Style and Meaning: Studies in the Detailed Analysis of Film

By John Gibbs and Douglas Pye (eds.)
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005. ISBN 0-7190-6525-9. 41 illustrations, xiv + 250 pp. £15.99 (pbk), £50.00 (hbk)

A review by James Walters, University of Westminster, UK

John Gibbs and Douglas Pye's edited collection stems from the Style and Meaning Conference held at the University of Reading in 2000. In their preface, the authors make reference to the appetite among scholars attending the conference to engage with issues of detailed analysis and interpretation but reveal that,

> At the same time, even in the context of greater plurality and openness in the field, for some a renewed focus on style and meaning seemed problematic and misguided. One feeling voiced was that to renew a focus on interpretation and style was to turn the clock back to the bad old days, before film studies was placed on a sounder, more rigorous, even more *scientific* footing (2).

This view can hardly be uncommon to anyone engaged in the academic study of film. It is not unusual for the practice of detailed analysis to be treated warily, even with hostility, from time to time and for any sustained emphasis upon style and meaning relationships to be viewed as a superfluous critical activity. Likewise, the proposition that the academy has moved on from such interests is frequently voiced, so that raising the matter of interpreting and evaluating film style is effectively regarded as a regressive tendency. These objections are curious as, for the most part, film studies does not appear to have abandoned analysis of style in relation to meaning at all, with critics and scholars continuing to regularly produce interpretative readings of films whatever the theoretical bias.

Naturally, there are those who invest (and have always invested) strongly in the close scrutiny of film style. One could cite the continuation of the *Movie* tradition of criticism through that journal's now-occasional publication and the titles that continue to appear under its banner, or *CineAction!*, which shares *Movie*'s propensity for style-sensitive criticism, or a number of recent books published in Wallflower's useful *Short Cuts* series that offer potent examples of interpretative criticism, or the continuing work of authors such as Stanley Cavell, George Wilson and William Rothman whose philosophical writings are often based upon a careful attention to film style. The list could continue but, beyond these more obvious and exemplary cases, it is also apparent that a great deal of academic writing on film provides some manner of interpretative accounts and frequently makes reference to the significance of aesthetic elements such as framing, editing, lighting, costuming, sound etc.

To suggest that film studies had lost interest in or 'grown out' of considering such matters would be a misconception. However, the general reluctance to attend overtly to the

challenges and rewards inherent in the careful interpretation and evaluation of film style has perhaps, at times, resulted in a somewhat impoverished mode of description and analysis, whereby arbitrary readings of films are formulated without rigorous attention or adequate explanation. Moreover, as the merits of detailed analysis have remained ambiguous, accuracy in accounts of films can vary, often compromising the line of argument being pursued. It would be entirely wrong to say that the interpretation of film style intrinsically lacks rigour as an academic pursuit, as is intimated in the contentions that Gibbs and Pye describe above, but it would perhaps be true to say that an amount of rigour has drained from the practice (with notable exceptions) through a general lack of concern as to what the useful interpretation and evaluation of film style might involve.

Gibbs and Pye's collection, replete with close readings of films from a number of eminent and emerging scholars, is valuable not only for providing a timely focus upon the merits of the interpretation and evaluation of film style in criticism but also for presenting a series of exemplary essays which analyse films in a disciplined, rigorous and incisive manner. It becomes clear when reading the book that a number of films provide opportunities for detailed analysis so rich that they can be returned to over time to create fresh, incisive readings and new interpretations. For example, V.F. Perkins' chapter (the first and most expansive of the collection) deftly scrutinises moments from films such as *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), *You Only Live Once* (Fritz Lang, 1937) and *Night of the Hunter* (Charles Laughton, 1955), all of which have received a good deal of critical attention elsewhere. Yet Perkins revisits them for the purpose of newly interrogating the fact of the fictional world in film, a subject that has been overwhelmingly taken for granted in previous critical study. Likewise, Neill Potts analyses aspects of style in *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958) -- a film that has already been the focus of varied, often accomplished, readings -- in relation to character interiority -- a topic previously receiving sparse sustained attention. And Steve Neale focuses upon *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophuls, 1948), which has become a crucial text for a number of expressive critics, in order to stress some of the attributes of the film's diegetic soundtrack that he considers to have been somewhat neglected elsewhere.

This diverse revisiting of established critical texts is an area of strength in the book, reinforcing the collection's contemporary relevance and demonstrating the extent to which certain films continue to invite a range of readings. Such diversity in interpretation, however, can frustrate those who would maintain that close analysis throws up a series of discrete readings that fail to locate the defining 'message' of a film. Yet, the extent to which Potts', Neale's and especially Perkins' sharply focussed discussions yield extensive conclusions on the nature of those films and film itself demonstrates a clear relating of the specific to the general. Moreover, it seems inadequate to suggest that films provide only singular meanings, relayed linearly to an audience in the first sitting. The promulgation of that notion gives a poor account of an intricately constructed artistic medium. On the contrary, repeat viewing can surely deepen existing understanding and open up new opportunities for interpretation and evaluation. As Laura Mulvey elucidates in a fluent chapter which itself encompasses a personal return to Sirkian melodrama through an extended analysis of *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, 1959), "textual analysis itself involves stretching out the cinematic image to allow space and time for associative thought, reflection on resonance and connotation, the identification of visual clues, the interpretation of cinematic form and style" (231). This contemplative process, as Mulvey describes it, fundamentally complements the guiding principles of advanced critical study and can be observed in abundance throughout the edited collection.

As well as those chapters profitably revisiting texts more familiar to the field, the collection also contains a number of essays exploring matters of style and meaning in other, less-chartered areas of filmmaking. Jim Hillier, for example, lays out some of the special challenges for interpreting style and meaning relationships in *avant-garde* cinema as time and space, image and sound often function disharmoniously in those films. Using *Sink or Swim* (Su Friedrich, 1990) as a case study, Hillier points out that the difficult style of the *avant-garde* nonetheless contains its own pleasures distinct from the 'normal' expectations associated with cinema. In an equivalent departure, Sarah Cardwell's chapter suggests ways in which the methodology of close textual analysis can enhance television studies alongside her own close reading of a sequence from *Perfect Strangers* (Stephen Poliakoff, 2001). Both Hillier and Cardwell employ the techniques of detailed analysis away from the canon of filmmaking more usually associated with the practice and, in so doing, suggest avenues of debate that those engaged with matters of style and meaning in film (and television) might choose to usefully pursue. Again, these new critical directions serve to reinforce the collection's contemporary importance as well as emphasising the pervasive value of detailed analysis across forms and boundaries.

The breadth of films covered in this collection and the high calibre of contributing authors should broaden its appeal to a wide group of film scholars and enthusiasts. Each chapter provides detailed and expressive accounts of individual films that will enrich future viewing, expanding the potential for understanding and evaluation. Furthermore, each contributor illustrates the merits of close analysis of film style through their carefully reasoned and sensitively handled arguments. In this way, the collection functions as a series of case studies for good practice in the interpretive criticism of film style. (And those interested in the practical application of the book's methodological approaches will be rewarded by Andrew Klevan's chapter offering notes on the teaching of film style within the university.) The book may find appeal across audiences precisely because sophisticated conclusions are reached through treating film itself as a common focus, rather than by reading films 'through' other disciplines such as social, cultural, psychological or political theory. Detailed analysis of this kind therefore fulfils a democratic function: the film is made central to the authors' claims, which in turn can be judged and evaluated according to the films themselves, there for all to see. As Gibbs and Pye make clear in their introduction,

> A central advantage of rooting interpretation in the detail of the film…is that it provides a material and verifiable basis for discussion. Appealing to what is observably present in the film provides a platform of shareable experience, with ready reference back to the film…now facilitated by the availability of films on VHS and DVD (4).

Taking into account the opportunities for access and engagement provided, it seems logical that this collection might be used as a textbook in universities and colleges, introducing a key methodological approach in film studies as well as a portfolio of film titles that can broaden and enrich viewing experiences. However, unlike some textbooks that seek to reduce concepts into broad-brush accounts which then translate unattractively into students' work, *Style and Meaning* encourages the detailed analysis of film and concurrently proposes a more intricate model of critical expression wholly appropriate to the demands of contemporary academic inquiry.

Sembene: Imagining Alternatives in Film and Fiction

By David Murphy
Oxford: James Currey, 2000. ISBN 0-85255-555-5. 6 illustrations, xii+275pp. £14.95

A review by Alexander Fisher, University of Ulster, UK

While studies of African film are not particularly difficult to track down these days, overviews of individual filmmakers continue to be rare phenomena, due in part to the simple fact that few African directors have had the financial means to produce more than a few films. However, Ousmane Sembene, the Senegalese author and 'father of African cinema,' and the subject matter of David Murphy's book, has already been the focus of two volumes, namely Paulin Soumanou Vieyra's *Sembène Ousmane, cineaste* (Presence Africaine, 1972) and Françoise Pfaff's *The Cinema of Ousmane Sembene: A Pioneer of African Film* (Greenwood Press, 1984). What differentiates David Murphy's study is that it considers both his literary and cinematic achievements on equal footings, while freeing them from the interpretive constraints of 'African literature' and 'African cinema' paradigms. Consequently, Murphy avoids the temptation to interpret Sembene within 'Africanist' or 'third-worldist' terms, instead articulating the nuanced shifts in Sembene's political focus as a corollary to the specific cultural contexts within which he produces his work.

The volume straddles individual themes and texts, using close textual analysis to exemplify particular aspect of Sembene's anti-colonial project. Thus, for examples: 'resistance and representation' is discussed in relation to the novel *God's Bits of Wood* (Heinemann, 1960) and *Man is Culture*, (the latter a paper Sembene presented in America in 1975 demonstrating that the notion of purely aesthetic, decorative art was non-existent in pre-colonial Africa); 'consumerism, fetishism and socialism' is discussed in relation to Sembene's 1974 film *Xala* (an acerbic satire on the hypocrisy of the post-independence Senegalese elite); and the 'representation of women' receives its own chapter in which Murphy discusses a cross-section of Sembene's work. None of these approaches are particularly groundbreaking, but this structure allows Murphy to explore the thematic strands which run through Sembene's work while considering the texts in substantial detail. Appended to the main discussions is an interview with Sembene conducted by the author.

Murphy argues that Sembene's film and literary works "imagine alternatives to 'official' versions of the truth" (226). The dynamics of Sembene's project are transmuted throughout his career; we learn, for instance, that the Fanonian belief in African independence via revolution evident in Sembene's early novels (written in exile in France), gives way, upon his return to Senegal in the years after independence, to a "more disillusioned and ironic but also more imaginative and more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of his society" (218). This is supported via an investigation into his (often overlooked) shorter works such as *Tribal Scars* (1962), in which "the whole practice of storytelling is problematised" (41) and *White Genesis* (1966), which interrogates the role of the *griot* (the storyteller of West African tradition). Murphy emphasises the elliptic form and ironic distance of these works, arguing

that this complexity undermines the recurrent characterisation of Sembene as a 'realist writer' primarily concerned with articulating a Marxist agenda via naturalistic modes of narration and lacking any real interest in form. For Murphy, "Sembene is an artist who is keenly aware of the dynamics of art and culture, combining traditional African techniques of storytelling with the eye for detail, and the political awareness, of the social realist writer" (40). Implicit throughout the book is the idea that it is the tendency to consider Sembene's literary and filmic works in isolation, a tendency that almost invariably favours his novels and his more 'realist' films such as *Borom Sarret* (1963) and *Xala* (1974) that results in this limited understanding of his *oeuvre*.

The author also undermines discussions of Sembene that depend on polar oppositions, such as 'tradition versus modernity' and 'West versus Africa.' He argues that Sembene in fact refuses these oppositions, in relation to the latter "focussing instead on the interactions between Africa and the West, and, more importantly, on the conflicts within African societies themselves" (52). Likewise, Murphy rejects essentialist notions of identity, for example undermining Negritude's aim of identifying an authentic African identity, via the Congolese philosopher Charles Z Bowao's assertion that "'Western'" ethnocentrism is no more valid than 'African' ethnocentrism and vice versa. You cannot criticise the former as an historical fact while legitimising the other as an historical ideal" (16). The author demonstrates how a rejection of ethnocentrism is evident in Sembene's project; discussing the ways in which Sembene offers alternative accounts of Senegalese history (which, unlike official histories, do not attempt to hide their ideological subjectivity), he argues that Sembene's narratives, "are precisely designed to be ideological, to espouse his Marxist viewpoint" (225). Murphy (like Sembene) is clearly more concerned with problems of cultural specificity, rather than the issue of imagining 'authentic' African or Senegalese identities.

The most impressive aspect of the book however is Murphy's informative contextualising of individual texts, especially in relation to Sembene's filmic output. The author's comprehensive analysis of Sembene's novels such as *Xala* (1973) provides an illuminating basis upon which to consider the films they later became. Similarly, he is able to provide the reader with a wealth of background information relating to the films' production contexts that is woefully absent from many studies of African cinema. His discussion of *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988) exemplifies this; the film is based on real-life events, depicting a camp accommodating Senegalese former-soldiers who had been enlisted to support Allied forces during the Second World War. The soldiers hold a justifiable revolt and consequently the occupying French forces storm of the camp in revenge, causing numerous deaths. Here we are given a comprehensive account of the events upon which the film was based, poignantly relating how the role played in the war by the victims of the massacre was only ever officially recognised after the release of Sembene's film. Such a thorough contextual understanding allows Murphy to demonstrate the impact that Sembene's work has at a pragmatic level in West Africa, rejecting the widespread perception of African filmmakers as being more concerned with making grand political statements and networking on the international festival circuit than engaging with local concerns. Likewise, in the appended interview Sembene describes his attempts to fund a Wolof newspaper as a challenge to the status of French as the official language of Senegal (Wolof being the country's most widely spoken language).

Despite the level of depth in this investigation of Sembene's *oeuvre*, the volume is also an excellent introduction to post-colonial theory, providing general coverage of the works of figures such as Césaire, Fanon and Cabral through to Homi Bhabha and Neil Lazarus, as well

as some general coverage of issues relating to African literature and cinema. No doubt this is due in part to the fact that the book is based on a doctoral thesis completed a couple of years before its publication in this form, and as such a literature overview accompanies more detailed analysis. The volume remains highly reader-friendly however, and as such is recommended for both readers with a specific interest in Sembene, and those looking for an introduction to African film and literature. Rigorous in its scholarship yet lucid in its prose style, *Sembene: Imagining Alternative in Film and Fiction* is a gratifying read for both the general and specialist reader.

How Hollywood Works

By Janet Wasko
London: Sage, 2003. ISBN 0-7619-6814-8. vii + 248 pp. £18.04 (pbk), £60 (hbk)
European Film Industries By Anne Jäckel

European Film Industries

By Anne Jäckel

London: BFI, 2003. ISBN 0-85170-948-6. 12 b&w illustrations, vii + 168 pp. £14.24 (pbk), £33 (hbk)

A review by Philippe Meers, University of Antwerp, Belgium

Hollywood and Europe have had a continuous relation of love and hate since the early days of the cinema industry. In film studies this relationship has mostly been analysed on a textual level, looking back at the history of 'classics' created by great directors and actors. In the last decade, however, several film historical studies analysed the 'Hollywood vs. Europe' issue on more structural levels. Apart from classical textual approaches and the recent upsurge of historical contextual and reception studies, much less attention has been given to the study of contemporary structures, industries and power relations in the US and Europe, both part of global filmed entertainment. There still is a need to unveil "the mechanics of the industry" (Wasko, 2) in addition to the study of film texts, genres and audiences.

Two timely books that tackle these questions have appeared almost simultaneously, each focussing on one side of the Atlantic. Anne Jäckel focusses on European film industries, Janet Wasko studies the Hollywood system. Neither of the books is explicitly entering the debate on cultural dependence/globalisation. The analyses stay at the level of basic facts, key figures and general insights. But this does allow for the global dominance of Hollywood to be put in perspective.

The book by Anne Jäckel on European film industries, is the first in a new series of the British Film Institute on 'international screen industries.' Although it deals with highly different national contexts, some general tendencies are visible. But the first problem every book on European cinema encounters is: how to define its scope and subject? What is European? In practice the scope of the book is wide enough: it not only covers Western Europe, but equally Central and Eastern Europe, the EU but also the Council of Europe. The problem remains however due to a lack in conceptual clarity. Where does Jäckel draw the border? More reflection on the concept of Europe and European cinema would have been welcome.

Jäckel accomplishes the agenda set forward in her introduction: "to explore the changes which have taken place in Europe's film industries, concentrating on conditions shaping those industries since the early 1990s, and to examine variations between national territories, both at the level of the industry … and in terms of the interaction between public authorities and the film sector" (1). In six chapters the author covers historical developments (in a nutshell), production, financing and co-production, European and pan-European production initiatives, distribution networks, and exhibition.

The author duly stresses the heterogeneity in the European production sector (Chapter Two). We are dealing with different film economies. She equally reflects on possible solutions for the European film industries: critical mass and/or volume in activity for instance could provide the key to success for the technical industries. The main strategies and constraints are explained: delocalisation and networking as a way to achieve economies of scale, specialisation and innovation, illustrated with examples in animation and special effects. As for genres, important but common insights are repeated, such as the fact that comedies play an important role in sustaining the viability of many national film industries but do not travel well. The classical divide between auteur-led versus producer-driven productions is also foregrounded.

A third chapter deals with production financing and co-production: the complex combination of private and public sources, with a focus on France as case in point. In a fourth chapter Jäckel sketches the history of European (EU Media programmes) and Pan-European (Council of Europe's Eurimages) production initiatives, at times with the necessary critique. She also covers other, less known, supranational funds such as Ibermedia and the Nordic film and television fund. The conclusion clearly stands: "programmes have not succeeded in developing a collective and competitive industrial logic to help the European film industries match the strength of Hollywood" (88). There is in effect neither a common film market nor a strong and effective pan-European distribution system.

On the distribution level, networks within Europe are still lacking, apart from the US majors. The mergers and alliances in European distribution (often with US majors) could indeed become a danger for independent distributors, as major groups are acquiring the more promising art-house titles. In the final chapter on film exhibition and the European box office, the reader is again confronted with the harsh facts of life: the European box office is predominantly American. An interesting section on arthouse exhibition is included here, as well as legitimate speculations on digital distribution: "it will serve only to strengthen the position of the existing large US and European chains, as they will be the only operators in a position to raise the levels of capital required for the transition" (139).

Some details are less accurate. The first European multiplex did not open in 1985 in UK, but in 1982 in Belgium (118). For a non-native speaker, it seems strange to speak of 'foreign-language' films in a European context meaning non English spoken films, and thus adopting to the biased Hollywood perspective/discourse on English language and "foreign language" films (100).

On the whole, this book has great pedagogical value as a general introduction. For in depth analyses of particular countries and/or issues however, you will have to find additional reading material. It is not so much a new contribution or an original point of view, but rather an excellent summary of existing analyses and findings, well-organised and accessible. Jäckel integrates the existing literature, including non Anglophone sources. She furthermore

illustrates her discourse with well-chosen examples and case studies of movies, companies or debates.

The European overview Jäckel offers us, urges for a highly critical stance towards globalised capitalist ventures. And this is exactly what Janet Wasko asks the reader to do in her new book *How Hollywood Works*. Almost a decade after her groundbreaking *Hollywood in the Information Age* (Polity Press, 1994) Janet Wasko again brilliantly explains in detail 'how Hollywood works.' The book contains chapters on the classical phases of production, distribution and exhibition/retail. Two additional chapters highlight how the Hollywood industry is expanding and promoting and protecting itself. Wasko aims "to survey and critique the current policies and structure of the US film industry, as well as its relationships to other media industries" (1). She hereby focuses on the major players, the studios, "companies that are a part of transnational diversified entertainment conglomerates involved in a wide range of activities" (1).

Wasko, one of the most prominent contemporary voices of the political economy approach to film, explicitly reaffirms her position within the field of film studies: political economy analyses motion pictures as commodities produced and distributed within a capitalist industrial structure (3). Thus the profit motive and the commodity nature of film are the guiding principles for her analysis. Wasko starts of in the introduction with a brief but interesting history of political economy approaches to film: from the early beginnings with Dallas Smythe and Thomas Guback, to the more recent approaches of, among others, Pendakur, Garnham, Aksoy and Robins. As she reiterates, the political economy approach is much less common within film studies, and on the other hand, film is much less often included in political economy of communication. This makes her book all the more relevant.

In a first chapter, Wasko guides us through the complex process of film production, sketching the different phases to come to a final product. She illustrates how creativity is tempered by "clout and power " (55) and decisions are made within the parameters of the box office. It is significant for a realistic view on the power-play in Hollywood, that the majors are not presented in the first instance as production companies, but rather in a second chapter, under the heading of distribution companies. And it is again demonstrated that the majors form an oligopoly. Within each topic, the main issues of debate are explained. On distribution matters for instance, the controversial issue of creative accounting of Hollywood studios is highlighted.

When it comes to the exhibition of movies (or 'retail,' as Wasko calls it) much attention is devoted to cinemas with topics such as wide release and summer and holiday releases. Here again, a general trend of concentration and integration becomes visible. Besides the problematic evolution towards electronic or digital cinemas, the author devotes many pages to film outlets other then cinemas: home video, DVD, cable TV, television, video on demand, even non-theatrical markets such as airlines with in-flight movies and internet film distribution. And for most of the current and newly developing outlets for Hollywood films, Wasko shows how the majors (try to) stay in control.

The originality of the political economy approach becomes more apparent, discussing the main trends for expanding the industry. Wasko explains convincingly how commercial activities have accelerated dramatically over the last decade. Product placement, merchandizing, tie-ins, video games, all fostered the commercialization and the commodification of movies. Not only creativity may be compromised when scripts and

characters must fit in merchandise formulas but "film now represents not only a commodity in itself, but also serves as an advertising medium for other commodities and increasingly generates additional commodities" (170). And although the majors are a part of diversified business units, the corporations are creating synergy between individual units and producing immediately recognisable brands. On the international markets, the development and proliferation of new technologies plus privatisation and regulation actions worldwide have combined to further enhance an already lucrative global market for Hollywood (174). Wasko offers a brief but illuminating overview of the domination of Hollywood: a complex mixture of historical, economic, political and cultural factors. She also destroys the idealistic notions of the 'free market without state intervention' discourse so precious to MPPA boss Jack Valenti and neo-classical economic analyses. She shows how Hollywood does not simply rely on the strength of the movie product, but uses many strategies to protect its interests within the US and internationally. It receives considerable support and assistance from the state. This is illustrated with the case of piracy in Eastern Europe, where the MPA assists governments in updating copyright legislation abroad (216).

The volume comes richly illustrated with tables but has no photos. It includes several appendices, with ratings, and a (rather hilarious) index of '*Variety*-Speak,' with excerpts from the primary Hollywood trade publication's 'Slanguage dictionary,' including expressions as 'blurb,' 'boff,' 'crix,' 'preem' and 'scribbler.'

Wasko concludes with a challenging finale, unmasking four main "film industry illusions" (220), showing again "why it matters how Hollywood works." The general theme of the book is that the majors are well positioned to maintain their prominence in the new forms of entertainment. She challenges assumptions often made about the film business. Throughout the book it is demonstrated that it is not this "unique and risky" business, but a stable profit driven oligopolistic capitalist system. For Wasko Hollywood does not provide "a supremely democratic form of entertainment" (223). She duly points towards economic, cultural and political implications of these ideological products. But then again we arrive at the limitations of political economy analysis. The implications, impact or effect of ideological products such as film are always implied but never thoroughly developed.

It would be unfair to make a direct comparison between the two books, considering the differences in scope, object and approach. Both books give detailed descriptions, the main difference lies in the ideological starting point. Wasko doesn't stop with a mere description, she has an explicit political economy research agenda. Jäckel also has to cover a much more diverse landscape. This is because "it continues to make sense to discuss the importance and the competitiveness of Europe's film industries in national terms" (1). The books also share common types of sources: business papers, academic literature, interviews with professionals. One problem both books face is the fast developments within the industries, mergers, etc. An update in the second edition could be necessary.

These books are definitely highly recommended material for both undergraduate and graduate courses on the US and the European film industries. Reading the two together again forces you to take into account the huge differences between Hollywood and European film industries, and at the same time to acknowledge the intrinsic ties across the Atlantic. Ultimately, we are unable to understand one without the other.

Deleuze and Horror Film

By Anna Powell
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. ISBN 0-7486-1747-7. 232pp. £45.00
Japanese Horror Cinema By Jay McRoy (ed.)

Japanese Horror Cinema

By Jay McRoy (ed.)

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. ISBN 0-7486-6199-5X. £16.99

A review by Patricia Allmer, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

Two recent publications have added significant new contributions to current writing and scholarship on horror film. Anna Powell's *Deleuze and Horror Film* offers a rethinking of currently used theoretical tools in relation to the horror genre, and introduces philosophical and analytical concepts deriving from the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze to the exploration of specific horror films. Jay McRoy's edited *Japanese Horror Cinema*, in contrast, explores an emergent sub-genre which has recently achieved a high degree of prominence and popularity. Both books can be seen as inaugural -- Powell's is the first to conceptualise horror cinema through Deleuzian frameworks and McRoy's offers the first up-to-date engagement with a significant sub-genre that is marked by specific national characteristics. Both books open up new territories of enquiry which represent valuable additions as well as challenges to the already existing tradition of writing on horror cinema.

Deleuze and Horror Film studies horror-films through Deleuzian and Bergsonian thought in order, Powell argues, to counteract the still prevailing psychoanalytic 'master discourse' in film criticism in general, and in the analysis of horror films in particular. Through Deleuzian thought, Powell seeks to shift critical and theoretical attention away from the focus on the symbolic and unconscious contents of horror films, explorations which often see specific films as fundamentally allegorical, endless re-enactments of conventionally psychoanalytically significant dramas of the self and other. Instead she argues for an as yet rarely explored focus on specific aspects of, and a specific comprehension of, the horror film's aesthetic contents:

The genre has showcased strongly affective style from its outset. Excessive forms of cinematography, *mise-en-scène*, editing and sound are the pivotal tools of horror, used to arouse visceral sensations and to 'horrify' the viewer. Theories of representation and narrative structure neglect the primacy of corporeal sensations, and although there has been some exploratory work with horror film spectatorship, the affective dynamic of the films has so far been downplayed (2).

Powell's principal shifts of critical focus are from the Freudian state of being to the Deleuzian state of becoming, from the psyche to the body, from stasis and completion to flux and continual reformation: "Psychoanalytic subjectivity is reconfigured by Deleuze and Guattari as a physical process in perpetual motion" (4). She moves from a focus on plots and themes to an application of the Deleuzian argument that there is no difference between content and expression, an assertion explored in the main through an analysis of how horror films allow, even celebrate, the viewers' corporeal responses to what is projected before them. The viewer becomes, in this reading, a technological machine bonding [in the manner of Cronenberg's *Videodrome* (1983)] with the cinematic apparatus. What is at stake here is experience, generated by the sensory affect of horror films rather than by the allegorical significance of them -- a film, in Deleuzian terms, communicates not merely on a visual, representational level, but also on the level of sensory experiences, through "*affective* contamination" (4). Nevertheless, Powell stresses that her new theorisations should be regarded as complementary to the already existent perspectives, rather than as a new master discourse replacing or overriding previous modes of analysis.

Powell maps out Deleuzian concepts by exemplifying them through the exploration of specific films, a methodology which leads to detailed scene-by-scene discussions of each particular *mise-en-scène*. These analyses remain strangely detached, strangely removed from the previous corpus of writings on the films discussed or on film theory. There is little attempt to position the films in relation to previous research or to explore how the Deleuzian reading adds to or changes previous findings. However, as Deleuze stresses, the theory of cinema is "[…] a practice of concepts, and it must be judged in the light of the other practices with which it interferes. A theory of cinema is not 'about' cinema, but about the concepts that cinema gives rise to and which are themselves related to other concepts corresponding to other practices […]." (Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image,* 280)

A sense of detachment can also be found in other aspects of this book. Analyses here do not attempt to re-locate the films, through the new Deleuzian findings, in relation to any kind of social or political universe. Powell largely avoids the political motivation of Deleuze's theories, pre- and post-1968. His writings are invariably concerned about how capitalism and political powers can be subverted and overcome: they are "introductions to non-fascist life," as Michel Foucault has argued. (Michel Foucault 'Preface' in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* xiii) Deleuze's philosophy asks "How can and must desire deploy its forces within the political domain and grow more intense in the process of overturning the established order? *Ars erotica, ars theoretica, ars politica*" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, xii).

However, this sense of detachment is also the level at which Powell's book is interesting. It can be read as an experimental project, not following established rules of writing on film and film theory and, leading the reader instead into a strange universe where being has been dissolved into colours, rhythms, movements and becomings, into bodies without organs: as Powell herself comments: "Film is an assemblage of bodies-without-organs, as apparatus, text and spectator intermesh, intersecting physiology and psychology with technology. […] The material assemblage of bodies enables awareness of space, movement and duration" (79). Her readings invoke a truly *unheimlich* universe devoid of ethics and politics. The analysis of *The Fly* (David Cronenberg, 1986) seems to exemplify this -- whilst the transformation of Brundle into fly could be seen as a relegation of ethical and political responsibility (as Brundle states: "insects don't have politics"), Powell argues that we should

"shift focus from these negative readings" since by "leaving human constraints behind, he revels in the becomings of his new formation […]" (80).

Apart from some typographical mistakes and the persistent misspelling of Nietzsche's name throughout the book, this book offers an intriguing demonstration of how the application of Deleuzian theory to horror films might be a challenging new perspective which, particularly in conjunction with other theoretical frameworks, offers new insights into this genre.

Jay McRoy's edited collection *Japanese Horror Cinema* has a completely different agenda from Powell's book, its intention being to understand Japanese horror films as consisting of the exploration of "images of out-of-control madness, bloodshed and mass destruction," offering commentary and analysis (in marked contrast to Powell) on "corporate capitalism's assault on the very institutions and values its superstructure says it holds dear: the home, the family, the community, the sanctity of the individual." (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, xii) The horror genre here is regarded as offering an important outlet for political criticisms and a critical language which is, elsewhere in the culture, otherwise censored or unspoken. The essays address the current international appeal of Japanese horror cinema in order to provide a fuller comprehension of "historically specific social anxieties [which] may offer scholars a crucial barometer for measuring the impact of economic, philosophical and political continuities and discontinuities upon a nation and its populace's various, and often conflicting, notions of national, class and gender identity" (15).

Japanese Horror Cinema is part of Edinburgh University Press's *Traditions in World Cinema* series (edited by Steven Jay Schneider), and its thirteen essays are split into four thematic sections. These address four major concerns of Japanese horror cinema, comprising 'History, Tradition' and 'Gender, Terror, and the "Avenging Spirit" Motif,' 'National Anxiety and Cultural Fears' and 'The Production and Consumption of Fear.' Essays such as Eric White's 'Nakata Hideo's *Ringu* and *Ringu 2*,' which analyses the films as expressions of "a new cultural logic, a logic of the simulacrum according to which copies of copies vary continually from an always already lost original" (41), manage the careful balancing act of being comprehensible introductory case studies of key aspects, and saying something new and interesting, and maintaining an informed, up-to-date theoretical position. The essays therefore also exemplify the application of a variety of theoretical and analytical approaches, ranging from psychoanalysis to postmodernism and reception theories to Marxist analysis, as well as tracing historical developments.

This categorisation is part of a key distinctive feature of this book, namely its clear structure, which makes it accessible to students and a valuable tool for teaching Japanese horror cinema. Each part of the book starts with a brief introduction which gives an overview about the essays which follow and shows the links between them. McRoy's overall introduction to the book provides the reader with a good and interesting synopsis of the history, major trends and sub-genres of Japanese horror cinema. His summaries of different sub-genres are accompanied by helpful lists of exemplary films, which are further extended by a filmography which includes a useful guide to DVD availability in the UK and US, as well as information on reputable on-line providers, easing the difficulty of finding the films.

This book teases out and critically discusses parallels between Japanese and Western cultures, arguing that Japanese horror has in its essential features "a relationship to its society similar to that of American horror in the post-Vietnam 1970s" (xii). Effective equations are repeatedly drawn between Japanese and Western horror cinema, for example in Ruth

Goldberg's essay 'The Nightmare of Romantic Passion in Three Classic Japanese Horror Films,' which demonstrates, in discussing Miike Takashi's *Audition* (2000), Nakata Hideo's *Ringu* (1998) and Nakagawa Nobuo's *Jigoku* (1960), their incorporating "larger concepts of passion and romantic attachment which are represented as being monstrous" (30). Goldberg, in her discussion on *Jigoku*, argues that the film explores the social pressures of marriage, portraying its main character as choosing hell over the impending marriage to his fiancée, a theme she also traces out in Western films (with its closest counterpart being Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*):

> The repeated theme of 'I was all set to get married when I suddenly turned into/encountered a monster' is not unique to Japanese horror, but rather is critical to the canon of international horror cinema as a whole. It is on the verge of marriage, after all, that the Baron von Frankenstein unleashes a monster, Jonathan Harker is suddenly called away to Transylvania, and Dr Jekyll starts mucking about in his lab (33).

The book argues that the increased popularity of Japanese horror films outside of Japan also suggests the production of Western and specifically Hollywood film as in creative decline. As McRoy states in his final discussion on cinematic hybridity between Japanese and US films, this rise in popularity is "a testament not only to the unique and compelling vision of directors like Shimizu Takashi, Nakata Hideo, Kurosawa Kiyoshi and Miike Takashi, but also to the stale redundancy that has become an all too familiar trait in horror films produced within major 'western' studio systems, especially Hollywood" (182). McRoy warns of revisionist adaptations, such as Gore Verbinski's remake of Nakata's *Ringu*, which "reduce the Japanese films' perceived 'difference,'" compromising "through heavy-handed direction, the very aesthetic and narrative content that render the original texts effectively unsettling and terrifying" (182). Such adaptations are revisionist, and digested potentially challenging filmic contents into Westernised, palatable narratives, removing the films from their Japanese roots and re-rooting them in a toned down Western ideology. This is, of course, also the point where this book reveals its problematic dimension, a point where it can be perceived as belonging to precisely this Western apparatus which imposes Western film-theoretical frameworks and ways of thinking on the films, since this collection contains no writings by Japanese scholars, leaving open questions such as how these films are theorised and regarded in Japanese academic contexts.

However, the care taken in the writings of these essays, demonstrated in the continual reflecting upon the relations between Japanese and Western horror films, suggests an implicit awareness of this problem and the hierarchical, appropriative dimension of Western discourse. Whilst *Japanese Horror Cinema* acknowledges the fruitful significance of cultural differences which challenge cultural perceptions, it also identifies the cinematic apparatus as an area of dialogic exchanges between different cultures in the form of potentially challenging cinematic cross-fertilisations.

Although entirely different in focus and theorisation, both these books manage to convey and account for, from different perspectives, the continuing significance of horror films as sources of cultural analyses and explorations as well as aesthetic and visceral experiences.

The Fountainheads: Wright, Rand, the FBI and Hollywood

By Donald Leslie Johnson
Jefferson, North Carolina & London: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2005. ISBN 0-7864-1958-X. 59 illustrations, xii + 231pp. £33.49
The Gordon File: A Screenwriter Recalls 20 Years of FBI Surveillance By Bernard Gordon & Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach: The Hidden Structure of Successful Screenplays By Paul Joseph Gulino

The Gordon File: A Screenwriter Recalls 20 Years of FBI Surveillance

By Bernard Gordon

Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2004. ISBN 0-292-72843-3. 344pp. £21.95

Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach: The Hidden Structure of Successful Screenplays

By Paul Joseph Gulino

New York & London: Continuum, 2004. ISBN 0-8264-1568-7. 19 illustrations, xiv + 230pp. £10.99

A review by David Dunn, Southampton University, UK

I have never been a convert to Ayn Rand's egocentric philosophy, sometimes called objectivism, yet it holds a sinister fascination. Her anti-social, anti-socialistic beliefs were never big on college campuses; however she did have converts, particularly during the Cold War period, as she embraced selfishness -- the dark side of individualism -- and showed how a utopia of everyone acting selfishly was for the public good. Like every critic who has seen the black and white film made of Rand's novel, *The Fountainhead* (King Vidor, 1949) and starring Gary Cooper, I find it less than compelling drama. Rand had worked in the film industry as a script writer since arriving in California in 1926, and later famously testified before HUAC, admonishing Hollywood for its attacks on US capitalism.

Rand was a Russian émigré who detested all things Soviet. She fully developed her ideas about the primacy of the individual while she lived in the USA, yearning for a different future than the Roosevelt administration was promising. Donald Leslie Johnson, in a beautifully bound and printed volume, reproduces Rand's 1937 statement of her objectivist philosophy:

"…My happiness is not the means to any end. It is the end…I owe nothing to my brothers…I ask none to live for me, nor do I live for any others" [ix]. Rand believed in society in the same way as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher did. However her philosophy not only advocated the best should be rewarded but that, until they were, the best and brightest should boycott society, taking the most menial jobs rather than having their talents exploited.

Frank Lloyd Wright was the architect, most famously known for Kaufmann house, 'Fallingwater' at Bear Run, Pennsylvania -- the one where the water comes pouring out of the rocks below the expansive main lounge. His philosophy was to design organic and decentralised buildings and communities as a response to a given problem, and he was open, even aggressive, in his criticisms of conventional town planning.

Critics have long commented that in *The Fountainhead* (Rand's most famous novel published in 1943, Prentice Hall & IBD), the main protagonist Roark, who is an architect, bears a strong resemblance to Wright, in terms of their belief systems, admiration for individualism and enterprise. Rand claimed that the similarities were only in their approach to 'principles' and innovation as modern US architects. However, as Donald Leslie Johnson shows, though Rand's hero-worshipping correspondence and Wright's frequent lack of interest in becoming more closely involved, there was more role-modelling than Rand admitted. Wright initially refused meetings with Rand. However as the Cold War heightened and Warner Brothers from 1947 were looking for screenplays critical of communism as penance for their wartime pro-Soviet output, most notably *Mission to Moscow* (Michael Curtiz, 1943), the filming of the *Fountainhead* forced the two closer.

Much of this study by Johnson is what I would term as fragmented, parallel lives. There are sections first on Wright, then on Rand, then on Wright and Rand. The FBI section, for example, is built on the fact that Rand testified before HUAC as a friendly witness (albeit not for as long as she would have liked) and Wright, in common with almost everyone of note, had a FBI file that listed incidents and affiliations of a potential communist nature, such as wartime meetings in support of the US's hard-pressed ally, the Soviet Union. In fact Wright, like Rand, was anti-communism and anti-collectivism and both were elitists.

Johnson, himself an architectural historian, goes on to produce some very interesting work on the set designs for *The Fountainhead* and every section of the book is richly illustrated, with a good index and some appendices (which, although disparate, do offer film credits, a film outline and a book synopsis of *The Fountainhead*). However one is left wondering whether there is enough material here to justify a full-length work? Johnson's main hypothesis and proofs would barely constitute an article of academic length. That leaves the author pleading for us to understand the biographies of creators and to see architecture as telling us "what we have been, are, or [where we] might go" [173].

On November 25, 1970 the FBI closed their investigation into Bernard Gordon. He was a screenwriter whose extensive credits included *The Day of the Triffids* (Steve Sekely, 1962), *55 Days at Peking* (Nicholas Ray, 1963), *The Thin Red Line* (Terence Malick, 1964) and *Battle of the Bulge* (Ken Annakin, 1965). He directed *Horror Express* (Eugenio Martin, 1973) and *Pancho Villa* (Eugenio Martin, 1972). Using the US Freedom of Information Act, he tried to find out what his greatest critics (the FBI) had to say about him as a former Communist Party member, who'd been investigated by HUAC in 1952 and blacklisted. He obtained 287 pages of files about himself. 202 other pages the FBI admitted to withholding and, as Gordon remarks, who knows how many more pages were destroyed? He quotes JK

Galbraith, who described his own dossier as an 'unparalleled mire of misinformation.' Certainly Gordon's autobiography -- which in effect is what this book is -- when placed alongside The Bureau's recorded observations from its informants and 'tails,' shows that although the West won the Cold War, it was scarcely thanks to the nature of focused, western 'intelligence.'

As Gordon was blacklisted during the late 1940s and '50s, much of what he wrote or co-wrote during that period was unacknowledged, most famously *Flesh and Fury* (Joseph Pevney, 1952), starring Tony Curtis, and *Hellcats of the Navy* (Nathan Juran, 1957), starring Ronald Reagan and Nancy Davis. It would be gratuitous for a later generation of historians to criticise a memoir, saying that this is old ground better trod by the likes of Dalton Trumbo and Ring Lardner, Jr. However, this particular account of national Cold War paranoia and a screenwriter's downgrade from thousands of dollars a week to a scrimp and travel routine at times reads as self-indulgent. That said, it demonstrates the time and effort the FBI devoted to the little people of the film industry (*my term*) and allows a new generation of readers to marvel at the day-day or weekly-monthly grind of a US screenwriter, which, while very hard work, produced fabulous salaries, and allowed them to share in the extravagance of an ex-pat life in Europe during the 1950s and '60s.

Gordon is well-read and introduces into his autobiography not only FBI testimony but also other writers, such as Viktor Navasky and Michael Moore. However in interrogating his FBI file we learn little other than it was often wrong. Ironically, the files he's managed to obtain provide aides memoirs enabling Gordon to write his autobiography whose details might otherwise have been lost to senior moments. We can only hope that we are all being watched and our movements recorded at state expense in order to top up the final pension.

I must confess to a liking for simple models and basic formulae. As a scholar of the Humanities, I often yearn for the comfort of the rulebooks that seem available to social scientists and linguists. (As you can imagine, I prefer approaching languages through an understanding of their grammar.) So any rule-based approach to creative writing always interests me, and Paul Joseph Gulino's clear, engaging and very useful book does not disappoint.

Gulino's thesis is that standard (two-hour) films consist of eight sequences. The sequences (which he identifies A-H) are all approximately 15 minutes long and serve the following purpose.

Sequence A: Within the initial quarter of an hour, the screenwriter provides the hook to get the audience interested and answers the 'w' questions -- Who? What? Where? and When? Sequence B (ending about a quarter of the way through the picture) poses the dramatic questions, setting up the main tension, and signalling the end of act one. Sequence C is the protagonist's first attempt at resolving the issues revealed in Sequence B. In Sequence D, we see the protagonist fail. By the end of this sequence there is often a *culmination* (first or midpoint) -- a revelation or a reversal of fortune that complicates the protagonist's task. In Sequence E the protagonist tackles the new complications shown in the *culmination*. Sequence F is the final sequence of the second act, aka the *second culmination*. The audience is given an insight into a possible outcome of the picture (or its mirror opposite) as the protagonist, who has eliminated all the easy solutions and is finding out how complex life really is, settles on a method to resolve the main tension. The seventh sequence G complicates the picture. The proposed resolution has unexpected consequences, often by

bringing into play other story lines and dangling causes to which the audience has previously been introduced. The pace becomes more frenetic. Sequence H presents the resolution and often a coda that ties up any loose ends. The audience is allowed "to catch its breath and come down emotionally from the intensity of the experience" [18].

In the next eleven chapters, Gulino analyses how eleven films use the sequence structure, one chapter per film: *Toy Story* (John Lasseter, 1995), *The Shop Around the Corner* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1940), *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944), Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria* (1957), *North by Northwest* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959), *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean, 1962), *The Graduate* (Mike Nichols, 1967), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Milos Forman, 1975), *Air Force One* (Wolfgang Peterson, 1997), *Being John Malkovich* (Spike Jonze, 1999), and *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001). There are a couple of stills from each film as well as a two-page sequence breakdown based on the model, at the end of each chapter, describing the action in each sequence and the running length of that part of the film. With such consistent proofs, Gulino establishes the usefulness of his methodology for reviewing films.

The title of the work *Screenwriting* may, however, be misleading and sell short the potential benefit Gulino's analytical method could have to all students of Film Studies -- but more of that later. As a screenwriter's *vademecum*, there are far more comprehensive works available. However, as a priority mechanism for structuring screenplays, Gulino makes a convincing argument for 'sequencing,' a device which, he tells us, was first expounded by Aristotle (360-322BC). It was customarily used, as an eight sequence structure married to three acts, by the army of playwrights who were drawn into Hollywood after the coming of sound in 1927.

Also included are some helpful screenwriting advice boxes on "motifs," "character arc," "subplots," "exposition," "indirection" and "recapitulation scene." The fact that such boxes disappear after the first three chapters adds weight to the argument that this is less a book for would-be screenwriters than for those who would analyse screen texts. Unfortunately, we are never given any sight of the screenplays themselves; rather we must draw on our own viewing of the films and Gulino's analysis and sequence breakdowns. The argument that this is less a screenwriting book than a methodology for analysing the progress of a narrative is compounded when we learn that only *Air Force One* was written explicitly using this method.

One of Gulino's strengths is that he is constantly aware of audiences and how they react. In reviewing the sequence structure of *Fellowship of the Rings* he looks at what the screenwriters might have done to increase the tension, a more constructive approach than those critics who simply refer to the trilogy as *Bored of the Rings*. Gulino himself is clearly passionate about storytelling and, unlike the authors of some analytical works, he is keen to hold his own reading audience. Although the worked examples of eleven films, coming one after another, make a compelling but unnecessarily over-evidenced argument, I would still recommend this text to undergraduates who are learning how to navigate themselves through the various developments and elements of a film's story. They would benefit from reading Gulino's initial analysis and then cut to see how he applies it to one or two screenplays that they know well. It would also do no harm for any aspiring playwright as well as screenwriter to discipline themselves both with the sequence structure and the four basic tools that Gulino reminds us have been used to keep audiences watching drama for centuries. The four tools are: telegraphing (letting the audience explicitly know one of the things that will happen), dangling cause (revealing an expression of intent for which no immediate answer is

forthcoming), dramatic irony (when the audience knows something that one or more of the characters don't), and dramatic tension (which was defined by Frank Daniel as "someone want[ing] something badly and is having difficulty getting it") [10].

Criminal Visions: Media Representations of Crime and Justice

By Paul Mason (ed.)
Devon: Willan Publishing, 2003. ISBN 1-84392-013-1. ix + 310 pp. £18.99 (pbk), £40.00 (hbk)

A review by Frances Pheasant-Kelly,, University of East Anglia, UK

In recognising the paucity of sources in relation to televisual and cinematic representations of crime, Paul Mason, as editor of *Criminal Visions*, has successfully helped to fill the vacuum. Because media is usually more interested in the borderline than the conventional, criminality, like mental illness, is always a provocative subject. The media/crime nexus proves here to be a particularly fertile ground with insightful and original debates around issues of representation that illustrate both the pervasiveness and skewed positioning of media-generated information.

This edited collection of essays is divided into three parts, namely 'Criminal Visions in Context,' 'Criminal Representations: Crimes and Criminals,' and thirdly, 'Criminal Decisions: Agencies and Agents.' Within these three sections, the book traverses the various categories of both factual and fictional, predominantly visual, representations.

While inviting new perspectives on old debates, such as censorship of 'video nasties,' and convincingly marshalling familiar themes, such as the criminal in film, the book goes on to examine hitherto novel considerations under the axiom of 'the media,' notably Mafia mythologies in film and Internet 'murderabilia.' Therefore, while some credibility derives from examining familiar themes, it is perhaps the more obscure topics that lend originality to this anthology.

The diversity of subjects covered here however has a common conclusion, namely that the media give their own particular slant on issues of crime. This is borne out within many of the fourteen chapters, raising relevant questions about the accuracy and value of the media in the reporting of crime. This is specifically highlighted in the opening chapter, which debates the reporting of crime news since the Second World War; the authors here found that the incidence of crime reporting, particularly that of murder, shows an increase with time. Unsurprisingly, the more extreme the crime, the more likely it is to be reported, whereas less extreme crimes show a decline in reporting. Furthermore, this research also shows that the victim is more prominently represented over time, whilst reporting of police deviance has correspondingly also increased. These statistics reflect a shift towards sensationalism in the post-war period and a trend towards public emotivity. While this study provides indisputable evidence of these patterns for comparing newspaper reports, it may have been helpful here to include official crime statistics since 1945, the relationship of crime reporting to issues of punishment and deterrence, and cultural shifts in attitudes towards certain crimes, although the authors do indicate that this research is part of a larger study.

In relation to a society that is increasingly inclined to public outpourings of grief, it is relevant that 'Signal Crimes: Detective Work, Mass Media and Constructing Collective Memory' also examines how the dramatic aspects of particular crimes are highlighted in the context of societal reaction. The author suggests that the police harness the emotional stakes generated by journalists, especially in crimes against women and children, to increase the chances of crime reporting. Greer, in his appraisal of sex crimes, also reports a focus on dramatic sensationalism, revealing that sex-crime press reporting increased between 1985 and 1997 at a disproportionate rate to that actually recorded. The author reveals a greater emphasis on individual cases rather than deeper issues and, more disconcertingly, a tendency to shift the notion of threat, from people known to the victim, to strangers. Sex-crime seems to be particularly susceptible to skewed representation in that there is a propensity to put all sex offenders in the same bracket, thereby vilifying equally all acts of sexually aberrant criminal behaviour.

In moving to representation of crime in the fictional world, 'Video Violence: How Far Can You Go?' examines issues of censorship and 'video nasties,' with particular reference to *The Last House on the Left* (Wes Craven, 1972). Petley considers the various premises upon which the British Board of Film Certification's (BBFC) decisions for censorship of this particular film were made, and raises the perpetual controversy of paternalism versus pragmatism as pertinent to censorship. Petley here, rather than attempting to posit answers to the various questions that he raises, rather re-opens the debate and re-assesses the criteria for regulation of film and video.

In exploring the representations of criminals in recent heist films, Rayner focuses on the ambiguous criminality suggested in Michael Mann's films (notably *Heat* [1995]) whilst fiction and fact as relevant to Mafia films are examined in 'Organised Crime: Mafia Myths in Film and Television.' With a focus on *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) and *Goodfellas* (Martin Scorsese, 1990), Larke discusses the origins of mythologies that these films both depend upon and in turn, perpetuate, although conceding that the boundary between myth and reality is impossible to discern. Fictional representations of crime and justice are further explored through the connotations of the television image of the British police officer, and the security embedded in this cultural icon. The author charts a succession of police series, from *Dixon of Dock Green, Z cars* and *The Sweeney* to *Prime Suspect*, and notes how representations have overall remained positive but tend towards moral ambiguity of the police.

The lawyer and the prisoner are also subject to scrutiny within both factual and fictional representations. One chapter questions the banning of television cameras from British courtrooms, while the editor, Paul Mason elaborates on the prison film. Mason argues that the fictional prison film seeks to entertain rather than inform and consequently departs centrally from 'real' experiences of prison life. Problems of genre definition are recognised in both the law and prison film, with Mason noting that the prison genre has remained under-developed as a discourse. He goes on to discuss commonality of themes whilst also addressing the diversity that has emerged over the long history of the prison genre. He proposes the prison as a machine and re-examines Foucault's approach to the institution in light of this, as well as suggesting that medieval punishment as spectacle partly survives in the spectacle of the prison film.

In an era that has witnessed the devastating effects of terrorism on western society, it is perhaps the chapter on media coverage of terrorist activity that will resonate most strongly

with the British public. Here, Hayes appraises what has been claimed to be a symbiotic relationship between the media and the terrorist. The author raises questions about definitions of terrorism and highlights the fine line between terrorist and freedom fighter, concluding that the media, rather than mediating reality, actually misinform and become mouthpieces through which government antiterrorist propaganda is channelled.

Perhaps less familiar to the reader, but equally as fascinating, is an examination of how the Internet has become a forum for exchange of what the author terms 'murderabilia' and has thus enabled the expansion of a 'serial killer culture.' Here, Conrich outlines how the Internet has facilitated composites of cybernetic killers to be created, and allowed these 'cyber killers' to enter private space. He goes on to discuss how the narratives of serial killer films such as *Copycat* (Jon Amiel, 1995) have incorporated these ideas.

Equally innovative is the chapter entitled 'Media Representation of Visual Surveillance,' which considers synoptic modes of observation as illustrated by reality television programmes, as well as the panoptic epidemic of CCTV. The author goes on to consider the news value of CCTV, highlighting particularly the differential between 'them' (criminals) and 'us' (motorists and workers) that CCTV news coverage reveals.

Possibly the strongest chapter of *Criminal Visions* is a consideration of photography in the context of imaging victims and criminals on *Crimewatch UK*. Here, Jermyn explores the relationship between the generation of public emotivity, and crime solving. She asserts that *Crimewatch's* imaging of the criminal is historically foregrounded in the nineteenth century practices that generated the composite criminal physiognomy; she contrasts this with the image of the victim, which is generally taken from the family photo album and is thereby contextualised within the conventional ideological framework of the family unit. This not only heightens the sense of loss through a sense of the victim's relationships, but also realises the emotional charge that resides in the oxymoronic presence and absence defined in images of the dead. In recognising these patterns, Jermyn delineates a particularly astute deconstruction of the signifying practices of *Crimewatch UK*. This is perhaps a juncture where capitalisation of emotional distress is weighted in the interests of the victim.

Overall *Criminal Visions*, in debating representations of crime and justice, seeks to clarify the implications for the public of mediated information relating to crime. While there is evidence that this representation is often skewed, reflecting media fascination with the deviant, and often ascribing heroism to the on-screen criminal, the benefits of such media coverage are also made apparent. This book therefore re-opens some of the debates that exist between purposeful, documentary reportage and lurid sensationalism. *Criminal Visions* also offers some innovative discussion relating to Internet 'murderabilia,' and Mafia mythologies. This book therefore traverses the broad spectrum of aspects of criminality and induces one to reconsider the skewing of crime and justice representations. Encompassing aspects of photography, film and CCTV as well as news media and Internet technology make this essential reading for undergraduate students of photography, film and media, with potential interest for those in journalism and criminology.

Chinese National Cinema

By Yingjin Zhang
London & New York: Routledge, 2004. ISBN 0-415-17290-X. 40 illustrations, 328 pp.
£11.21 (pbk), £57 (hbk)

A review by Sabrina Q. Yu, University of Nottingham, UK

As the first English academic book to offer a comprehensive panorama of Chinese film history, Yingjin Zhang's *Chinese National Cinema* (2004) is like a special gift to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of Chinese cinema (1905-2005). Following his *Screening China*, published two years earlier, this is another ambitious effort by Zhang to make connections between the films of the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and to establish the framework of "Chinese national cinema." Anyone who tries to define "Chinese national cinema" will find him/herself in the mire in the end. This is not only because Chinese cinema is fundamentally disperse - -historically, politically, territorially, culturally, ethnically and linguistically -- like a "messy affair," as Zhang describes it in the book, but also because the globalization of film production, distribution, and consumption has called into question the notion of "national cinema." The very idea of "Chinese cinema" has been strongly challenged by scholars since the 1990s. Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu even suggests that Chinese national cinema can only be understood in its transnational context and studied as "transnational Chinese cinemas" (*Transnational Chinese Cinemas*, University of Hawaii Press,1997). Probably realizing his hastiness in dismissing Chinese national cinema as an outdated concept, in his 2005 book *Chinese-language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics* (University of Hawaii Press, co-edited with Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh), Lu re-defines Chinese cinema as "Chinese language cinema," which uses predominantly Chinese dialects and is made in the Chinese-speaking world, as well as those films produced through transnational collaborations with other film industries (1).

The title of this book, *Chinese National Cinema* suggests that Zhang still assumes the persistence of the national in Chinese films and film studies. In a brief interview to this author, Zhang opined that he uses "the national" in this book more as an adjective than a noun, as there are different constructions of "the national" in Chinese cinema given different geopolitical regions and periods of time. Zhang stated that he did not want to define "Chinese national cinema," instead he only tried his best to literally describe the historical development of Chinese cinema and to propose the questions. Despite Zhang's denial of his aspiration to rebuild "the national" in Chinese cinema, after reading this book, I feel that it is a sense of nationalism instead of any cultural or artistic trait that runs throughout the whole of Chinese film history and stands out as the most prominent characteristic of Chinese cinema. A strong nationalist overtone can be found in each stage of Chinese film development and in each locale, as a response or a resistance to the West. According to Zhang's point of view, "the national" in Chinese film has been shaped and highlighted whenever national spirit and nation-building are promoted by emphasizing traditional morality, retracing cultural roots or portraying Chinese heroes, as a correction of "the Western misconception of and contempt for the Chinese" (37), or as "national defence" or "national salvation" to face the invasion of western powers, or as a strategy to compete with imported western films (mostly from Hollywood). Andrew Higson has written that both the idea and the practice of national

cinema are developed in terms of the significance of antagonizing outer challenge or threat, and deemed as a struggle for cultural, political and economical self-definition. Exactly through the way it shows the perpetual existence of western threat in Chinese film history, this book confirms the validity of the designation of Chinese national cinema.

Different from most works on Chinese film history, which usually focus on authorship, movements, themes or genres, Zhang calls for "a willing consideration of various issues at both production and consumption ends" (10). Although he declares his intention to build his historiography on multiple approaches including industry analysis, biographic sketch, stylistic consideration, textual criticism and audience study, the book is characterized by its production-based and consumption-based approach. A remarkable contribution of this book is that it offers much by way of first-hand industrial data, such as actor-salary comparison in Hong Kong 1930s-90s, production costs and revenues per film in Taiwan 1929-2002, annual feature production in the PRC 1949-2002, and so on. These archival materials not only function as historical evidence to explain the circumstance of film production and consumption of the day, but also give a visible demonstration of the development of Chinese cinema. However, while more attention is paid to the industry, the status and role of film people in film history has been largely neglected or obscured. In many cases, film history is described mostly in terms of the change of social, political and economical situation, while the names of many influential directors and actors of the time can only be seen in the brackets after film titles. That the author's critical judgement and theoretical analyses seem scant and dispersed is another shortcoming, compared with circumstantial historical and industrial facts. For instance, when Bruce Lee is referred to, Zhang only introduces which company produces Bruce Lee's films and the cost of each film; Lee's contribution in establishing the *kung fu* genre and in making Chinese cinema's first international performance is astonishingly not addressed.

The book is divided into eight chapters according to historical periodization. Fully aware of the influence of an ideological viewpoint on Chinese film historiography, Zhang tries to give Chinese cinema a less politicized, but broader periodization. Starting with early cinema (1896-1929) in Chapter Two and the 'golden age' of Chinese cinema (1930-1949) in Chapter Three, the author moves to separately address the cinema of Taiwan, Hong Kong and the PRC before 1978 in Chapters Four, Five, Six, and then investigates new waves in the three Chinas (1979-1989), and concludes with a discussion of transnational imaginary in the three Chinas from 1990 to 2002. This scheme clearly shows Zhang's aim to balance complicated Chinese film history in different temporal and geopolitical locales. On the one hand, the films of the three Chinas are given similar attention, avoiding any priority. On the other hand, a roughly identical periodization is applied to the films in the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong. While the films before 1949 can easily be discussed in the name of Chinese cinema, the films in the three Chinas after 1979 are similarly accessed through two periods marked by the new wave and transnational imaginary. Although appreciative of the author's endeavor to simplify 'messy' Chinese cinema one finds some of his categories unconvincing. For example, it is strange to put Stephen Chiau's *mo lei-tau* (nonsense) comedy, Tsui Hark's new martial arts films, Wong Jin film with diverse styles and Category Three films together under a title "postmodern Hong Kong film," just because all of them appeared in the 1990s and are similarly sensationalistic. Likewise, can the works of the fifth generation directors be split into two stages, labelled as *avant-gardism* in the 1980s and ethnographic cinema in the early 1990s? In my view, the films of the fifth generation directors bear some consistent characteristics from the 1980s to the 1990s, in which *avant-gardism* and ethnographic

exhibition were always two conspicuous ones, while the real change occurred not until the mid-1990s.

Although the periodization in this book is questionable it does not prevent one from noticing its outstanding strength -- good comparative consciousness throughout the chapters; as Zhang claims in the introduction, "my scheme aims to provide a flexible framework for a comparative study of cinema and the national in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan in the twentieth century" (11). The most successful comparative analysis is made between post-war Taiwanese cinema and the PRC cinema. Zhang insightfully observes many similarities in film productions on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, such as intractable ideological positions, strict censorship, and the stress on nationalistic pride and heroic martyrdom in both Taiwan's 'policy films' and socialist films in the PRC. Zhang points out that what makes Taiwanese cinema different from the PRC are its combination of state administration and market self-regulation, and the presence of Hong Kong and Japan in Taiwanese cinema.

When the new wave films in the three locales are discussed, Zhang argues that contrary to the *avant-garde* in the mainland and Taiwan, the Hong Kong new wave never became narcissistic in its auteur style, thus leading to its commercial success which the other two never achieved. This kind of comparison can be found everywhere in the book. The comparative approach to Chinese film history breaks up rigidly ideological and geographical boundaries, and highlights the connection between the films of the three Chinas, which strongly supports the idea of "Chinese national cinema" proposed by the author. At the same time, it also foregrounds the differentia of the films of the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong, based on different social, political and historical context.

As a mainland Chinese critic, it is heartening to see that Zhang, a film scholar from mainland China, pursues an ideological neutrality in his writing of Chinese film history. This depoliticized viewpoint provides Zhang a vantage point to examine Chinese film history more impartially and objectively, and enables him to catch its richness and complexity, thereby avoiding intended omissions and erasure, as usually seen in film textbooks written in mainland China. For example, Zhang reveals that butterfly fiction, which has been long disregarded as expressing petty bourgeois sentiments, had exerted more influence than the reputed May Fourth literature in early Chinese cinema. Zhang Shankun, whose remarkable career as a film producer is to some extent unknown in mainland China due to his collaboration with Japanese censorship in wartime and his anti-Communist position, is described as the most famous producer and a controversial industry leader in occupied Shanghai in the book. Indeed, an ideologically neutral stance, together with the advantage of writing in the West, gives Zhang more freedom to get rid of the heavily political propensity found in mainland academic tradition. One salient example is the re-evaluation of leftist film in the 1930s, which is either over-exalted by the CCP historiography or ruthlessly disparaged by the KMT account. Instead, Zhang justly points out that despite sharing some plots, mood and subject matters, leftist films did not occupy a clearly demarcated territory in visual and narrative terms, and "what distinguished leftist films at the time was the ideological reading leftist critics imposed on given titles, whereby they assigned the directors to certain ideological camps" (81).

When certain sensitive or taboo topics are referred to, Zhang also shows his moral courage and academic conscience. The *Wu Xun* campaign (the criticism of the 1950 film *The Life of Wu Xun*, directed by Sun Yu) in 1951 is usually seen as the prelude to the disastrous campaigns initiated by Mao Zedong, but has been largely understated due to its political

sensitivity. In this book, Zhang pays appropriate attention to the *Wu Xun* campaign given its historical significance as a symptom of the "absolute supremacy of politics over art in Chinese cinema" (195).

In *Chinese National Cinema*, Zhang tries to put forth some features that exclusively belong to Chinese cinema, such as an unique film aesthetic influenced by Chinese traditional art and theatre, underlying didacticism carried on by literature people, May Fourth melodrama as an enduring cinematic tradition, the specificity of socialist films in terms of its creative genres, socialist realism aesthetics and administrative nature, some of which have not been elaborated before. However, the author's eagerness to establish the ontology of Chinese cinema inevitably faces some difficulties. In a reality where European/American-centric logic is omnipresent both in film practice and research, how can a Chinese scholar resist the temptation to identify with the western standard and insist on making his/her own voice? How can 'the national' in Chinese cinema be fully articulated when western film theories are applied as the only frame of reference, and Chinese film study has never established its own methodology? Zhang makes an effort to challenge this dilemma, even though he is still a long way from resolving it.

The actress Gong Li's portrait as the cover of the book is like a metaphor of the inescapable fate of Chinese national cinema in an era of film globalization -- being gazed at by the West -- but the book tries to fill this exotic look with some basic historical facts. The significance of Zhang's *Chinese National Cinema* results from its groundbreaking endeavour to establish a less biased history of Chinese cinema, and to "conduct primary research and complete the constructive phase of film historiography before we can proceed with deconstruction and reconstruction in any confident, meaningful way" (12).

Film Genre: Hollywood and Beyond

By Barry Langford
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. ISBN: 0 –7486 – 1903 – 8. x + 310 pp. £16.99 (pbk), £50.00 (hbk)

A review by Elaine Lennon,, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland

Definitions of the cinematic and the further assignation of both meaning and names to the narrative models which frequently provide our cultural self-image have ceaselessly proved their attraction in the area of film studies. However, 'naming names' is no easier now than it has ever been.

The area of genre has become intensely complicated in recent years following a period of consensus throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Ideological formation and cultural hegemony underlie all these writings as a given, while the transgeneric blockbuster and industrial realignments of recent years have combined to prove an overwhelming challenge for analysts. It seems that every year or so another substantial volume is added to what itself is becoming a growing genre -- books about film genres -- complicated ever further by those regular and systemic shifts in the film industry itself. As the author reminds us, however, "Hollywood films today are as intensely generic as ever, perhaps even more so" (274). This book's particular gift is to offer robust counterbalance to the canonical formation of genres which, Langford reminds us, is extraordinarily partial (and in the case of the gangster film, based on just three examples!) The author predicates his task as a quest to consider genre filmmaking on what he terms a processual level, contextualising its adaptive features within production and social historical terms (both American and international), thereby providing a solid framework for critiquing not just film genres but genre analysis itself, new and old.

Following a thorough introduction in which the author states his approach and tackles head-on problematic and divisive issues such as definition, history and audience, the book is organised into three more-or-less chronological sections: Classical, Transitional and Post-Classical, each of which is divided into relevant chapters on genre. An introduction in each chapter summarises and critiques the vagaries of the genre in question and, together with a cautionary reminder of genre's anomalous taxonomy, or, as Langford, puts it, film genres' "porous and leaky borders" (159), and impressively condenses one hundred years or so of film history into an easily absorbed continuum.

Although occasionally susceptible to obscurantism, Langford's style can be pleasingly thoughtful and even humorous: for instance his superb sleight of hand in the Science Fiction chapter, in which he creates a neat conceptual loop between Muybridge and *The Matrix* (Andy & Larry Wachowski, 1999), exemplars of technology separated by almost two centuries and several thousands of films and narratives. He picks apart common assumptions about a genre such as the integrated musical and makes a case for another generic aspect; introducing new ways of seeing a generic corpus and its formal variants, which further disintegrates claims of generic stability which have underpinned so much critical writing.

While no single book can hope to be the sole guide to a field of film analysis, the author offers a hugely impressive yet concise account of genre theory, cycles and contemporary reportage -- from Hollywood and beyond. The effect is to give the area a profile and depth (and geographical breadth) which few previous writers could muster. In the area of war films alone, the author summates both the times and the industries in which the sub-sets (First World War, Second World War, Korea, Vietnam) originate and the singular cultures (that is other national cinemas) which have produced them and their evolutionary cycles.
This approach serves to place what is usually an anachronistic and occasionally arbitrary form (war films are not necessarily made during the actual conflicts) within a completely different set of references both socially and industrially and also serves to pose a unique set of parameters for a later chapter in which he includes the minor variant identified as the Holocaust genre; pornography and documentary also bolster this chapter, which, he posits in terms of evolving forms whose limits are ever-altering and prone to slippage and yet their very ubiquity calls attention to their functions as organising cinematic modalities. Pornography, he concludes, may now warrant consideration as a mode to match melodrama, such is its infiltration of the mainstream.

He considers the importance of discourse which seeks to prioritise intra-, or extra-generic impact on the formal development of genres and uses a variety of prominent criticism and textual analyses to extrapolate well-reasoned if sometimes complex strategic linkages for understanding an increasingly clogged literature surrounding genre film production. He reminds the reader, for instance, that the Vietnam narrative has broad similarities to Fenimore Cooper's nineteenth century captivity tales, underscoring the literary foundation of North America's self-perception and heritage. The macro-references on this scale provide a broad and satisfying canvas for a consideration of American cultural production.

The blurring of genre boundaries and the tensions between the industries which produce them provides an intriguing subtext to his survey. The big question is of course genre identity, which, as Langford comments, is a permanently discursive issue and which he addresses with the use of Steve Neale's term, 'inter-textual relay.' Not merely revisionist, his application of terms negotiates the changing production system, the growth of alternative modes of reception and the culture itself.

Far from being devalued, genre filmmaking is more important to the film industry than ever before. The author's comprehensive attempt to synthesize film genre theoretically and culturally is an enormous project, which at times overwhelms the reader with its steady raft of references. However the individual case studies of intricate textual examination [ranging from *Out Of The Past* (Jacques Tourneur, 1947) to *Armageddon* (Michael Bay, 1998)] offer welcome respite and contain insights which reflect his welcome research into American cultural production and the reading of that complex issue in so many diverse commentaries. It is also a volume which engages with the relentlessly contemporary, offering a context on 2005 releases (and publications). If one is forced to acknowledge that books on genre have become a virtual genre unto themselves, where might we place Langford's text on the evolutionary cycle? While Altman's *Film/Genre* (BFI, 1999) is perhaps the most significant recent addition to the area in a contemporary postmodernist coda and Thomas Schatz's classical *Hollywood Genres* (McGraw Hill, 1981) remains a personal favourite, Langford's book is a majestically informed achievement and a prodigiously detailed production. (It may come as news however to singer Perry Farrell that he made a Jamaican gangster film in the Seventies.) It is perhaps cavil to add that a larger format and a few dozen photographs would

add immensely to the book's reception but one can't help feeling that this has the makings of a standard textbook and the publishers would do well to consider another, enhanced edition.

Andrei Rublev

By Robert Bird
London: BFI, 2004. ISBN 1-84457-038-X. 70 illustrations, 88 pp. £9.99 (pbk)

A review by Kenneth R. Morefield, Campbell University, USA

Andrei Tarkovsky's (1932-1986) place in the canon of great directors is above dispute among followers of world cinema, but his name is probably not as familiar to casual film viewers as those of Hitchcock, Kurosawa, Kubrick, Bergman, or other directors whose works have been subjects of the British Film Institute's Film Classic Series.

Due to their length and non-narrative structures, Tarkovsky's films have the reputation of being difficult, perhaps even inaccessible. On the surface, then, *Andrei Rublev* is precisely the sort of film that cries out for a BFI Film Classic treatment. Begun in 1992, this series attempts to provide critically informed yet readable introductions to landmark films.

Robert Bird faces some significant challenges in trying to craft a companion piece for Tarkovsky's non-traditional biography of the eponymous protagonist, an icon painter who lived in Russia during the 15th century. In addition to Tarkovsky's difficult style, *Rublev* essayists must confront a host of critical and scholarly difficulties in approaching the film. Bird mentions that English subtitles of *Rublev* are often "incomplete and inaccurate" (6); Western readers of Bird's text, like viewers of the film, often lack the familiarity with Russian history to identify many of the principle events that provide the film's context; interference by The State Committee on Cinema of the Soviet Union (32) has made it nearly impossible to identify a definitive cut of the film with much confidence.

Given this array of difficulties, Bird does a fine job in doing exactly what a BFI author should -- he provides new and less experienced viewers with a foothold into the film. The lack of depth or detail, especially in the sections that explicate the film, may disappoint Tarkovsky's more ardent admirers. Most of these readers, however, will understand that they are not the target audience and opt instead for *Andrei Tarkovsky: Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema* (University of Texas Press, 1996), a translation of Tarkovsky's own thoughts, upon which Bird relies heavily for background. Given the lack of introductory or explanatory materials within *Sculpting in Time*, Bird's work complements rather than replaces it. Less than a third of the length of Vida T. Johnson's and Graham Petrie's *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue* (Indiana University Press, 1994), Bird's work may be deemed more respectful in tone towards its subject matter by Tarkovsky enthusiasts.

Although the book has four chapters, it is dominated by two sections. The beginning provides a brief summary of the historical Rublev, an introduction to Tarkovsky's personal history, and an overview of *Andrei Rublev*'s production and critical reception history. Because of the repeated insistence that the film is less concerned with historical authenticity than with creating a mood or tone, Bird's explanation of the complications Tarkovsky faced from Soviet censorship in dealing with historical events illuminates the film more than does the

history itself.

The summary and explication of the film is probably the sketchiest, yet paradoxically the least dispensable, part of the book. Consisting of nearly a third of the book, Chapter Three, 'The Shape of the Story,' provides useful summary for those who might be disoriented by the film's abrupt transitions, but given Bird's contention that *Andrei Rublev* can seem both uneventful and confusing one is surprised at the brevity and repetitiveness of interpretive glosses. Considering the length and density of the film, this quality of its explication is probably forgivable, but it disappoints.

In lieu of specific interpretive statements, Bird often points to overarching themes or motifs that can be found in the film, leaving the viewer to identify specific examples and work out their meaning. For example, we are told several times that "many scenes end with background characters proceeding to the right, as if in a universal migration to some off-screen destination" (38-39), but we are left to decide for ourselves what significance, if any, we attach to this use of geographical film space. We are told that "each episode contains both an act of cruelty and an act of creativity" (38), that scenes are linked by repeated shots and visual motifs (39), and that our perception is "affect[ed]" by music and ambient sound (39). At times, the broadness with which the motifs are elucidated or attached to any interpretive significance makes Bird's arguments come across as tentative or unconvincing. He notes, for example, that three different actresses play Marfa in Episode Three (50), but his explanation that the camera, like Andrei, turns Marfa into a mutable object comes across as particularly tentative.

What is more helpful in this section is Bird's insistence and explanation that the Tarkovsky's non-linear technique intentionally eschews narrative devices that lay bare implicit ideas before passive audiences. Instead, Bird argues that Tarkovsky forces the viewer to participate in constructing a meaning out of what he sees in much the same way he must interpret life: "Tarkovsky is concerned not to specify causality. Instead, the viewer must actively seek and even construct connections between events, people and images" (37). Once he has set out this central interpretive strategy, however, Bird is left with little more to do in his summary sections than repeat that individual scenes are examples of places where the viewer is forced to construct specific interpretations of deliberately open-ended material.

Bird concludes with a chapter entitled 'The Elevating Gaze' in which he situates Tarkovsky's work among his influences and peers. Particularly helpful is a discussion of the influence of Robert Bresson in dealing with the problem of depicting the invisible, spiritual state of man without relying on outward signs of piety or rituals to serve as external symbols of one's internal state. As with the rest of the volume, it is brief, and some readers will be left wishing that these statements of influence were better exemplified with reference to specific scenes in Tarkovsky's or Bresson's films.

To quibble over these shortcomings, however, is to forget the purpose of the series of which this volume is a part. Overall, *Andrei Rublev*, like the film it accompanies, is less of a linear argument than a meditation on its subject matter. It will probably not stand as the definitive work on Tarkovsky's film, but it will no doubt continue to be a useful introduction to it for those wanting or needing a short and accessible baptism into the essentials of an important but little understood filmmaker.

Doing Philosophy at the Movies

By Richard A. Gilmore
Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005. ISBN 0-7914-6392-3. xi + 183 pp. £ 13.00 (pbk), £ 44.50 (hbk)

A review by Tom Paulus, University of Antwerp, Belgium

There are different ways of going to the movies: there are those who go to the movies for escape, and there are those that go to the movies in a more particular way. That particular way, Richard A. Gilmore argues in *Doing Philosophy at the Movies*, his new book on the relationship between philosophy and film, is to go 'philosophically.' Going to the movies philosophically is both radically different from going to the movies for escape, and somewhat similar: radically different because going philosophically implies looking for more than is going on and tracking down what that more might be; somewhat similar because it turns out that more is again related to escape -- escape from "our quotidian ways of being, a way of being which is characterized by a kind of thraldom" (4). In other words, the aim of going to the movies in that particular philosophical way can be said to free people. The difference between going to the movies for escape and going to the movies philosophically is that in the former case the escape is just an escape *from*, whereas in the latter case it is also an escape *to*, an escape from one state of mind to another. Throughout his book Gilmore returns to the *locus classicus* of the idea of philosophy as escape, Plato's allegorical cave, that place of confinement from which (enlightened) people can be freed.

Plato's cave as an allegory not just for spiritual imprisonment but for the -- in a certain theoretical light equally imprisoning -- movie apparatus is, of course, a staple of contemporary film theory [although Noël Carroll has done much to dispel the conceit in *Mystifying Movies* (Columbia University Press, 1988)]. Gilmore puts a fresh spin on it by emphasizing the *instrumental* nature of the cave itself in the process of liberation: "a way out of the cave is to use cavelike things, but to use them in a proper way" (3). This proper way is to use them thoughtfully.

Which brings us to the main point (and main problem) of this book: if a certain way of going to the movies is to go philosophically, a way implying an escape out of imprisonment and towards self-fulfilment, then what is the right way of doing philosophy at the movies? Let me first say that Gilmore's conception of philosophy is very specific: the philosophy that he has in mind is a "democratized" philosophy (142), available to any and all who can manage to locate it. It is not a philosophy of first principles or final ends but a more, let me say, pragmatic philosophy. It is a philosophy about trying to understand things, about going -- per Charles Sanders Pierce in 'The Fixation of Belief' (Popular Science Monthly 12, 1877) -- from the consideration of what we already know, to something else we do not know; or as Gilmore rephrases it, going from a place of confusion and doubt to a place of understanding and of knowing what to do (10). Essential to this enterprise is an open, questing attitude, allowing, in the words of that other Pragmatist thinker John Dewey, meanings to be liberated and clarified (74). So going to the movies philosophically is to go with an open, questing attitude, allowing oneself to grow and be liberated through the liberation and clarification of

meaning. The question -- and the challenge for this book -- then becomes: how can meaning be liberated?

In the preface Gilmore states quite clearly how he intends to go about setting meaning free: he will be doing 'readings' of the films that he considers [a Hitchcock and Ford classic, and more recent films like *Fargo* (Joel Coen, 1996) , *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996) and *The Matrix* (Andy & Larry Wachowski, 1999)], will be looking at them as texts. This reading implies two assumptions: that there is something in the films worth learning about, and that what is important may not be immediately obvious, may need to be searched for in the text. This search for meaning may be understood, Gilmore acknowledges, as an interpretation. In the introduction, however, he immediately qualifies what he means by interpretation by quoting from Susan Sontag's *Against Interpretation*, (Vintage, 1994) an attack on the kind of interpretation that is static and deadening to art. This kind of interpretation works from a template and, by eliminating all details irrelevant to that template comes up with a replacement narrative (12-13).

Sontag's essay dates from the late seventies, but its attack on 'template-thinking,' what we now call 'theory,' is extremely relevant to the current 'post-theory' debate in film studies. Despite Gilmore's reference to empirical method (74), and his defence of a "dialectics of interpretation" (141-163), however, this book is essentially about a third way of interpreting that is neither 'Theoretical' nor strictly empirical. This open, questing research attitude appears in the book under many guises: as a Wittgenstein's encounter with the ordinary, as Dewey's "poetic meaning" (a matter of richness and freedom of meanings, rather than of truth, 74), as Sontag's (or Plato's) 'erotics,' as Simone de Beauvoir's 'ethics of ambiguity,' as Harold Bloom's conception of both the American sublime and the '*zimzum*' moment from the Jewish Kabbalah as an 'abyss' or a 'dearth' of meaning. The point, however, is singular: we must stop trying to impose an interpretation, and allow an interpretation to emerge (150).

Although the kind of film interpretation Gilmore proposes is conceptually, let me say *philosophically*, challenging it is methodologically vague. Gilmore seems to conflate several research traditions, hoping, I assume, to get rid of the template by mixing it up: we find traces of auteur Structuralism in the idea of a film as text to be read, and specifically in the essay on John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956); we find traces of psychoanalytic film theory throughout, especially in the essay on *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), where the author first distinguishes himself from this theoretical template ("To say specifically what Scottie is symbolically holding on to is to be more psychoanalytic than I want to be," 43), but then goes on to quote at length from Slavoj Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Verso, 1989), where Žižek talks about the way our identities are formed in relation to the symbolic network, the big Other (45). Gilmore's open, questing attitude gets him into trouble when he starts taking his cues not just from Nietzsche, Heidegger and Freud, but from contemporary *maîtres à pensers* like Žižek, who is nothing if not a template-thinker. In fact, Gilmore's approach consistently reveals most of the routines of reasoning that David Bordwell finds typical of the 'Grand Theory' variety of film studies: the inquiries he makes are often top-down, and rely on a patchwork of ideas that are often incompatible if not all-out contradictory.

Perhaps my countering Gilmore with Bordwell is unfair because what I take to be problematic reasoning strategies for film studies is not necessarily so for philosophy of the kind Gilmore has to offer. In fact, *Doing Philosophy at the Movies* works best when it is doing philosophy regardless that it does so at the movies: I cherish Gilmore's understanding of the sublime as a mode of discovery, but it does not cast great light on how *Fargo* works as

a movie. Likewise I generally support Gilmore's Cavellian plea for letting the movie teach us how to consider it, but at the same time cannot shed the impression that the films under discussion merely serve as colourful examples of the philosophy he is interested in.

Perhaps we are comparing apples and oranges and we should take *Doing Philosophy at the Movies* as a book of philosophy and not as book of film studies. Gilmore quotes from *Art as Experience* (G.P. Putnam, 1980), where Dewey says that when criticism becomes a function of the creative response of the individual who judges, criticism becomes art (160). But then, is not the study of film more like an art than a science? Perhaps it is, but given the dominance of the hermeneutic model in film studies and the subordination of historical research, the suggestion that films are there to be used in a pluralistic interpretative enterprise is not so innocent. Perhaps the biggest problem with *Doing Philosophy at the Movies*, both as a book of philosophy and as a book of film studies, is that it is pragmatic in the wrong sense: it is dialectic in the sense that it finds the real measure of how good a film is -- and how good a theory about a movie is -- to be determined by the conversation after the movie (ix). But if all interpretations that make a movie more interesting, more exciting, more complex, are more or less equally valid, as the conclusion to the book suggests (162), then how should this conversation help us to grow and evolve, both as thinkers and talkers? Would not the conversation be that much more interesting if the participants actually put forth a fallible theory or interpretation, instead of merely emphasizing the communal or pluralistic aspects of interpretative openness? This is the kind of pragmatic dialectics Noël Carroll suggests in his essay, 'Prospects for Film Theory' (see Bordwell & Caroll, *Post-Theory*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1996) -- defending one's own theory by demonstrating that it succeeds where alternative theories falter, is a guarantee for spirited conversation.

Powell and Pressburger: A Cinema of Magic Spaces

By Andrew Moor
London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005. ISBN 1-85043-947-8. 7 illustrations, xii+250pp. £25
Coward on Film: The Cinema of Noel Coward

Coward on Film: The Cinema of Noel Coward

By Barry Day

Lanham, MD and Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005. ISBN 0-8108-5358-2. Illustrated, xviii+183pp. £31

A review by Philip Gillett

Watch the films of Powell and Pressburger (more conveniently known as the Archers) or those scripted by Noel Coward and what impression do you gain of the times in which they were made? Theirs is a self-absorbed world of passion, explicit or repressed, and of exquisitely-wrought amusements for the middle classes in which social and political issues hardly ruffle the surface. There is precious little sense of life as most people knew it. All right, the Second World War spawned its quota of morale-boosters, but it could hardly do anything else. So long as people knew their place – - and in these films they did, notwithstanding some ritual melding of the classes which never outlasted the war. The work of the Archers and of Coward exists in a world which is timeless in its themes, yet dated in its attitudes. Whatever sympathies the men share, their reputations have markedly diverged.

Powell and Pressburger's work has always been a difficult proposition. On its first release it was never populist like the Gainsborough melodramas. Later it was reviled or ignored for being outside the realist tradition, but it was rehabilitated thanks largely to the efforts of Ian Christie. With supporters like Martin Scorsese, Powell has been elevated to auteur status. Andrew Moor's book is the latest attempt to assess the couple's diverse output. His thesis is summed up in the subtitle: Powell and Pressburger's cinema is a place of magic spaces. The very diversity of the Archers' output makes this a risky claim. There is certainly magic in *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) and *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), but even Moor can arouse little enthusiasm for *Gone to Earth* (1950), *The Elusive Pimpernel* (1950), or the final two war films. Magic spaces have to be sought.

The book is set out thematically, with chapters devoted to the wartime propaganda films, the two pastorals (*A Canterbury Tale* and *I Know Where I'm Going!* [1945]), the two films about men (*A Matter of Life and Death* and *The Small Back Room* [1949]) and the two dance films *(The Red Shoes [1948]* and *The Tales of Hoffman [1951]). The Life and Death of Colonel*

Blimp (1943) and *Black Narcissus* (1947) are each accorded a separate chapter. The pastorals receive the most sympathetic coverage, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* the most detailed. Moor employs an eclectic approach, making some intriguing connections, notably between *A Canterbury Tale* and both Kipling's work and *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939). Inevitably it is possible to quibble. Some points deserve more exploration, including the assertion that Powell's work has vestigial sadistic overtones (108). In *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, "This connotation of hunting with sexual and emotional inadequacy directly critiques the popular justification of imperialism" (75). Yes, but hunting could just as well be associated with the primitive forces of nature and virility as Clive's walls are adorned with trophies. By this interpretation inadequacy is not an issue. Reading imperialism as 'grotesque acquisitiveness' akin to trophy hunting makes sense if an anti-hunting viewpoint is adopted, but Powell enjoyed his hunting. Some dubious pop psychology blemishes the analysis of *Black Narcissus* (187-8), while the unfortunate habit of Powell and Pressburger heroines of falling to their deaths deserves more examination. (Wendy Hiller's character nearly undergoes a similar fate by being sucked into a whirlpool in *I Know Where I'm Going!*, but this too goes unobserved.) And do firing guns always have to be read as phallic symbols? (37).

In a market where readers can read Powell's extensive autobiography as well as Christie's studies, Moor has to tread a distinctive path. This may have governed his approach, though it leaves this reader wanting something more than an analysis of the films. What were the circumstances of their production? This is only explored in the case of *The Red Shoes*, but even in this case some questions remain. At a cost of over half a million pounds this was Rank's most expensive production and management concerns over such an investment might be anticipated. How much latitude were the Archers given? More generally how successful was Powell's attempt from *Black Narcissus* onwards at blending dialogue, music and visuals? Moor draws a comparison with *Alexander Nevsky* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1938), but Eisenstein had a score written by Prokofiev; Powell's collaborator Brian Easdale was not in the same class. And how did a seemingly conventional middle-class Englishman become a maverick among filmmakers? An obvious answer is that he collaborated with Emeric Pressburger, but Pressburger's later work without Powell was prosaic. The partnership and the production team which coalesced under the Archers banner were greater than the sum of their parts, but Moor offers no clue as to how this unity of purpose was achieved. And if magic is in the eye of the beholder, what did audiences think of the films? This is a notoriously difficult area to research, with the trade press often providing tantalising clues. When I interviewed the owner of a second-run cinema in the plotlands of Essex, he vividly recalled *The Red Shoes* because it proved so unpopular with his regular patrons. It would be intriguing to know if cinema-goers elsewhere took the same view. Critics are a rarified species, but at least they get their views into print. Moor quotes from reviews, though a spectrum of opinions from newspapers of identifiable political and national standpoints would be welcome.

Ideally the work of a director with a visual sense like that of Powell needs to be profusely illustrated with high quality colour plates. In this book we have to make do with a handful of black and white stills, but if cost has been the limiting factor, the same excuse cannot be made for the absence of a filmography. Moor's prose might lack the magic he seeks in his subject, but *Powell and Pressburger* is a praiseworthy attempt to discover what makes the Archers' work distinctive, while providing an analysis of the best films for others to argue about. Is it time for a historiography of the Archers, examining their changing critical fortunes over half a century? Within a decade the pendulum of fashion may lead us to re-

assess the films again and what will that reveal? And who are the heirs to Powell and Pressburger? How about Ken Russell, Terry Gilliam, Dennis Potter and Baz Luhrmann?

Fashion has not been so kind to Noel Coward. His name is enough to evoke memories of clipped, stilted speech and emotional constipation. His influence is evident in Pinter's work, though Pinter escaped the summary dismissal accorded to the drawing-room school of playwrights like Coward and Rattigan in the 1980s. In his later years Noel Coward became an establishment figure -- a celebrity who deigned to appear in films, but always let his audiences know with a nod and a wink that he was doing it for the money. Before this he was better known as a polymath -- playwright, scriptwriter, composer, librettist, actor, director and producer, whose talents were spread too thinly to achieve recognition in any one field. Even this was an evolution from the firebrand young dramatist who scandalised the theatre world with *The Vortex* (1924), his play about drug taking in high society. Barry Day does not attempt to make sense of Coward's complex personality. Nor does he give us an academic treatise -- his bibliography is so select that it only runs to eighteen books, there is no scholarly apparatus and no attempt is made to analyse Coward's overall contribution to British cinema or the place of film in his career. What Day does offer is an exhaustive and chronological survey of Coward's involvement in film and television. His study is well written, profusely illustrated and filled with insights. Attention to design means that the book is a joy to look at and to handle. American proofreading may account for MI5 appearing as M.1.5 (xviii), but the blemishes are minor and infrequent.

In spite of his ambivalence towards filming, Coward had a long involvement with the cinema. In 1917 he appeared in D. W. Griffith's *Hearts of the World* -- and made his first attempt to upstage other actors by wheeling a barrow towards the camera rather than away from it as Griffith expected. In 1969 Coward's last screen appearance was in Peter Collinson's *The Italian Job*. More interesting is the off-screen work. Three Coward plays were filmed in the final days of silent cinema in 1927. It is difficult to envisage his work shorn of that distinctive dialogue, though as *Easy Virtue* (1928) was directed by Hitchcock, it cannot be dismissed as lacking in interest.

The 1940s marked the high point of Coward's film career and Day devotes most attention to the major films of that decade. The genesis of *In Which We Serve* (Noel Coward & David Lean, 1942) is covered in considerable detail. Coward's own account is quoted at length, though some points deserve following up. Coward states that disapproval of the project came from "very high up indeed," while the Admiralty leaned on the Ministry of Information to suppress press rumours that his performance was an impersonation of Mountbatten (47 and 50). What evidence is there for such claims and why was the matter considered so important? It would be intriguing to know more about the relationship with Lean, whom Coward described at an early stage of the project as "a cutter" (50). Lean would not have been flattered, but he seems to have exerted increasing influence -- it was Lean who advised Coward to watch *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), which led to a rewriting of the script using a flashback technique (62). Lean subsequently dissuaded Coward from playing Frank in *This Happy Breed* (David Lean, 1944) (79-80). To keep Coward out of the limelight, Lean's powers of persuasion must have been considerable.

Brief Encounter (David Lean, 1945) epitomises the synthesis of music, vision and sound as successfully as anything from Powell. It also represents Lean at his peak, before he became seduced by bloated epics. The repressed passions and seemingly banal dialogue have been endlessly parodied, making it difficult to view the film with an innocent eye. Day takes a

sympathetic approach, quoting extensively from Coward, Lean and Celia Johnson as well as from reviews. His analysis is perceptive and detailed. He notes how the film presents Laura's subjective account of events, leaving ambiguous whether the audience is watching what happened or how she visualises what happened. This determines the structure of the film, so that the first (objective) scene is reprised at the end from her viewpoint (104-5). Day's approach illuminates the language which can so easily be dismissed as cliché: "Laura's words are those of a woman used to absorbing and accepting the words of others but never using them to express her own feelings, except on the most unexceptional subjects. Some things lie too deep for words with women like her." In this way the actors can play against the words, relying instead on suggestion (107).

The first audiences made fun of the film, which Day attributes to their discomfort at its emotional power (113). Perhaps, but an alternative explanation is that the film is class-bound and 'a woman like her' seemed comical to working-class audiences. It would be intriguing to explore class and gender differences in responses to the film -- surviving members of those first audiences might offer some insights. Day notes how the film received a positive reception in France and America, though he omits to mention that Italian audiences were less enthusiastic. Quite what those foreign audiences made of what they saw is another topic worthy of study.

Several of the plays were performed live on American television. Day does not indicate whether Montgomery Clift's 1939 performance in *Hay Fever* was recorded; nor does he get to the bottom of whether the stage production of *Private Lives* was filmed in 1931, providing the only record of Coward and Gertrude Lawrence performing together. Read the book if only to groan at what is lost, or what might have been. You might also be prompted to re-examine the Coward-Lean collaborations.

Where do you look for real emotion? My answer would be towards *Brief Encounter* rather than the Technicolor confections of Powell and Pressburger. Coward saw himself as having a talent to amuse. Perhaps his tongue was in his cheek, but he had a better sense of comedy than Powell, a finer ear for dialogue and less pretentiousness. Coward's talent could be facile, but he was always a painstaking craftsman and at his best he offered considerably more than amusement. Now that Powell and Pressburger have been rediscovered, is it Coward's turn?

Hollywood Utopia: Ecology in Contemporary American Cinema

By Pat Brereton
Bristol: Intellect Books, 2005. ISBN 1-84150117-4. 270 pp. £19.95 (pbk)

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

Within the study of literature ecocriticism has been a growing field for over ten years. Until the recent years, however, not much of that interest has transformed into innovative study of film in terms of the environment, ecology, and the sustained, politically engaged attitude preferred by the ecocritics. Pat Brereton's new book *Hollywood Utopia: Ecology in Contemporary American Cinema* ventures into this territory with mixed results.

The back cover blurb notes that the "book applies a range of interdisciplinary strategies to trace the evolution of ecological representations in Hollywood film from the 1950s to the present. Such a study has not been done on this scale before." Although the ecocritical study of cinema is only a nascent field, the latter statement is not, strictly speaking, correct. David Ingram's award-winning monograph *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema* (Exeter UP, 2000, reprinted 2002) is similarly interdisciplinary, has a similar chronological scope and topics, deals with a similar amount of films, and, indeed, many of the films Brereton discusses. Thus it may seem a bit odd that Ingram's book cannot be found in Brereton's bibliography, but then again his overall approach or philosophy clearly differs from Ingram's critical realist analysis of Hollywood's (mis)representations of non-human nature.

As opposed to 'light' or pragmaticist environmentalism, Brereton's discussion is connected to a notion of deep 'holistic' ecology. Many attributes and goals are given to this point-of-view, from "harmony with nature" via the "transformation of humanity" to a "new holistic eco-consciousness," (21, 27-9) but because of the generality and fuzziness of the concepts it never really becomes clear what this/these notions really mean or how its/their goals are actually going to be achieved, on film or in reality. Or, conversely, they can be made to mean all kinds of things on an *ad hoc* basis and linked to very different types of images and films -- a feature, which characterises Brereton's analyses and which also diffuses the book's focus.

Brereton then gives Hollywood a deserved benefit of the doubt in terms of its capability for progressive politics: there is enough semantic ambivalence in the images for plausible 'against-the-grain' readings. In this kind of effort, Brereton's own textual analysis deploys the concepts of 'utopianism' (visions of a better world / society), 'sublime' (a kind of awe-inspiring natural grandeur) and 'excess' (a more than necessary exposure of that grandeur). Again, one is left wondering: when does a sequence become sublime? What is the threshold of excess in a representation? How does one identify the presence of these concepts in a film? Brereton refers to several commentators and theorists from Marx and Marcuse via Jameson to Geertz and Gledhill but in the end these basic questions are left unanswered. Only the fourth

concept, 'closure,' which establishes the final scenes of the films as primarily important, seems accurately defined.

In Chapter Two, these concepts are applied to several short case studies from *The Yearling* (Clarence Brown, 1946) via *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) and *Emerald Forest* (John Boorman, 1985) to Steven Spielberg's works, especially the *Jurassic Park* (1993, 1997, 2001) franchise. They address many interesting themes and issues ranging from frontier myths to rainforest preservation and reveal how these issues can be present in progressive ways even in Hollywood films. The closing moments of the *Jurassic Park* films are connected to the agendas of these films, which seem to contrast the beauty and power of nature with the utilitarian and potentially maleficent side of science. Although these readings create provocative points, Brereton's "mammoth task" of sketching "the contrasting ecological connotations of nature through Hollywood film from the post-war period to the end of the century," (51) must remain unfulfilled as it is based only on six key films. Given the ubiquity of nature in Hollywood film, this task, taken literally, would require a survey of dozens, maybe hundreds of films. Alternatively, one could reduce the amount of relevant films by adopting a more restricted, thematic approach.

This is what Brereton effectively does in the rest of the book as chapters three to five address the representations of nature in different genres. In Chapter Three, Westerns and road movies are discussed in terms of their sublime landscapes, their subversive ecological potential and development over time. For instance, the male "'adolescent' narcissism" of *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969) is contrasted with an eco-feminist reading of *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991), while the seemingly bleak closures of both films are revealed to open up spaces for re-thinking our relationship with the environment. In *Grand Canyon* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1991), Brereton argues, the combination of characters and environment "help produce an ecological and inclusive evocation of the sublime abyss of nature and allow them [the main characters] to appreciate their true function and holistic identity." (119) Again, the case studies provide fascinating, if sometimes assertive and faith-based, deep-ecological arguments.

While these issues could be seen as a matter of interpretative opinion, the generalisations that follow cannot. Brereton concludes that "contemporary audiences are more often exposed to the cinematic energy, even entropy, of raw nature. Such pro-active filmic aesthetic can be read as Hollywood's move outwards towards a more provocative evocation of non-human agency, which is most essential to homo sapiens' communal happiness and fulfillment" (123). Never mind the fact that some key terms such as "raw nature" are again left undefined, the claim about Hollywood's "move" rests on about a dozen films picked out from the 1950s to the 1990s -- a number that is suspiciously small for such a lofty statement.

Chapters Four and Five deal with conspiracy thrillers and science fiction films from the 1950s to the 'postmodernist' present. As for the 1950s, Brereton persuasively challenges the view that holds seminal sci-fi films such as *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Don Siegel) and *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (Jack Arnold, both 1956) only as reflections of Cold War anti-Communist paranoia, and suggests a complementary, eco-critical reading addressing the various aspects of the films that the political allegory cannot fully explain. These nascent themes, Brereton argues, were developed more fully and with new twists in the 1970s, especially in explicitly ecological films such as *Soylent Green* (Richard Fleischer, 1973) and *Logan's Run* (Michael Anderson, 1976), which centred on the separation and alienation from nature and the (consequent) loss of humanity. Of the more recent examples of

environmentally aware sci-fi films *Star Trek: The First Contact* (Jonathan Frakes, 1996) and *Contact* (Robert Zemeckis, 1997) are briefly examined.

"The cultural logic of postmodernism" and cyborg studies are deployed in Chapter Five to eke out "contemporary eco-fears as expressed through science fiction films which are usually dismissed as being preoccupied with empty spectacle." (185) *Dark City* (Alex Proyas, 1998), the *Terminator* franchise (James Cameron,1984, 1991, 2003), *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) and other films are then examined by focusing on the issues such as fragmented identity, space and eco-catastrophy, and cyborg-type alternatives to human nature. As with the previous chapters the focus is on how the moments featuring these issues can widen our ecological understanding of the world. Again, numerous theorists (e.g. Baudrillard, Lyotard, Bataille, Foucault, Levinas, Haraway, Gunning, Debord), theories and concepts are alluded to, but in a manner which feels more associative than systematic and which makes the chapter more a collection of meditations on selected films than a clearly arched argument.

The overall style and presentation in *Hollywood Utopia* also contributes to this effect. At times it seems that the prose is unnecessarily dense and digressive. Brereton frequently uses parenthetical asides, some of which are associative, some just irritating. Many of them might contain a kernel of an interesting idea, but as quick remarks they are left undeveloped and shallow, a distraction for the reader. The repetition of certain adjectives becomes inflationary (e.g. "potent") or downright embarrassing as with the grandiose and unqualified variations of "majestic" appearing again and again. One final round of attentive reading and revising on Brereton's -- or his editors' -- part could easily have purged these small, but nagging flaws, along with a few colloquialisms, the (accidental?) conflation of actors and their roles, shifting indentations and the inconsistent use of italics.

It seems that the gist of Brereton's arguments can be boiled down to three statements: 1) the visual conventions of mainstream Hollywood cinema have enough semantic ambivalence that on some occasions some environmental representations can be read as having therapeutic and enlightening potential; 2) these 'utopian,' 'sublime' or awe-inspiring moments have the potential to educate us about some ecological facts, such as the fact that human action and the environment are causally linked; 3) this covert progressiveness carries some real political potential in terms of changing the spectator's consciousness about the environment, a sustainable way of life and so on.

The first statement is quite easy to make, since the ever-present margin of semantic ambivalence in audiovisual (or any other) representations can sustain any number of speculative readings, be they post-feminist, post-Marxist or ecocritical ones. But it still feels a point worth making and I think Brereton is right in stressing the fantastic nature of these representations and the therapeutic function they provide for the audiences. Like many other, non-ecological moments, they construct beautiful and soothing instances of entertainment. The second statement is more problematic since the facts that, according to Brereton, are mediated by these moments seem vague ("life finds a way") or trivial (we are a part of nature, too), which means that there is very little actual value in this kind of enlightenment or 'education.' And in any case, as Brereton himself acknowledges, these moments are usually modulated by romance, sentimentality and fantasy, a fact which should clearly affect their didactic value.

This leads to the third and, to my mind, the most untenable statement concerning the political pay-off of these ecologically 'sublime' moments. Pristine and spectacular daydreams,

fantasies and misrepresentations of non-human nature might sometimes make for useful propaganda, but *as such*, they cannot -- and must not -- be used as a basis for further education about ecological issues. Granted, we learn a lot from fiction whether we want to or not, but that should not lead to the endorsement of fiction or myths as valid descriptions of and answers to the critical problems that many environmental issues pose. Fantastical land- and seascapes and clichéd Native Americans as therapy are fine, as are the mythical, conventional or trivial factoids about life -- that is what entertainment is all about. But to be too enthusiastic in promoting myths and idealistic utopias of Hollywood as ecologically sound could turn out to be greenwash-PR for the corporate machine and runaway consumerism which sustain the studios but which are in contradiction to the basics of the environmentalist ethos.

If, however, one wants to engage with the ecological moments in detail and in a fashion beneficial to environmental awareness it is hard to think of any other way than critically examining these cinematic representations against other contextual and scientific evidence about the reality of the facts represented. David Ingram did just that in *Green Screen* and was able to delineate not only the ideological conventions of the (mis)representation of nature from *Valley of the Giants* (Charles Brabin, 1927) to *Pocahontas* (Mike Gabriel & Eric Goldberg, 1995) but also to uncover some quite commendable efforts, such as *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* (Hector Babenco, 1991) and *Thunderheart* (Michael Apted, 1992). This approach does have the 'ecological use-value' (which Brereton does call for) simply because it can pinpoint the moments when Hollywood got it more right or less right in terms of environmental representations while the results can be utilised more reliably in ecological education. But because in his own analysis Brereton insists on using only close textual analysis one is left with "the creation of a new *conceptual* space [through which Brereton's] form of eco-*utopianism* helps to provide a *potentially* more effective *blueprint* for *theorising possible* eco-*readings* of Hollywood *texts*." (34) My italics indicate the several conceptual layers and conditionals that distance this strategy from reality. After all, that is where the concrete ecological use-value and the true problems and challenges of environmental education really reside.

In short, the discussion in *Hollywood Utopia* succeeds in highlighting some aspects of the enjoyment of utopian environmental representations in Hollywood cinema and reminding the reader of the complex and potentially educative nature of these images. It fails, however, to construct a convincing linkage between its textual analyses and their practical political usefulness in terms of the increased ecological awareness promised in the premises of the study. This is at least partly due to the theoretical framework of deep holistic ecology, which seems to allow for the use of fuzzy concepts and definitions, and a continuous, unsystematic slippage and conflation between reality and fantasy. Finally, the presentation of these important issues is beset by a style that feels unnecessarily dense and unfinished.

The Cinema of Andrzej Wajda: The Art of Irony and Defiance

By John Orr and Elzbieta Ostrowska (eds.)
London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2003. ISBN 1-903364-89-2 (pbk), 1–903364–57–4 (hbk). xxii + 208 pps. £15.99 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk)

A review by Sheila Skaff, University of Texas at El Paso, USA

Andrzej Wajda has directed thirty-five feature films, won dozens of awards including a Honorary Academy Award for lifetime achievement, served as a senator, put major philanthropic projects in place and started his own film school in his native Poland in the past fifty years. While he has been praised widely for his choice to make films almost exclusively in his native language, this decision has negatively affected the global flow of information about him. An English-language critical study of his work is so long overdue that expectations for it have been heightened greatly over the years. Wallflower Press' collection of articles devoted to his films, *The Cinema of Andrzej Wajda: The Art of Irony and Defiance*, edited by John Orr and Elżbieta Ostrowska, is likely to fulfil or exceed these expectations. The diversity and quality of its articles make it an exciting, thought-provoking read. Each of the contributing authors delivers a unique perspective on one or more diverse aspects of the director's work in this well-rounded, highly scholarly collection.

It is not its editors, though, who set the tone for the book. It is introduced with a formidable speech given by Wajda at the 2001 conference on his work that gave rise to the collection. The film-maker's foreword contains elemental answers to many of the dilemmas of Wajda scholarship posed in the book and lays the foundation for what is to come. In his foreword, Wajda asks rhetorically, "What is national cinema today?" In his opinion, national cinema is cinema made in a national language, which Wajda assumes to comprise the whole of an author-director's inner world. He writes, "As long as we really want to hold onto our place and our language, we must not renounce national cinema..." (xvi). In support of his point, Wajda brings disparate historical moments from Polish Romanticism to Stalinism together, moving from one to another and then to various points in cinema history with an entrancing fluidity. It is clear that the writings to follow will find inspiration in his words.

And many do. In the first essay, 'At the Crossroads: Irony and Defiance in the Films of Andrzej Wajda,' John Orr explains that Wajda's films capture the irony in Polish history, in which "grand defiance of the state of things always has to take into account past failures in the grand defiance of the state of things" (2). It seems as though Polish National Romanticism has cast a mould for Polish history as well as for Wajda's cinema. For example, Michael Goddard's examination of the work of the late theater director Jerzy Grotowski in relation to Wajda's *Man of Marble* (1976) considers the latter a work of neo-romanticism. In 'Dangerous Liaisons: Wajda's Discourse of Sex, Love and Nation,' Elżbieta Ostrowska examines the discourses of public and private, community and home, and sex and love in *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958), *Landscape After Battle* (1970) and *A Love in Germany* (1983). She

skilfully ties these discourses to concepts of nationhood in Polish literature and Wajda's films. Lisa Di Bartolomeo offers a critical analysis of Wajda's 1999 adaptation of the major work of Polish National Romanticism, Adam Mickiewicz's epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* (Hippocrene Books Inc., 1992). Izabela Kalinowska's 'Changing Meanings of Home and Exile: From *Ashes and Diamonds* to *Pan Tadeusz*' contemplates the prevalence of the exiled protagonist in Wajda's work and contrasts this with the sense of a regained home in *Pan Tadeusz*. Describing the response of an émigré audience to a screening of *Pan Tadeusz* in the United States, she notes that the film offers Polish nationals a means of emotionally reconnecting with a homeland. She writes, "The visual reconstruction of home cures nostalgia" (75).

Although studies of Polish culture after the Second World War have largely ignored Freudian theory, many of the articles in this collection employ the tools of psychoanalysis. Paul Coates' 'Wajda's Imagination of Disaster: War Trauma, Surrealism and Kitch' takes the bold step of using Freudian theory to understand Wajda's depictions of the traumatic events of the war. Incisive and sharp, his essay finds Wajda's work a reproduction of the experiences of the film-maker's father's generation. Coates claims, "Wajda's literary adaptations are thus far from the evasions as which they have often been stigmatized, but rather critique their originals in the name of the traumatic incomprehensibility of the experiences they gloss over with a language Wajda unpicks as scar-tissue" (21). Coates' mastery of the language of psychoanalysis and insight into Wajda's films is such that even the many who insist on a strict separation between Freud and Polish culture may be forced to reconsider. Tadeusz Lubelski's ' "He Speaks to Us": The Author in *Everything for Sale*, *Man of Marble* and *Pan Tadeusz*' uses psychoanalysis less directly but equally effectively. Lubelski considers the therapeutic purpose of the figures of the film director and narrating author in Wajda's work. He asks, "Who really speaks through the picture on the screen?" (30).

Michael Stevenson finds curative properties in Wajda's portrayal of intra-national relations. In 'Wajda's Filmic Representation of Polish-Jewish Relations,' Stevenson points out the instances in which Wajda has appeared inconsistent in his representations of these relations but claims that, on the whole, the director's willingness to create and re-create moments of derision between Catholic-Polish and Jewish-Polish protagonists demonstrates his ongoing concern for the matter. In 'Remembering and Deconstructing: The Historical Flashback in *Man of Marble* and *Man of Iron,*' film flashback expert Maureen Turim claims that Wajda's best-known works from the Solidarity period correspond to films, such as Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941), which employ the flashback as a narrative device for understanding historical experience through the experience of a major historical figure. Turim examines the alternate building and destruction of monumental figures in the historical flashback.

A few articles restrict analysis to particular films. From Ewelina Nurczyńska-Fidelska comes a study of Wajda's 1974 adaptation of Stanisław Reymont's turn-of-the-twentieth century novel, *The Promised Land*. Nurczyńska-Fidelska describes the depiction of the city of Łódź in the film, which she claims is darker and more pessimistic than the novel even as it better captures the industrial city's "spirit of enchantment" (153). Christopher J. Caes examines *Lotna* (1959) through Freudian theory. Tomasz Kłys looks at time and historical narrative in Wajda's 1980 "ironic epic" television series, *As the Years Pass, As the Days Pass ...* The most personal of the articles, Bjorn Sorenssen's '"Visual Eloquence" and Documentary Form: Meeting *Man of Marble* in Nowa Huta,' describes the author's viewing of the film while on a cultural exchange from Norway in 1977. He asserts that the film was comprehensible to

someone with no knowledge of Polish in a way that *Man of Iron* was not because of its strong visual imagery and lack of urgency.

The only major flaw in the book is that it allows Wajda's presence at the conference that spawned the collection to be felt closely in it. The authors employ various critical points of view with skill and vigour, but they tend to advance literary theory even more than the filmmaker's work in their writings. Wondering why, I am reminded of the question posed often by frustrated students as they try to decipher the meaning of a living filmmaker's work: "Why can't we just ask the director?" This collection demonstrates that the standard response -- "because you might not get a straight answer" -- might well be replaced with, "because you might not ask a straight question." It is, perhaps, too much to ask of academics not to suffer from tied tongues when face-to-face with their subjects. Orr and Ostrowska have assembled the work of exceptional scholars for their collection. The authors leave little to be desired, but any lack in them is probably due to the type of symposium at which they were first presented and the fact that they follow Wajda's intriguing foreword. The articles approach their subject as if on tiptoe and wearing scholarship as armour against the inevitability of confrontation with the discomforting notion that film scholars' emotional intimacy with a director is usually illusionary and almost always unrequited. The book is an impressive collection of interpretations and analyses, but does it get to the essence of Wajda's work? I wonder if anyone had the nerve to ask.

Shooting Stars. Drugs, Hollywood and the Movies

By Harry Shapiro
London: Serpent's Tale, 2003. ISBN 1-85242-651-9. 320pp. £14.99 (pbk)

A review by John Saddington, University of York, UK

According to the introduction, *Shooting Stars* addresses the following questions, all relating to drugs in Hollywood: "what are the key themes and messages? How have drugs themes been tackled? What do these treatments tell us about societal attitudes to drugs? How have these attitudes changed over the years? What is the symbolic nature of drug themes? What impact has drug use had on the film industry itself?" (5). This book also examines drugs legislation and censorship.

The book is organised into fifteen chapters plus an introduction and appendix. For the most part, each chapter focuses on a particular recreational drug, for instance 'Junkie Goes to Hollywood: Heroin in the 1950s,' 'Snowblind Friends: Cocaine Returns to Hollywood' and 'Honey, I Smoked the Kids: Crack and Black Film.' The book focuses heavily on America and American films, "because it has long been synonymous with the business of film-making and the art of excess" (7) and while this is fairly understandable it makes the book feel, in parts, a little too familiar. As Hollywood excess has been common currency for the national and international press for many years some of the stories of this book may be known to readers already.

So, what does this book actually say? Within most of the chapters there is a general introductory section, perhaps referring to the history of the drug under discussion, or legislation, followed by a discussion of the drug in film history, followed by detailed discussion of a small number of films. For example, the chapter titled 'Altered States II: Highways to Hell' introduces LSD by explaining that Albert Hoffman developed it while working for the Sandoz Pharmaceutical Company in Switzerland. We are not told when, which is an oversight on Shapiro's part (for the record, it was 1943), but we are told how the CIA and American Military started drugging people with LSD as part of numerous experiments into the debilitating and destabilising effects of the drug. It is also very interesting to learn that Cary Grant experienced "LSD psychotherapy," claiming that it helped him "to become a parent" (135). It is also reported in this chapter where and when Allen Ginsberg tried LSD for the first time: "the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, California" (135), in 1959, and the clear implication is that this institute was working under the auspices of the American espionage services. Referencing in this section is quite poor and it is not stated where Shapiro has obtained this information from.

Shooting Stars contains a number of interesting asides and snippets of information, such as the fact that Harrods was fined for selling cocaine during the First World War, marketing it as "a useful present for friends at the front" (60). This is a foretaste of the situation that

developed during the Vietnam War, "where thousands of troops were shooting heroin and smoking dope just to anaesthetise themselves from the fear and terror of fighting" (147).

Shapiro also covers the 1948 Robert Mitchum drugs bust at some length, detailing who was there, some of the things that were said -- including Mitchum giving his profession to a police officer as "*former* actor" (86) -- and the situation that developed following the arrest (firstly the guilty verdict and suspended sentence, followed by the barely publicised acquittal a year later). This is a well written section which serves to explain the story while at the same time asking questions about the bust and two subsequent trials. Shapiro's speculation as to the motives of the protagonists is interesting and well researched.

A very popular drugs film which Shapiro discusses over a number of pages is *The Man With The Golden Arm* (1956), Otto Preminger's film starring Frank Sinatra. Apart from referring to the problems experienced by the filmmakers to try to get the film passed by the authorities that oversaw film regulation and decency, Shapiro also highlights the differences between the novel (written by Nelson Algren and published in 1949) and the film released seven years later. The principal difference being that in the book it is Frankie Machine that commits suicide, whereas on screen it is his deceitful ex-partner Sophie that throws herself off the apartment balcony at the end of the film. Shapiro's explanation for the change relates to Sinatra's casting as Frankie and his 'star status' at the time.

We have, rather briefly, covered some of the content of *Shooting Stars* in order to see how it is laid out. Who then, is the book aimed at? I would say that it is for the general reader interested in films, drugs and the combination of the two. It is strong on the issues of film censorship and drugs legislation and Shapiro's book is a useful starting point for the titles of drugs films from the history of the cinema, including educational films [with titles such as *The Narcotics Story* (Robert W. Larsen, 1958), *The Trip Back* (uncredited, 1970), and *People Versus Pot* (1970)], but the more interested or scholarly reader would need to consult texts further afield for more intricate details.

Readers interested in the lurid or salacious will not have their appetites fully sated by *Shooting Stars* as its tone is quite measured, rather than exaggerated. Where inappropriate behaviour by film stars or studio executives is referred to, it is in a very matter-of-fact way indicating the writer may not be all that impressed by such antics and, by implication, neither should the reader.

The film analyses, while helpful, could do with some improvement. Essentially just descriptions of plot, with some gossip from behind the scenes occasionally thrown in, such analysis is of the light variety. There is no systematic study of narrative in the selected films and therefore little consistency in the analysis of the films. Features are brought to our attention in an unsystematic way, rather than via a standard, analytical framework.

In the copy of *Shooting Stars* that I read there is no index which was a source of substantial frustration during the writing of this review. I hope this is corrected in future editions. Similarly, the bibliography is not as complete as it might be, because it is a selection of some of the most useful articles and books that were used. My own preference is for every source used to be included in the bibliography and again I hope that this is rectified in the future. On the subject of referencing, there were too many statements and quotations in the book that were not properly cited which prevents the reader from further exploring the points made. In addition to the aforementioned example, in the section on Corman's *The Trip*

(1968), we are told that a critic called the film "an hour and a half commercial for LSD" (127) but this is not referenced so the reader does not know who said this, or when, or where it was said. Such a cavalier approach to referencing will need tightening up in any future editions of this book.

There are also occasional phrases that feel too clichéd, for instance in a paragraph about Gilliam's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998) about to do well at Cannes 1998, we are told that suddenly "everything all went hideously pear-shaped and the press tore the film to bits" (275). Finally, I feel that *Shooting Stars* lacks a punchy conclusion and instead ends rather abruptly in a chapter eulogising the author's "two favourite 'substance-orientated' films of all time" (269), *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (Terry Gilliam) and *Withnail and I* (Bruce Robinson, 1987), followed by a very short appendix, apropos nothing at all, about 1960s US classroom scare movies.

Shooting Stars is full of really interesting information relating to people, places, dates, laws and films -- all tied to Hollywood and drugs. Some of the writing reminds me of Michael Moore's books [such as *Stupid White Men* (Penguin Books, 2001)] or investigations by Eric Schlosser [*Fast Food Nation* (Houghton Mifflin, 2001)] in the way that the slightly familiar narrative is given an extra twist with reference to some previously unknown fact or statistic, but the film analyses could be improved in order to turn this interesting book into a gripping and sophisticated read. If you like books that mix anecdotes, facts, quotations and statistics about drugs, Hollywood and movies, then *Shooting Stars* is certainly worth a look.

Nelson Pereira dos Santos

By Darlene J. Sadlier
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A review by Vicente Rodriguez Ortega, New York University, USA

Nelson Pereira dos Santos is undoubtedly one of the more influential figures in the history of Brazilian cinema. Often overshadowed by the critical attention paid to Glauber Rocha's iconoclastic and revolutionary cinematic feasts, his filmmaking career extends over forty years, and epitomizes, from both a production and aesthetic point of view, the ongoing struggle Latin American filmmakers must invariably carry out if wanting to achieve a widespread distribution and exhibition of their works. For, Hollywood's vast domination of the Latin American film market has historically been (and still is) paramount and has continuously silenced or at least diminished the impact native filmmakers have had in their countries of origin and elsewhere.

Pereira Dos Santos' work also reflects the ways in which filmmakers have negotiated the political turmoil most of Latin American nation-states have suffered throughout the twentieth century. For decades artists have been forced to comply with the co-ordinates of repressive military regimes and their changing censorship standards or creatively elude them by resorting to a range of indirect narrative and audiovisual tropes in attempting to produce politically dissident films that encompass the rich variety of multicultural discourses and the defining socio-economic unevenness that characterizes Latin American societies. In addition, Pereira dos Santos' work, often drawing from canonical masterworks of Brazilian literature, can be seen as a complex re-writing of Brazilian history and culture from a nonconforming point of view. His films have repeatedly granted visibility to repressed sites of Brazilian cultural life in the mainstream media -- the working classes, the Northeastern, African-Brazilian religion, the *favela* -- while offering an alternative aesthetic to the Hollywood global dominant. Simultaneously, he has attempted (often unsuccessfully) to reach the masses by articulating a popular mode of address based on the specificity of Brazilian culture.

Darlene J. Sadlier's *Nelson Pereira dos Santos* is the first (and long overdue) comprehensive study of the Brazilian director in the English language. Although several scholars, most remarkably Ismael Xavier, Randal Johnson and Robert Stam have made pioneering efforts to explore the intricacies and nuances of the extremely complex and fruitful arena of Brazilian cinema, Sadlier's monograph feels like a necessary step in acknowledging its tremendous importance in as much as it stresses the privileged status Pereira Dos Santos should hold in a revisionist history of cinema that would de-centre the European and Hollywood fetishistic approach that has typically haunted this kind of endeavour.

Sadlier does a good job in recounting Pereira dos Santos' career from a film critic and social activist to his full-blown realization as a politically committed filmmaker in the early 1950s. Battling censorship ever since the making of his first film, *Rio, 40 graus* (*Rio, 100 Degrees*,

1956), Pereira dos Santos' career may be understood as a multi-layered set of competing and yet complementary discourses that challenge territorially-based approaches to the cinematic medium and call for a more open-ended, transnational, framework. His work presents an active engagement with a myriad of cinematic film practices, ranging from Italian Neorealism to the French New Wave to Cinema Novo -- while drawing from the very multicultural variety and multi-ethnicity of the Brazilian social field. At the same time, he offers a radical commitment to audiovisual and narrative experimentation.

Even though the author makes a remarkable effort in contextualizing Pereira Dos Santos' films within the aesthetic and political co-ordinates that have dictated the meanders of Brazilian filmmaking in the last fifty years, she falls short to offer new insights. Sadlier centers her attention on the Brazilian director's two most acclaimed works, *Vidas Secas* (*Barren Lives*, 1963) and *Como Era Gostoso o Meu Francês* (How *Tasty was my little French man*, 1971), devoting seventeen pages to each of them, and concentrates far less extensively on the rest of Pereira dos Santos' films. Her detailed analyses of these two films neither approach them from a different perspective in relation to previous scholarship nor manage to illuminate their complexity by establishing a series of connections with his other works. One feels the author wasted an opportunity to re-evaluate these two films and pay more attention to those that have been less critically discussed. In other words, Sadlier reproduces the canon of Brazilian cinema scholarship in English, instead of plunging into under-explored territories. Likewise, even though she mentions other Brazilian and European film movements and filmmakers' works, her comparative studies often tends to stop in an easy name-dropping pattern, failing, thus, to thoroughly situate the Brazilian filmmaker's output historically (for example when discussing the cinematography in *Vidas Secas* Sadlier argues that it is "photographed against the sky in the manner of Eisenstein or Ford" (40). Even though she takes into consideration well-known theoretical templates within the field of Brazilian cinema, most notably cannibalism, anthropophagy and national allegory, she does not critically challenge or re-assess them. Sadlier seems content with acknowledging their importance and employ them in the context of her textual examinations.

To Sadlier's credit, it is fair to emphasize that she graciously lets Pereira dos Santos speak his own words as a counterpoint to her stylistic and socio-political analyses. Furthermore, reading the Brazilian director's statements, often contemporary to the making of his films, allows us to ground his work in the very historicity of the successive socio-cultural milieus he had to work through and fully understand the political motivations that inform them.

To conclude, Sadlier's monograph, which is part of a series titled 'Contemporary Film Directors,' can indeed be a very useful text for an introductory or survey course on Latin-American or Brazilian cinema but, using Christian Metz' words, it does not expand the field of the 'sayable' in relation to either Brazilian cinema as a whole or Pereira dos Santos' work more specifically. *Nelson Pereira dos Santos* functions well as an entry point into the field of Brazilian cinema if complemented with Randal Johnson and Robert Stam's *Brazilian Cinema* (University of Texas Press, 1988) and Ismail Xavier's *Allegories of Underdevelopment* (University of Minnesota, 1998). For scholars or students already familiar with these key texts, it does little else than presenting a discussion of Pereira dos Santos' works that feels slightly superficial and hardly engaging.