a daily basis than someone living in Manchester or even Moscow. This in turn undermines the linguistic determinism of much contemporary cultural theory. (165; emphases in the original).

Wayne ends the chapter in a similar manner by concluding --

the sign world must have some correspondence -- even if limited -- with the real world because of the necessity for some (if desperately limited) co-operation which interdependence thrusts upon human beings in the production of social life. (181-2; emphases

in the original)

The last two chapters, on commodity fetishism and the possibilities of knowledge respectively, are more theoretical and abstract, at times even obscure. The discussion seems less grounded in reality that was so emphatically salvaged in previous chapters, and the evidence and examples, though varied, seem to merely serve and allegorise the complexities of the theorisation rather than vice versa. Wayne continues to deal with important issues such as the dire philosophical and political consequences of relativism (219), but his answers in the form of commodity fetishism theory seem somewhat airy and just a smidgen too loyal to the letters of the older, and perhaps a bit defunct Marxist theory, such as Lukacs. On the other hand, the more recent Leftist figures receive a much more critical handling. While Habermas is criticised at length for his detente with the bourgeoisie, Zizek, for all his obscurantisms, is let off the hook relatively easily. Again, while the subtitle of the last chapter is ‘Dilemmas for the Documentary', a sustained discussion is lacking. The few examples highlight the abstract theory, and those, who might have expected some critical words about the current mainstream documentary boom, are in for a mild disappointment.

The last chapters might leave the reader with a sense of *deja vu* towards the traditional theorising: the abstractions seem, from time to time, to take life of their own, and the reality is called in only in order to conform to the new tenets. And just once in a while it feels that Wayne needs ‘to say it in Marxian,' although there might have been a more straightforward way of phrasing the matter. This makes some of the passages dense, and towards the end of the book, sometimes convoluted and hard to understand. If the concepts truly are so difficult, a bit more explanation and editing and opening up of the text might have done wonders. In its current form, Wayne's prose tends towards long sentences and frequent use of parentheses, which interrupt the flow of reading and hinder the comprehension of many important and crucial concepts.

Having said that, the other chapters, with the refined base-superstructure model as their climax, make the reading effort worth-while. Politically, Wayne's book is a sobering reminder that the current and popular rightwing economic orthodoxy is not a natural necessity and certainly not necessarily beneficial. On the other hand, the text does not slip into utopian optimism that has grabbed some of the so-called radical Left; instead, Wayne leads the reader towards a more cool-headed analysis of political economy grounded into realism and materialism. In effect, most of Wayne's forceful points are -- dare I say it -- rather commonsensical and all the better for it.

Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Supermen in the 20th Century

By Scott Bukatman
Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-8223-3119-5. 55 illustrations, xvi + 296 pp. £17.50 (pbk)

A review by Ross Thompson, University of Dundee, UK

In his introduction to *Kingdom Come*, Alex Ross and Mark Waid's graphic novel about a future war between superheroes, Elliott S. Maggin writes, "In the waning moments of the twentieth century, the superhero is Everyman" (5). The modern age has become accustomed to the superhero. Phenomena of science and physical dexterity no longer hold the same element of spectacle that they once did. Maggin continues, "Look at the way we live: travelling over the Earth at astounding speeds with unimaginable ease; communicating instantly at will with people in the farthest corners of the globe" (6). In the previous century, mankind watched astronauts shoot off into space and walk on the moon. Their puffy, oversized, dome-helmeted suits gave them the look of comic book characters. What once appeared far, far away was now much closer, and much less mysterious as a result.

The moving image is no longer seen as a form of benign witchcraft. It has become everyday, passive entertainment. Scott Bukatman negotiates this territory in *Matters of Gravity*, a popular culture dominated by special effects, where computer-generated imagery creates a world where anything is possible, and nothing, least of all other planets, is out of reach. His writing covers a range of disparate subjects: the futuristic experience offered by Disneyland, or the music video for Fatboy Slim's 'Weapon of Choice', in which a jubilant Christopher Walken dances in a deserted hotel lobby. Tellingly, the most curious element of this short is not that the character leaps over a banister and sails through the air. It is the fact that Walken dances. "I didn't know he could do *that*," the viewer thinks, somewhat ignoring the graceful arcs he performs mid-air.

Elsewhere, Bukatman analyses the technique known as "morphing". This process, which he describes as "continual remaking of the self" was adapted for two science fiction films by the American director James Cameron (134). In *The Abyss* (1989), a pool of water sprouts a fluid tentacle, which elongates along the corridors of a deep sea station before its tip ripples into the shape of a human face. For Cameron's next film *Terminator 2* (1991), the novelty was even greater. Audiences were enthralled by a cyborg made entirely of liquid metal impersonating those whom he executed.

The first thing that the reader notices is the musicality of Bukatman's prose, which is witty and playful whilst losing none of its analytical power. He has a talent for studying complex concepts without getting mired in clumsy literary theory. When a sentence veers too close to the snootily intellectual, Bukatman subverts it with a self-deprecating comment or a wry aside. He knows he is on thin ice speaking of comic books and popcorn movies in language that others might reserve for the 'Classics' and the 'Masters'. In that respect, his writing is

reminiscent of that of the late critic Tony Tanner, who produced expansive and deeply compassionate portraits of authors such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Burroughs at a time when American Literature was not considered a fashionable area of study.

The comic book, for example, perhaps the area on which Bukatman's writing is strongest, has always acted as a purging of teenage and adult neuroses. "Identity is the obsessional centre of superhero comics, as revealed by endless processes of self-transformation and the problematic perceptions of others", he posits (54). While the act of donning a mask has symbolic resonance, a metamorphic dualism that would excite most philosophers, the power of the medium runs much deeper than that.

Like the lowly humans they disguise themselves as, superheroes are driven by insecurities, yearnings and self-doubts. For example, there is the way in which comics company Marvel presents the emergence into the brave new world of puberty as an unremittingly painful period. Bukatman argues,

the Marvel heroes were rarely gifted by birth or by choice; they were instead transformed in young adulthood by (sort of) varied forces: radioactive spider bites, cosmic ray bombardment in near Earth orbit; gamma ray bombardment at a military testing ground […] The Hulk, for example, got big and hairy and his voice changed. Go figure (54).

For the most part, these young people do not view their new powers as a blessing, but as a curse. If the gawky, bespectacled teenager Peter Parker believes that his life is bad before he is transformed into Spider-Man, then it is much worse afterwards. Endlessly plagued by a league of villains hell-bent on destroying his home city of New York, Parker and his alter-ego Spidey is constantly saving his loved ones and fellow civilians whilst trying to maintain some resemblance of a social life and keeping his true identity (the ‘real me', to employ the patois of anaemic American teen dramas) a secret. Stan Lee, the comic book Svengali who claimed to have created the Spider-Man franchise could not resist inserting the moralising maxim ‘With great power comes great responsibility' into the story, but Peter Parker wants neither of those things. He is given power at a stage in life when most normal teenagers enjoy being irresponsible. Therefore, the main selling point of the Spider-Man comic, as Bukatman highlights, is that anyone can relate to it.

Perhaps out of all the superheroes, it is the X-Men (Marvel, again) that most poignantly balances the superhuman with the human. While the students that attend Professor Xavier's school for the gifted are identified on the surface by what Bukatman calls "hypermasculinity" and "supersolidity", inside they are just as fragile as the ‘normal' society from which they seek shelter. Persecuted by the families that do not or will not understand their ‘gift', characters such as Longshot, Shadowcat and Colossus take refuge at the Xavier mansion, where they can find community with others just like them. The individual character arcs of these so-called ‘mutants' are symbolic of the hostility and suspicion on which significant periods of American history have been built.

Put simply, the X-Men, taken individually or as a collective group, could be adopted for any abject group in society, but the most straightforward answer is also the most satisfying. Bukatman writes, "Mutants, while they want to fit in, know their birthright is to exist ‘outside' the normative. They are categorical mistakes of a specific type; they are, in short, adolescents" (69). Take, for example, the character of Cyclops, whose eyes emit lasers that are so powerful that he must wear a protective visor at all times. "The struggle of Cyclops

involves holding back this energy, containing it within himself. To release it would be to destroy his own sense of being (the woman he loves can never see his eyes)" (68). The X-Men series is full of similar metaphors for the insatiable desire for something that you cannot have.

Elsewhere, Bukatman's other observations are just as illuminating. His piece on Cyberpunk author William Gibson is peppered with intriguing sideways shifts in logic. Bukatman namechecks the Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan, but his analysis of creating prose (on either an antiquated typewriter or an electronic word processor) is evocative of the work of Paul Auster, particularly the novella *City of Glass*, in which New York blocks are likened to paragraphs in a book, and a homeless man spells out words by walking the city's streets. His moving discussion of the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 is an effective companion piece to the comic book genre, which features scenes of mass destruction on a regular basis. Furthermore, before the September 11 tragedy took place, American movies frequently featured their cities being decimated. In the aftermath of the assault on the two towers, films like these appeared less often. In a reversal of the conundrum discussed at the beginning of this review, cinema could not match up to real life.

Bukatman's strongest quality is that he takes his subject, not himself, seriously. His essays are compelling because he imbues them with humour, not with archness. Bukatman knows that the notion of a comic book – underpants-worn-outside- tights, overt phallic symbolism, -- is pretty ridiculous, and questions why a grown man would buy so many in the name of ‘research', but his enthusiasm for the material is infectious. At one point, Bukatman states, "Nothing kills a good critical analysis like an author who beats you to it" (47). Bukatman guides the reader to the truth, but in most cases permits them to see it for themselves, with or without x-ray vision.