

# Electric Dreams: Computers in American Culture

By Ted Friedman

New York: New York University Press, 2005. ISBN 0-1847-2739-5. 31 illustrations, 286pp. £14.50 (pbk), £41.50 (hbk)

## A review by Anne Petersen, University of Oregon, USA

*Electric Dreams* takes two issues to task: our collective lack of historical context concerning the computer, and the promotion of the hope for a utopian (computer-influenced) future. By investigating the tension induced by what he terms "the dialectic of technological determinism," Ted Friedman, a Professor of Communication at Georgia State University, claims there is room, even *hope*, for utopian visions of the future. Because "Americans don't take computers for granted yet," their uses and meanings are not fixed (2). Friedman calls his readers to think differently about computers, to reexamine their history, their exponential evolution, and their future utility. Instead of commodities with ever-increasing speed, memory, and capabilities, if we consider them as creations with the potential to dissolve gender or race, to eliminate (instead of produce) sweat-shop labour....then the utopian technological sphere envisioned by generations of sci-fi writers and pro-technology pundits may be realised. The only way that this will happen, however, is if we cease thinking about a computer as merely the labour-saving tool that performs a number of processes: that allows me to word process this review, to email it as an attachment, to read *Scope* on-line.

*Electric Dreams* forwards this thesis by providing the reader with an engaging, extremely readable account of the genealogy of the computer. Friedman introduces each "ancestor" of the laptop, from Charles Babbage and Ana Lovelace's original innovations to the basement-filling mainframes created for the military. If you consider yourself well-versed in computer history, these anecdotal sections will likely prove tiresome. Tech-savvy folk are not the audience for this book, however. If, like myself, you consider yourself interested in the ramifications of the computer and other aspects of new media, then the straightforward manner in which Friedman presents even basic concepts -- analog vs. digital, the invention of the micro-processor, the fundamentals of Unix -- will be greatly appreciated. Like many of my colleagues, I consider myself rather tech-savvy, but at the same time, somewhat embarrassed of the gaps in my grasp of how, why, and for what reasons my digital tools work the way that they do. Without descending too deep into specifics, *Electric Dreams* provides a crash-course in computer culture, allowing this academic to flesh out her knowledge of the computer and its historical context.

In providing the reader with said context, Friedman pressures the determinist idea that if a piece of technology *can* be built, it will be: as he plainly demonstrates, Babbage's early computing machine *could* have been built and operated, but there simply was no driving demand. This counters the driving ethos of today, which seems to broadcast "if you build it, they will come." In Friedman's words, "Charles Babbage continues to haunt computing culture, and to loom over the rhetoric of inevitability that comes so easily to today's cyber-

pundits" (31). Here Friedman's persuasions shine through the text -- he wants the reader to realise that change and innovation have not always been (nor need be) inevitable. History's path is not determined; there is no "inevitability." This is a lesson to apply to the present, when the future of American computing culture -- complete computerization, Microsoft monopoly, elimination of wage-based labour -- indeed seems inevitable. Friedman's clear message: it is not.

Such polemical statements are peppered throughout the text, but never overpoweringly. In explaining the shift from the analog to the digital computer, Friedman digresses into a lengthy discussion of both technologies, defining the defenses of both sides through the obvious example of vinyl vs. digital. He extends the differences between the warm, accessible sound of the LP to the cold, perfected sound of the CD, asserting that the 1950s shift to digital likewise demonstrated a shift in values. Friedman takes this extension one step further: "computers are digital, people are analog" (43). This claim functions as both salve and warning: here is why it is equally impossible for us to think like a computer *or* to manufacture a computer who can think like us. As much as society attempts to think in binary yeses and nos, black and whites, Democrats or Republicans, the fuzzy indecision and ambiguity of human flesh are what characterizes humanity and has built our civilization. An attempt to escape the analog mind, to shift to a completely digitalized (read: fascist) society would result in the dystopian inverse of what Friedman hopes for the future.

*Electric Dreams* passes through the 1980s and 1990s, giving attention to the innovation of the microprocessor, the import of Apple's 1984 commercial, and the double-edged sword of Moore's Law, with its fulfilled prophesy of yearly exponential growth in computer capability. Exploring the decade-long process of commodification, Friedman returns to the concept of technological determinism: in his view, a few decisions could have easily steered the computer into the position of a utility (similar to French's Minitel system) rather than the highly-privatized commodity it is today. But the tactics of computer promotion -- as a slick addition to a household of labor-saving tools -- solidified its position (and overwhelming success) as a commodity. Friedman's thesis once again reveals itself: it did not have to be this way. Although most of us have only used computers as personal devices, that should not limit our conception of how the computer may be utilized in the future.

Granted, in the process of commodification, the computer likewise became accessible. What was once available only to the highly-skilled techie was now available to the tech amateur. This democratization erased lines of schooled and unschooled: as Lev Manovich previously posited in *The Language of New Media*, this disillusion of the line between professional and amateur made sophisticated digital production a reality for the masses. In the era of the Apple II, this meant that a housewife could perform accounting processes formerly exclusive to the C.P.A. Today the democratization of computers has evolved in nearly all fields -- from web design to film production, from sound recording to photo manipulation. Friedman's point, however, is that the ideal of democratization could (and should) have gone further: while housewives could indeed perform their own taxes, the process of commodification -- along with the price of licensing, the constant need for upgrades -- prevents authentic democratic access. Friedman shies from pinpointing exactly *what* democratic access would resemble. He hints that it would incorporate third-world nations, especially those whose computing systems are hampered by the inability to duplicate software. His exploration of Unix and free-ware, discussed at-length at the end of the book, sheds light on what computing outside of the commodity-driven free market might look like. As is, perhaps we're all (Friedman being no exception) too mired in the muck of

capitalism to conjure a detailed vision of how the computer could exist apart from its current status as commodity.

As Friedman shapes his genealogy of the recent past and future, he trudges through the rise of the internet and Microsoft and the subsequent optimism of the dot.com boom. In the process, he constructs a serious critique of the cyber-liberalism of *Wired* and its followers. Lamenting *Wired*'s process of reconciling "corporate profits and Bohemian anarchism," Friedman effectively skewers those who defended a form of "free market Neo-Social Darwinism" by forefronting faux notions of a free-access future (174;180). Here Friedman's text turns vitriolic, but no less powerful -- the background he has provided, stories recounted, and chances forsaken have led to this point, where we examine the dot.com bust not simply as the burst of an economic bubble, but as the deflation of currency-inflated egos. For Friedman, the beginning of the internet was rife with promise, but those who rode out the promise, costuming their capitalistic gain in the becoming dress of utopian rhetoric, deserve to be exposed.

Exposed, however, for the purpose of change. If *Electric Dreams* teaches us anything, it is that nothing in the computer world -- not what we do with our computer tomorrow, nor what our computer will look like in five years -- is pre-determined. Friedman believes the computer capable of so much: of a world without gender, of free-source accessibility, of a seamless connection between individuals. The only way to arrive at such a technological utopia, and what Friedman indeed accomplishes with his study, is through acknowledgment of the past. The clichéd Roman saying rings true here: those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. We must learn, then, not only from the dot.com bust, but through the way that computers appear today and tomorrow in cultural artifacts, in advertising, in homes - - the way that the internet (and commodities, such as music) are open to several conceptions, not just as a commodity, but as a utility, or as an idea. Friedman concludes with the reminder that "resistance is never futile" -- that "the utopian sphere of cyberculture can be a beacon to a better world -- a more just, egalitarian, democratic, creative society....the future is up to us" (220).

*Electric Dreams* is a polemic dressed in history, diverse in its arguments, with a central goal of self-actualization that is to be admired. While I wonder how dated it will appear in coming years (as is, it's extremely current -- published in late 2005, the only thing lacking is a more in-depth exploration of blogs and online communities such as *MySpace* and *Facebook*) at this particular cultural moment, Friedman pressures our acceptance not just of our laptops, but of what we complacently accept as our collective societal fate.

# Mute Dreams, Blind Owls, and Dispersed Knowledges: Persian Poesis in the Transnational Circuitry

By Richard M.J. Fischer

Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004. ISBN 0-8223-3298-1 (pbk), ISBN 0-8223-3285-X (hbk). 488 pages, 58 illustrations, 10 tables. £13.99 (pbk), £60.00 (hbk)

## A review by Farhang Erfani, American University, USA

There are a number of good books out there on Iranian cinema, but none, to my knowledge, is like Michael Fischer's. Unlike most other monographs or collections of essays which cover Iranian films from an interesting -- yet fairly predictable -- angle, Fischer provides us with a unique take. Through an impressive combination of anthropological (his "home discipline"), psychoanalytic, aesthetic, historical and philosophical approaches, he pays close attention to Iranian films but also grounds the genre in the entirety of Persian culture and history. Not only all film scholars would benefit from reading his work, he also does something that most of us simply allude to or mention in passing. The current state of theory in the humanities, generally speaking, is sensitive to particularity and contextual contingency. Many of us agree that a particular work -- aesthetic or otherwise -- ought to be appreciated within its context, but most fail to say or do more than just that. Fischer is clearly well versed in contemporary theory; he also applies it. Instead of making vague references to some historical events, or to some political moments, he puts together an analysis that shows where Iranian films come from.

On my first reading of Fischer's book, as it is truly the sort of work that benefits from rereading, I kept waiting for Fischer's analysis of Jafar Panahi's *The Circle* (2000). Unfortunately for me, this particular film was not one of the many that he wonderfully interprets. It was a little surprising since, to his credit, he manages to cover -- in depth -- more Iranian films in one volume than anyone else. The reason for my anticipation is that, in my view, Fischer's book is very much like Panahi's movie. In the latter, we watch a number of women struggle against the web of patriarchy and social misery. The Kafkaesque circularity and irrationality of women's fate in Iran is well captured in Panahi's script but also in its title. For Iranians, it is inconceivable to begin with a clean slate -- were such a thing possible. Instead, resistance and struggle means interpreting, reinterpreting the past and the present in order to enlarge the future world of possibilities. Fischer's work, it seems to me, works through the same logic of the hermeneutic circle. Throughout his book, he builds a very interesting and credible framework of interpretation that is revised and informed by historical changes and aesthetic works, which were produced by that very framework but also changed it and reinterpreted it.

Anyone familiar with Iranian films would readily acknowledge their symbolic and as Fischer clearly shows surreal qualities. After watching a film, the viewer is often in a strange state, a dream-like world. A good deal of work remains to be done; the viewer must put together the

movie's "goal" as well as the viewer's own appreciation. This common effect is indeed an intended style, inspiring a portion of Fischer's book title. "Mute Dreams" is a Persian expression, referring to the experience of grasping a phenomenon, wishing to share it but failing to find the words to describe it. In my conversations with colleagues and friends about Iranian films, I usually see two different -- equally weak -- interpretations. The first one appreciates "mute dream" as an aesthetic quality -- an "oriental" one. It is the cultural distance, the mysticism of the east that for some viewers explains the "different" poetics of Iranian cinema. Another reaction, one that is more learned but also insufficient, appreciates the symbolic depths of these films as a kind of detour around censorship, as though the filmmakers are forced to speak obliquely, despite themselves. The first refuses to really engage a film by turning it into an exotic product; the second fails to appreciate the depth of the Iranian culture on its poetics. Admittedly, as an Iranian, I have often fallen prey to these misinterpretations and Fischer's book has genuinely opened my eyes.

To make his case, Fischer does not begin with films. Instead, he begins with two constitutive narratives of Iranian culture. The reader may expect that at least one of the two would be Islam. It rightly is not. It is undeniable that Islam occupies a privileged place in Iranian consciousness; but it is an Iranian form of Islam. The Iranian regime's theocrats have repeatedly tried -- and failed -- to eradicate the Persian heritage in order to replace it with "true" Islam. As Fischer points out, the Zoroastrian tradition as well as Iran's epic work *Shahnameh* (*The Book of Kings*) have a greater impact on Iran's poesis than one would expect. The first two chapters explore the structure, the history and the relevance of each of these two sources of the Iranian heritage. Here, his anthropological expertise gives Fischer the unique ability to decipher and explain Zoroastrian symbolism and *Shahnameh*'s rich text. I learned more from these chapters than I could tell. Essentially, these two traditions, the latter fully informed by the former, have shaped the symbolic structure of narrativity in Iran. Their circular and performative qualities have left a permanent place on how Iranians see and interpret the world. In the later chapters, Fischer skillfully shows their presence in the film industry.

The interaction and the sometimes tumultuous conversation between the Zoroastrian culture, the *Shahnameh* and Islam continued for centuries. In the work of Sadeq Hedayat, the author of the existentialist novel *Blind Owl*, Fischer finds a renewal of Iranian poetics, this time mixed with the European tradition of Surrealism. Very few have paid due attention to Hedayat's novel, which many Iranians, Fischer rightly points out, mistake as pessimistic. Fischer cleverly shows how the *Blind Owl* has had an impact on many Iranian intellectuals, particularly filmmakers. The rest of the book, more or less chronologically divided, is devoted to analyzing different films and styles by showing the similarity, continuity and contribution to the Persian poetic heritage. As a result, the reader will find many detailed analyses of some of Iran's classical and contemporary films, many of which may not have appeared on Western radars. In particular, Fischer understands the key role that Darisuh Mirhaji's 1969 film *Gav* (*The Cow*) played in transforming the film industry. *Gav*, like Hedayat's *Blind Owl*, negotiates its content within a very difficult framework. Inspired by the dream-like rituals of Zoroastrianism, faithful to *Shahnameh*'s resistance to essential unity in favor of "dispersed knowledge" and narrative reconstruction, and finally staging the Iranian conversation with the West by mirroring Hedayat's surrealist style, *Gav* gave the Iranian genre its own identity, going all the way to Iranian films made after 9/11, in response to war and violence.

It is very hard to ask more of a book that already does so much. I would like to briefly mention two areas, which in my view could have benefited from more development. First, I would have liked a little more on Islam. As much as I agree with Fischer that Islam in Iran is unique -- and his chapter on "Illumination" is simply excellent, nevertheless, since Fischer is so talented in fleshing out what seems so remote to many, I cannot help but wonder what an additional chapter on Iranian-Islam would have been like. No doubt I would have learned a great deal from it. Second, and this is a small matter, as a professor of philosophy, my preference would have been for the Prologue which is exquisitely philosophical to have been more weaved into the rest of the narrative. As Iranians, we are blessed and cursed by our poetry. Most of our heroes and thinkers were poets, which isolates Persian thought and limits it to awkward translations. In the epic rivalry between Persians and Greeks, the latter benefited from their translatable prose. The Persian culture does have a philosophical contribution to make and the nature of the visual media has helped us transcend the boundaries of the poetic -- written -- language. This is the reason why I wish the connections to philosophy were a little more prominent in the book.

I fear that I cannot do justice to Fischer's book in such a short space. A symposium of essays is perhaps better suited for this task. Readers familiar and unfamiliar with Iranian films (and culture) will benefit from reading this work, which I highly recommend. As an Iranian, it was rather uncanny to read Fischer to better understand my self. It truly had a "mute dream" quality for me.

# Uncovering the Holocaust: The International Reception of *Night and Fog*

By Ewout van der Knaap (ed.)

London: Wallflower Press, 2006. ISBN 1-904764-64-9 (pbk), 1-904764-65-7 (hbk). 22 Illustrations, x + 198pp. £16.99 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk)

## A review by Chris Cagle, Temple University, USA

Documentary scholars may share every bit of the sophistication of their fiction-film-oriented counterparts in explaining textual form of nonfiction cinema, but documentary studies as a subfield has been less inclined to the kinds of historically situated inquiry that have gained currency in the study of Hollywood and other national film industries lately. Industrial study, including a full view of exhibition, marketing practices; social history; and film reception -- these areas beg further scholarly exploration in the context of documentary film. Almost obliquely, *Uncovering the Holocaust* answers this call by examining the reception of one film, *Night and Fog* (Alain Resnais, 1955) across six national contexts: France, Germany, Israel, Netherlands, Britain and the United States. The force of the situated context of reception to the meaning of a now canonical documentary will provide material for those interested in new dimensions of the "construction of nonfiction" approaches that had previously been the province of theoretical or text-focused methodologies.

The volume, it should be noted, is less immediately concerned with documentary studies or reception theory as either has been constituted in film studies than in using film reception history as a means to contribute to ongoing debates and concerns in Holocaust studies. In particular, the book sees the film as a study in memory of the Holocaust and unites three overlapping concerns: the textual and thematic construction of memory in *Night and Fog*; the importance of memory in the historiography of the Holocaust; and the role of the film in popular and official memory. In the words of the introduction,

[E]ach case study about the reception of *Nuit et Brouillard* addresses such concerns as when, where and how the French original was shown the first time; whether the government stimulated the film version; whether the reactions center on the film, the past, the present or future; which reactions that have been uncovered note the fact that the commentary does not explicitly state that the Holocaust destroyed the lives of Jews and whether the reception of the film was typical for the politics or remembrance (3).

Thus, to a remarkable extent, the historical reception studies are integrated thoroughly and clearly with the main lines of interpretive contention that follows *Night and Fog*. The documentary, after all, has come under attack for its universalist theme, its elision of the Jewishness of the Holocaust victims, and its use of certain graphic actuality footage. By tracing the critical judgments and political debates in different national contexts, the volume demonstrates the nationally specific character of the film's critical interpretation.

Each of the case studies provides a strong synthesis of political history and reception study. Judith Petersen contrasts the reception in the Jewish press in Britain between *Night and Fog* and *The Diary of Anne Frank* and suggests how the Anglo-Jewry seemed to be future-focused rather than focused on the past. Warren Lubline, writing on the American context, relates that Cinema16 considered the documentary apolitical. The chapters on French and German reception, by Jean-Marc Dreyfus and van der Knaap, examine the diplomatic dimensions to the removal of the film from consideration at the Cannes Film Festival. Nitzan Levoic's chapter on Israeli reception charts the pull of an international intellectual field on Israeli intellectuals, leading to a conflicted interpretation.

There are two main drawbacks to the study. First is the format. An edited volume, five of the nine chapters are penned by the editor, Ewout van der Knaap. Normally the advantage of an edited volume is the range of perspectives on the subject matter, however these perspectives are given shape and coherence by the editing. *Uncovering the Holocaust*, however, falls between two formats, neither single-author book nor edited volume. Not simply unorthodox, the monographic origins hurt the project at times, as in the first chapter, which emphasize historiographic completism over analytical clarity. A chapter that starts by laying out the interpretive problems of *Night and Fog* -- problems that the subsequent chapters will revisit in their national contexts -- ends up getting bogged down in the minutiae of composer Hans Eisler's commission terms or tendentious readings of art historical references in the film.

Second, and more to the substance, the theoretical apparatus of the book does not add much value to the study, at least for the humanities-oriented film scholar. The introduction focuses on "collective memory," and several of the essays activate this concept. However, collective memory does not mean here what film and media scholars normally mean by the term. Van der Knaap uses "cultural memory" for mass-mediated construction of memory, distinguishing it from collective memory, which seems to mean memory communicated person-to-person, and from public memory, which seems to mean official history marked by government and allied institutions. The distinction appears mainly to argue, in the context of Holocaust studies, for the importance of mass-media texts in the construction of memory, a point on which film and media scholars need no convincing; for us, the conceptual framework adds little and even seems redundant, as when Petersen announces that "the term 'collective memory' will be employed to denote any representations or evocations of the past that are available to a collectivity" (106). Alongside such usage, commonplace notions like "political correctness" appear repeatedly, often in awkward or unclear ways (33). As a reception study, *Uncovering the Holocaust* is simply undertheorized.

Perhaps reception study has come far enough in gaining acceptance that long, polemical introductions along the lines of Janet Staiger's in *Interpreting Films* are no longer necessary. However, the case studies do raise such interesting points about documentary reception that a fuller exploration is in order. One after another, the studies show the reception of *Night and Fog* in the terrain of a national public sphere separate from and parallel to popular mass media. How do the class dimensions of the art film audience impact the reception? What are the differences in reception study when talking about feature films distributed as entertainment commodity and documentary films shown in the educational context? Did the institutions of the official public sphere themselves change in form after World War II? The strength of *Uncovering the Holocaust* is that its historical scholarship and political analysis raises these larger questions; the weakness is that the modesty of its scope leaves them unexplored.

The strengths of the book's national studies will undoubtedly come out in the pedagogical context. *Uncovering the Holocaust* presents clearly and forcefully the complicated debates around memory and representation of the Holocaust. Moreover, the case study format would work well in the classroom situation, even in film studies courses not specifically about the Holocaust. For film scholars generally, the study will be an invaluable book to provoke our thinking about the meaning of documentary texts in their historical context, even if we might need to turn elsewhere for fuller answers.

# Color: The Film Reader

By Angela Dalle Vacche and Brian Price (eds.)

London: Routledge, 2006. ISBN 0-415-32443-2 (hbk), 0-415-32442-4 (pbk). 6 colour plates, 214pp. £70.00 (hbk), £19.99 (pbk)

## A review by Deborah Allison

An in-depth study of colour in the cinema has been long overdue. This recent entry in the publisher's *In Focus* series can be seen as a welcome launch to what promises to be an evolving body of critical work on the subject. (At least one other forthcoming title has already been announced: Steven Peacock's entry, *Colour*, in Manchester University Press's new *Cinema Aesthetics* series.) Several factors, notes Brian Price, have discouraged writers from focusing upon colour to the same extent that they have considered other aspects of film style such as editing or camera movement. Foremost of these, he rightly suggests, are "archival concerns about restoration and fading" (3). Other barriers he identifies are "the larger philosophical and physiological problem of color vision...very few of us see the same color exactly alike" (4), terminological debates, and the fact that "even if we can agree on what to call a color, we may not be able to agree on what the color is meant to signify" (5). Yet despite these veritable difficulties, with close analysis of film style representing an ever-increasing proportion of contemporary film literature the fact that, in Edward Branigan's words, "criticism of film to the present day has largely proceeded as if all films were made in black and white" (170) is becoming ever more untenable.

The majority of articles in this anthology have been previously published elsewhere. Indeed, other than the relatively brief editorial material, only two essays appear here for the first time. The range of articles that have been gathered here has a valuable threefold function though. It shows the methodological range of historical and aesthetic analysis that already exists; it simultaneously highlights the relative paucity of existing material; and, perhaps most importantly, it constitutes a bold and eloquent argument that further work should -- indeed must -- be done if we are to develop a full appreciation of an aesthetic element so central to our experience of most films.

The volume is divided into four sections: "Color Technology and Visual Style"; "Color Theory"; "The Filmmaker as Color Theorist"; and "Case Studies". Just as the perspectives of the contributing writers vary greatly, so do the films under consideration. Discussion of mainstream Hollywood fare, such as *Leave Her To Heaven* (John M. Stahl, 1945) and *All That Heaven Allows* (Douglas Sirk, 1955) can be found alongside analyses of European art cinema -- *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967) and *The Red Desert* (Michaelangelo Antonioni, 1964) and experimental works such as *Blue* (Derek Jarman, 1993) and Stan Brakhage's cycle of films in which he painted colours directly onto strips of celluloid. Several pieces -- especially in the first and last sections -- deal with colour film as an historical phenomenon. Thus we find some discussion of the economics of colour film production in essays by J. P. Telotte and Steve Neale (the latter drawing heavily on the research of Gorham Kindem whose own pioneering writings on colour in the cinema are sadly not represented in this anthology), while Dudley Andrew examines competing colour

technologies in Europe after the First World War and Scott Higgins's analysis of *Becky Sharp* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1935) shows the extent to which "the goal of production was as much to demonstrate the possibilities of three-colour [Technicolor] as to create a profitable or popular film" (154). By contrast, films from the contemporary cinema are conspicuously absent. Only in Brian Price's essay are some recent films dealt with -- *Beau Travail* (Claire Denis, 1999), *Millennium Mambo* (Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 2001) and *Punch Drunk Love* (Paul Thomas Anderson, 2002). Of the single-film analyses, the most recent title is *Blue*, while the Hollywood movies don't get any more recent than *All That Heaven Allows*.

In their non-historical aspects many articles -- for all their variety -- share certain recurring preoccupations. Central amongst these are issues of "realism" versus "artistry" or "style" and issues of the symbolic meaning of colour in specific films. Both of these feature prominently in one of the oldest and most influential pieces in the book: Natalie Kalmus's "Color Consciousness" from 1935. "Until Technicolor was deemed a monopoly," explains Brian Price, Kalmus served as an advisor on every film that chose to use Technicolor equipment... Kalmus's job was to provide the director with color schemes appropriate to the narrative" (11). "Color Consciousness," he argues, "is nothing less than a blueprint for understanding color patterns and associations intended in Technicolor films" (11). Her essay proves an important reference point for the editors as well as J. P. Telotte in his discussion of early Technicolor Disney films and Scott Higgins in his analysis of *Becky Sharp*. Kalmus argued that "We must study color harmony, the appropriateness of color to certain situations, the appeal of color to the emotions" (25). She continues, "We have found that by the understanding use of color we can subtly convey dramatic moods and impressions to the audience, making them more receptive to whatever emotional effect the scenes, action and dialog may convey" (26). Her approach has attracted some criticism, not all of it fair. J. P. Telotte characterises it as being "rooted in a rather customary, even conventional sensibility" (31) and approvingly quotes Richard Neupert's assessment of her place as being within "a long line of color practitioners who accept as fairly natural that color's meanings are fixed and reliable" (31).

The question of whether or not colours have "'fixed and reliable" meanings might be understood as a key theme of the book, even though it is rarely addressed head-on. An immense discomfort with the idea that colours may indeed have fixed meanings prevails throughout the writings in this collection, and indeed much other literature. "Almost all color theorists", writes Edward Branigan, " -- even those holding expressionist views of the nature of art -- maintain that color has neither an absolute perceptual base, nor an absolute meaning (emotional or intellectual): color depends on relationships and comparisons" (170). Even in Kalmus's essay, many passages show that her understanding of colour meaning is more nuanced than Telotte's and Neupert's appraisals of her suggest. She writes, for instance, "we found that colors mixed with white indicate youth, gaiety, informality. Colors mixed with gray suggest subtlety, refinement, charm. When mixed with black, colors show strength, seriousness, dignity, but sometimes represent the baser emotions of life" (26).

Even while the contributors are universally uncomfortable with the notion of fixed colour meanings, their writings manifest a widespread inability to fully escape assumptions that certain colour associations and symbolism are indeed widely shared, at least within Western culture. If denial of fixed meanings provides much of the text in this book, a tacit acceptance of common colour associations is often present as a subtext. These are occasionally cited briefly, such as Telotte's reference to green as "a color of vitality" (35) and Scott Higgins' citation of "feeling blue" as an example of emotional colour associations in the English

language (155) but such associations and symbolism are never explored in any depth. Given the mass of literature that exists on colour psychology and colour meaning it is surprising to find this unrepresented in the theoretical sections since, whether or not one subscribes to such theories they are clearly foundational to a great deal of thinking about colour, even in those pieces centred upon their denial. In a volume that so firmly positions itself as a student textbook the absence seems especially regrettable.

In writing about the meaning of colour in film, several writers productively invoke the idea of colour "systems" to frame their arguments -- an idea that features prominently in the case studies by Edward Branigan, Mary Beth Haralovich, Marshall Deutelbaum and Richard Allen. Allen, for instance "proposes four central stylistic tendencies in Hitchcock's color practice: color versus colorlessness, cool colors versus warm colors, black versus white, and the warning series" (129) while Deutelbaum proficiently demonstrates how the costume design of *Leave Her to Heaven* establishes links between certain colours and characters, pointedly varying the colour scheme in order to express issues of sibling rivalry and control of situations within the narrative. Such an approach allows these writers to acknowledge that colour can assume powerful meanings within specific texts whilst evading a subscription to notions of absolute colour value or meaning. These essays, as the editors note, "suggest many of the ways in which interpretative claims about color can be productively made" (129).

The scope of this anthology, and the varied and excellent content of the articles it presents, represents a major contribution to the study of film colour and, indeed, of film aesthetics in general. If some wide gaps, such as the relative absence of writing about contemporary film, prevent it from being wholly satisfying, the blame must lie not with the editors but with the lack of material available for them to draw upon. In helping to raise the profile of complex issues surrounding colour in cinema, it must be hoped that the book's greatest achievement will be to stimulate a new wave of carefully considered writing in the field.

# Pretend We're Dead: Capitalist Monsters in American Pop Culture

By Annalee Newitz

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006. ISBN 0-8223-3745-2 (pbk), ISBN 0-8223-3733-9 (hbk). 232 pages, 18 black and white illustrations, £13.95 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk)

## A review by **Natasha Patterson, Simon Fraser University, Canada**

Analyses of horror film have flourished over the years, yet most studies remain dominated by psychoanalytic and feminist theories, to the detriment of other issues like class. Author Annalee Newitz, in *Pretend We're Dead: Capitalist Monsters in American Pop Culture* (2006) based on her PhD dissertation research, sets out to fill in this gap in the literature by exploring how monsters represent economic crises in American film and "naturalist" literature from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Newitz is also careful to note that her exploration of American "capitalist monsters" as she calls them, is culturally and historically specific, as other cultures deal with concerns and anxieties specific to their culture by utilizing different kinds of imagery and symbols specific to them. Moreover, the pervasiveness of the myth of the "American Dream," which attempts to render class differences invisible, makes Newitz's study even more crucial for its willingness to try and "exorcise" class from the subtextual depths of American horror film.

The book is divided thematically around three themes of "monstrosity": mental monstrosity, bodily monstrosity, and narrative monstrosity. Within each thematic category specific capitalist monsters are discussed and analysed: "Mad Doctors" and "Serial Killers," "The Undead" and "Robots," and "Media Monsters."

In the first section of the book, Newitz explores the mental monstrosity embedded in tales of serial killers and deranged doctor. In both instances, mental deterioration leads to violence and death, though the narratives are positioned differently in relation to class. Stories about serial killers often reveal links between alienated labour and violence, as many well known murderers often describe their killing similarly to their paid work. Turning to the figure of the mad doctor, we find similar narratives about alienated labour, but here the focus is on social anxieties swirling around the professional classes. Referencing the early influence of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," Newitz charts how this British tale became transformed within the American imaginary, revealing fears about downward social mobility, and abusing one's mental powers to harm others. In their more current formations these tales suggest that mental labour (within the context of globalization), is gradually becoming equated with manual labour; the brain can just as easily become another commodified, alienated body part, something that most of us can relate to, or have at some point in our working lives.

The second thematic concern, narratives of bodily monstrosity, focuses on the undead and robots. It is in this section that Newitz arguably contributes her most significant insights, in the process greatly expanding our understanding of the cultural appeal and importance of

horror film. Surveying a number of films dealing with the "living dead," Newitz firmly grounds this generic mainstay of American culture within race relations and colonialism. Through a number of "against the grain" readings she contends that it is the monstrosity of whiteness which is most often put under the microscope rather than marginalized "others," though their marginal status ultimately remains unquestioned and intact. Contemporary horror films like *The People Under the Stairs* (Wes Craven, 1991) turn the tables on these earlier undead tales about colonizers and the colonized by envisioning a world where white supremacy can be usurped, thus making it possible for the colonized to transcend class marginalization. Yet, moving up the class ladder becomes another source of anxiety in films like *Tales from the Hood* (Rusty Cundieff, 1995), serving as a reminder that we are all capable of becoming "monsters" if we economically suppress others. Newitz also provides a fascinating, albeit brief, re-reading of *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, 1968) seeing Ben as a sympathetic, middle class, educated, black hero, illustrating important links between masculinity and economic power. This chapter offers timely critiques about racial difference in horror cinema, something that has yet to be given the full attention it deserves. Questions about coercive labour and slavery spill over into Newitz's discussion of robots and cyborgs. Considering a broad range of material from Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* and Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), to contemporary films like *RoboCop* (Paul Verhoeven, 1987), Newitz explores the ways in which cyborgs embody contradictory discourses about love and work, consent and slavery, often highlighting the slippery slope between cyborg/human distinctions. In its more dystopic formation, cyborg narratives show a dark world where robots control humanity, the ultimate master/slave relationship; whereas utopian versions emphasize romance and love, especially between robots and humans, as a way to overcome these differences, yet we must always be wary of turning human emotion into a mechanical thing.

Newitz's concluding chapter brings everything full circle with a discussion of the "media as both a monstrosity and a manufacturer of monsters" (152). Here, we find a fascinating fusion between the negative effects of mass media and our own unconscious desires to take control of the means of cultural production. Not surprisingly, Newitz's examples reveal that it is most often women and television that are the subject of these anxieties. Aging female stars, no longer regarded as physically desirable, must re-market themselves as "monsters" in *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (Robert Aldrich, 1962) while female consumers become killers when they don't get the products they want in *Misery* (Rob Reiner, 1990). Television meanwhile emerges as the symbol of the (negative) power that the media wields over its audiences, often blurring the line between reality and fiction in films like *Pleasantville* (Gary Ross, 1998) and *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998). More current takes like the *Matrix Trilogy* (Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski, 1999, 2003), expressing postmodern theories about media simulations and rampant technological developments, constructs a world in which we must overcome "the copies" in order to regain control of "the real." Surprisingly, Newitz does not explore further film's preoccupation with the cultural influence of television in our everyday lives, and why it continues to be an object of fascination in many film productions. At times too, her resistant readings of films like *Nurse Betty* (Neil LaBute, 2000) become a little heavy handed, as she attempts to reread the figure of the female consumer in these pop culture narratives as one who "takes on her assigned role with a vengeance" (168). The problem is that female consumers (and by extension television), are often positioned in a culturally devalued role. In these particular examples, these figures/symbols are often pathologized to the point where audiences find it difficult to sympathize with the characters; such is the case with Annie in *Misery*. The media, and film in

particular, continues to position particular figures as more "monstrous" than others, and thus more susceptible to monstrous commodification and consumption.

Nevertheless, Newitz's investigation leaves us with important questions about whether we can ever fully traverse or revolutionize the capitalist system. As well, the monstrous marriage between the mass media and capitalism appears to be painfully clear, and how our own participation through the consumption and enjoyment of "capitalist monsters" is dependent upon our continued involvement in the very system that these feels critique. Unfortunately, capitalism's presence is mostly left intact, though as Newitz points out, these films demonstrate the vulnerability and fragility of an economic system which "makes us pretend that we're dead in order to live" (6). But how to imagine another world or social structure outside the prevailing one is clearly problematic, as it becomes clear that nothing short of death and violence will spearhead the revolution.

Newitz has constructed a text which is very reader-friendly, written in an accessible and pleasant language, which will easily appeal to both genre fans and students. As well, by utilizing Marxist, postcolonial, feminist, and cultural theories to study American horror film and literature, this book will certainly be attractive to scholars across a number of disciplines. *Pretend We're Dead* provides refreshing insights into American horror film by excavating questions of class and economics from the grave, and challenging the American myth of classlessness and economic equality. As many critics have shown over the years, some of the most politically charged critiques of American culture emanate from one of the most culturally devalued genres -- the horror film. This book certainly contributes to this, by bringing questions of class and capitalism to the fore, and by illustrating how these tales speak to both our complicity with an economic system which exploits us and yet also taps into our fantasies about overthrowing capitalism by any monstrous means necessary.

# **Film as Philosophy: Essays on Cinema After Wittgenstein and Cavell**

By Rupert Read and Jerry Goodenough (eds.)

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The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Special Issue: Thinking Through Cinema: Film as Philosophy By Murray Smith and Thomas E. Wartenberg (eds.)

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### **A review by Vincent Gainé, University of East Anglia, UK**

Following the success of *The Matrix* (the Wachowski Brothers, 1999), a multitude of texts have appeared detailing a relationship between film and philosophy. These texts include different approaches, such as using film to illustrate philosophy, using philosophy to understand film, and discussing film as actually doing philosophy, which is the subject of the two publications I will be reviewing here. Both compilations include a variety of articles from academics both in film studies and philosophy, with different critical interests and understandings.

Curiously, the two texts do not refer to each other, but they do share many of the same references in terms of philosophers and their particular theories and arguments. Goodenough and Read include their reference points in their title: *Cinema After Wittgenstein and Cavell*, and these philosophers feature prominently in the collected essays. Goodenough offers some general approaches to associating film with philosophy, while Read identifies philosophy as a thought process, and argues that film can be thought of "as reasoning and as exploring the "limits" of reason" (32). This is the overarching agenda in *Film as Philosophy*, arguing and demonstrating that film can undertake the same philosophical exercises as the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Stanley Cavell. Consequently, the collected articles either refer explicitly to these philosophers, or utilise film as a thought process.

Wittgenstein and Cavell also appear in *Thinking Through Cinema*, so an immediate difficulty for the film scholar may be a lack of familiarity with these philosophers. However, any text which encourages the scholar to read more widely can hardly be considered a bad thing. In addition, some of the authors offer an introduction to the relevant aspects of the philosophical

writings, while still others focus primarily on the films and the philosophical suggestions they make in themselves. *Thinking Through Cinema* is divided into four sections, each with its own focus, but taken together, this collection demonstrates the sheer range of philosophical understandings that can be gleaned from cinema. So *Thinking Through Cinema*'s agenda can be regarded as an alternative answer to the initial question that Goodenough poses: "Why might a philosopher go to the cinema?" (1) by demonstrating the different philosophical interpretations and filmic traditions that can be understood in this way. Due to this more general approach, my review begins with *Thinking Through Cinema*.

Although Murray Smith is one of the editors of this collection, his contribution to it does not agree with the overall premise. Smith accepts that films may be philosophical, if philosophy is part of daily life and not the exclusive territory of academics. In response to Stephen Mulhall's work on the subject, however, Smith asks what is the "mode" or "way" that film can philosophise (33). In answering this question, he identifies two strategies for aligning film with philosophy: the expansive and the reductive. With the former, Smith argues that all the "key activities" (34) of the film, such as visual and aural representation, engaging the viewer through storytelling etc, must be reduced to their philosophical relevance, and that those activities are "best illuminated" (34) in relation to philosophy. With the latter, he suggests a "looser, more inclusive conception of philosophy" (34), allowing activities beyond academic argument to be seen as philosophical. Smith elaborates on this by describing how the expansive strategy identifies various constituents of philosophy, so that a wide variety of activities can be seen as philosophising, including film.

Smith's essay observes that although Mulhall describes an "open border" (34) between film and philosophy, he also suggests that films "embody arguments" (34) supporting pre-existing views. Therefore, Smith argues, film is not actually *doing* philosophy, but merely expressing or even re-iterating it. A central problem for Smith is that *argument* seems essential to a philosophical thesis, but mainstream Hollywood movies, like novels and other forms of media, have *narratives*, and Mulhall does not establish a relationship between argument and narrative. Smith does call for the analysis necessary to establish this relationship, but does not provide it, instead suggesting other links between philosophy and narrative filmmaking. The first of these is to think of films as thought experiments: a hypothetical situation "conveying a philosophical thesis or implication" (35). Smith points out the problem with using a narrative as a thought experiment however, as narratives are filled with *details* that have no relevance to the philosophical thesis, but are essential for the development of the story. Smith does not deny that thought experiments *can* occur in narrative much as they do in philosophy, but asks if they are likely to have the same role.

To develop this idea, Smith compares a philosophical thought experiment by Bernard Williams with the film *All of Me* (Carl Reiner, 1984). Both, he argues, pose questions about the relationship between body and identity, but he questions the *significance* of the film's philosophical project, and whether there are "more apt" (39) ways of understanding it. The answer he provides is simple: *All of Me* is a comedy -- although there may well be a philosophical question in the film, this will be subordinated to the aesthetic content of comedy: "*All of Me* may not be conceptually watertight, but it is very funny" (39). The film displays a dramatic paradox, rather than a philosophical inconsistency, because its primary goal is to provoke laughter. Clearly, Smith argues, there are different levels of elaboration in philosophical and artistic imagining, and although there is overlap, there is also a clear hierarchy. Moving into more abstract territory, Smith identifies "properties" (40) found

across the arts, especially ambiguity, which philosophers would avoid but artists value, again placing aesthetic value above that of philosophy in narrative cinema.

In conclusion, Smith identifies Mulhall's "challenging possibility" (33) that mainstream Hollywood movies can do philosophy as running the risk of assessing film with inappropriate and potentially misleading criteria. So Smith advocates a different approach: take popular film seriously as *art*, assessing it on its own goals and objectives, which would be a separate concern from the agenda of this publication. However, it would be in keeping with the journal of which this is a special issue: *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Perhaps Smith is calling for another special issue, concerned specifically with the understanding of film as art.

Many of the other essays in this collection actually agree with Mulhall, although they may not wholeheartedly embrace his arguments. In his introductory essay to the volume, Paisley Livingston discusses the "bold thesis" (11) that the actual cinematic capacities make a philosophical point or realise an innovative philosophical contribution. Although he argues that cinema can be utilised best as *illustrations* in the context of philosophical inquiry, through its ability to "quote" (15), he also recognises it as a stimulus for further study. He concludes that films' epistemic values can be a "useful complement" (18) to philosophical teaching and research. This conclusion is modest, not fully endorsing the bold thesis that began his essay, but he still accepts that film can be used in philosophical inquiry, unlike Smith, who advocates a different approach for understanding film.

The rest of the collection is divided into three sections, the first of which is "Popular American Film: Entertainment and Enlightenment." Of the four essays in this section, three follow Mulhall's position, arguing that philosophical enlightenment *can* be found in popular narrative film. Richard Allen's discussion of "Hitchcock and Cavell" questions Cavell's understanding of scepticism in relation to romance, an understanding with two central claims. The first is that people do not relate to the world and each other in terms of knowledge, but with constant scepticism. The second is that within romantic love people learn to live with this scepticism, either overcoming it or succumbing to it, and a romantic narrative demonstrates this learning. In the films of Alfred Hitchcock, Cavell argues, this learning is expressed, since the protagonists are in constant doubt over the genuineness of their romantic partners. Allen however argues that Hitchcock's films display the *reverse* of Cavell's assumption. Allen appears to be opposing the idea of film as philosophy, but in his discussion of Hitchcock argues that Hitchcock's films actually lead to a position of *knowledge*. According to Allen, a philosophical exercise is carried out in Hitchcock's work, but not in support of Cavell's position, rather as a "counterexample" to "Cavell's philosophy" (52). Indeed, Allen even suggests turning "a skeptical eye [*sic*]" (52) on the sceptic Cavell himself, so in contrast to Smith, who argues that attempting to understand film as philosophy is to appreciate the film in misleading terms, Allen uses film to reassess a philosophical position.

Although Allen's understanding of Hitchcock's work runs counter to the recognised philosophy of scepticism, he argues that the development of knowledge *is* present in Hitchcock's films. This is a philosophical inquiry in itself, a demonstration (or dramatisation) of the means by which certainty can be achieved. So Allen is also disagreeing with Livingston, who argued that film is not innovative but only expresses pre-existing philosophical concerns. But according to Allen, film is capable of more than this.

Lester H. Hunt follows a similar thesis in his reading of *Letter From an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophuls, 1948). Hunt argues that this film (also) dramatises a development of knowledge, and that this development is shown through artistic composition, a composition that is stimulated by the love a woman holds for a man. He justifies this by arguing that the film's flashback structure places its narrator, Lisa Berndle (Joan Fontaine), in the position of an artist, writer and/or director of her own drama. By communicating her life to Stefan Brand (Louis Jordan) through her letter, Lisa enlightens him, and when he "sees" her anew, knowledge has been attained. According to Hunt, the film performs a philosophical exercise, in a way "that was previously unknown to us" (65). Much like Allen, Hunt disagrees with Livingston, since he presents film as being innovative, and he uses the film's stylistic elements to justify its philosophical trajectory, with particular attention to mise-en-scene, therefore avoiding Smith's fear of misleading language.

Christopher Grau's article on *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004) advocates that the philosophy of the film is partially responsible for its popularity. Like Allen, Grau relates various established philosophies to the film, including utilitarianism, scepticism (again) and Immanuel Kant's "duties to oneself" (123). Kant argued that since human beings are unique and have value beyond price, we all have a duty to treat ourselves with respect and "never to use yourself solely as a means to an end" (124), and therefore any form of self-mutilation is morally prohibited. Erasure of memory like that in *Eternal Sunshine* is surely a form of self-mutilation, and Grau argues that the film supports Kant's insights through its critical position on the technology in its plot, so Livingston's position that film is illustrative rather than innovative is being followed. But Grau takes his argument "one step further" (126), making a fresh point about *the moral duty to remember others*. He justifies this with references to Iris Murdoch (127), but in the unique case of *Eternal Sunshine*, Grau argues that the film develops this new idea. Much like Hunt, he refers to the film's narrative and the reaction it provokes from a viewer to justify this idea. Although Grau's reading does embrace Kant's theories of duty, his piece is similar to Allen's in that the essay argues that the film criticises "traditional utilitarian thinking" (128). Therefore, *Eternal Sunshine* serves as a counterexample to an established philosophy, a counterexample that the film argues through its narrative.

Although George Wilson's essay "Transparency and Twist in Narrative Fiction Film" is in this section, it has more in common with later essays, and therefore will be discussed in relation to those. The next section of the collection is entitled "Continental Philosophy, Continental Film." Andras Balint Kovacs effectively demonstrates Livingston's position, finding film examples to express the established philosophical notion of Nothingness. Although Kovacs regards cinema as "particularly well suited to represent" Nothingness (136), representation is all he finds. Katherine Ince's "Is Sex Comedy or Tragedy? Directing Desire and Female Auteurship in the Cinema of Catherine Breillat" is more a study of authorship, and seems to belong somewhere else.

In the remaining articles in this collection, a different agenda is at work: the philosophy of film. George Wilson's article begins this, and it is given further discussion by Jinhee Choi's "Apperception on Display: Structural Films and Philosophy" and Noel Carroll's "Philosophizing Through the Moving Image: The Case of *Serene Velocity*." Carroll constructs an argument similar to that of Livingston, but takes the opposite route: film *can* be philosophically innovative and unique. His example is Ernie Gehr's *Serene Velocity* (1970) a minimalist and reflective film that "is an instance of philosophizing through moving images" (179). Carroll argues that the film makes a concrete claim about the nature of cinema, and it

performs its philosophical inquiry "by means of the art of the motion picture" (179). The philosophy posed and presented in *Serene Velocity* is a philosophy of film, a thought experiment on the very nature of cinema: "It is the thought experiment that constitutes the argument, not the prosaic explanation of the thought experiment" (181). Carroll proceeds to argue that since the art of the moving image has expanded since the film was made, a further philosophical move can be made, namely that "film itself belongs to a larger category, namely, the moving image" (183), and this move is also "doing philosophy" (183). So both the film itself and a reassessment of it performs philosophical inquiry.

A philosophy of film is also found in Wilson's essay, which discusses the inflection of individual shots and the principles and habits of film-viewing: the actual activity of watching a film and the rewarding or confounding of expectations is described as a dialectic, a dialectic that twists in recent films such as *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999), *The Others* (Alejandro Amenabar, 2001) and *Vanilla Sky* (Cameron Crowe, 2001) perform with their viewer. As one example, Wilson demonstrates that in *The Others*, the viewer appears to be watching the film from a human perspective, but in the twist ending, the protagonists are revealed to be ghosts, so the viewer has in fact been watching "an alternative standard of perceptual objectivity" (93). This makes the entire concept of the film's spectator problematic. By questioning the position of viewing, these twist films perform philosophy about film watching. Jinhee Choi also discusses the perspective of the viewer and the ability of film to "propose new hypotheses about" itself (171). Although Choi disagrees with one article by Carroll in her essay, she agrees with Carroll's contribution to this collection by stating that film can reflect upon its own status, and this self-reflexiveness is a philosophical act.

The remaining essay is Whitney Davis' "The World Rewound: Peter Forgacs' *Wittgenstein Tractatus*." Davis presents the 1992 film as an equivalent of Wittgenstein's philosophy, using images as language and paralleling these images with text (136). Davis argues that the film works as an expression of Wittgenstein's philosophy, particularly through its "constant refrains" (205) and inherent reversibility" (207), so his essay agrees with Livingston that film works as illustrative of an existing philosophy.

Davis' essay is an anomaly as, in general, the articles in this collection appear to oppose the views of the editor and the introductory piece. Livingston and Smith ultimately do not embrace film as philosophy, but various articles in the collection do, in a similar (though not necessarily identical) way to Mulhall. The recurring notion throughout the collection is one of *knowledge*, films arguing for the attainment of knowledge, the moral duty to retain it and a knowledge or awareness of the status of film as film. Crucially, these writers use the cinematic qualities of films to justify their positions that films are doing philosophy, so Smith's concerns about paraphrase can be allayed. Perhaps Smith was not convinced by these writers, but for this reader, the films are certainly not compromised by being read as philosophy. Indeed, for the film scholar, the discussions of Hitchcock, *Letter From an Unknown Woman* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* offer fascinating new insights into film, drawing the two disciplines of film study and philosophy closer together, while the essays that discuss the philosophy of film are useful contributions to the critical debate about what cinema actually is.

*Film As Philosophy* has a more specific agenda than the collection discussed above. Whereas *Thinking Through Cinema* includes debates on whether or not film could be philosophy, this one establishes this point early on. Jerry Goodenough suggests in his "Introduction I: A Philosopher Goes to the Cinema" the interests a philosopher may have in film with some

illustrative examples. *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990) is discussed in terms of three key issues: the nature and cause of experience; the nature of personal identity; external world scepticism, i.e. "Could the whole of my experience be a dream/nightmare?" (5). *Ma Nuit Chez Maud* (Eric Rohmer, 1969) is provided as an example of a film in which "the roles and limitations of philosophical thinking in everyday life" (5) are dramatised, Goodenough identifying the philosophical questions of this film as being apparent and integral to its narrative. Goodenough argues that *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) is a cinematic expression of Daniel Dennett's paper "Conditions of Personhood," the film questioning the very criteria of being a person that Dennett proposes. *L'Annee Dernière a Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961) is discussed as using its seemingly incoherent structure to express a state of mind and the illogical process of memory, rather than the artificially coherent structure of most narrative films. Goodenough also quotes Stephen Mulhall, arguing that the *Alien* tetralogy (now a hexology -- Ridley Scott 1979; James Cameron, 1986; David Fincher 1992; Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 1997; Paul W.S. Anderson, 2004; Colin and Greg Strause, 2008) explores many philosophical questions, offering new answers not found in written considerations. This is linked to Nathan Andersen's argument that philosophical questions can actually be a part of the film's entertainment value, and for the film scholar seeking meanings and pleasures in cinema, this is relevant and applicable. Finally, Goodenough argues that the film may not perform a philosophical exercise alone, but that the exercise involves the active engagement between the film and its viewer, leading to a suggestion of the philosophy of *watching* film, echoed by writers discussed above. Over the course of his "Introduction," Goodenough establishes an understanding of film as *dramatising* philosophy, bringing it to a kind of life, so the reader can anticipate the book following this conceit.

Rupert Read's "Introduction II: What Theory of Film Do Wittgenstein and Cavell Have?" draws the reader's attention specifically to the book, declaring its task and why its primary philosophical context is Wittgenstein and Cavell, rather than film theory. Wittgenstein regarded films as similar to philosophical thought experiments, a device he used extensively, while Cavell developed a method for thinking about film intellectually. This method identifies "serious conceptual thought" (30) in films, but not according to any existing theory, therefore, it is a specific method for understanding film. Read does presuppose a familiarity with Wittgenstein and Cavell, so it would be advisable for the reader to acquire some before proceeding with the remainder of the volume. But in summary, Read proposes that it is from the suggestions of Wittgenstein and Cavell that film can be viewed as a *source* of philosophy. With the conception of philosophy as a thought process, drawn from Wittgenstein and Cavell, Read argues that film can be thought of similarly: "as reasoning and as exploring the "limits" of reason" (32). The following essays therefore use (specific) films to perform these thought processes.

As noted above in relation to George Wilson's essay, *Fight Club* is a film which has received philosophical attention (including from this author). In her essay "Cogito Ergo Film: Plato, Descartes and *Fight Club*," Nancy Bauer takes her cue from Cavell's question of "the relationship passions have to reason" (39). What is striking is that Bauer relates her discussion of this relationship to two philosophers "whose work turns on *denying* this relationship ... Descartes [and] Plato" (39), and asks whether passion and reason are entirely separate. Bauer's analysis of the formal cinematic properties of *Dead Man Walking* (Tim Robbins, 1995) demonstrates that film can stimulate debate, even "change the terms of our conversation" (43), and her description of Plato's cave and its relation to cinema provides a useful backdrop against which *Fight Club* can be considered. Bauer analyses Fincher's film in philosophical terms, "Tyler is Cartesian skepticism distilled to its essence" (51), but also

demonstrates the philosophical inquiry of the film itself. This inquiry is the desire for mutual acknowledgement of oneself and an other, which Bauer argues is played out between the two sides of the protagonist, and between the protagonist and the female love interest.

The inquiry involves the film posing, developing and answering a number of questions, and this *is* doing philosophy. Therefore, Bauer makes the case that Smith does not: narrative can work as argument, in the case of *Fight Club*, an argument involving acknowledgement of others, and the correct distance from which to view them. In addition, Bauer's essay serves as a useful contrast to Livingston's, since she presents *Fight Club* as producing its own resolution rather than subscribing to either Plato or Descartes. Whereas the writings of those philosophers argued for a separation of reason and passion, *Fight Club*, in its climactic moment of self-destruction and re-integration, unites these aspects of the mind and suggests the distance "from which to bear witness to what's real" (55). By placing this ideal distance as "the one at which you are inclined to watch a movie with someone you love" (55), *Fight Club* suggests an innovative philosophical position. Therefore, Cavell's notion of thinking about film intellectually is continued, and Read's agenda of finding philosophy *in* film is served.

Stuart Klawans also proceeds from Cavell's position in his essay "Habitual Remarriage: The End of Happiness in *The Palm Beach Story*" by identifying what appears to be a curious omission: Cavell excluding *The Palm Beach Story* (Preston Sturges, 1942) from his *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (1981). Klawans describes this as surprising "because no other film would seem more appropriate to a study of "the comedy of remarriage"" (149), and then addresses this omission. His initial analysis is, quite deliberately, in Cavellian terms, before Klawans steps away and defines his own interest, that of performance. Klawans argues that the film's conclusion is not a resolution, indicating that the "compact" (161), or the philosophy, *of film-watching* is questioned by *The Palm Beach Story*, as is the accepted understanding of how a film develops: "conviviality fails and optimism falters" (160). Much like Wilson, Klawans draws attention to the philosophy of film and viewer interaction, and in answer to his initial question about whether this film was an omission from Cavell's work, Klawans concludes that it is not -- rather, it is making an argument quite *different* from that which Cavell was pursuing. Therefore, this essay still maintains the Cavellian notion of thinking about films intellectually, but along a different line to that which Cavell himself wrote on.

Although Wittgenstein and Cavell figure prominently in both collections, Stephen Mulhall is also a highly influential scholar in the study of film and philosophy; as noted above, many of the articles in *Thinking Through Film* follow his lead. His essay "In Space, No One Can Hear You Scream: Acknowledging the Human Voice in the *Alien* Universe" does not have an obvious philosophical content, but Mulhall relates his emphasis on the voice to an association with embodiment or lack thereof, and much like Bauer, his essay therefore addresses the human condition. The essay works therefore as describing the *Alien* saga as a thought experiment in identity, raising and answering questions about the significance of dialogue in the acknowledgement of another. Mulhall takes this even further as he argues that each film in the series is concerned with its own status as *part of a series*, and he discusses this in relation to each film, therefore considering a philosophy of film and the continuance of narrative. Through his discussion of the films' character development and directorial treatment, Mulhall takes the reader through a philosophical inquiry regarding what is (arguably) the very point of philosophy: allowing dialogue among all. This is presented through his discussion of the *Alien* saga as the *reverse* of this basis of philosophy. Much as

Allen discussed Hitchcock as a counterexample to Cavell, so Mulhall presents a counterexample to the point of philosophy, over the course of the *Alien* saga. Therefore, this essay works as a very strong case of film as philosophy, and is particularly accessible for the non-philosopher since it focuses upon the films themselves.

Two other essays in this collection take the films as their starting points, and discuss the philosophical arguments that the films themselves present. David Rudrum's "silent Dialogue: Philosophising with Jan Svankmajer" and Simon Critchley's "Calm: On Terence Malick's *The Thin Red Line*," both emphasise the philosophical dimension of the films under discussion. By contrast, Phil Hutchinson and Rupert Read's "*Memento*: A Philosophical Investigation" and Simon Glendinning's "The Everydayness of Don Giovanni" begin with the philosophy and then apply it (somewhat forcibly) to the films under discussion.

Rudrum's essay is particularly striking as, rather than analysing the film as an expression of philosophical arguments, he argues that the film takes an *opposite* stance, and therefore does philosophy itself. Rudrum places the film (and by extension, the director) in opposition to the advocacy of "dialogism" (122). Mikhail Bakhtin is described as promoting the interaction of dialogue: "To be means to communicate" (123). Rudrum argues that Svankmajer presents dialogue as *destructive*: "the self after a loving communion with another self can be *less* than itself" (126). Other criticisms of Bakhtin are noted, supporting Svankmajer's position (as Rudrum tells it), as does the film's disturbing conclusion, which goes beyond Bakhtin. Once again, Wittgenstein is important, as Rudrum argues that Svankmajer is doing in film what Wittgenstein did in words -- thought experiments, being carried through to conclusions. Clearly, this fits into the overall agenda of the book, as film is seen to do philosophy in a similar manner to Wittgenstein, but as an alternative to existing theory.

Hutchinson and Read are explicit and deliberate in their reading of *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000) as a Wittgensteinian investigation. This suggests an expectation of familiarity with Wittgenstein, but Hutchinson and Read's discussion is detailed and comprehensive, focusing on Wittgenstein's discussion of language. Unfortunately, they also assume knowledge of "John Searle's famous Chinese Room example" (77) and the non-philosopher would be advised to read up on this first, although it is only mentioned in passing. Through their initial discussion, Wittgenstein's concerns about the restricting nature of words as relational are explained, and the distinctiveness of the film is justified in relation to this concern of relating words to images. The authors argue that the film's non-chronological sequence of scenes makes viewing the film a reflexive exercise: "a prolonged dialogical inquiry" (80). The in-depth investigation probes the philosophical questions of the film, including the very question of understanding, which is created by enculturation, but which *Memento* denies to its protagonist. The essay develops further the argument of the film's self-deconstructing inquiry, arguing that the film presents a new way of thinking about itself. This occurs at the film's conclusion, when the backstory which has been consistent throughout is contradicted. The film's story, like a Wittgensteinian thought experiments, is "not meant to hold up" (88), so the viewer is invited, or even compelled, to question everything they have seen, as the very methods of verification that the film has been relying upon collapse. This essay demonstrates the self-questioning philosophy that this particularly complex film practices, and in doing so illustrates that the narrative form and structure of film, as well as its stylistic elements, can perform philosophy.

Glendinning's essay on *Don Giovanni* identifies the difficulty of thinking anew about philosophy as similar to aesthetic appreciation, and addresses this difficulty. Much like

Livingston, Glendinning finds language inadequate to express what is in the music, Kierkegaard arguing that the music and its meaning exists in and of itself. The result of this indescribable meaning is an understanding derived from experience, so the reader will have to listen to the opera to truly appreciate Glendinning's point. But from the essay itself comes an argument about the philosophy of aesthetics, the *sensuality* of the medium being its very meaning. Glendinning argues that the opera begins this, but the filmed version takes it further, having "the capacity literally and figuratively to *refocus our vision*, a capacity to defamiliarise the everyday" (109). But he does not elaborate on this statement, which may be the point: the essay prompts a viewing of the film, and then an application of the essay. Certainly this is useful in suggesting a particular understanding, but all the other articles in these collections stand better on their own, without an insistence that the film be viewed in a prescriptive manner.

This is particularly so in Simon Critchley's "Calm: On Terence Malick's *The Thin Red Line*." Critchley's essay focuses almost entirely on the film (1998), commenting upon how the narrative works, largely through voiceover and music (which makes this essay interesting to compare to Glendinning's). He points out difficulties in approaching Malick, arguing for an appreciation of Malick's work as philosophising. His analysis of the film illuminates the philosophical dialogue of the film, leading to a notion that the truth is in the *argument*, rather than the resolution. It is through watching the progression and development of conflicts that knowledge, Critchley argues, is acquired. Critchley describes the film as a meditation on calmness in the face of death, contained within the *film*'s portrayal of war and nature, rather than any particular philosophical text. This idea is intrinsic to the film, the film working as philosophy itself, so the agenda of the collection is again being served.

Certainly the agendas of the two volumes are different, with *Thinking Through Cinema* taking an interrogative approach to the notion of film as philosophy, whereas *Film As Philosophy* accepts and demonstrates this position. The two publications both have value for the film scholar, particularly in terms of a philosophy of film, and new understandings of how cinema can work. Many articles have been written on *Fight Club* and the *Alien* tetralogy, Hitchcock's oeuvre and *Letter From an Unknown Woman*, but these essays offer new insights. These insights further the academic study of film, partly in relation to the discipline of philosophy, but also allowing greater understanding of the workings of films themselves. Understanding films as philosophy is far from misleading or inappropriate, since the authors in these collections demonstrate that the narrative and stylistic qualities of film are themselves the language of philosophical expression, at least in these cases. Therefore, there is much of value for the film scholar in both publications: for the sceptic uncertain if cinema can work as philosophy, *Thinking Through Cinema* would be a good starting point. But if it is agreed that film *can* work in this way, *Film As Philosophy* offers a rich variety of examples, opening up new and exciting ways of understanding cinema.

# Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory

By Marijke de Valck and Malte Hagener (eds.)

Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005. ISBN 90-5356-768-2 (pbk), ISBN 90-5356-769-0 (hbk). 236pp. £19.00 (pbk), £46.25 (hbk)

Quintessential Tarantino

## Quintessential Tarantino

By Edwin Page

London: Marion Boyars, 2005. ISBN 0-7145-3116-2 (pbk). 32 illustrations. 263pp. £9.99 (pbk)

## A review by Ryan Shand, University of Glasgow, UK

The founding of the academic study of film, the existence of *Scope* and *Kill Bill* (Quentin Tarantino, 2003 and 2004) are all expressions of the love of cinema, or to use the correct terminology, examples of *cinephilia*. This was not always a desirable quality however. Writers in France used it to tar the reputations of those who frequented revival film houses in Paris in the 1950s and 1960s. According to legend these founding cinephiles always sat in the middle of the third row, had an intense emotional connection with the screen and found expression for their love in the pages of magazines such as *Cahiers du Cinema*. Those days are gone, as critics such as Susan Sontag and David Thomson keep reminding us. But does cinephilia, in such a passionate form, still exist today? According to the editors of the new collection, *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, most definitely; you just have to know where to look. This polemical defence of contemporary multi-media culture, from the dismissive laments of an older generation of cinephiles, is reassuring reading for film fans/scholars born after the introduction of the VCR.

Rather than regretting the fact that most people no longer re-discover the classics in a darkened movie theatre, the writers of this volume suggest that contemporary cinephiles have regrouped and have moved onto different territories in order to fight their consolidations and assaults on the canon. Instead of being members of local film societies/ film discussion groups and writing for the student film magazine, they now buy/rent DVDs and generate passionate debate with similarly minded fans from all over the world through the World Wide Web. This represents a fundamental change in audience habits, as this collection suggests, but just how successful is the attempt to seize the cinephilia debate from established film critics?

Happily they have at least one of the classical generation of cinephiles on-side. In the opening essay of the collection, "Cinephilia or the Uses of Disenchantment", Thomas Elsaesser offers a reflective overview of the debates, positioning himself as a first generation cinephile affectionately remembering his cinemagoing habits as a student in London and

Paris while also trying to account for more recent shifts in film culture. The strength of this opening essay is that Elsaesser builds on the work of Paul Willeman's published interview "Through the Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered". Thomas Elsaesser introduces suggestive terms such as seeing cinephilia as a process of "deferral" in both place and space, in which spectators are engaged in an act of nostalgia for earlier moments in film history (30). This seems like a useful way to characterise cinephilia in general, as well as second-generation viewers who discovered films on late night TV/video and more recently the third-generation specialist users of DVDs. He is especially concerned to understand why the first generation of cinephiles turned their early quasi-theological reverence for the cinema into the *Screen* theory of the 1970s in which this passion was mercilessly deconstructed as false ideology, something he calls a "productive disenchantment" (33). His melancholic reassessment of former positions in the academy concludes as follows: "unfortunately for some of us, the time came when students preferred disbelieving their eyes in the cinema to believing their teacher in the classroom" (35).

Devotion to the auteur (the heart of cinephilia) may have been marginalized in the academy, but it instead went underground only to re-emerge much later. This movement structures the later sections of his essay as the critical practices of today's fan cult cinephilia are examined. These amateur critics, even those outside of metropolitan centres, have instant access to films from all over the world in the multimedia environment. There is not such a strong attachment to retrospectives in art house cinemas, which has meant that different forms of cinema tend to be valued by contemporary cinephiles:

Instead of discovering B-picture directors as auteurs within the Hollywood machine, as did the first generation, these cinephiles find their neglected figures among the independents, the avant-garde, and the emerging film nations of world cinema (36).

These anti-commercial auteurists find their discoveries on DVD and especially at the numerous film festivals that have emerged since the 1970s. At least in the U.K, this description perfectly fits contemporary film critics such as Mark Cousins. These new cinephiles actively engage with the wealth of material that they have potentially instant access to. Elsaesser calls this recent cinephile activity a process of "re-mastering, re-purposing, and re-framing" (36). This places his argument in line with much writing on fan cultures, challenging inherited ideas of passive spectatorship. This is fine, however as the essay continues, it becomes more and more evident that he is at a loss to understand, rather than to explain, certain developments in film connoisseurship. He describes cinephilia take one (1960s cinephilia) as provoking "trepidation in anticipation," where the pleasure is in a delayed expectation of the exceptional. However, in cinephilia take two (today) there is no such delay, as the past is constantly re-encountered, a situation that instead provokes a more complex "stressed/distressed" mode of spectatorship (39). This does not resonate with my own experience of film viewing; therefore I would hope that someone with a more sympathetic engagement with today's film culture could build on this theoretical model. Indeed, for all the talk of the problems with *Screen* theory, what is surprising is how much of the discussion is framed around psychoanalytic theory. There is a talk of "oedipal time" at the beginning of the essay and he concludes with passages like the following, "This work of preservation and re-presentation -- like all work involving memory and the archive -- is marked by the fragment and its fetish-invocations" (40). Passages like this made me wonder what a cognitive theory of cinephilia would look like. It may seem contradictory to suggest a cognitive approach to a subject such as love; after all doesn't conventional wisdom

tell us that love is always irrational? This approach however, building on recent scientific studies of emotions, could be more productive than current models of spectatorship. Nevertheless, this is a thought-provoking piece of work by a major scholar, who establishes the tone that influences the rest of the contributions by the other (second and third generation) cinephile/scholars.

Many of these essays are under ten pages and feel much like rewritten conference papers. Indeed this collection emerged out of three conferences on cinephilia held in Amsterdam, New York and London. None of the contributors are researching cinephilia; this is very much a side project of people with related interests. So it is refreshing to read the work of scholars and writers of the next generation and it is clear that they are writing from personal experience and enthusiasm.

This collection is structured around three sections "The Ramifications of Cinephilia: Theory and History," "Technologies of Cinephilia: Production and Consumption" and "Techniques of Cinephilia: Bootlegging and Sampling." However, like any conference, I think it is fair to say that the groupings have a tenuous connection to each other. I would propose that this collection has three approaches towards the subject: The activities of contemporary cinephiles themselves: theorising contemporary cinephilia (Elsaesser), online film communities, the pleasures of cinephilia; Issues related to contemporary cinephilia: blockbuster films, film archives, film festivals, problems of film history, Dogme95, the films of Morgan Fisher; and the films of contemporary cinephile directors: Bernardo Bertolucci, Quentin Tarantino, Jean Luc Godard, Todd Haynes, Paul Thomas Anderson, Wes Anderson, Jon Routson.

It is clear from this inventory that even in a book dedicated to cinephilia, there is a general inability or reluctance to directly address the nature of contemporary cinephiles. Apart from Elsaesser's contribution, the only other essays focusing on cinephiles themselves is Gerwin van der Pol's "The Secret Passion of the Cinephile" (which I will come back to later) and Mehlis Behlil's "Ravenous Cinephiles: Cinephilia, Internet, and Online Film Communities." Writing from the perspective of someone who has been a member of various online film communities for five years, she proceeds to combine personal experience, interviews with participants and theories of "community" in an enlightening fashion. By way of introduction she notes, "Born into a pre-existing home-viewing culture, I am among those who think limiting cinephilia to movie-going is a restrictive and provisional way of perceiving the love of cinema" (112). The argument then moves from the personal to the historical with the following observations on contemporary film culture:

In an attempt to build an analogy, one can argue that online communities are to home viewing, what cine clubs were to the movie-going experience. Similarly, there are online journals such as *Scope*, *Senses of Cinema* or *Film Philosophy* that are no less stimulating than their printed counterparts, which are often partly or fully available online to readers who would not have a chance to get hold of this material otherwise (113).

Of course extra points are awarded for the promotion of this online journal (!). However, it is the connection that is being made between cine-clubs (I think "film society" would be more appropriate in this context, as they are devoted to the appreciation of films, while cine-clubs were focused on the production of amateur films) and online communities that is important. This suggests there has been a movement from a local to a global network in film

appreciation culture, facilitated by the internet. Love of film has not disappeared it has just been transformed. Why limit your passionate discussion of film to people who just happen to be in close geographical proximity, when you could potentially interact with an infinite number of film lovers from all over the world? This seems to be the motivation for the relative popularity of the three online film communities that Behlil focuses on: *The New York Times Film Forums* and the two more recent additions *Milk Plus Blog* and *The Third Eye Film Community*. The amateur cinephile users of these forums find kindred spirits from around the world despite their geographical location, the strength of contemporary cinephilia being that it is not just a metropolitan phenomenon. While it may be easy to find lovers in major cities, it tends to be more difficult in more remote and rural areas. She notes, "What used to be a minority taste in their local surroundings is no longer minority in the global context, reached via the internet" (116). These participants find space to exchange information and opinion about their passion, something that would have gone through the more formal process of student film magazines for earlier generations. Indeed the popularisation of cinephilia, in a movement away from metropolitan elites, is a general theme running through the essays in this collection that focus on issues related to contemporary cinephilia.

Drehli Robnik's "Mass Memories of Movies: Cinephilia as Norm and Narrative in Blockbuster Culture" attempts to make the case for seeing cinephilia as a mainstream cultural practice. This consideration of the blockbuster, while a potentially interesting topic, ultimately proves an unrewarding read. Much better is Marijke de Valck's (co-editor) "Drowning in Popcorn at the International Film Festival Rotterdam?: The Festival as a Multiplex of Cinephilia," an account of the changes that have taken place over the years at the Rotterdam International Film Festival. She is interested in "finding out whether the growing popularity of film festivals with the larger audience really increases exclusion and the marginalizing of marginalized tastes, or does it lead to more inclusion, amounting to a multiple concept of cinephilia?" (101). Her observations on the movement of the film festival from exclusively art house venues, to also holding screenings in the nearest multiplex, are tendencies that I have noticed at the Edinburgh International Film Festival. I especially liked her taxonomy of typical festival attendees: the lone list-maker, the highlight seeker, the specialist (often professional), the leisure visitor, the social tourist and the volunteer (103-105). All of this rings true and points to a diverse audience for film festival product. She ends on a conciliatory note by claiming that, "The encounters between the various films, experts, and spectators in the stimulating and dynamic environment of the film festival is the ideal starting point for the development of taste" (108). A fair point that seems surprisingly at odds with the use of the term "elitist" to describe art cinema, in the introduction to this collection. Like many other contributions from this book, it reads like a chapter from a thesis, dealing only with cinephilia in the most tenuous of ways. Here it is perhaps acceptable, but as the collection progressed I began to wonder what most articles had to do with cinephilia at all. While generally well written and researched, the articles on the Hong Kong Film Archive, the rhetoric of the "original" in film restoration, the Dogme95 manifesto and the films of Morgan Fisher were completely out of place. In fact, in the essay on Morgan Fisher, the following is written:

Fisher's ideal, then, is not the artfully interwoven tapestry of patterns and motifs created by the cinephile-turned-filmmaker, but rather the catalogue or database of the collector who seeks to remove himself from the archiving system after having chosen its contents (202).

Surely this is reason enough for not including this piece of work in the collection. It seems that it was enough to mention cinephilia in the introduction and conclusion to justify publication. The editors, in putting together a collection of this length, should have maintained tighter control on inclusion. There are so many subjects more directly related to cinephilia that could have been given the space to be explored. Articles on related topics as diverse as fanzines, the growth of users reviews on internet DVD rental sites, the popularity of the websites *Aint It Cool* and *IMDB*, and especially fan sites devoted to film directors. For example, the cult around a director such as Takeshi Miike would have proved a fascinating case study. Writing on him precisely evokes a similar kind of "double nature" to the first generation of cinephiles and their relationship to Hollywood, as was discussed in the introduction:

...it dotes on the most popular genre film(maker)s of the most popular national film industry, yet it does so in a highly idiosyncratic, elitist, and often counterintuitive fashion (11).

This would be a tendency worth exploring, precisely because Miike is a director whose films were mostly discovered by fans in Europe and America not on theatrical releases, but through the medium of DVD. Therefore a lot of his films will be missed by the first generation of cinephiles such as Sontag, Thomson and Rosenbaum.

Rather than showing some imagination we get predictable discussion of the films of Bernardo Bertolucci, Quentin Tarantino, Jean-Luc Godard, Todd Haynes, Paul Thomas Anderson, Wes Anderson and Jon Routson. These article tend to rely heavily on interviews with the directors and say little of surprise. One anomaly is the article on the New York bootlegger of cinema Jon Routson. The author Lucas Hilderbrand notes, "By seeing and recording films nearly indiscriminately -- seeming to disregard canons or personal taste -- Routson could be seen as either the ultimate cinephile or as altogether indifferent to the film" (171). This is precisely the problem, including a chapter on a cinephile conceptual filmmaker whose status as a cinephile is ambivalent. The ordinary reader could be forgiven for given up long before this point. However it is worth sticking around until the end.

The editors were wise to leave the last word to Gerwin van der Pol's "The Secret Passion of the Cinephile: Peter Greenaway's *A Zed and Two Noughts* Meets Adriaan Ditvoorst's *De Witte Waan*." Those who are not discouraged by the title will discover a consideration of cinephilia that has much resonance to wider tendencies in film culture and especially with the second book I am reviewing, *Quintessential Tarantino*, by Edwin Page. Gerwin van der Pol describes the experience of watching a film and seeming to recognise elements of other films; in this case the influence of *De Witte Waan* (Adriaan Ditvoorst, 1984) on *A Zed and Two Noughts* (Peter Greenaway, 1985). This game is common to most "post-modern" spectators, as is frequently noted, however the unique cinephile twist is the sensation of coping with the fact that you might be missing some quotations:

The cinephile game is the exact antithesis of the postmodern game. The spectator finds a quote that was possibly not deliberately put there, cannot be observed by other spectators, and thus exemplifies the mastery of the cinephile as a film expert. The cinephile experience is thus best described as pride (215-16).

This has resonance with the growing industry of websites and books that list the quotations from the films of Quentin Tarantino. However van der Pol takes this further by noting "the strange co-existence of pride and shame that characterises the extremist film buff can be explained via social psychology...when displaying too much pride, or making it too public, pride can become shameful" (216). This is useful, going some way towards the more cognitive approach to cinephilia that I longed for earlier in the collection. Due to this sense of shame about their excessive knowledge, van der Pol says that cinephiles tend to be careful in selecting their social groups. They gravitate towards others that would encourage such disclosure of knowledge. Thus, the popularity of film festivals and internet communities. This links back nicely to Thomas Elsaesser's opening essay as well as Mehlis Behlil's study of such communities. These three contributions are the essential reads in this collection.

Edwin Page's recent book-length study of the films of Quentin Tarantino, *Quintessential Tarantino*, in the light of Gerwin van der Pol's article, emerges as a potential case study of the pleasures of cinephilia and its dialogue with mainstream audiences. If cinephilia is by definition a minority practice, then books such as this attempt to mediate these personal pleasures to a non-expert audience. This book does not merit the kind of attention given to *Cinephilia: Movies, Love and Memory*, as it is a journalistic, rather than a scholarly book. Unfortunately it is also badly written and researched. Its chief sources of reference are not original interviews but fan sites and IMDB. This is interesting in light of the internet fan culture noted in the edited collection, and might have been fine in the hands of a more knowledgeable and skilful writer, but Page turns this into a painful read. After an introduction and biography in which Tarantino is cast as a "postmodern" auteur, each film he has written or directed is subjected a banal to chapter-by-chapter textual analysis. These close readings are interspersed with quotations from websites, often attributing them to "unknown". Small boxes also dot each page with a "Pulp Fact" such as "The money from the sale of the *True Romance* script allowed Tarantino to direct *Reservoir Dogs*" (60). This misquoted information is the first piece of trivia on *IMDB* for *True Romance* (Tony Scott, 1993). In fact, this is the book length equivalent of the trivia section of *IMDB*. So it is also disappointing that no index of film titles was included in the back of the book, surely one of the pleasures of a guide such as this.

Rather than cut and phase journalism like this, I would point the Tarantino fan in the direction of other biographies and guides by Wensley Clarkson, Jami Bernard and D.K Holm. The only audience who could find this book useful is those with no access to the internet and with little previous knowledge of the film themselves, which is itself revealing of the diverse nature of film audiences. *Quintessential Tarantino*, despite appearances, is not a book written by or for cinephiles. It instead draws on the writings of internet cinephiles around the world for the benefit of more mainstream audiences. This tendency in book publishing (reader's guides to films) is one of the numerous topics left to explore in future studies on the enigmatic nature of cinephilia.

# Billy Wilder, American Film Realist

By Richard Armstrong

Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, 2000. ISBN 0-7864-2119-3 (pbk), ISBN 0-78640-821-9 (hbk) vii + 164 pp. £19.50 (pbk), £22.99 (hbk)

## A review by Thorsten Carstensen, New York University, USA

Over a period of more than four decades, Billy Wilder achieved a combination that is extremely rare in Hollywood. Deeply rooted in U.S. popular culture, his movies expressed an explicit social and political criticism while scoring very well at the box office. Despite his status as one of the most significant and influential American filmmakers, however, Wilder never fully made it onto university syllabi. His movies have been appreciated by a broad audience, but academic writers rarely engage in investigations of Wilder's substantial and multifaceted oeuvre. Dating back to 1980, Bernard F. Dick's volume *Billy Wilder* (Boston: Twayne Publishers) is perhaps still the most valuable and most coherent study of this usually underrated director.

Such a lack of scholarly attention could be a promising start for any new approach to Billy Wilder (1906-2002) who was born in what is now the Polish province of Galicia and immigrated to the United States in 1934. However, Richard Armstrong's study *Billy Wilder, American Film Realist* does not fully capitalise on this favourable situation. As has been the case with most studies on Wilder, Armstrong dispenses with theoretical baggage and does not provide a conclusive argument. Far too often, his elaborations get buried underneath insignificant details. But while lacking academic profundity, this rather essayistic treatment shows how Wilder's art flourished beyond the purely commercial realm of Hollywood entertainment. The book does succeed in illustrating the director's versatility while pointing to recurrent themes and motives throughout his work. Beginning with *Hold Back the Dawn* (Mitchell Leisen, 1941) and *Ball of Fire* (Howard Hawks, 1941), for which Wilder contributed the screenplays, and concluding with *Buddy, Buddy* (Billy Wilder, 1981), the author provides a very accessible, well-informed account of 16 movies Wilder made in Hollywood. Since Armstrong has drawn together a remarkable amount of information on the films' social and political contexts, his discussion of Wilder's work as both a reflection on and a reaction towards a specific American reality is ultimately convincing.

Screenwriter Ernest Lehman once said of Billy Wilder, "He feels like an American feels. I never think of Billy as being a European." An intense preoccupation with the American 1920s, as well as an obvious fascination with Hollywood heritage, can be traced in almost all of Wilder's productions from *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) to *The Front Page* (1974), the latter one being a nostalgic remake of Howard Hawks' newspaper classic *His Girl Friday* (1940). In a compelling manner, Armstrong relates *The Front Page* to Wilder's own personal life and career. Dramatizing the tension between an older director and the "Hollywood of the Movie Brats," the film could indeed be considered as an indirect, autobiographical comment on "the genesis of one of classical American cinema's auteurs" (131). As Armstrong points out, Wilder was known to lament the radical change in the Hollywood studio system that occurred

after World War II, a change linked to the emergence of an affluent suburban society. Studios such as Paramount and M-G-M, Wilder oftentimes complained, had lost their individual handwriting, becoming "more or less Ramada Inn motels" and producing movies that were tailored to the taste and ideology of the new middle class.

An avid admirer of fellow-director Ernst Lubitsch, Wilder aimed for simplicity on the set and avoided stylistic playfulness that would interfere with the desired effect of realism. "If you, the audience member," Wilder stated in a 1972 interview, "pay attention to the style, if you sense the dolly or a shock effect from editing, that will distance you from the pleasure you take from the totality of the story, it breaks your participation in that which is happening on the screen." In Wilder's cinema, style is subordinated to action -- the image is there to propel the plot and to provide information on the character's motivations and feelings. With his devotion to realistic *mise-en-scène* and authentic locations, Wilder created recognizable environments, situations and relationships. Even though he was indeed preoccupied with "reworking the clichés and conventions of the movie business" (109), Wilder's intent was to be an "invisible" director, allowing the audience to immerse themselves in the cinematic illusion.

Nonetheless, his sincere realism is sometimes combined with a playful quotation of elements from Old Hollywood, as the opening sequence of *Some Like it Hot* (1959) demonstrates. Parodying ambience and mood of classical Warner Brothers gangster flicks, the first shots evoke the dimly lit big city street of films such as *Little Caesar* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1930) and *The Public Enemy* (William A. Wellman, 1931). But once the plot is under way, "no distracting camerawork or cutting is allowed to stand in the way of dialogue," Armstrong writes (5). Famous for its sophisticated dialogue, *Some Like It Hot* also illustrates Wilder's palpable concern with language: "Wilder cares deeply for the word," Armstrong notes. "It is a treat to close one's eyes and listen to a Wilder film. His grasp of English is consummate, with a feel for the American idiom rare in a Continental European." (5)

*The Spirit of St. Louis* (1957) has often been discarded as one of Wilder's minor works. However, as Armstrong convincingly argues, the filmmaker's nostalgic treatment of Charles Lindbergh's crossing of the Atlantic in his monoplane is central to an understanding of Wilder as an American realist. After a number of movies which criticized the American way of life, with *The Spirit of St. Louis* Wilder now celebrated American pragmatism and optimism: His movie told the quintessentially American story of one lonesome, taciturn man who struggles against all odds to make his most unrealistic dream come true. The movie had "drama, sentiment, humor and a slight dash of destiny," film critic Bosley Crowther commented when the *The Spirit of St. Louis* first came out. "It pictures the dogged perseverance of the youthful flier in simple, standard terms. And it details his trans-Atlantic passage in exciting and suspenseful episodes." Lindbergh's flight can be regarded as the pinnacle of American triumphalism in the Roaring Twenties. Wilder's realist endeavour is most impressive in his recreations of Lindbergh's take-off from Roosevelt Field, a scene that, according to Armstrong, reiterates "the Enlightenment dream of Man's rational, technological triumph over the world around him." As Armstrong argues, the film is more than just the fictional representation of Lindbergh's endeavour; on a metaphorical level, "it is a triumph which is reflected in Hollywood craftsman Wilder's logistical triumph of filming it" (85).

Co-written with his congenial partner I.A.L. Diamond, Wilder's comic screenplays tend to conceal the fact that his films stage blatant social criticism and expose people's double standards. This is especially true for *The Apartment* (1960), a morality tale that contemporary

reviewers misjudged as a "dirty picture." In the book's strongest chapter, Armstrong maintains that *The Apartment* pits "the solitary individual against the anomie of Big Business" (98). The story about the amiable bachelor Bud Baxter, who makes his apartment available to his fellow employees for their extramarital affairs, shows how the protagonist's loneliness is intensified by his will to advance in life: "*The Apartment* arises out of its squalid details like a Zola novel, its funny moments casting welcome light into shadowy lives and lending perspective to a trend which, by implication, must spell social ruin" (107). Both in mise-en-scène and character portrayal, the movie is lucid evidence of Wilder's realist yet symbolical rendering of contemporary America. As Armstrong posits, the setting of *The Apartment* resonates with the larger meaning of the film and has an essential narrative function, since "each room becomes a stage for a new conflict, actual or psychological, reflecting the atomized, combative society outside" (105).

Armstrong makes a compelling point when relating Wilder's portrayal of New York City as an alienating, uninviting environment to Edward Hopper's realist paintings. Hopper's "American urban tableaux" (105) represent landscapes of utter loneliness and distress. Similar to Hopper's canvases "with their anonymous transients waiting in blocks of matt brown or blue", Wilder's movies visualize the exasperation inherent in many commonplaces of the American way of life. When we see Baxter resting in Central Park at night time, while his colleagues enjoy the privacy of his apartment, the camera zooms in on the leaves driven by the wind along a seemingly endless row of benches. In a typically modernist manner, this shot of a lonely and uneasy figure suggests a spiritual crisis within the framework of a realistic setting and realistic characters. And yet, however pessimistic Wilder's outlook on American society may be, he treats his main theme, the "departure from traditional American values" (116), with constant humour.

The director's strategy of confronting the dark side of American contemporary society with plain sarcasm is equally apparent in another Wilder classic from the 1960s. Subsequent to *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *The Apartment*, *The Fortune Cookie* (1966) appears to be the final part of a "classic Wilderian cycle of essays on American materialism" (115), as Armstrong asserts. Canby called the movie Wilder's "latest vision of the American Dream" -- a dream corrupted by greed and people's willingness to do whatever it takes to move upward in society and transcend their insignificant existence. Set in Cleveland, "a world in which materiality took precedence over humanity long ago" (116), the story centres on the good-natured, but naïve cameraman Harry Hinkle who is coaxed into an insurance fraud by his shady brother-in-law, a typical trickster figure. The director's moralistic rendering of the world is visualized by the use of light and colour so that "the dichotomy between Good and Evil is present in every corner of the frame" (123). As a modernist character, Harry eventually resists the temptation to completely immerse himself into the underworld of crime and moral corruption. Disgusted with himself being involved in the fraud, Harry comes to express Wilder's moralistic world view: "I didn't like the setup, I didn't like the characters involved. Especially me." Thus, *The Fortune Cookie*, as well as *The Apartment*, realize individual redemption. Both Bud Baxter and Harry Hinkle undergo a transformation of character and finally prove to be "unable to reconcile themselves to a society which thrives on the buying and selling of human dignity" (98).

Bernard F. Dick has argued that, "Once a theme finds its way into Wilder's consciousness, it enters his catalogue of plot devices and starts recurring in subsequent films." The greatest merit of Armstrong's book lies in the author's continuous ambition to reveal the common themes shared by an extremely heterogeneous group of films. Throughout Wilder's work,

issues such as the moral decline of American society, the impact of consumerism on human nature, identity confusion as a result of shifting values, and the male buddies "united by professional pride" (126) are ubiquitous. Armstrong neatly tracks these topics, points to intertextual references and identifies allusions to political events. Yet his interpretations rarely venture beyond the obvious. His anecdotal style as well as the many digressions into the history of Hollywood as an entertainment industry do not substantiate his reflections on Wilder's realism, but divert attention from the main flow of his argument. Eventually, Armstrong fails to provide a succinct conclusion that would connect his diverse ideas and thus round off an analysis that embarks on too many diverging routes at the same time. Armstrong's volume is certainly a fine overview. But it falls short of being a truly indispensable addition to Wilder criticism.

# Carmen: From Silent Film to MTV

By Chris Perriam and Ann Davies (eds.)

Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005. ISBN: 90-420-1964-6 (hbk). 232 pp. Price £39.05 (hbk)

## A review by Tom Whittaker, Queen Mary College, University of London, UK

Like the other Spanish characters Don Juan and Don Quixote, the myth of Carmen has far outgrown its literary origins. Although perhaps most widely known from Bizet's 1875 opera, Carmen was originally incarnated in Prosper Mérimée's French novella of 1847. It tells the story of a sensuous, raven-haired gypsy who works in a tobacco factory in Seville. Independent and feisty, Carmen breaks the heart of every man who attempts to possess her. Don José, an infatuated suitor, is driven to madness by the protagonist's beauty. On discovering that she has left him for a bullfighter called Escamillo, José kills the gypsy in a sudden fit of jealousy.

The enduring fascination with the Carmen story has been most strikingly borne out in cinema: over 80 films have been inspired by the story. *Carmen: From Silent Film to MTV* responds to the relative critical neglect of this substantial body of work. This impressive volume comprises thirteen essays on various cinematic adaptations of the story, with versions hailing not only from Spain and France, but from the United States, Italy and Argentina as well. The disparate range of contributors reflects the multidisciplinary nature of this project, with chapters by academics from Modern Languages, Film Studies and Musicology, as well as one by an orchestral conductor.

According to Ann Davis, the essence of the Carmen story has remained largely impermeable to the social changes of the twentieth century. As several of the chapters attest, the figure of Carmen embodies the perennial problem of otherness. Just as her transgressive sexuality renders her sexually other, so her status as a marginalised gypsy renders her ethnically other. Exactly *how* the individual films work to articulate (or, indeed, suppress) Carmen's problematic identity throws light on the historical and cultural contexts in which they were made. The films therefore do not merely recycle their nineteenth-century progenitors: each one stands as a cultural artefact in its own right.

As expected of such a wide-ranging collection of scholarly writing, there are several varying approaches to the texts: questions of gender, national and transnational identities, music, cultural hybridity and postmodernism all come under scrutiny. The accompanying methodological frameworks range from the empirical and historical (with a particular accent on the contemporary receptions of the films), to the more theoretical (star studies, psychoanalysis, filmic space and human geography). The articles on offer are as convincing as they are insightful, and of the thirteen, those provided by Nicholas Till, Amy Herzog and José F. Colmeiro are among the most impressive.

Hilaria Loyo discusses *The Devil Is A Woman* (Josef von Sternberg, 1935) in which the platinum blonde Marlene Dietrich plays Conchita Pérez, a character inspired by Carmen. Through a detailed analysis of the film's erotically charged scenes, the author explores the extent to which the Dietrich/Conchita character both follows and departs from her nineteenth-century forebear. Via her controversial off-screen behaviour and sexualised film roles, Dietrich, like Carmen, threatened the patriarchal status quo. But whereas the threat of the former articulates the colonialist fear of the non-Western uncivilised and irrational, the latter can be ascribed to the breakdown of traditional values brought about by post-Depression consumerism. Loyo then turns to the film's reception in Spain, which heavily criticised the orientalist representation of its nation. The figure of gypsy as a symbol of national identity sat uncomfortably with Nationalist discourse, which sought to promote a pure caste of the Spanish people.

Amy Herzog's essay on *Prénom Carmen* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1983) arguably stands as the most innovative of the volume. In a narrative that departs radically from the original, this film sees Carmen as a French terrorist. At one key juncture in the film, a passer-by whistles a tune from Bizet's eponymous opera. The brief surfacing of Bizet renders its absence most conspicuously felt in the film's soundtrack, which is made up entirely of Beethoven. In drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattari, Herzog considers this whistling to be a "refrain", which like other parts of narrative and cultural references, "move within and across multiple texts" and "circulate meaning"(135). Her approach lends itself particularly well to Godard's film, whose self-conscious style draws on a mosaic of intertextual references. The author then shows how the relationship between self and other is played out through tension between image and music. The refrain, which is constantly shifting and elusive, therefore functions as a marker of difference. Herzog concludes that the refrain can best be understood by analysing the ways in which it moves between different texts.

José F. Colmeiro explores the representation of Carmen in three different Spanish films, which were all made at pivotal moments of Spanish history: Florián Rey's *Carmen de la Triana* (1938), Tulio Demicheli's *Carmen de la Ronda* (1959) and Carlos Saura's *Carmen* (1983). The three films attempt to wrest control of the orientalist notion of Spanish identity advanced by the French, and "rehispanise" the figure of Carmen. As such, the myth of Carmen is made a locus of struggle for cultural identity. Produced during an emergence of European fascism and the Spanish Civil War, Colmeiro demonstrates how Rey's 1938 film negotiates these hegemonic ideologies. While rejecting French political domination, Demicheli's 1959 film was made after Spain had renounced its fascist roots. An analysis of the Hollywood codes on which Demicheli draws in his 1959 film leads Colmeiro to argue that the film embraces American hegemony. Again, the author situates the film in its historical context, arguing that it illustrates both Spain's rejection of its fascist roots and the economic pacts that were established between Franco and Eisenhower at the time. Saura's 1983 art film, which was made just after Spain's transition to democracy, reflects the nation's integration into Europe.

Although in her introductory note Davis notes that several of the 80 films inspired by Carmen transplant Carmen to places as far as Africa and the Far East, the reader is struck by the volume's emphasis on Spanish and French films. Given the setting and origin of the story this is, to some extent, inevitable. The book's interdisciplinary nature, however, would have been enhanced by at least one reading of a non-Western film. This, however, is just a minor quibble: there are many positive qualities to recommend this book. Original, innovative and accessible, *Carmen: From Silent Film to MTV* is essential for those working in Film Studies

and Cultural Studies within French and Spanish research areas, and makes for a fascinating read for anyone interested in one of Europe's most enduring literary myths.

# The Hollywood Horror Film, 1931 – 1941: Madness in a Social Landscape

By Reynold Humphries

Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2006. ISBN 0-8108-5726-X (pbk). xvi + 283 pp. £ 25.00 (pbk)

The Quest for the Wicker Man By Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray and Lesley Stevenson (eds.)

## The Quest for the Wicker Man

Benjamin Franks, Stephen Harper, Jonathan Murray and Lesley Stevenson (eds.)

Edinburgh: Luath Press Limited, 2006. ISBN 1-90522-218-1 (hbk). 11 color photos, 1 illustration, 187 pp. £ 16.99 (hbk)

## A review by Edmund P. Cueva, Xavier University, USA

*The Hollywood Horror Film, 1931 – 1941: Madness in a Social Landscape* is a difficult book to get through. Reynold Humphries examines fifty-three films that were made from 1931 to 1941 and employs as his lens a methodology heavily laden with psychoanalytic and Marxist terms, hypotheses, and models. Some of the movies covered in this book are Tod Browning's 1931 *Dracula*, James Whales' 1931 *Frankenstein*, Rouben Mamoulian's 1931 *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Ernest B. Schoedsack and Irving Pichel's 1931 *The Most Dangerous Game*, Charles Brabin's 1932 *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, Karl Freund's 1932 *The Mummy*, Edward Sutherland's 1933 *Murders in the Zoo*, Stuart Walker's 1935 *Werewolf of London*, John H. Auer's 1935 *The Crime of Dr. Crespi*, Lambert Hillyer's 1936 *The Invisible Ray* and *Dracula's Daughter*, Vincent Sherman's 1939 *The Return of Dr. X*, George Waggner's 1941 *Man Made Monster* and *The Wolf Man*, and Edward Dmytryk's 1941 *The Devil Commands*. This book is not meant to be read by those who are not thoroughly conversant with the works and theories of such thinkers as Jacques Lacan, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, Herbert Marcuse, and Frederic Jameson. The book, indeed, at times relies too heavily on these theories, which causes the reader to lose sight of what Humphries himself thinks, has to say, or contributes to the compendium of knowledge on this fascinating period of cinematic history. It appears that this book was written for the advanced graduate student or experienced scholar.

My somewhat unenthusiastic introductory paragraph should not deter the committed follower of psychoanalysis and its use in the elucidation of film from reading Humphries' book. However, a word of caution is needed: the extreme and cumbersome use of terminology by the author leads to convoluted writing. One revealing case in which the author's stylistic density leads to near-unintelligibility is shown where Humphries is discussing Tod Browning's 1935 *Mark of the Vampire*:

We must separate the subject from the Real, a sort of invisible barrier that cannot be broached, has "evaporated," as it were, by the presence, blocking the way, of the vampire, the impossible fusing of the Symbolic and the Real, two "spaces" that cannot coexist except through the effects of the latter, here represented by Luna. (34)

I should also note at this juncture that Humphries' comments on *Mark of the Vampire* are somewhat misleading. He tries to explain away some confusing and inconsistent parts of this very odd film by using possible metatextual or narratological devices. In fact, the incongruent details of the plot and surprise ending are due to MGM's demand that all references to the incestuous relationship between Count Mora (Bela Lugosi) and Luna (Caroll Borland) be eliminated and to the fact that the actors performed their roles as if they were in a real horror movie, ignorant of the changed ending until the very last days of the movie's filming.

Another example of something being amiss is found later, where Humphries is examining Hillyer's *Dracula's Daughter*. Humphries writes:

The commissioner, who has not quite made up his mind as to whether he believes in vampires or not, makes a facetious remark to his butler about vampire hunting, which elicits this bizarre reply: "I thought you chased after them with checkbooks." The signifiers here are not so much wandering as leading us a merry dance. Given the Slav origins of the countess, we must rewrite the end of the sentence as "Czech books," especially as the countess's studio is situated over a bookshop in London's Chelsea district, renowned (at least outside Britain) for eccentric (= gay?) artists. (65)

Why must we rewrite the end of the sentence with "Czech books"? The commissioner surely was not thinking this. Why must we?

The book also suffers from contradictions. One instance is brought to the attention of the reader by the author himself. In the section entitled "Can Heterosexuals Behave with Gay Abandon?" of chapter two, "Mad Doctors in Love," the author states that since one of his "arguments throughout this book is that class, politics, and history are far more massively repressed within horror and critical discourse thereon than sexuality of whatever persuasion," he feels it fitting to "draw attention in passing to its role in *Dracula's Daughter*" (63-64). First of all, this book discusses sexuality on almost every one of its pages, and, secondly, the "passing" observation is by no means short-lived: Humphries discusses this point at length.

*The Quest for the Wicker Man*, on the other hand, offers a more balanced and straightforward approach to the reader. In addition to an introduction written by the editors, "The Search for *The Wicker Man*," the text has eleven essays, which in general are well written and researched. The essays and their authors are: "The Genesis of *The Wicker Man*" by Robin Hardy, "*The Wicker Man*, May Day and the Reinvention" by Richard Sermon, "Ritualistic Behaviour in *The Wicker Man*: A classical and carnivalesque perspective on 'the true nature of sacrifice'" by Paula James, "Sacrifice, Society and Religion in *The Wicker Man*" by Luc Racaut, "Anthropological Investigations: An innocent exploration of *The Wicker Man* culture" by Donald V. L. Macleod, "The Folklore Fallacy: A folkloristic/filmic perspective on *The Wicker Man*" by Mikel J. Koven, "*The Wicker Man* -- Cult Film or Anti-Cult Film? Parallels and paradoxes in the representation of Paganism, Christianity and the law" By Anthony J. Harper, "The Wicca Woman: Gender, sexuality and religion in *The Wicker Man*" by Brigid Cherry, "'Do As Thou Wilt': Contemporary Paganism and *The Wicker Man*" by

Judith Higginbottom, "Music and Paganism with Special Reference to *The Wicker Man*" by Melvyn J. Willin, and "Wicker Man, Wicker Music" by Cary Carpenter. The book also includes an interview with Robin Hardy conducted by Jonathan Murray.

*The Quest for the Wicker Man* is the result of a cross-disciplinary conference, "*The Wicker Man: Rituals, Readings and Reactions*," that was held at the Crichton Campus of the University of Glasgow in Dumfries. The conference took place on July 14–15, 2003. The editors note that this film is able "to rouse religious passion and provoke debate" (9) even after more than three decades. This is a very good reason for the conference to be held and for the book to be published. The main thrust of this collection of essays, however, is the appropriation of some of the cultural components of the movie that can be identified as Pagan or pagan. The editors define the former capitalized term as an "identifiable set of spiritual practices or coherent set of beliefs concerning magic, pantheism and the moral principles thus derived" (9). The latter lower case term encompasses "any unsystematised religious or mystical belief that lies outside standard monotheism" (10). Most importantly, the editors aim to scrutinize the verifiable historical roots of these components.

The authors make several attention-grabbing and unanticipated observations and revelations. Robin Hardy, for example, observes that Tony Shaffer's *Sleuth* served as the inspiration for the core of the movie along side Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. Moreover, Paula James rightly remarks that the Graeco-Roman resonance of the film "was not consciously created (the emphasis is naturally on allegedly Celtic rituals) but elements of classical sacrifice can be detected as the plot unfolds" (44). The classical, of course, derives from the film's creators' reliance on *The Golden Bough*. Likewise, Luc Racaut touches on Frazer's influence, but on the contrary emphasizes Christian symbolism as the root of the plot. *The Golden Bough* also surfaces as a topic of analysis in Milkel Koven's essay, where the author competently and convincingly argues that the more folkloric details are added to a motion picture in order to lend to it a quality of authenticity, the more misinterpretations, misrepresentations, and faulty conclusions may result. The multitude of folkloric minutiae creates the opposite of what was intended: instead of authentic context and content, the film has the effect of a "folkloric amusement park" (93). This slippery slope has its start in the erroneous reading of Sir Frazer's work as historical rather than "folkloristic description" (83). In particular, Hardy and Shaffer uncritically reproduce numerous flaws in Frazer's text. Most damning is Koven's conclusion that the filmmakers "missed Frazer's own, albeit belated, admission that such a depiction was being filtered through a very specific theoretical schema" (92).

An associated problem that arises from this conflation of fact and fiction is the resultant belief of the verisimilitude shared by Pagans and Wiccans who have enthusiastically accepted this film and made it a "firm favourite" (126). Fascinatingly, Judith Higginbottom writes that Pagans do not see *The Wicker Man* as a "horror film *per se*, but rather as a drama in which knowledge of Pagan spirituality is key to understanding the outcome" (131). The rationalization of the obvious contradiction between a peace-loving system of religious belief and the shocking immolation of Sergeant Howie is as follows: the death of Howie is logical "because Howie has rejected the knowledge which would enable him to escape his fate as the virgin sacrifice" (132). I am not sure if Pagans note the flawed reasoning behind this logic since the same could be said of the multitude of people who suffered destruction during the multiple permutations of the Inquisition because they did not accept the knowledge which would enable them to escape annihilation. Richard Sermon's "*The Wicker Man, May Day and the Reinvention*," possibly the best essay of the lot, is a systematic and careful evaluation of

the ways in which this film has been re-interpreted to serve modern rituals and ceremonies that have been incorporated into present-day folk events.

Some of the essays in this book greatly elucidate the quasi-historical and folkloric elements of the film. Other essays, unfortunately, do not do this and cause puzzlement. For example, Brigid Cherry's essay lends great credibility to R. McKie's unsubstantiated and superficial designation of Stonehenge as an ancient representation of female sex organs (R. McKie. "The vagina monoliths: Stonehenge was ancient sex symbol," *The Observer*. July 6 [2003] 7). Similarly, Melvyn J. Willin's "Music and Paganism with Special Reference to *The Wicker Man*" falls into the verisimilitude trap that Koven cautions against when he writes that the film's music is "in harmony with the Pagan ethos" and that it "underwrites the film's Pagan aesthetic and, by extension, supports readings of the film which are sympathetic towards Paganism, *whatever the writers' intentions*" (151). I italicized the last clause because it crystallizes for us the problem that arises when one takes a naive approach to a multifaceted film.

# Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative in National Contexts

By David Martin-Jones

Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2006. ISBN 0-74863-585-8 (pbk), ISBN 0-74862-244-6 (hbk). 256 pp. £18.99 (pbk), £50.00 (hbk)

## A review by Terry Rowden, The College of Wooster, USA

In the most general sense David Martin-Jones's book *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative in National Contexts* seeks to illustrate "how [Gilles] Deleuze's theories can broaden our understanding of the way national identity is constructed in cinema"

(1). Overall, this book represents a very strong example of the strengths and some of the weaknesses of adapting Deleuze's work to general projects in cultural criticism. At its best, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative in National Contexts* reveals the still potent dynamism of a sensitive formalist perspective when it is placed in the service of an explicitly sociopolitical or historical project.

Martin Jones's primary argument is that "A jumbled, fragmented, multiplied or reversed film narrative ... can be interpreted as an expression of the difficulty of narrating national identity at a time of historical crisis or transformation" (1). According to Martin-Jones:

Such narratives formally demonstrate a nation's exploration of its own "national narrative," its examination of the national past, present and/or future in search of causes, and possible alternatives, to its current state of existence.  
(1)

The greatest strength of Martin-Jones book is the persuasiveness of his readings of the "unusual narratives" of particular recent films in relation to this position. The primary weakness is that the terminological detour through Deleuze's Bergsonian-inspired concepts of "the movement image" and "the time image" and less problematically the Deleuzo-Guattarian terms "deterritorialisation" and "reterritorialisation" often seems more obligatory than necessary or particularly illuminating in the specific contexts of the author's readings.

In explaining his recourse to Deleuze's work on cinema as the theoretical fountainhead for his own project, Martin-Jones writes, "[A] focus on national identity enables me to bring together an apparently ahistorical philosophy of cinematic time, with a consideration of historical context" (9). Ultimately, it is the "ahistoricity" of Deleuze's concepts that makes them less than fully persuasive in the service of the explicitly historical notions of national identity that Martin-Jones offers in his readings of the films that he focuses on. Admittedly, the author himself indicates that his "interactive model of the time -- and movement -- image ... necessitates a slight rejigging of Deleuze's categories" (4). Unfortunately, this "rejigging" or, more harshly, "invasive reappropriation" (10) often consists of stripping Deleuze's concepts of the philosophical and contextual weight that they are given in Deleuze's texts *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* and even more so in the context of the

extensive philosophical and theoretical system that Deleuze developed in his other writings and in his work with Félix Guattari. For instance, Martin-Jones writes:

Whether an image is a movement -- or a time-image depends on the degree to which it de -- or reterritorialises time. The closer it is to establishing a linear narrative, the more likely it is to be a movement-image. By contrast, the more visible the labyrinth, the closer to the time-image. (27)

While suggestive, such statements fail to reflect the great pains that Deleuze goes to in his cinema books to prevent the movement-image and the time-image from being read in the strictly binarized manner that Martin-Jones deploys. For instance, in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* Deleuze writes, "All things considered, *movement-images divide into three sorts of images when they are related to a centre of indetermination as to a special image: perception images, action-images and affection images*" (Continuum, 2001, 68, italics in original). In its eschewing of such distinctions in favor of a more general notion of "hybridity," Martin-Jones's functionally basic deployment of Deleuze's terms, while always semantically meaningful, is ultimately not flexible enough to ground the readings that he offers in ways that reflect the depth of Deleuze's thinking. Too often the Deleuzian terminology seems like window dressing on offerings that would be perfectly satisfying and comprehensible without it.

The author's reading of a wide range of films in terms of how consistently they "reterritorialise" their non-linear narratives into temporal linearity and, thereby, arguably a "linear narrative of national identity" may seem facile in its Deleuzian dimensions, but as free-standing considerations of these films they provide useful and engaging analyses of the extent to which both covertly and overtly notions of national identity are often basic to the manifestly varied and even extreme formal choices made by a range of directors in response to markedly different national situations and generic expectations. In fact, one of Martin-Jones's most original insights is his recognition of the dangers of what he calls "the binary trap of equating art films with time-images, and popular genres with movement-images" (38). The ease with which he moves from considerations of the, he argues, simultaneously formal and nationalistic particulars of arthouse masterpieces like Fellini's *8½* (1963) to popcorn pushers like *Terminator 3: The Rise of the Machines* (Jonathan Mostow, 2003) is impressive. In fact, Martin-Jones's placing of his ostensibly formalist concerns in the various national contexts (Britain, Germany, North America, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Italy and Poland) that he considers throughout the book is consistently thoughtful and revelatory. This is especially evident in the author's masterful reading of the British film *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt, 1997).

In fact, one of the most noteworthy if underdeveloped aspects of Martin-Jones book as cultural theory and critique is his pinpointing of the role that "the young *transnational* professional" (95) is playing in both the consolidation of notions of global modernity and the transnational cinemascap. He writes:

As a deterritorialized flow of labour, the transnational professional's ability to move within the global economy is best illustrated by a labyrinthine model which demonstrates how a discontinuity of identity can occur when a person is transplanted to work in another country. (114)

This is another point at which movement beyond a simple reliance on notions of the time and movement image and consideration of Deleuze's statements on the relation of movement to migration might have been useful. Still, despite Martin-Jones's limited exploration of the more individualized aspects of Deleuze's work on cinema, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative in National Contexts* is a useful and even essential book for considerations of transnationalism as an emerging concept in the critical discourse of world cinema.

# Filmosophy

By Daniel Frampton

London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2006. ISBN 1-90476-484-3 (pbk), ISBN 1-90476-485-1 (hbk). 256 pp. £15.00 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk)

## A review by IIs Huygens, Jan Van Eyck Academy, The Netherlands

Philosophy of cinema often comes down to nothing more than a reductive application where film is simply used as an illustration of certain philosophical questions or ideas. Philosophy takes on a paternal position in helping the film reveal its hidden essence and the specific aesthetics of the cinematic medium or the effects of the audiovisual images are not considered in the analysis. For Daniel Frampton the real question to ask however is not "what can film do *for philosophy*?" but "what film *offers* philosophy" (9). How can film be a companion for philosophy in engaging new ways of thinking?

This basic starting point already reveals the influence of Deleuzian philosophy on Frampton's filmosophy: to think film philosophically means to draw or produce concepts out of the affects and percepts given in the film. Film philosophical concepts are produced by the film but not articulated by them, that is why we need a philosophy of cinematic images. But philosophy also needs images to renew and update its own thinking. Especially now that our lives have become dominated by images and the world itself has become more and more cinematic.

Filmosophy is about this mutually productive encounter between cinema and philosophy. But as Frampton states "in order to philosophize the thought of film, one must first adequately, practically, work through the thinking of film" (183). What kind of thought is produced? How is it articulated; and by whom? And how can we approach it? These are the main questions of the first part of the book.

Frampton first looks at a number of other writers that have formulated similar thoughts (including Germaine Dulac, Antonin Artaud, Ricciotto Canudo). Some seem quite naïve whereas others have developed the issue in a more elaborate way, open for further exploration. In this sense this chapter, but also the rest of the book functions as a wonderful introduction and overview of this heavily under-theorized matter, presenting different lines of thought concerning the conceptualization of filmic thought and how it relates to our own thinking.

But here filmic thinking is always seen as an analogy, a mirror or even a visualisation of human thinking and this goes against one of Frampton's main theses, that film develops its own non-human and specifically filmic ways of thinking. Film-thinking offers us both less and more than human thinking and needs to be considered in its own right. The "filmind" (as he calls the film's thinking) also should not be seen as an external subjective force in the form of a character mind, a narratological being or the author's creative intention but as internal to the film. It *is* the film. Seeing the film itself as a subjective being, as phenomenology (Vivian

Sobchack) does, seems equally reductive and again limited to the confines of human experience.

In the chapter called "Film Neominds" he considers theorists that are closer to his own line of thought and that see cinematic thought as fundamentally different from human thought. Eisenstein's notion of the cinema as a sensuous kind of thought and Deleuze's concept of the spiritual automaton (which refers to the auto-thinking of cinema) offer him an entrance into his final argument; that film is not only thoughtful but that it can think differently than us and provoke us to re-visit our own ways of thinking. In its imagistic way of thinking film can present us with the "unthought" in thought, it can confront us with the gaps and fissures in our own ways of thinking but also show us what's beyond the reach of human thought: an ambiguous, superfluous and uncertain way of thinking.

The second part of the book is devoted to the further conceptualization of the "filmind", which as Frampton writes, should be seen as a rhetorical extension of Deleuze's spiritual automaton. He sets up the basic argument that film thinks because it can focus attention and produces meaning intentionally. For Frampton, and most contemporary film theory would agree, the film is never just a re-presentation of reality but always immediately a reconfiguration of it. "Film does not merely present objects, but reveals a way of seeing them -- a way of seeing that results from a way of thinking"(49).

Frampton also takes into consideration the importance of the role of the filmgoer. This encounter is seen by Frampton as a joining in thought that produces a unique third mix. This allows him to include the viewer in his individuality without immediately generalizing or categorizing him. Concerning film writing Frampton clearly has a point when he criticises the rigid theoretical language of most film theory, that fails to capture the fluidity (and increasing fluidity) of the cinematic medium. Filmsophical writing should be performative, poetic and open; it should not close the film for the viewer but open it to him, make him want to watch it (again).

On several occasions throughout the book Frampton makes it clear that filmic thought for him is not linguistic nor rational or logical but an embodied, emotional and affective kind of thinking. When a film shows us a character from a high or low-angle, this is experienced differently by the viewer, but when film theory tends to turn to either narratology, literary theory or to a technician language it misses precisely what is going on. To know a film's technical language or structure does not help explain the viewer's experience where form and content are experienced as one. In filmsophy "film style is now seen to be the dramatic intention of the film itself" (8). The seventh chapter is devoted to how different formal elements (colour, image, sound, framing, editing...) work with and *as* the dramatic intention of the film.

The idea that film produces thinking or is related to the human mind has always been around in the history of cinema, but it has never been so rigorously discussed and elaborated upon as in Frampton's book. It is perhaps not groundbreaking since many of its central claims have become more and more accepted in film theory recently (that film produces its own specific reality and is not just a representation of reality; that film is not a language, the embodied nature of filmic perception and experience, the affective nature of the thought produced) but they were never put together in such a coherent discourse. In this way, *Filmsophy* truly lays down an outline as well as a clear start off point for a new way of thinking about cinematic images. Frampton also captures in a clear and lucid way the main problems with most film

theory. As for his own arguments Frampton often does nothing more than putting into perspective or extending Deleuzian ideas but he also adds to Deleuzian film philosophy by developing methods, concepts and strategies for doing concrete film philosophical analysis.

However the book seems to fall short precisely when it goes into concrete description and analysis of films. When Frampton starts writing about specific films or "filminds", this leads to awkward sentences like "the film makes us feel" or "the film thinks". His examples of concrete filmosophical analysis somehow do not feel less removed from the filmic experience itself than most of the theoretical film writing he is arguing against. But this is perhaps only a minor or a temporary setback in comparison to a bigger conceptual problem that emerges from the concept of *Filmosophy* itself. By pulling together the two terms, in the idea of seeing film itself as "doing philosophy" Frampton loses touch with his extension of Deleuze's spiritual automaton and seems to take off on a kind of Hegelian idealism and essentialism. For Deleuze it is not the merger of film into philosophy that matters but their differences; their autonomy should be maintained since it is precisely out of the confrontation of philosophy with the non-philosophical (science or art) that interesting new concepts can arise.

# Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image

By Laura Mulvey

London: Reaktion Books, 2006. ISBN: 1-86189-263-2 (pbk). 216 pp. £14.95 (pbk)

## A review by Daniel Herbert, University of Southern California, USA

Some books take hold of us so completely that we devour them in urgent acts of reciprocal absorption. Others make us wrestle with every page, even every phrase, until we want to throw them across the room (only to sheepishly retrieve them soon after). Laura Mulvey's new book, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, engenders a different sort of engagement; it regularly prompts us to look up from its pages and gaze off as we ponder its ideas, reflect on them, and relate them to our own experience. This rhythmic alternation between reading and reflection conforms to the book's central motif, a tension between movement and stillness, which is embodied with particular force by cinema. The issue of divergent temporalities appears on the book's first page, where Mulvey marks the passage of time, between "then" and "now," both for cinema and her intellectual engagement with it. This point of entry evokes many of the book's aims and accomplishments, as *Death 24x a Second* is about time, death, cinema, representation, and subjectivity. It is a work of profound philosophical meditation, packed full with great ideas, demonstrating also the thorough attention to textual detail for which Mulvey is so well known. Attractively written throughout and at certain points taking ingenious compositional turns, *Death 24x a Second* clearly articulates a thoughtful consideration of film aesthetics.

The initial thought that generates the book's arguments is this: electronic and digital technologies provide new forms of control over film and filmic images, displacing cinema as we know it. Rather than theorizing the death *of* cinema, however, Mulvey argues these technologies allow for new reflections upon the extant death *in* cinema. Hence the author looks at the aesthetic ontologies of film and photography, specifically analyzing how these media inscribe time and implicate human mortality. Mulvey's title derives from Jean-Luc Godard's pronouncement that cinema is "truth 24 times a second" and switches one actuality for another, death for truth. Yet this analysis reverberates outward and leads to a number of related discussions, many of which extend the author's previous intellectual projects. It should come as no surprise that *Death 24x a Second* draws upon a combination of psychoanalytic and semiotic theory; it engages in aesthetic, narratological, and historical analyses of films from post-classical Hollywood, the international art cinema, and the avant-garde; it investigates representations of gender and class; it theorizes models of cinematic, and now post-cinematic, spectatorship.

Beyond her personal body of thought, Mulvey's book engages primarily with two intellectual contexts. First, it registers with the contemporary interest in intermediality, which appears largely provoked by the advent of new digital media and their encroachment upon the terrain previously held by cinema. Although Mulvey joins a number of thinkers in reexamining

cinema from the altered new media context, she is more peculiar in looking at these issues from a psychoanalytic perspective, which has certainly been one tendency but by no means the norm. Second, her book aligns with work by a number of classic cultural theorists, such as Siegfried Kracauer, André Bazin, and Roland Barthes, who ruminated previously about the relationships between film and photography, time and death. (These names appear regularly in her text). In fact, Mulvey builds upon this earlier work fairly seamlessly. In this respect, Mulvey's assertions about how film and photography configure time and its passage are themselves caught up in a temporal bridge that conjoins contemporary issues and contexts with those of the past.

The bulk of this theoretical work occurs in the book's preface and first four chapters. Mulvey notes that by 1995 cinema had grown old and that new technologies threatened it with extinction. She argues that these technologies make cinema's basis in still images apparent and accessible, thereby resituating cinema's tension between stillness and movement within an "aesthetic of delay." This leads her to reconsider the division between these temporalities, particularly investigating how stillness and movement correspond with uncertainties about life and death. Whereas photography indexically inscribes the past in stillness and thus bears a taint of mortality, film creates an uncertain temporality, an uncanny zone between life and death, by putting photographic images into motion. In this discussion, Mulvey elucidates the divergent characterizations of "the uncanny" in the writings of Sigmund Freud and Wilhelm Jentsch; in fact, she demonstrates how cinema conjoins their insights. She extends this point with a thorough reading of Bazin and Barthes, connecting their suppositions about photographic indexicality to the uncanny. Mulvey shows tremendous facility in illuminating, connecting, and extending the work of these thinkers, and others, which not only demonstrates the depth of her own thinking on these topics, but further makes her theoretical readings one of the great pleasures of this book. Finally, she draws upon the work of Peter Brooks as she incorporates issues of narrative structure into the theoretical matrix wherein stillness corresponds with death and movement with life. In combination, these opening chapters present a coherent and dynamic analytic cosmology, which Mulvey punctuates routinely with discussions of gender, culture, and history.

The second movement of *Death 24x a Second* engages in three close textual analyses, each of which confirms the book's previous theoretical assertions: first *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) then *Journey to Italy* (Roberto Rossellini, 1953) and finally Abbas Kiarostami's Koker trilogy, *Where is my Friend's House* (1987), *And Life Goes On* (1991), and *Through the Olive Trees* (1994). For instance, she concludes her analysis of death and the uncanny in *Psycho* by discussing Douglas Gordon's *24-Hour Psycho* (1993) as an embodiment of the new temporalities made possible by digital technologies. Yet lines of analysis accumulate in Mulvey's discussions in addition to the aesthetic and narrative configurations of time, death, and the uncanny. She investigates issues of space, the history of the film industry, natural disasters and psychological traumas, as well as issues of realism and representation. As she interweaves these topics to provide new and interesting interpretations of the films, Mulvey is characteristically detailed in her textual descriptions and forceful in asserting their meanings.

Of course, the same technologies that allow for new control over the temporality of cinema also displace the role of textual analysis in film scholarship; what exactly are we reading when we read a film on video or DVD, so often pausing the "film" to scrutinize particular frames? At just the moment when Mulvey's textual analyses begin to implicitly raise such questions, she confronts them directly and engages in a meta-textual analysis of Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life* (1959). Arguing that textual analysis subjects films to temporal and

narrative disruptions resembling those rendered by new media technologies, Mulvey reads the film's representations of space, gender, and class in ways only made possible by these new forms of media control. This twist initiates the third and final movement of the book, which theorizes new forms of spectatorship. Extending the arguments of her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" as well as incorporating critiques of it, Mulvey theorizes a possessive, "fetishistic" spectator of this new cinema of delay. This spectator draws pleasure from the ability to stop, control, repeat, and somehow possess stilled film images, particularly of movie stars. Drawing from the work of Raymond Bellour, Mulvey then theorizes an alternative to this, the pensive spectator. For this spectator, the cinema of delay prompts considerations about cinema itself and for whom fascination displaces fetishistic scopophilia as the main form of pleasure. As these ideas bring the book to a close, it becomes apparent that *Death 24x a Second* is itself an extended practice in just this sort of pensive spectatorship.

Given the general cultural turn in film and media studies, there may be some resistance to Mulvey's psychoanalytic approach and tendency for theoretical abstraction. Indeed, her discussions of "new technologies" never examine in detail the exact devices or question where and how they are used; this detracts from her arguments inasmuch as they rely upon quite specific technological capabilities. Further, Mulvey does not interrogate the economic forces and interests that shape technological change in the media industries. Yet this should not suggest that Mulvey's analysis is ahistorical or anti-cultural, as she continually and insightfully situates her arguments within historical and cultural contexts. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, *Death 24x a Second* elucidates a model for thinking through time, history, and culture in its own right, which at its best moments can lead us to reflect on how we do film history. With cinema substantially displaced if not outright dying, issues of continuity, closure, and change become all the more pressing in media scholarship. And in much the same way that the death of cinema demands a reconsideration of the death in cinema, so too can it cause media scholars to rethink what we do with our time. In *Death 24x a Second*, Laura Mulvey illuminates these issues with curiosity, creativity, and care, providing a substantial new work of film scholarship.

# Robert and Frances Flaherty: A Documentary Life, 1883-1922

By Robert J. Christopher

Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 2005. ISBN 0-7735-2876-8 (hbk). 46 illustrations, xxi + 453 pp. £25.95 (hbk)

## A review by Timothy Shorkey, Wayne State University, USA

In the introduction to his book on the early years in the lives of the titular documentary filmmaker and his wife/collaborator, Robert J. Christopher clearly lays out his three primary research goals. In contrast to the bulk of available writings on Robert and Frances Flaherty, Christopher intentionally set out to emphasize the period before the release of 1922's *Nanook of the North*, and in this respect he is obviously successful. The full entirety of the text is a culmination of his research of fifteen different archives, as well as numerous secondary sources, and his entire focus is narrowed on this time period (as the book's title clearly states, the period in question is between 1883 and 1922). In fact, most of the text is nothing more than a transcription of personal diaries written by Robert Flaherty during this period of his life. Christopher's second goal, "to address the forty-year hiatus in biographical studies of Robert and Frances" (xv), is also similarly easily fulfilled. The mere fact that the book exists is tangible evidence of the completion of this task, though his assertion of a completely devoid forty-year gap is at least somewhat in doubt. As the author even admits, there was one exception, an exhibition and catalogue at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1979-80; further, this compilation similarly focused on the years leading up to *Nanook of the North*, 1910-22 (though this isolated occurrence certainly could not stand on its own as a sufficient example of biographical studies). Christopher's third objective, to illuminate "the scope and depth of the influence that Frances Flaherty had on her husband's early career" (xvi), is probably the most worthwhile objective of the piece. I am not entirely certain that her contributions were previously completely ignored or minimized, as I was already aware after reading her own 1960 text (1984 reprint), *The Odyssey of a Film-Maker: Robert Flaherty's Story*, which coincided with the Robert Flaherty Centennial Project; further, the first chapter likewise provides the historical background which led to the eventual recording of the footage for *Nanook of the North*. Regardless, a book with a mere 31 pages of text cannot even begin to be considered adequate. Frances could obviously benefit from wider exposure like Christopher's, so it is nevertheless thoroughly enriching to see her contributions more fully explored.

The book's format is straightforward enough: each of the eight chapters begins with Christopher's summary of a component of his research, followed by an excerpt from one of the many personal diaries he has transcribed. These diary entries compose the bulk of the text, and the most prominent achievement of the book may be the fact that Christopher brought these long unavailable, unpublished texts to light in a format that is widely accessible. Upon first glance, it might seem as though the information contained within the chapters has minimal value as a potential research source to the film scholar, as most of it is far more concerned with, say, Flaherty's work as an expedition leader for Sir William

Mackenzie than as a fledgling filmmaker. While weeding through the often seemingly endless monotony of Flaherty's tedious journal excerpts might not initially seem like the most beneficial use of one's time, there is the occasional kernel of potentially interesting curiosity that might make the experience worthwhile after all.

However, the main problem of the journal entries is the lack of sufficient substantiality to justify their consideration as an academic resource. The majority of the entries are tedious and pointless, such as this "gem" from Chapter Three:

Wednesday, 15 February Away with twelve dogs. Splendid day. Arrive at post at eight o'clock at night. Waiting till next Monday before I can get a team for Moose. Rupert House quite the finest post I've seen. Most important on James Bay (63).

With so much of the source text concerned with these useless entries, the question must be asked: did the Flahertys' journals really *need* to be transcribed and published verbatim? The mere fact that they hadn't been brought to light previously does not necessarily warrant doing so now, does it? Even the entries that are relevant to film studies often leave a great deal to be desired. That is unless, for example, one is solely concerned with knowing the date when Flaherty finished the square flipper -- FYI, it was April 12, 1916 (293).

Chapter One traces Flaherty's childhood, from his home in Iron Mountain, Michigan, where his father worked at an iron mine, to the goldfields of northwestern Ontario, Canada, where they relocated in 1896. He later gains an apprenticeship "as surveyor and prospector" (6) in Port Arthur (now Thunder Bay) in 1902. In Chapter Two we begin to see the romantic side to Robert, as he pens such lovesick, lonely, sweet passages to Frances like this one from a 1906 journal entry: "It is late. I sit by the fire, or rather lie before it, trying to catch light with which to write you. I dream of you and me sometime together before a fire -- the same as it is tonight" (37). The third chapter is concerned mostly with the origins of his relationship with Frances Johnson Hubbard, for "the passionate yearning for union that pervades Flaherty's 1906 diary was not to be satisfied" (43) until their marriage in 1914.

It is with Chapter Four that we begin to finally see an inkling of the filmmaker that Flaherty was to become, as Christopher briefly details his interest in expeditionary photography. An unpublished 1911 album of photographs is discussed (65-70). Chapter Five shows Flaherty delving deeper into film during his third Mackenzie expedition as a resource to help defray the rising costs of the trips. As Christopher succinctly points out, "the nexus here of exploration, economics, and filmmaking was a paradigmatic moment in Flaherty's career" (131-2).

Chapter Six, the only chapter to contain passages from Frances's diary, concerns their marriage and her role in his career. As explained, she had a "determined aspiration to partner, protect, and promote her husband's career, whether as diarist, writer, photographer, or filmmaker" (202). The fame Flaherty received after the third Mackenzie expedition is also explored here, for the footage he shot on this voyage eventually became his first film, known here as the Baffin Island film. While it was screened both in Canada (its first public screening, at the University of Toronto, March 30, 1915) and the United States, (initially shown in New York, April 13, 1915), the Flahertys were ultimately unsuccessful in finding a distributor, despite the efforts of Frances. It was, however, largely thanks to her efforts that

Robert was eventually able to work on his filmmaking without having to deal with the "slavery to salary" (257) of William Mackenzie.

Chapter Seven concerns the fourth Mackenzie expedition, and Robert was more confident than ever that motion pictures could be "potential revenue sources to offset expeditionary costs" (283). While the text lacks substantial details regarding the making of this film, its fate -- destroyed when "a careless cigarette" causes "a burst of flame" that destroys all but "an edited print of the negative which he had shipped to Harvard" (321-2) -- is vividly described in Chapter Eight. The initial portion of this chapter (the research that precedes the journal) provides a succinct explanation of Flaherty's dealing with the Revillon Freres Trading Company that eventually brought *Nanook of the North* to fruition, while the Port Harrison Diary, as it is called, displays a "fragmentary structure and the absence of a comforting sequential calendar" (379).

Overall, there is unfortunately precious little to recommend this text to the film scholar. Yet, could *A Documentary Life* be justifiably faulted for what might be considered its insufficient potential to film studies? Certainly it makes no claims in the field. As one in the publisher's *Native and Northern Series*, it is designed to cater to a different audience. According to their website:

This series includes books dealing with the issues facing native peoples in all parts of the northern world. It includes works in the fields of archaeology, history, and traditional cultures of native peoples, as well as studies of the relations of native and non-native people and the problems native peoples face as a result of contemporary development, the environment, and government policy. (McGill-Queen's University Press, <http://www.mqup.mcgill.ca/> [Accessed: 08 January 2008])

Therefore, any contribution to film studies, if there is any, could be viewed as a plus, an academic profit in an otherwise (in this context) fruitless, if not at least sporadically entertaining, read.

# **Directed By Stephen Spielberg: Poetics of the Contemporary Blockbuster**

By Warren Buckland

London and New York, Continuum Books, 2006. ISBN 0-82641-691-8 (pbk), ISBN 0-82641-692-6 (hbk). 242 pp. £10.99 (pbk), £60.00 (hbk)

In Capra's Shadow: The Life and Career of Screenwriter Robert Riskin By Ian Scott

## **In Capra's Shadow: The Life and Career of Screenwriter Robert Riskin**

By Ian Scott

The University Press of Kentucky, 2006. ISBN 0-81312-390-9 (hbk). x+288 pp. £26.50 (hbk)

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

Authorship remains a key if controversial focus of debate within film studies and it is this theme which forms the overarching agenda for Warren Buckland's study of Steven Spielberg. Deriving his poetic, neoformalist approach from a systematic approach established by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, Buckland combines a canonical overview of Spielberg's groundbreaking work in the blockbuster genre with a detailed technical examination of his films.

The book commences with a succinct survey of the Hollywood blockbuster, an area covered in relatively recent guises by writers as diverse as Tom Shone and Geoff King, attending in particular to the industry's history of vertical integrated studio organisation and the idea that DreamWorks operates in similar fashion. Buckland contests this claim, arguing that in fact it operates as a freelance operation pursuing its dramatic vision with independent dealmakers. Now that it has effectively been taken over by Paramount, the future of non-conglomerative filmmaking looks dubious.

A concept hitherto under-explored elsewhere and which will prove of use in further like-minded studies is the chasm dividing external and internal authorship; the former having to do with the director's managerial position; the latter being the way in which auteurism is classically understood in its Romantic, artistic manner. This is some way from previous studies of Spielberg (by John Baxter, et al) which have tended to be biographical and thematic, appreciating his success as maker of spectacles yet overlooking those specific components which create that distinctive effect.

Crucially, Buckland identifies Spielberg as a *contemporary* auteur, because:

he occupies key positions in the industry (producer, director, studio co-owner, franchise licensee); he is therefore attempting to vertically integrate the stages of filmmaking -- but, unlike classical Hollywood, the integration is under the control of the creative talent, not managers. (15)

Previously, auteurs were judged those gifted men working within and against the Hollywood system; with his branding and studio acquisition, Spielberg *is* Hollywood (in many senses courtesy of Lew Wasserman, the focus of three recent biographies) in his attempt to control both the external and internal authorship of his work.

Buckland skilfully sidesteps any of the true pitfalls of this style of criticism, which dogged much early director studies in which the most hack-like of metteurs-en-scène were exalted to the detriment of those screenwriters who gave them their characters and themes -- one is reminded of the case of Charles Bennett, arguably the true architect of Hitchcock's narrative structure and cinematic worldview. The wilder extremes of this position could be seen in Mark Cousins' hilarious television interview with Rod Steiger a few years ago, in the course of which he elicited a reaction of pure apoplexy from the late, great actor at his suggestion that *Run Of The Arrow* (Sam Fuller, 1957) was a better film than *The Pawnbroker* (Sidney Lumet, 1965), in which Steiger gave arguably the best performance ever recorded on film.

While many have recognised Spielberg's gifts, few have attempted such a thorough and systematic deconstruction and definition of his particular added value, which the author defines as an attempt "to reconstruct the artistic reasoning behind the creation of an artwork" (30). An early chapter outlines the fundamentals of directorial poetics, from the basic technical skills listed in filmmaking manuals to the more esoteric concept of formal or organic unity, espoused by auteurist V.F. Perkins. This critical methodology of dominant narrational strategies forms the basis for the remaining bulk of the book, a chronological examination of those of Spielberg's works which fall under the titular rubric. Buckland considers the film from its basic unit, the shot, and looks at scenic technique and design, as well as considering the overall effect on the viewer. He argues that while Spielberg habitually makes the same basic choices, these often, but not inevitably, combine to create Perkins' beloved cohesiveness (surely in the eye of the beholder) and have always been overlooked by critics in their efforts to pigeonhole the director's achievements. Buckland carefully dissects the filmmaker's individual style, evident from the short film, *Amblin*" (1968), onwards, utilising tools familiar from Barry Salt's statistical analysis format -- including shot duration, angle, scale, movement and so on. This, the author reminds us, is the most reliable and systematic form of *mise-en scène* criticism because it precludes the subjective (158). In case we might suspect any partiality, the author identifies the spreadsheet software that he has used to collate the data from the first thirty minutes of each of the selected films. He tackles particular signature tropes of the director, such as the use of offscreen space, wide angle shots, long takes and a highly mobile camera, and illustrates that even with these elements in place, Spielberg doesn't inevitably achieve formal unity, sometimes undermining his narrative choices with poorly-placed humour.

Buckland uses the fission between external and internal authorship to revisit the long-held view that Spielberg not only produced but also directed *Poltergeist* (Tobe Hooper, 1982), actually credited to Tobe (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) Hooper: the commercial aspect of (disputed) authorship meant of course that Spielberg's name above the title drew the audience

in droves. As Buckland points out, Spielberg's "brand image is closely linked to his internal auteur status, particular themes conveyed in his films" (23). While "Steven Spielberg Presents" was a ploy which he would exploit throughout the 1980s with more or less child-oriented product directed by a raft of protégés culled from his TV stable, much of which was critically derided and is to blame for his long, somewhat self-defeating drive toward more serious, critically palatable fare (which, as Buckland reminds us, paradoxically doesn't necessarily showcase his cinematic "magic"), it is also regularly credited with the infantilisation of American cinema. In a recent interview with the director for the BBC, critic Mark Kermode needlessly restates his own personal preference for the blockbusters, the superiority of that body of Spielberg's work labelled "serious" notwithstanding. In the same interview Spielberg explained -- using Buckland's style of analysis -- why he was wrongly credited with aspects of the co-authored *A.I.* He also stated that *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) was his favourite of his own films because of its biographical aspect. Interestingly, Buckland does not consider it in this book.

In considering both what he calls the precompositional (preproduction) and compositional (visual) aspects of Spielberg's blockbuster films, Buckland uses Bordwell's construction to provide a valuable and serious contribution to an understanding of the most iconic and culturally charged filmmaker since Alfred Hitchcock. He cannot, however, redeem the reputation of a filmmaker whose technical mastery, masking ingenious narrative construction, was originally perceived as pure showmanship and now seeks to recover in the eyes of his many critics by tackling ever more politicised subject matter, no matter how brilliantly. Buckland concludes that Spielberg is a filmmaking magician, whose genius lies in this adaptation and manipulation of compositional norms; he has created a fine vocabulary by which to defend this position.

If Buckland's book privileges the director, then Ian Scott's biographical study of screenwriter Robert Riskin provides much-needed ballast to a director-driven genre. Early in 2006 critic David Kipen published a manifesto entitled *The Schreiber Theory* (Melville House Publishing) in which he argues for the screenwriter's position as auteur. Riskin's place in Hollywood history has never been challenged, except of course by Frank Capra, his long-term collaborator, who called his own memoirs *The Name Above the Title* (Da Capo Press) in a bid to resuscitate an ailing career in an era driven by auteur directors. This publication had the unfortunate effect of casting doubt on Riskin's huge contribution to that Name; Riskin was of course long dead and therefore not capable of defending his role in the consolidation of Capra's self-mythologising. Ironically, their collaborative ventures had always called attention to the great American theme of reinvention. The continuities and discontinuities within that director's career are always linked to those suggested by Riskin's screenplays, despite Capra's cinematic achievements prior to their professional marriage; but as Tom Stempel points out in the seminal *Framework*: "what Riskin did was develop the material, provide the frame, that Capra could use to show his talents on" (Continuum, 1988: 104). Capra had in fact a prior longstanding screenwriting collaborator in the person of Dorothy Howell, Columbia's leading story editor; he had also established a "visual style and sophistication ... rather more than content and certainly more than any social construction in his stories. (30)

The criteria for considering the screenwriter as auteur lie in what Buckland correctly identifies as internal auteurism: personal style, evident in a director's use of compositional norms but also perhaps in the screenplay, whose elements are mostly attributed to traditional dramatic structure but sometimes lie more significantly in the intangible aspects of the

writer's personality -- his outlook, his politics, his experience, his reflection of and on the culture (and in Riskin's case, three-act structure). Biography is therefore a highly significant element of auteur studies. This is particularly the case with Riskin, whose commercial nous and endlessly quotable dialogue alone mark him out from other screenwriters of his era. His uniqueness, Scott argues, pertains because:

his politics, his social examinations, and his wit never screamed at you from page or screen. Instead, they worked subtly to drag you into his worlds and into a style that was the epitome of dignity and integrity. (12)

Riskin himself believed that theme was the most important element of the writer's armoury.

Scott traces the evolution of Riskin's writing style, from his early one-reel comedies to his brief Broadway output through his Hollywood career and carefully delineates the construction in particular of his strong female protagonists and gender politics, and the conjoining of an observational narrative style with ideological obsession, frequently framed in a story which places an ordinary person in an extraordinary situation. He had a series of what Scott calls symbiotic professional relationships; with girlfriend and fellow writer, Edith Fitzgerald; with his brother, producer Everett Riskin; with Harry Cohn's Columbia Pictures, where, intriguingly, Cohn frequently stated his belief that the screenwriter should be treated as a star; and most pertinently of all, with Frank Capra, who directed *The Miracle Woman* (1931) based on Riskin's (co-written) play *Bless You, Sister*, from a screenplay by Jo Swerling, who himself would become Riskin's lifelong friend. This would mark the commencement of their professional involvement. Riskin would later ruefully, and perhaps cynically, remark in an interview about Capra, "We've been married a long time" (99). Despite apparently conflicting political inclinations, they took parallel paths through the Screen Writers and Directors Guilds and their complicated sense of co-dependency would see them reunited under the banner of Frank Capra Productions and then at RKO, which housed both of their production companies.

Riskin was the most commercially successful of any of the Thirties screenwriters, a fact Scott attributes to his "innate ability to summarize social and cultural attitudes while making the audience laugh out loud" (36). This of course was epitomised by *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934), which swept the Academy Awards and became the model for screwball comedy, and *The Whole Town's Talking* (John Ford, 1935). Ford's comedy proved to be virtually as big at the box office as anything else Riskin wrote. While Scott does not adopt Buckland's overtly poetic approach to his subject, he nonetheless implies it by looking at those interpretive elements which contribute to filmic meaning: style, structure, plot, dialogue, and the ineffable, tone. His analysis of the social aspect of Riskin's work is particularly effective and his disentangling of the complex weave of authorship, particularly in the work with Capra on *Mr Deeds Goes to Town* (Frank Capra, 1936), is exemplary. While there were other films of that era based on what Scott calls "latent social investigation" (104), none was so acutely tuned to the vagaries of New Deal politicking and the actual character of FDR; yet Scott also suggests what no other author has noted about their collaboration on the adaptation of short material for the big screen: they were now, in the shadow of each other's influence, taking the same path, independently of one another, implicating their co-authored narratives with their own personal stories of success and fame. And, contrary to popular belief, Scott reminds us that *Mr Deeds* did not boast Capra's name above the title.

In the aftermath of that film's success Riskin attempted to carve out a singular artistic identity for himself and intended to make a career out of directing features. However he got cold feet over making *When You're in Love* (Robert Riskin, 1937) and confessed to missing Capra's "quality control and editorship" (123). Their reuniting for the convoluted writing process behind *Meet John Doe* (Frank Capra, 1941) would, Scott claims, prove that "Capra heroes ... also belong to Riskin" (148). Ironically the Oscar eluded him and went to the writers of the original story instead. The war years saw Riskin exercise complete creative control over an extraordinary series of underappreciated propaganda films for the Office of War Information, *Projections of America*, which boasted talents as diverse as Ingrid Bergman, Aaron Copland and Josef Von Sternberg, putting Riskin's ideas in a narrative frame that suggested post-war ideological reconstruction and would be echoed in his screenplay for *Magic Town* (William A. Wellman, 1947). Of course Capra would, inevitably gain more kudos for the *Why We Fight* series (1942-1945). In his capacity at this office, Scott relates that Riskin acted as a virtual censor for American films overseas and prevented *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) being screened in North Africa -- for political reasons.

Providing an interesting symmetry with Buckland's book on Spielberg, in which that author forensically proves that Spielberg did not in fact direct *Poltergeist*, Scott offers another angle on *Magic Town*, which to the uninitiated looks very like a Capra outing and is mostly as good as that director's other whimsical efforts after World War II, *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946) notwithstanding. *Magic Town* was in fact directed by William Wellman, a wholly underrated Hollywood stalwart. Riskin reportedly saw *Magic Town* as "a perfect Capraesque story with a modern twist" (207). Capra would in fact claim that he had co-written it, in yet another spectacular instance of his false reinvention. The divisions between the pair would be set in train by the credits dispute on *It's A Wonderful Life* (Capra thought that Riskin sided with Goodrich and Hackett) and later, in remaking *Broadway Bill* (1934) as *Riding High* (1950), Capra sought to downplay Riskin's right to shared credit, which Riskin fought -- and won -- through the Screen Writers Guild.

While Scott chronicles familiar ground for the wider consideration of screenwriting in what he calls the "wider, scarred landscape" of film history (235), he does not entirely go along with Joseph McBride's polemical account which favoured Riskin over Capra (*Frank Capra: The Catastrophe of Success*, Faber & Faber, 1992); indeed he happily makes the particular point of Riskin's "exceptionalism" (237) and yet lays bare the facts behind what was a truly collaborative and mutually beneficial screen partnership with Capra. He also notes a bittersweet coda to Frank Capra's ridiculous gamesmanship, in the 1970s debate on Capra's authorship initiated by David Rintels, then president of the Writers Guild. It would appear that internecine battles have their origins in marriage whether professional or familial: Victoria Riskin, the screenwriter's daughter, was married to Rintels and one critic at least took issue with the connection. In such mundane human experience does the backdrop to filmic debate reside.

The book's stated aim is to demonstrate the price that has been paid by Hollywood history in the neglect of the screenwriter: it more than fulfils that ambition, as well as setting the record straight about Riskin's contribution to screen art, it creates a trope for that period of cinema history and the wider realm of American political culture. It is a model of its kind.

The progression of textual debate within film studies is continually as divided as it is divisive. While much theoretical writing is influenced by the decentering positions of Barthes and Foucault, it is fair to say that the dialogue long ago given a voice by *Cahiers du Cinéma* and

Andrew Sarris is ever more pungent in contemporary terms. Both Buckland and Scott contest assumptions in their particular fields while asserting the need to transform both the understanding and reading of the semantics of cinema studies. As they unpick the fabric of film history, a truer retelling may emerge. The authors can die; but the authorship battles continue.

# Multiculturalism and the Mouse: Race and Sex in Disney Entertainment

By Douglas Brode

Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005. ISBN 0-29270-960-9 (pbk), ISBN 0-29270-923-4 (hbk). 70 b&w and 12 colour illustrations, 292 pp. £14.99 (pbk), £41.00 (hbk)

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

*Multiculturalism and the Mouse* is the second of Douglas Brode's Disney books, the previous being *From Walt to Woodstock: How Disney Created the Counterculture*. In that book, Brode makes what is by his own admission a hyperbolic argument about how Walt Disney -- the man as well as his corporation -- influenced youth culture of the 1950s in ways which informed the social revolutions of the late 1960s and early 1970s. *From Walt to Woodstock* claims that the baby-boomer generation, while figuratively sitting at Uncle Walt's feet, learned lessons of tolerance, political activism, and pacifism and were encouraged to resist capitalism and establishment authority figures. Walt, then, was less a middlebrow, conservative figure than a progressive visionary in ways which contemporary cultural criticism has overlooked or willfully ignored when they examine Disney.

*Multiculturalism* is an ambitious extension of that first book's broad ideas, this time focusing more on Disney's visual texts than on Walt himself. In the cartoons, live-action films and television programs developed under Walt's supervision, Brode sees positive representations of difference that reflect Disney's proactive and even predictive embrace of multiculturalism long before such values were embraced by mainstream media texts and America. Intended as a revisionist look at Disney, the book challenges what Brode characterizes as the incorrect assumption that Disney is conservative and conventional. Instead, Disney was and is progressive; during the post-War era it was one of the few studios that dared to produce texts promoting what would come to be known as multiculturalism.

Nowhere is this provocative argument more boldly expressed than in the book's introduction and conclusion. These sections confirm Brode's proclaimed status as provocateur or, as the book's blurb celebrates, the "only academic author/scholar who dares to defend Disney entertainment." Central to *Multiculturalism*'s thesis is the presumed need to defend Disney from academic lambasting. These sections describe the current state of Disney Studies as an elitist enterprise that offer decontextualized critiques of Disney under Walt. Brode's introduction selects one text, *Mickey Mouse Monopoly*, as representative of this interdisciplinary field -- a fifty-two minute documentary produced for secondary-school and college settings and which includes brief interviews with cultural scholars working in the field. Relying on this documentary to characterize these scholars' claims and the range of Disney scholarship weakens the book's central arguments. Moreover, this single example reveals one of the book's more troubling aspects: Brode's overall approach is marked by bold claims unsupported by evidence of careful scholarly research.

What *Multiculturalism* does offer is scope, and much of the book's impact derives from its number and range of materials. Its eight chapters reference nearly one hundred films and television programs -- cartoons, animated and live-action films, and television programs -- loosely united under multiculturalism. Brode presents selective summaries of texts that support his general claims, but his discussion on any specific text is necessarily limited to a length of between a paragraph and a few pages. While this scope effectively suggests Disney's body of work deserves re-examination, it regrettably does not permit space for sustained analyses of any texts which would help develop a chapter's or the book's overarching concerns.

The breadth of materials extends to the chapters' coverage, with the eight chapters addressing the presence of Disney's positive depictions of race, ethnicity, disability, gender roles, sexuality, and religious difference. Of course, *Multiculturalism* is ambitious and its attempt at comprehensiveness is admirable. When combined with the number of texts discussed, however, its chapters' range means the book sacrifices developing its arguments. For instance, the chapter on representations of African Americans, subtitled "Disney and the Civil Rights Movement," references eleven texts, among them *Dumbo* (Ben Sharpsteen, 1941), *Song of the South* (Harve Foster and Wilfred Jackson, 1946), and *So Dear to My Heart* (Harold D. Schuster and Hamilton Luske, 1948). This chapter primarily offers close readings of their presumably progressive characterizations, often to counter others' claims concerning the films' stereotypical and racist depictions. Some discussions, such as those involving *Dumbo* and *Song of the South*, briefly introduce the public's contradictory responses concerning racial representation before siding with those which praise the Disney text in question. Brode defends Disney's portrayal of *Song of the South* as being set in a post-Civil War context to minimize the criticisms -- especially the negative reactions to -- of these films during the time of their first theatrical releases. Initial criticism of *Song of the South* is attributed to "white reviewers, overeager to display their newly acquired heightened [racial] awareness" (53) and to the NAACP's misunderstanding of the film's historical context. In many of the examples, the films' relationship to the civil rights movement are not developed clearly; *So Dear to My Heart* is justified for inclusion, in part, because it "can be read as an indirect allegory" (62). These analyses, despite the book's stated concerns otherwise, do not make sufficient connections between Disney texts and their context. Perhaps it is more accurate to state Brode's primary interest is in contextualizing a scene within its text, and to a lesser extent within cinema history, rather than to discuss the social and historical context of a film or television show.

Yet it is in Brode's primary interest that one finds *Multiculturalism*'s strength, particularly for its readings of racial and ethnic representation within the live-action films and television programs associated with the *Disneyland* television program. The book's suggestively described plots and characters in Brode's treatment of *The Light in the Forest* (Herschel Daugherty, 1958), *Tonka* (Lewis R. Foster, 1958), and *Legends of the Swamp Fox* (within *Disneyland* 1959-1961) and *Bon Voyage* (James Neilson, 1962) are among its strongest, in part because they are offered a lengthier treatment than other texts found in *Multiculturalism* and in part because there has not been much written on them. *The Light in the Forest* and *Tonka* become the predecessors to revisionist Westerns such as Arthur Penn's *Little Big Man* (1970) and Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves* (1990). *Legends of the Swamp Fox* depict strong African-American characters whose roles in a historical series, as plantation slaves in Revolutionary America, are nonetheless correctives to those found on the television versions of *Amos and Andy* (1951-53) and *Beulah* (1950-53). While the book might more clearly

distinguish between film and television media, or develop its passing references to Disney's reception, Brode offers sharp insights on these texts.

Less successful, however, are the book's arguments for Disney's depictions of other forms of difference, particularly for feminism, gender roles, religion, and sexuality. It makes few distinctions between feminism, gender and sexuality. Religious difference seems to mean the inclusion of good witches and generic signifiers for witchcraft. The last chapter, "Disney and the Gay Experience," does not make a clear distinction between homosocial relationships, homoerotic experiences, and homosexuality. More problematically, the discussions often rely on exaggerated or overstated points in order to further Brode's claim of a progressive and even radical Disney. To support the fifth chapter's claim concerning Disney's embrace of a post-War sexuality, a position which presumably resists the constraints of Victorian ideals, Brode asserts *Cinderella* (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson and Hamilton Luske, 1950) depicts a natural woman who is comfortable with her body and sexuality. He describes the audience's first encounter with Cinderella:

In the opening, Cinderella rises from bed, utterly at ease with her nude body in a way that no other positively portrayed screen woman was at that time. Her casualness induces the uptight audience to likewise relax about sexual matters (130).

From this description, one would not only assume that the character appears nude in the Disney animated film -- she does not -- but that there is evidence Cinderella's behaviour reflects and informs an audience's acceptance of female sexuality. Questions concerning how Cinderella's "sex appeal" is conveyed, a developed contextualization of other contemporaneous films for contrast, and evidence of the film's effect on audience are absent.

I wanted to be convinced by the arguments offered in *Multiculturalism and the Mouse*, because its desire to reexamine Disney's ideological work -- and that of media conglomerates more generally -- raises valuable questions for media studies. Brode's introduction and conclusion, which suggests the need for more nuanced analyses of Disney's influence on children's media culture and its synergistic use of film and television, also are points well-taken. And at times, the book would offer readings of scenes which compelled me to re-watch a Disney text in hopes of verifying an alternative reading. Too often, though, I was struck by the disparity between the book's bold, broad arguments and its execution. *Multiculturalism* fails to live up to the promise of its material. But what *Multiculturalism* does well -- providing the reader with dozens of Disney texts presented as an overview of multiculturalism's concerns as they emerged in the post-War era -- will hopefully prompt others to offer the type of rigorous, contextualized investigations called for by Brode and essential to such a reexamination.

# **The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture**

By Diane Negra (ed.)

London and Durham: Duke UP, 2006. ISBN 0-8223-3740-2 (hbk), ISBN 0-8223-3740-1 (pbk). 392 pp. £64.00 (hbk), £14.99 (pbk)

Irish and African American Cinema: Identifying Others and Performing Identities, 1980-2000

By Maria Pramaggiore

## **Irish and African American Cinema: Identifying Others and Performing Identities, 1980-2000**

By Maria Pramaggiore

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007. ISBN 0-79147-095-4 (hbk), ISBN 0-79147-096-2 (pbk). 245pp. £43.99 (hbk), £11.00 (pbk)

### **A review by Sinéad Moynihan, University of Nottingham, UK**

Maria Pramaggiore's book proposes that "during the 1980s and 1990s, a common interest in rejecting lingering colonial stereotypes, and the rigid racial, gender, and national identities that inform them, was expressed in Irish and African American cinemas through an emphasis on character identification" (2). She defines "character identification" as "acts through which characters temporarily relinquish the notion of a permanent, coherent, self" (3). In so doing, Pramaggiore argues that these gestures "reveal both a desire to move beyond the understanding of identity as a fixed essence and the difficulty of renouncing traditional, ontological notions of national, gender, and racial identity" (3). As such, she describes recent Irish and African American cinema as "nonessentialist" (9).

Because Pramaggiore states on page one she will examine no fewer than twenty-five Irish and African American films, I assumed that the book would be an overview or survey. Instead, after a short introduction and a methodological Chapter One, Pramaggiore provides nuanced and compelling readings of a series of Irish and African American films, emphasizing the importance of the body as the site upon which essentialized identities are often inscribed or challenged. She structures her main four chapters by elaborating on films that feature embodied or disembodied performances: jazz musicians are the focus of Chapter Two, films about pregnancy in Chapter Three, violence in Chapter Four and the Western -- as a genre that reinforces the rhetoric of a "national body" -- in Chapter Five.

While Pramaggiore's readings are astute and persuasive, the broader framework that she uses and the conclusions that she draws are less convincing. One problem is that Pramaggiore's

insistence that the films she discusses challenge "essentialist discourses of gender, sexual, racial, and national identity" now appears somewhat outdated (191). Diana Fuss, upon whose later work Pramaggiore draws (32), argues as early as 1990 in *Essentially Speaking* that:

[T]here is no essence to essentialism, . . . (historically, philosophically, and politically) we can only speak of *essentialisms*. Correlatively, . . . constructionism (the position that differences are constructed, not innate) really operates as a more sophisticated form of essentialism. (Fuss, xii)

Fuss's analysis has been helpful for a whole generation of scholars of "passing," a body of criticism curiously and conspicuously absent from Pramaggiore's book. The passing subject may *appear* to destabilise the racial boundary by exposing its constructedness, its permeability, its instability. But in the very act of passing, s/he also reinforces it by granting authority and credibility to the mythical "colour line" as a real and true boundary to be transgressed. As Amy Robinson puts it, "the social practice of passing is thoroughly invested in the logic of the system it attempts to subvert" (in Diamond, *Performance and Cultural Politics*, 1996, 237). Similarly, the acts of identification Pramaggiore discusses often reify, rather than challenge, essentialized identities. For Phillip Brian Harper, this aspect of passing disqualifies it from carrying any political significance, though it may have critical significance. Pramaggiore eventually comes to the same realisation, when she concludes that "moments of heteropathic identification do little to effect lasting, structural change" (191).

Another issue is the premise of the book itself: why bring Irish and African American cinemas together? Pramaggiore acknowledges and addresses the difficulty in paralleling Irish and African American cinemas in her methodological Chapter One. Although she rejects a "strict obeisance to the national cinema model" because "that framework circumscribes these cinema cultures within national borders" which interferes with her commitment "to de-essentialize identity" (20), Pramaggiore does not provide a convincing definition of what she *does* include within the rubric of "Irish" and "African American" cinemas. She suggests that what she means are "Irish and African American "themed" films," but this is never clearly explained (2). The confusion surrounding this issue is evident in the shift from Chapter Two to Chapter Three. In Chapter Two, Pramaggiore foregrounds the early films of Neil Jordan and Spike Lee, two directors who may be placed emphatically within Irish and African American cinematic traditions respectively. Here, then, Pramaggiore seems to want to retain some aspects of the national cinema paradigm. However, Chapter Three features analyses of, among other films, *The Colour Purple* (Stephen Spielberg, 1985), *Beloved*, *The Snapper* (Stephen Frears, 1993), *A Man of No Importance* (Suri Krishnamma, 1994) and *The Playboys* (Gillies MacKinnon, 1992), none of which have either African American or Irish directors.

One potential minefield that Pramaggiore negotiates admirably is the temptation to collapse Irish and African American experience. As she observes importantly, "Although they are diasporic cultures, the Irish Diaspora is primarily the result of emigration rather than a global dispersal emanating from the triangular trade in commodified bodies that produced the African Diaspora" (18). She does devote a section of her methodological Chapter One to exploring what George Bornstein has termed "Afro-Celtic connections," but she also demonstrates the ways in which cross-racial character identification established through the playing of jazz music in Neil Jordan's *Angel* (1982) and *The Miracle* (1991) "may perpetuate certain stereotypes of black emotion and spontaneity" (75). In her introduction, though, Pramaggiore trots out the rather tired example of Roddy Doyle's Jimmy Rabbitte, who claims in *The Commitments* that "the Irish are the niggers of Europe" (4). The quotation -- from

both the novel and film adaptation -- has been used anecdotally by Noel Ignatiev and analysed exhaustively by George Bornstein, Elizabeth Butler Cullingford and, in Negra's collection, Catherine Eagan.

Indeed, Pramaggiore's book may be seen as an example of the academic equivalent of the "mania for all things Irish" that Eagan sees as "pervasive" in the U.S. from the late 1990s on (Negra 20). In other words, Pramaggiore's *Irish and African American Cinema* and Diane Negra's impressive edited collection, *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture*, are symptomatic and, in Negra's case, diagnostic of the global fascination with Irishness that the last ten or fifteen years has witnessed. The issue of cross-racial identification which Pramaggiore explores is also one of the key concerns in Negra's book, in which an essay by Pramaggiore, which forms the basis for her Chapter Three, is included. In her introduction, Negra telegraphs the contributors' collective interest in the way that "Irishness seems to move between a quasi blackness and a politically insulated ethnic whiteness" (3). Because this is a thread that runs through the collection, the essays interlink very well to form a cohesive, coherent whole as many of them grapple with the implications of the work of Whiteness Studies scholars that has proliferated over the last fifteen years. Noel Ignatiev, among others, has traced the racial transformation of the Irish, considered "black" or racially indeterminate in the nineteenth century, but becoming, over time, both unambiguously white and the most successful, assimilated ethnic group in the U.S. From a rich variety of angles, several contributors wonder if Irishness now operates as a reassuring, benign form of whiteness, offering white subjects the opportunity to lay claim to a history of colonial and racial oppression, while retaining the privileges of whiteness. In this vein, a number of essays highlight Irish invocations of an affinity with African Americans and consider whether such conjunctions of Irishness and blackness are "inevitably conservative formulations" (3).

Catherine Eagan's essay explores films, novels and cultural events that foreground the Irish-black connection, from *Riverdance* to *Angela's Ashes* (Alan Parker, 1999) to the New York and New Jersey school curricula on the Great Famine. Eagan grapples with the following dilemma: how do we acknowledge the racialisation of the Irish and their history as colonial subjects under British rule without conflating their experiences with those of people of color, thus partaking of a politically-correct whiteness? One cultural figure who successfully negotiates this problem, according to Lauren Onkey, is Van Morrison who, in his blues-inflected music, "doesn't use blackness as a commodity he owns, that he can sell to counter his own anxieties" (190). Meanwhile, Natasha Casey confronts the potentially pernicious effects of insisting upon the whiteness of Irishness. She notes that white supremacists in the U.S. have appropriated certain symbols -- such as the Celtic cross -- that are inextricable from popular conceptions of Irishness.

In an essay on the discursive significance of redheadedness, Amanda Third contends that red hair has historically been coded as Irish and, by extension, has functioned, in a colonial context, as a metonym for Irish racial "otherness." In particular, Third examines the female redhead as a figure as a locus for both anxieties and desires concerning the colonial "other." Third's essay is interesting, but I thought it would have been better placed at the beginning of the volume (it is number nine of thirteen contributions). The principle reason for this is Third's discussion, in exhaustive detail, of the history of the racialisation of the Irish by the British. However, because so many essays in the volume also foreground similar issues, but in a more concise fashion, the placement of Third's essay towards the end of the book unfortunately renders much of her meticulous research extraneous.

My one quibble is that the historical parameters of the volume remain somewhat obscure. This is frustratingly evident in the frequency with which the term "Celtic Tiger" appears with few attempts made to pin down the precise parameters of this historical moment. Diane Negra's observation in the opening sentence of the final essay that the "transnationalized Irishness" to which she refers in the Introduction has been "spurred by Celtic Tigerism" represents the culmination of a series of vague invocations of this term throughout the collection (355). Negra does specify, in the introductory essay, that the collection's emphasis will be on "the last ten years," which corresponds roughly with (some) conceptions of the Celtic Tiger moment, but the terms "Celtic Tiger Ireland" and "post-Celtic Tiger Ireland" are not used with any consistency in the collection as a whole. For example, in an otherwise well-wrought analysis of how Irish artists and intellectuals have "used Afro-Caribbean culture as a way of fashioning Ireland as a part of a cosmopolitan brotherhood," Michael Malouf examines "invocations of the Caribbean in Irish culture and Irish-inflected popular culture from the 1970s to the present" (321-322). However, Malouf claims elsewhere that his focus will be on the 1990s, during which Ireland became an "import" rather than an "export" culture, and explains his exploration of Sinéad O'Connor's music and Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game* (1992), but not *Kingdom Come*, a play first staged in 1978 (319). Malouf seems to want to have it both ways: to use the Celtic Tiger moment as a historical backdrop for his analysis, but also to move outside it, as far back as the 1970s, if he so wishes. It is not unreasonable to locate the origins of the Celtic Tiger in the 1970s (some commentators would credit Sean Lemass's government of the 1960s with laying the groundwork for the Celtic Tiger economy), but since Malouf still firmly grounds the Celtic Tiger in the 1990s, the periodisation of the essay remains bewildering.

Malouf is not the only offender in this regard. In a fascinating essay on the representation of Irish Travellers in Irish -- and internationally -- produced films, Maeve Connolly extends Diane Negra's contention that Irishness operates as a "moral antidote" to a range of contemporary ailments and argues convincingly that in the films she discusses the Travelling community represents an even more "authentic" variation on mainstream Irishness (285). In the context of a post-Celtic Tiger Ireland, in which conceptions of Irish identity as valuing "tradition," "spirituality" and contact with the land have become increasingly compromised by the demands of a thriving global economy, Irish Travellers have come to function as "a conduit to the recovery of the past, a past coded as therapeutic" (311). However, alongside films from the 1990s and early 2000s (*Into the West* (Robert Dornhelm et al, 2006), *Snatch* (Guy Ritchie, 2000), *Chocolat* (Lasse Hallström, 2000), *This Is My Father* (Paul Quinn, 1998)), Connolly explores Joe Comerford's 1981 film *Traveller*. In the early 1980s, the Irish economy was experiencing a severe recession. The focus on *Traveller* thus seems somewhat anomalous given the Celtic Tiger emphasis of the essay; that is, if the "Celtic Tiger" moment corresponds with "the last ten years," as Connolly suggests. But this is a minor issue in what is, otherwise, a thoroughly engaging essay.

One contributor who *does* map out convincingly the contours of the Celtic Tiger moment to which she refers is Mary McGlynn, who seeks to account for Garth Brooks's popularity in Ireland during the late 1990s. Tracing Brooks's musical origins in "new country," which coincided with "a resurgence in conservatism in the United States," McGlynn argues that Brooks enjoyed success in Ireland because he mediated shifting identities "between upward mobility and working-class roots" in Celtic Tiger Ireland (206). In other words, he offered reassurance to a cross-section of an increasingly-prosperous Irish public that they could enjoy the benefits of affluence *and* retain the kudos attached to a working class identity.

Overall, the volume is well-organised, with most contributors referring to and expanding upon the claims Diane Negra makes in the introductory essay, especially with regard to the "everything and nothing" status of Irishness" and "the status of Irishness as a category of racial fantasy" (1). Indeed, Negra herself argues in the concluding essay of *The Irish in Us* that in the aftermath of 9/11, through the emphasis on the Irishness of the Fire Department of New York (FDNY), Irishness was encoded as innocence compared with the threatening racialised, Orientalised (in Said's terms) Middle Eastern terrorist Other. Because the editor contributes a concluding essay, the book evinces a neat and pleasing symmetry. Due to space constraints, it is not possible for me to elucidate the merits of each individual essay in the collection. Suffice it to say that *The Irish in Us* is a ground-breaking addition to scholarship in the fields of Irish and American Studies, Whiteness Studies, and, not least of all, Film Studies and Cultural Studies.

# Crossing New Europe: Postmodern Travel and The European Road Movie

By Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli

London: Wallflower Press, 2006. ISBN 1-90476-468-1 (hbk), ISBN: 1-90476-467-3 (pbk).  
18 illustrations, vii +245pp. £45.00 (hbk), £16.99 (pbk)

**A review by Fiona Handyside, Queen's University, Belfast, UK**

Issues of mobility, movement, transition, transience, travelling, tourism, fluidity, border-crossings, immigration and emigration are central to the way in which "European" identity is being both shaped and contested in contemporary debates. One need only think of the media interest in asylum seekers, especially those housed at the Red Cross Centre Sangatte in Calais, closed by Nicolas Sarkozy at Britain's behest in 2002, or the continuing questions concerning the enlargement of the European Union towards the East and the status of expected Eastern European emigrants. To such political and socio-economic manifestations of these issues we can add also the theoretical and critical use to which identity categories such as nomad, tourist and vagabond have been put by thinkers as diverse as Zygmunt Bauman, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Stuart Hall and Dean McCannell. Despite the wide variety of approaches these theoreticians take to this vast and complex subject, they all argue that in some ways these transient, travelling figures can be seen as metaphors for or embodiments of the postmodern condition. This theoretical and critical interest in the figures of mobility predates postmodernity, however: movement has also been central to our ideas of modernity, especially as figured by the urban flâneur moving through the city streets.

Movement, then, is a key way that helps us think through the massive changes in society occasioned by modernity and postmodernity. Rather than allowing stable identities and fixed positions, critical writing and socio-economic experience teaches us that, for better or worse, we live in a society in which mobility is essential and expected. The effects of this range from the requirement to commute to work due to the separation of the spaces of leisure and production, and reliance on immigrant cheap labour in service industries, to the promotion of "exotic" holidays for rich Europeans in locations such as the Maldives.

Cinema is an art form that grew out of and responds to this interest in movement as a way of analysing and explicating the transformations of (post)modernity. It was the experiments of Etienne-Jules Marey in his attempts to uncover the essence of movement (how birds fly, how blood moves through the body, what happens when a cat falls off a wall -- all were of huge interest to him) that constitute the prehistory of cinema, not just chronologically but also conceptually. Cinema is forever caught between stasis and movement in its very form, breaking down complex movements into individual still frames and then using the phenomenon of persistence of vision to create an illusion of movement. It is hardly surprising, considering that cinema grew out of a scientific impulse to study and categorise movement, that its early films often concentrate on capturing movement. This is most famously illustrated by the Lumières' *Arrivée d'un train à la Ciotat* (1895), which terrified

and thrilled its audiences with its overwhelmingly realistic representation of movement. The adaptation of the motif of movement as travel narrative occurred very early in the history of cinema and "the "European" road film [...] developed alongside the Hollywood road movie" (4).

Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli's wide-ranging and comprehensive study of the "European" road movie engages with all these issues, moving in a confident and concise manner from close analysis of filmic text to the sweeping theoretical analysis of how the representation of travel speaks to a whole host of issues concerning identity and (post)modernity. The journey is a multifaceted motif which has a long and complex cultural history within Europe, located within ancient mythology such as Ovid's *Orpheus* and his trip to the underworld or the long peregrinations of Homer's *Ulysses*. Whereas American road movies grow out of the American myths of expansive land, the virgin territory to be conquered to the West, and the final frontier to be reached, European road films lack such openness and are forced to confront national borders, differing customs, varying languages and cultural heritages. Characters do not just travel through space, they also encounter time in the accretion of history that travel through Europe investigates and represents. However, as Mazierska and Rascaroli argue, the American and the European road movie share a fundamental generic core, which is the journey as cultural critique, as exploration of both the society and of self. While locating the "Europeanness" of these road movies does sometimes involve comparison with the American genre, especially in the chapter on the Finnish filmmaker Aki Kaurismäki, many of the analysis allow the films to stand alone or in dialogue with each other. This emphasises the way in which filmic travel narratives partake of a wide range of cultural traditions and critical discourses and avoids seeing the Hollywood genre as the "original" from which the European version can be only a mere copy, and is a welcome and fresh approach to European film which is often seen only in comparison with Hollywood. Especially striking in this decision to allow European films to enter into dialogue with each other is the resulting emphasis on the differences and the divisions between Eastern and Western Europe. Far from being seen as a homogenous block, "Europe" is constructed as a site of conflict and fluidity, in which films play a part in an exploration of how capitalist Western Europe can accommodate her Eastern "other".

The shifting relations between East and West Europe are argued by Mazierska and Rascaroli to be one of the key changes in European identity over the last thirty years, following *glasnost*, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dismantling of communism, and the enlargement of the EU. In Chapter Six considering the post-communist diaspora, Mazierska and Rascaroli discuss four Italian films (*Il toro* (Carlo Mazzacurati, 1994), *Lamerica* (Gianni Amelio, 1994), *Elvjs e Merilijn* (Armando Manni, 1995) and *Vesna va veloce* (Carlo Mazzacurati, 1996)) that all illustrate the question of the border between East and West through travel, either by Italian characters to Albania or Yugoslavia, or by Bulgarian, Hungarian or Czech characters to Italy. In the former films, the Italian characters initially see the East as a new "Wild West" in which legal and ethical prohibitions have been suspended and new opportunities are therefore available. In both cases, their misadventures transform them into vulnerable characters who come to realise their similarity to the local population. In an era of globalisation, Italy may try to paint itself as a fully First World country, affluent and urban. However, these films demonstrate that its recent past of poverty, physical labour, farming culture and mass emigration cannot be so easily forgotten.

Meanwhile, the latter films illustrate the profound difficulties Eastern Europeans have integrating into modern Italian society. While they have been exposed to idealised Italian and

global popular culture through the media, they are still marked as "other", mere pale imitations of "real" Italians (especially in the case of *Elvjs e Merilijn*, which, as its title suggests, deals with an Elvis and a Marilyn impersonator who fail horribly at their jobs). Yet they desire to stay: Vesna in *Vesna va veloce* provokes a car crash in which she dies in preference to facing repatriation:

As seen from the Eastern coast, the Adriatic Sea is pictured ... as a thin membrane, an open door, a forgiving site that allows the reshaping of identities. As seen from the Italian coast ... the sea is ... a Mediterranean which is no longer warm ... home in fact no longer exists on the other side. (160)

This theme of the difference between East and West also informs the chapter on female travellers, as Eastern European women traditionally enjoy less freedom and access to mobility than Western ones. The question of gender and mobility is a fraught one anyway, as female mobility has often been associated with sexual promiscuity (think of terms such as tramp and streetwalker) and has therefore been discouraged. *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1992) stands as a landmark film in the Hollywood road movie genre for placing a woman behind the wheel, although critics remain divided over its feminist potential. Mentioned briefly by Mazierska and Rascaroli, I would like to suggest that *Sans toit ni loi/Vagabond* (Agnès Varda, 1986), is also a key representation of a travelling woman, and one that does not punish its female protagonist for her errance, even as it acknowledges the sexual and physical vulnerability of a woman on the road. Whereas recent Eastern European films on women travellers detail the everyday financial and social restrictions on female travel, Western ones, such as *Butterfly Kiss* (Michael Winterbottom, 1995) (and not analysed by Mazierska and Rascaroli but wonderfully illustrative of their thesis, *À ma soeur!/ Fat Girl* (Catherine Breillat, 2001)) turn to fantasy and horror to illustrate the notion that the road can be a very dangerous place for women to be. Their analysis suggests then that representations of the road thus remain gendered: the freedom and joy represented by travel is tempered for women, whether located in East or West, by restricted access, fear and violence.

This emphasis on differences within Europe and the promotion of a dialogic consideration of European cinema is given a political as well as a methodological slant in the book's final chapter. Here, Mazierska and Rascaroli consider films that travel to the margins of Europe. Locations such as Lisbon, Lapland and Armenia illustrate the correlation between geographic and political distance. Wenders offers a romanticised view of Lisbon in *Lisbon Story* (Wim Wenders, 1994), seeing its marginality as a protection from the pressures of Americanised late capitalism and thus ironically more European than such "central" locations as Paris or Berlin. Yet as Mazierska and Rascaroli rightly point out, Wenders' idealised vision erases all knowledge of Portugal's colonial past and multicultural present, maintaining the myth of Europe as white, Christian and "civilised". This is a Europe that has not learnt to marginalize itself, to see its historical particularity and its limitedness. By emphasising European film as dialogic, Rascaroli and Mazierska make an important theoretical move in this direction, imbuing the study of European cinema with an awareness of the very edges of what the European project might be and illustrate Europe as a patchwork of identities and representations rather than a homogenous whole to be considered against Hollywood.

These suggestive and fascinating thematic chapters are accompanied by detailed studies of the way in which various individual directors construct "a philosophy of travel" in their film-making. Werner Herzog is rescued from accusations of imperialist romanticism to be classified as a filmmaker whose films stress landscapes as human (and cinematic) constructs,

created through our presence and our point-of-view. Eric Rohmer's work receives an unusual treatment as well. Instead of the usual concentration on Rohmer's tight, intricate plotting, sparkling use of dialogue and interest in games of seduction that characterises criticism of his work, Mazierska and Rascaroli draw our attention to the way in which Rohmer's characters are frequently on holiday and/or often shown commuting to work. Whereas Mazierska and Rascaroli conclude that, for Rohmer, travelling is symptomatic of a modern inability to find stability, and that to find happiness, one must struggle to find a 'spiritual centre" that avoids excessive movement, we could also see his engagement with holidays and commuter travel as acknowledgement that travel can be banal, ordinary and unexceptional. If the road movie usually posits the journey as social or personal critique, Rohmer integrates it into his films as part of our lives. Rather than allowing us critical purchase on society, travel integrates us into it, and Rohmer thus questions the very nature of travel as constructed in most road movies.

Given its dual authorship, it is not surprising that this book is occasionally marked by a slight unevenness in tone (Rohmer is contextualised far more than Herzog, for example), and it is a shame that a couple of film stills are mislabelled. However, this is only the most minor of flaws in a fascinating, incisive, exciting and highly readable work that is bound to stimulate further research in this complex and important area.

# Film Remakes

By Constantine Verevis

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## A review by Vicente Rodríguez Ortega, New York University, USA

Given the status of intertextuality as a privileged arena of scholarly research within film studies since the 1970s post-structuralist shift, the study of remakes encounters a paramount difficulty: should cultural commentators refer with this term to films that are explicitly or implicitly addressing an obvious anterior or should they complicate this category by defining it in relation to a set of diverse practices -- allusion, imitation, appropriation, quotation -- that point to the necessarily derivative character of cinematic production? What is more, the understanding of films as inserted within a broader cultural and social field inevitably brings to the fore the "wrapping" of such products within a variety of processes -- film reviews, movie clubs, TV and video reception, marketing or advertising -- that are deeply involved in endowing the remake its label. In addition, the rise of digital technology in recent years as the dominant area of exchange between the different players in the contemporary film business has not only exponentially increased the amount of dialogues between the producers and consumers (and often co-producers) of cultural items but also significantly altered the operative modes of these exchanges. Remakes and our understanding of them have not gone unaffected.

Whereas film scholarship has produced remarkable efforts in regards to the examination of film genres (most recently Altman, 1999; Neale, 2000; Williams, 2001), it has historically neglected remakes. With the exception of Jennifer Forrest and Leonard R. Koos' *Dead Ringers: The Remake in Theory and Practice* (2001) and Andrew Horton and Stuart Y. McDougal's *Play It Again, Sam: Retakes on Remakes* (1998), two remarkable and yet, uneven, book collections, and a very limited roster of scholarly essays, the study of remakes has remained minimal. Consequently, Constantine Verevis' recent *Film Remakes* is not only a well-thought out and somewhat comprehensive volume on the topic of remakes and a variety of surrounding discourses -- such as auteurism, genres and audiences -- but also a necessary step to rescue the analysis of remakes from the firmly locked vaults of academic thought. Accordingly, one may understand the author's effort as a preliminary exploration on a vast, heterogeneous and extremely multi-layered field of inquiry that opens up a series of fruitful areas of research but does not, by any means, exhaust them.

Looking at the cover of Verevis' book, the reader gets an unequivocal taste of its main structural core and its key topical absences. The cover is evenly divided in two halves. On the upper part, we see a frame of Godard's renowned *À bout de souffle/Breathless* (1960) in which Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg playfully exchange gazes. While he slightly leans toward her, she sensually invites his look by crossing her arms around her torso. Her reflection in the mirror replicates her image from the opposite profile. In the bottom half, the same frame from Jim McBride's 1983 remake of Godard's film salutes the reader. In this case,

Richard Gere leans forward, trapping Valerie Kaprisky with both his arms. There is no mirror. In addition, McBride favors a shallow focus that completely isolates the bodies and faces of the two actors in the frame as opposed to Godard's deeper frame. In short, McBride's re-imagining of Godard's *Breathless* reduces the encounter between the two lovers to a single plane of action, focusing on the erotic charge of their reciprocal gazes. Furthermore, the actor's positions in the frame are inverted in terms of left and right, pointing to the inseparable processes of repetition and re-invention that structure the practice of remaking. Apart from offering a privileged glimpse of McBride's cinematic re-shuffling of Godard's film, the book cover also signals the Euro-American bias with which Verevis dispatches the discussion of remakes even though the title of the book itself, *Film Remakes*, does not anchor its structural axis in a specific national cinema or mode of production. The author does explicitly assess the limits of his own field of study in the introduction; however, this does not validate his failure to scrutinize one of the key manners through which the practice of film remaking has historically functioned; that is, as processes of transcultural translation from one national film tradition into another. For, other than a short trip into Asian cinema via *Yoyimbo* (Akira Kurosawa, 1961), Verevis' book centers almost exclusively (and sometimes predictably, analyzing Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and its multiple remakes in the "Authors" chapter) on Hollywood cinema and a few selected instances of European remakes that the author reads in relation to their American counterparts. Not accidentally, this has been a methodological bias at work in genre scholarship that continues to remain quasi-uncontested in film studies to this day. For, the study of non-Hollywood cinematic genres or other countries' industries re-inventions of generic categories that were stabilized within the Hollywood production system are typically studied in books that are structured under the larger umbrella category of national cinemas, and still utilize, for the most part, a territorial criteria to determine their field of analysis.

Here I am not simply claiming that Verevis should have double the length of his volume and explore his six main areas of analysis -- authors, audiences, commerce, genres, texts and discourse -- outside the boundaries of a Euro-Hollywood axis. However, it seems that instead of concluding this groundbreaking 198-page study of film remakes with a short, inconclusive and somewhat predictable examination of Quentin Tarantino as the ultimate contemporary auteur of the remake, he could have devoted the last section of the volume to a number of remarkable types of remaking he ultimately fails to address -- i.e. the understanding of Bollywood as an industry that places remaking at the center of its production practices, the migration of artistic talent from one film industry to another and the cross-cultural processes of translation that this movement invariably involves, the study of silent era as an open ground for remaking before the creation of a tightly woven rope of copyright law in relation to the rise of the Internet as a venue for homemade re-inventions of a variety of film products etc.

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the merit and importance of Verevis' effort are noteworthy. The book offers an elegant and insightful review of previous scholarly writing on film remakes and a series of case-studies -- ranging from close textual analyses to the exploration of fan, copyright and industrial discourses -- that pin down the remake in both a critical and historical fashion, offering both students and scholars an essential guide to approach film remakes.

Verevis ultimately concludes:

cinema constantly remakes itself, but whether this is understood as homage, imitation or theft depends (as described throughout this book) upon historically specific technologies such as copyright law and authorship, film reviewing and exhibition practices.(170)

This is indeed the case. However, since all these categories depend on a network of culturally and economically inflected discourses that vary according to the diverse social fields that give birth to films and/or enable their consumption, it seems appropriate that to complement the author's study, film scholarship should move forward and explore in depth the practice of remaking through a transnational approach that attempts to understand film remakes beyond the Hollywood and European cinema safe box.