Switching to Digital Television: UK Public Policy and the Market

By Michael Starks
Bristol: Intellect, 2007. ISBN: 978–1-84150-172-7. xii + 251pp. £19.95 (pbk)

A review by David Hutchison, Glasgow Caledonian University, UK

Michael Starks spent many years working with the BBC, and in 2001 he led the launch of what was to become the BBC's Freeview service. Thereafter he managed the UK Digital TV Project for the British government. This book therefore is not simply an observer's account, nor even the account of a participating observer, but that of a leading actor in what Starks compares to "a dance in which, while the dancers may make up the steps as they go along, they know, and respect, their positions in relation to one another" (216).

The book starts from the premise that the move to digital is a good thing since it ensures better off-air reception, and, because it is possible to fit in at least four digital channels where previously a single analogue one occupied a particular part of the spectrum, more services can be offered to the public. Starks does not make too much of the view that governments across the globe see the resulting spectrum auction as a means of raising revenue. He charts the course of events to date, and reminds us of such important factors as the desire of terrestrial broadcasters to ensure that Rupert Murdoch's Sky, which dominates the satellite market, was not allowed to do the same in the digital one, into which it has moved with alacrity, as have the cable companies. Not all of the terrestrials have been successful in that endeavour. ITV's ONdigital collapsed into bankruptcy, contributing mightily to the decline of its parent financially and culturally. However the BBC, led aggressively by the then Director General Greg Dyke, took advantage of the opportunity and offered to merge the BBC's own package of digital channels with the ITV venture. The resulting Freeview service came as something of a relief to grateful government and regulator, and it made rapid progress in signing up customers, not least because once a set top box has been purchased no further payment is required to satellite or cable company.

Starks is fascinating on the difficulties, complexities and anxieties of what is in effect a compulsory, no exceptions, switch-off of the analogue signal. The risks to politicians facing voters, who demand to know why they are now no longer able to view their favourite programmes without forking out several hundred pounds, are explored, and it is clear that the gradualist approach to switchover which has emerged owes not a little to these risks and to the need to ensure that manufacturers provide the necessary hardware at the right time at affordable -- and profitable - prices. The British strategy is to manage switchover, so that digital refuseniks are a very small minority who command little public support. It remains to be seen whether the strategy will work.

As an account of how we got to where we are now the book is exemplary, and the chapter on what is happening elsewhere in the world provides a useful comparative perspective. Where

the book is less satisfactory is in its discussion of the wider implications of the shift to digital. At one point Starks notes that there was some concern that the proposed BBC4 would become a channel to which programmes previously screened on BBC 2 -- and perhaps even BBC1 -- would be relegated. Given that the new channel could be perceived as 'elitist' or 'highbrow' (ghastly word!), fewer people might then watch more demanding programmes. That is exactly what seems to have happened, and it is hardly a plus.

The transformation of ITV from a public service broadcaster financed by advertising, but willing to take risks politically and culturally, into a commercial channel desperate to make money however it can (and in some very dubious ways indeed) cannot of course be blamed on the digital switchover. Cack-handed management made a substantial contribution to ITV's decline, but the proliferation of channels initiated by cable and satellite -- a proliferation enthusiastically backed by both governments and regulators, and which digital is exacerbating -- has undermined ITV's financial base by diminishing its audiences and hence what it can charge advertisers. It is far from obvious that the disappearance of the ITV which existed twenty years ago is compensated for by, for example, the umpteen gambling and dating channels and fifty plus pornographic ones which are available on the Freeview service currently relayed to me by Sky (I should explain that I live outside the current terrestrial reception area and have availed myself of a not over-publicized offer from Sky to provide Freeview for a one-off payment.).

Starks does explore the relationship between HDTV and digital, which is much more tangled in the UK than it is in some other countries, and discusses the growing convergence between the television screen and the computer one. It is no fault of his that the minute his book went to press events moved on, so that, for example, the success of the BBC's new iPlayer service has demonstrated that the computer option may not be so attractive as a means of delivery of programmes if the capacity of the telephone system is exceeded. In the early 1980s, following the Hunt Report on cable systems, we were told that the UK was a leader in fibre optic technology and that if the country could be cabled using that technology it would bring into being the world's first 'wired society'; furthermore, the export opportunities for British manufacturers were deemed to be very significant. However the Thatcher government felt that it was up to the private sector to take the lead in the introduction of this technology, which that sector was reluctant to do. As a result copper cable has yet to be eliminated from the UK telecommunications system, in particular from the so-called last mile which connects networks and domestic dwellings. With the digital switchover there has been rather more government involvement, but, as Starks points out, there has been only limited government expenditure. Nevertheless, until Gordon Brown's final year as chancellor, the BBC enjoyed successive increases in the licence fee to take account of the development of its digital services, and Ofcom has been very sympathetic to the cries of woe emanating from the other terrestrial broadcasters about the cost of their broadcasting licences.

The book is lucidly written and very readable, although it could have been more tightly edited -- for example, we are told twice about Tessa Jowell being caught in a traffic jam en route to deliver an important speech, and at least twice that David Elstein was a leading opponent of the switchover. Minor blemishes, however, in a most useful book.

Feminist Auteurs: Reading Women's Films

By Geetha Ramanathan
London: Wallflower Press, 2006. ISBN: 978-1-90476-469-4 (pbk); ISBN: 978-1-90476-470-0 (hbk). 27 Illustrations, viii + 239 pp. £16.99 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk)

A review by Jane Fader, Wayne State University, USA

When the concept of the *auteur* was first introduced, it was rare to see a woman in the director's chair. As such, auteur theory has spurred a great deal of feminist criticism, intensified by the theory's relatively unquestioned universal acceptance. Disregarding the artistic efforts of those who occupied less recognized positions such as editor was a double-hit for women, who not only had their behind-the-scenes work overlooked, but also found the accredited position of director virtually inaccessible. Over time, women's successful struggles to obtain directorial positions have given rise to feminist notions of "women's film," and women's maintenance of directorial positions has resulted in exceptional bodies of cinematic work, thus allowing many possibilities to explore a gendered, politically motivated auteurship. Despite its title, Geetha Ramanathan's *Feminist Auteurs: Reading Women's Films* is not concerned with these possibilities.

Drawing from Johnston and Cook, two early feminist film critics who argued that feminist auteurship was a discursive function rather than the authorial product of an individual, Ramanathan characterizes feminist auteurship as entailing "the impression of feminist authority, not necessarily that of the auteur herself, onscreen" (3). For Ramanathan, the auteur is merely a filter through which feminist ideology is sifted; mentioned by name only to "acknowledge the historical contribution of the woman author" (6). With a disengagement of the author, texts are situated in relation to other texts and organized thematically by their similar manipulations of cinematic techniques that function as enunciations of feminist theory. In other words, the author suffers yet another death at the hands of modernity and the auteur is refigured as a de-personified authoritative ideology. The film is refigured as a visual utterance, a woman-behind-the-curtain to whom we are asked to pay no attention, yet cannot escape.

Ramanathan's selection of texts rests on a unique balance of essentialism. Utilizing the word *feminist* to describe "the work of women filmmakers that is feminist" (6), Ramanathan defends her exclusion of texts directed by men and non-feminist texts directed by women with the meagre precedent that her choice to do so was "[h]otly contested" (6). National, cultural, and racial boundaries, on the other hand, do not exist as inhibitors to her selection. With only the slight glimmer of a centralizing Western conception of feminism, Ramanathan's knowledge of and sensibility to the difference embedded in internationality is one of the strong points of this study. However, by organizing texts around cinematic enunciations as opposed to ethnic affiliation, *Feminist Auteurs* reaffirms the assumption of a universal film language and runs the risk of gender essentialism.

After praising Ramanathan's ethnically diverse approach, it would be irresponsible not to acknowledge that *Feminist Auteurs* is quite heterocentric. Although Ramanathan briefly

mentions Judith Mayne's motion towards film authorship and lesbian representation, little space is devoted to bisexual or lesbian desire and representation. As the majority of the films covered are non-Western, it is obvious that Ramanathan made considerable efforts not to privilege Western films. The same cannot be said for films that explore sexual desire outside of heterosexuality. *Working Girls* (Lizzie Borden, 1986) features a lesbian couple, but Ramanathan's analysis of the relationship is as casual as Borden's representation of it. Ramanathan addresses homosexuality through only one other film: *MŠdchen in Uniform* (Leontine Sagan, 1931). For this analysis, Ramanathan transforms heterosexual intimacy between women into a lesbian subtext. Although this is no doubt a subversive reading, the fact that there are no other instances of lesbian culture or representation in *Feminist Auteurs* reveals an overlooking that is easily nuanced by Ramanathan's strong globalist efforts.The book's heterocentricity is particularly apparent in the reading of *Daughters of the Dust* (Julie Dash, 1991), which does not so much as gesture towards the possibility that the two female characters Trula and Yellow Mary have a romantic relationship. Ramanathan's analysis argues for a black feminist overwriting of the epic genre and places Trula, who fights for Yellow Mary's acceptance in the community, as one of the film's three heroes. The failure to provide a substantial feminist critique of *Daughters of the Dust* by recognizing the possibility of a lesbian relationship crystallizes a failure to include films that directly address homosexuality in this study.

The notably international sample that is examined in *Feminist Auteurs* is limited to films "that construct feminist authority in the text by *refusing* certain modes of representation" (6). In six chapters, these refusals and their subsequent reconstructions are demonstrated through specific combinations of aesthetics, race, and genre; and subjectivity as it relates to gender, gaze, aurality, desire, and narrative. As previously mentioned, a unique aspect of this organization is its latent but strong gesture towards global feminism found in the omnipresence of Ramanathan's rejection of ethnic and national confines. A particularly good example of Ramanathan's attention to culture is found in the chapter, 'Aural Subjectivities.'

'Aural Subjectivities' analyzes films that challenge the "insistence on the visual as the singular path to the conferral of subjectivity in film" (109) by privileging aural over visual subjectivity. Ramanathan conducts a comparative analysis of *Danz—n* (Maria Novaro, 1991), *Angel of Fire* (Dana Rotberg, 1994), *The Silences of the Palace* (Moufida Tlatli, 1994), and *Sati* (Aparna Sen, 1989), in order to highlight feminist concerns regarding "the relationship between sound and the visual as understood through the narrative of the film" (139), and to spotlight the range of cinematic enunciations that enable culturally specific addresses of these concerns. *Danz—n,* titled after the traditional Mexican courting dance featured in the film, employs extra-diegetic music to "re-place the female protagonist's subjectivity outside of the cultural parameters indicted by Mexican film's placement of the female hero" (119), and emphasize the difficulties Mexican women face in finding and maintaining autonomy in romantic discourse, particularly "within the specific cultural parameters invoked by the danz—n, Mexico's plotting of romance" (119). *Sati*, on the other hand, centres upon an Indian female protagonist whose muteness functions to signify her excessive interest in the visual. Subjectivity is thereby established according to the classic codes of Bollywood (modelled after the American studio system) but the narrative positions her muteness as a "pre-condition for the visual, or the knowable" (134). Both films problematize assumptions about subjectivity achieved through the visual, yet in culturally specific styles that render very different conclusions.

Each chapter of *Feminist Auteurs* follows a similar format and maintains the same level of international attention and sensitivity. In 'Genre Covers,' Ramanathan draws from narrative re-workings in four films to argue for a feminist genre. This feminist genre is characterised by radical alterations of established genres, raising "questions about the existing genre's relationship to women, so that it can never again be impervious to the claims of women" (108). 'Desire and Female Subjectivity' compares and contrasts three films that confront assumptions that female desire is expressed psychically by transgressing desire into the social. This shift, Ramanathan argues, is "vital to the discursive representation of female subjectivity in the social" (142). Under the persuasive scholarly spell of fascinating connections and ornate vocabulary, it is easy for one to forget the questionable and almost irrelevant presuppositions on which *Feminist Auteurs* is based.

Feminist Auteurs is a sophisticated example of comparative film and deep textual analysis. It admirably follows the progressive trend towards global feminism. However, Ramanathan's initial proposals are problematic. Even if her twist on the definition of auteur is not disputed, the relevance of the director is unclear and inconsistent. While womanhood is a necessary criteria in Ramanathan's study, the gendered relationship a director has with her films is never addressed. If the relationship between gender and directing is not important enough to continue to explore, why would it play a role in Ramanathan's sampling? Fortunately, issues raised in the introduction seem to exist outside of, and play inconsequential roles in, the rest of the study.

For a rich feminist analysis of Western and non-Western feminist films, Geetha Ramanathan's *Feminist Auteurs: Reading Women's Films* is an excellent read. Unfortunately, as far as auteur studies go the book is simply not what its title suggests.

The Essential Chaplin: Perspectives on the Life and Art of the Great Comedian

By Richard Schickel (ed.)
Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006. ISBN: 978-1-56663-701-5. x + 315 pp. $16.95 US, £9.50 UK (pbk)

A review by Nicholas Guest-Jelley, University of Florida, USA

The Essential Chaplin collection is devoted to criticism of his films, studies of his life and an interweaving of the two. Taking a biographical approach, the book gathers together much important writing on Chaplin from both film reviewers and literary figures (Andrew Sarris, Graham Greene), political luminaries (Winston Churchill) and French theorists (Elie Faure, AndrŽ Bazin). Much of the appeal of including these famous critics and intellectuals (James Agee, Alistair Cooke, Theodor Adorno, Edmund Wilson are also included) stems from the fact that Chaplin was able to win over a mass audience and the intellectual elite, a feat reserved for the likes of Shakespeare and Dickens. Naming a collection *The Essential Chaplin* reinforces an attitude toward privileging the voices contained within as the be-all and end-all of criticism on the great filmmaker. As this book shows, however, both opinion regarding Chaplin's status as an icon, and that status itself, are always under revision. Chaplin's star image is hard to define partly because his own personality is often considered coterminous with his character on the screen. As his political conscience was being aroused by historical factors of the Great Depression, his personality seemed increasingly at odds with the innocent he played on the screen. Especially, as is repeatedly lamented in this collection as elsewhere, Chaplin begins to consider himself a philosopher, with his films becoming increasingly driven by philosophical ideas rather than gestural comedy. While not drawing any essential conclusions about Chaplin's iconic status, this collection implicitly considers his enormous impact and the influence of the journalistic culture that helps drive stardom.

Schickel divides the collection into six sections: 'Five Overviews,' 'In The Beginning,' 'The Early Features,' 'A Mid-Life Crisis,' 'The Late Features,' and a Conclusion by J. Hoberman (written for Chaplin's centennial). He does not impose on the writing after his initial lengthy introduction, providing only a short not on each author's importance and biography. While he lets the essays comment on each other, his biographical introduction provides a template with which to read the collection, suggesting that Chaplin's life followed a familiar pattern: tremendous rise to fame, increasing level of quality of work, life of celebrity leading to disillusionment with the type of work that led to fame (including feelings of over-importance), late work a sad ending to a great career. Schickel's stated aim is to "gather the most interesting writing about Charles Chaplin from commentators whose primary concern was not reviewing" (4). Unfortunately his definition of *interesting* seems have much in common with the compliment of "common sense" that he bestows on the essays he commends. This leads to some redundancy, leaving it to the reader to comprehend how Chaplin must have been received outside of the literary establishment in New York and London.

By emphasizing the Tramp's 'transformation,' Schickel notes his lament at Chaplin's increasingly philosophical and political orientation, especially derisive of *Modern Times* (Charlie Chaplin, 1936), the end of *The Great Dictator* (Charlie Chaplin, 1940), *Monsieur Verdoux* (Charles Chaplin, 1947), and much of *Limelight* (Charles Chaplin, 1952). Trying to determine Chaplin's image as a genius of comedy but not of politics, Schickel instead underscores the impossibility of fixing what is necessarily a volatile category: a star image. As J. Hoberman writes, Chaplin's image of the Tramp will potentially be transformed yet again by the entertainment culture, and by literary efforts such as this, into something to be other than what is portrayed in his films. The star image has emerged as an *empty* signifier, such is the logic of stardom as we now know it. The section 'Five Overviews' solidifies this point, with the overviews ranging from David Thomson's scathing biographical sketch, in which he condemns Chaplin as monotonous and guilty of "delirious egotism" (59), to the abstract theorization of Chaplin's films by Elie Faure which is abashedly positive -- the gods flee from Chaplin's power to make us laugh at hunger itself. Sarris and Bazin both contribute to this section as well with pieces familiar to those who know their writing. Sarris's 'The Most Harmonious Comedian' and Bazin's 'Charlie Chaplin' reference Chaplin's biography to work up an auterist account of his films as his personal expression.

'In the Beginning' consists of four essays. Two are by contemporary reviewers of Chaplin, Minnie Maddern Fiske and Gilbert Seldes; one is an excerpt from Gilbert Adair's *Flickers* (Faber and Faber, 1995), and the last is Alistair Cooke's memoir of his relationship with Chaplin. Mostly this section continues with the biographical approach -- hardly an essay goes by without mention of Chaplin's childhood poverty -- as both Fiske and Seldes laud Chaplin's ability to create humour from such a dire background. Alistair Cooke's biographical sketch, however, retains its original poignancy as a memoir of Cooke's friendship and working relationship with Chaplin. Having met in the early '30s on a report that turned into a vacation, Cooke befriends Chaplin and becomes one of the chief screenwriters of Chaplin's failed production of a film of Napoleon. Because Cooke doesn't consider Chaplin's personality relevant to the meaning in his films, this essay gives a fairly unclouded look at Chaplin's working style. Cooke's account of Chaplin's consideration of the Napoleon project makes it possible to imagine what such a film -- resplendently odd -- would have looked like.

'The Early Features' presents many short reviews, often by contemporary reviewers (Francis Hackett, Penelope Gelliatt, Stark Young, George Jean Nathan, Alexander Woolcott, Edmund Wilson), that pepper the book with insight into how the movies were received. They both acknowledge Chaplin's genius, but as early as *The Kid* (Charlie Chaplin, 1921) suggest that the Tramp as a character had run its course. Also included in this section are reviews of the early films upon their re-release. These reviews offer a re-evaluation of not only these great films, but the addition that Chaplin made to them on their re-release. Including work by G. Cabrera Infante and Stanley Kauffmann, these retrospectives privilege a look at the films in terms of the evolution of Chaplin's career. This section includes some surprising moments including the continual comparison of Chaplin with Dickens by invoking their similarity of biographical circumstance and Victorian morality. But what is more surprising is one comparison between Chaplin and Lewis Carroll not through biographical or thematic similarity, or even the proclivity for young girls. Rather Alexander Woolcott praises Chaplin's and Carroll's ability to bring "to a sore and anxious world a gift of healing laughter and quickening, cleansing, inexplicable tears" (193).

Many of the writers foresaw and tried to influence Chaplin's transformation, especially those considerations in the section 'Mid-life Crisis.' Both a shift in cinematic character and style

and in the seriousness of his artwork were called for. Stark Young, his earliest admonisher implores Chaplin to move to a real art form -- tragedy. Winston Churchill also has advice for Chaplin on the direction his career could, if not should, take -- using his experience of an absent father as its touchstone -- and considers what could be behind Chaplin's hesitation to explore new roles. In his review of *The Gold Rush* (Charlie Chaplin, 1925), Wilson is more reserved, considering where Chaplin might take his career, giving the perspective that Chaplin's gifts are "primarily the actor's, not the director's or artist's" (173). Max Eastman also enters the debate as to whether Chaplin was primarily a clown or something more -- by considering Chaplin not merely a humorist but a poet of humour. And Brooks Atkinson testifies to the inability to remain critically objective in the face of the love of Chaplin, but also derides Chaplin's attempt to infuse politics into his comedy, commenting that "*Modern Times* as social philosophyÉhas hardly passed [its] entrance examinations" (221).

The section 'The Late Features' offers a picture of the declining esteem of Chaplin in the intellectual community throughout this phase of his career, focusing on the films *Modern Times, The Great Dictator, Monsieur Verdoux,* and *Limelight*. Most of the section either tries to defend Chaplin's late films as mis-understood masterpieces (Agee, Sarris, Warshow) or allows for what moments of joy can be found in what are seen as failed but courageous attempts at expanding his repertoire (Otis Ferguson, Dwight Macdonald, Walter Kerr). Ferguson's criticism is most remarkable for the spryness of its style and the fact, as Schickel remarks, that most people have never heard of him. Agee's overvaluation of *Monsieur Verdoux* benefits from being paired with Sarris's response, which is equally as appreciative that Chaplin made the film, if somewhat less reverential. Warshow is always a pleasure to read, and his theory of Chaplin's presence and his invocation to his audience -- "Love Me" -- is contrasted with Kerr's disapproval of Chaplin's ceaseless wordiness in *Limelight*.

Chaplin's transformation from entertainer to thinker -- how he gained traction within the intellectual community and how this image of the serious Chaplin influenced his later films -- has already been treated brilliantly by Charles Maland in *Chaplin and American Culture* (Princeton University Press, 1989). In this collection, we receive the same narrative but also get a full treatment of this process from a variety of sources. The inclusion of such figures as Graham Greene and Churchill, Wilson and Adorno work to show just how seriously some of the great thinkers and writers of the twentieth century took Chaplin, and chronicles how a transformation of the star image began to take place. The book is complete with biographical accounts of his youth, extending his star persona into his "real" life. This book, taken as a whole, makes the argument that Chaplin's iconic status had as much to do with who held him in esteem as anything he produced.

Film's Musical Moments

By Ian Conrich and Estella Tincknell (eds.)
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006. ISBN 0-7486-2345-0 (pbk). ISBN 0-7486-2344-2 (hbk). 19 illustrations, xiii + 226pp. £ 16.99 (pbk), £ 50.00 (hbk)

A review by Lara Hrycaj, Wayne State University, USA

Film's Musical Moments is a refreshing look at music in film, specifically musical performance within film. Conrich and Tincknell present this collection of essays as an alternative to previous studies on music in film by exploring "musical moments" instead of analyzing traditional Hollywood musicals and film music scores. The essays in this collection focus on musical moments primarily found in non-mainstream Hollywood and international film. This book does not use music or film theory as its primary mode of analysis but relies on a cultural approach, which makes it accessible to both scholars and non-scholars of film and music. However, some music and film theory, particularly genre theory, is used. Conrich and Tincknell define film musical moments as being more than "just the conventional song and dance numbers in musicals" and include musical performances in many non-musical films like animation, comedies, biopics, and post-classical films (1). Also, these musical moments can be "a particular point of disruption, an isolated musical presence in a non-musical film which is most notable for its potential to disturb the text through its unexpectedness or at times excessiveness" (2). The types of music under analysis vary between jazz, opera, country, pop, disco, Bollywood, and many other music genres in between.

The book is divided into four sections -- 'Music, Film, and Culture'; 'Stars, Performance and Reception'; 'The Post-Classical Hollywood Musical'; and 'Beyond Hollywood'. While these sections serve as a reference point, some of the essays could fit in other sections since they have overlapping and interrelated subject matter with essays in other sections. The title of the Beyond Hollywood section could falsely give the impression that the essays found in the other three sections are primarily Hollywood or American film. This book is diverse in its selection of essays, focusing on non-Hollywood cinema, such as Australian films *Muriel's Wedding* (P.J. Hogan, 1994) and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1994); New German Cinema by directors Werner Schroeter, Hans JŸrgen Syberberg, and Alexander Kluge; Danish comedies from the 1930s; and the Bollywood film *Hum Aapke Hain KounÉ!* (*Who am I to YouÉ!* Sooraj R. Barjatya, 1994). Also, *Film's Musical Moments* examines non-mainstream film like cult and teen films. The book does not shy away from discussions of sexuality in relation to music and film. Gregory Woods and Tim Franks's 'Music, Film and Post-Stonewall Gay Identity' along with Jonathan Rayner's section on *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* in his chapter on the ABBA musical, can be used to discuss homosexuality and film musical moments. Female sexuality in relation to music can be found in the country biopics analyzed in Bruce Babington's chapter and the teen films examined by Scott Henderson.

At first glance it seems Tincknell's 'The Soundtrack Movie, Nostalgia and Consumption' is another essay on *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994) and *Boogie Nights* (Paul Thomas

Anderson, 1998), but her chapter seems to take a slightly different stance in its approach to these films' soundtracks. These two films along with *Forrest Gump* (Robert Zemeckis, 1994), use music, specifically popular music, "as a way of evoking the cultural moments of 'the sixties' and 'the seventies,'" but they do so in different ways (132). Tincknell utilizes Fredric Jameson and his ideas from *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Verso, 1991) that nostalgic texts can depict 'pastness' with the "use of musical quotation and pastiche, in its knowingness about textuality and the relationship between textsÉin its restructuring of the past as a level of style" and this music can give a film an "instant -- and depoliticzed -- history" (135). All of the films Tincknell discusses use music stylistically to situate history. The musical moment between Mia and Vincent in the twist dance contest to Chuck Berry's 'You Never Can Tell' (1964) is viewed as being outside of the other music used in *Pulp Fiction*; it "goes beyond stylistic allusion" because music and the moment serves a narrative function. While this may be true, there might be other musical moments in *Pulp Fiction* that go beyond stylistic allusion like the scenes of Mia playing Dusty Springfield's 'Son of a Preacher Man' (1968) and Urge Overkill's cover of Neil Diamond's 'Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon' (1994). While not necessary, reading John Mundy's analysis of the phenomena of the twist dance craze and the twist inspired Hollywood films found in an earlier chapter of *Film's Musical Moments* seems to shed more light on Tincknell's analysis of the twist contest in *Pulp Fiction*.

Ian Conrich's chapter on cult films and parody of musicals is an area that could be rich for further research. The ideas of the karaoke cinema-sing-a-long events featuring both classical Hollywood films like *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965) and *Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939) to cult films like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman 1975) -- is something that might be explored more closely with attention to the recent theatrical release of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*'s "Once More, With Feeling," a sing-a-long version of the 2002 musical episode from the Josh Whedon created television series. The defining of the sub-genre horror-musical offers a cross-genre space that challenges the utopian elements of classical Hollywood musical "with songs marking suicide, hanging, murder and pain" or other subjects of perversion found in horror and cult film while at the same time mixing two genres known for appealing to audiences "looking for cites of cultural allegiance, and amplified pleasures where subversion, excess and the absurd exist" (129-130). Conrich seems to tease with his description of Takashi Miike's Japanese horror film *Katakuri-ke no k™fuku* (*The Happiness of the Katakuris*, 2001) as homage to *The Sound of Music*. More about this Japanese cult film might yield some interesting cross-cultural findings besides adding more to the cross-genre elements of the horror-musical. Conrich's chapter works well with other chapters in this book like Henderson's section on *Tank Girl* (Rachel Talalay, 1995) and its homage to the Hollywood musical, along with Woods and Franks' sections on *South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut* (Trey Parker, 1999) and *Zero Patience* (John Greyson, 1993). The analysis of these parodies of musicals complement Conrich's analysis of *Joe's Apartment* (John Payson, 1996) and the horror-musical.

By not looking exclusively at film musicals, Film's Musical Moments alternative take on film music and performance, offers much to the study of music and film. Conrich and Tincknell situate this book in relation to other works on film music, film musicals and popular music in film (for example Claudia Gorbman's *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*, British Film Institute, 1987; Rick Altman's *The American Film Musical*, Indiana University Press, 1987; and Jeff Smith's *The Sounds of Commerce: Marketing Popular Film Music*, Columbia University Press, 1998), and this collection of essays could be used to complement these other works. The complementary nature of many of these chapters in this book has already

been pointed out, but says something about the areas that either need more study or are beginning to be researched more seriously. Conrich and Tincknell provide a book that "demonstrates the ways in which new debates can be opened up around music and cinema as cultural forms and practices which have tended to be treated as bounded rather than interrelated" (12). *Film's Musical Moments* is the first from the 'Music and the Moving Image' series edited by Kevin Donnelly, and if this book is any indication of what the later books in this series will be like, the study of music, film, popular culture, and other media will continue to open up, offering new or fresh perspectives within each respected field while being complementary and interrelated with one another.

Deleuze and Horror Film

By Anna Powell
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006. ISBN: 978-0-74861-748-7. viii + 232 pp.
£16.99 (pbk)

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

It is often difficult to review a book that has as its goal to supply a new "approach" in a field already bursting at the seams with methodologies, ways of reading, modes of analysis, interpretative schemata, etc. It may be a demanding task to write a review such as this, but without a doubt it is always satisfying to read a thoughtful and inventive contribution to the discipline, especially when it challenges the standard and recommended procedure of doing things. Moreover, it revivifies films that, for the most part, have been examined to death with the expected structural or psychoanalytical objective. Some of the author's conclusions or statements made the reviewer pause and rethink the films covered in the text. It should be noted that this is not an easy text to appreciate or internalize at first. A measured and unhurried evaluation is necessary.

Anna Powell notes in her introduction that she wishes to give a new direction in horror film studies that acknowledges that the complexity of films needs to take into account more than "a predetermined overlay of symbolic or structural meaning" (1). The innovative point in the compass to the author's new path for film studies is the work done primarily by Giles Deleuze, whose significant translated works include *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (The Athlone Press, 1983), *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* (University of Minnesota Press, 1986), *Cinema II: The Time-Image* (The Athlone Press, 1989), *Bergonism* (Zone Books, 1991), and 'The Brain is the Screen' (in *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, ed. Gregory Flaxman [University of Minnesota Press, 2000]). FŽlix Guattari (*Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*, Penguin, 1984; *Chaosmosis: An Ethico Aesthetic Paradigm*, Power Publications, 1995) is also a source. In addition, Powell relies closely on the writings of Henri Bergson, the author of such works as *Creative Evolution* (University Press of America, 1983), *Matter and Memory* (Zone Books, 1991), and *Duration and Simultaneity* (Clinamen Press, 1999).

A stumbling block in reviewing a book such as this one by Powell originates in the complex and prolix terminology used by the author, who borrows terms, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs from Deleuze and Bergson in an attempt to develop her own system of film-philosophy. The constant verbatim reliance on these other authors distracts the reader from what the author is trying to say. The intricacy of her book is made evident by the inclusion of a glossary of key terms: Affect, Affection-Image, Anomaly/Anomalous, Assemblage, Becoming, Body-Without-Organs, Diagrammatic Component, Duration/Space-Time, Extensive/Intensive, Haecciety, Haptic/ity, Line of Flight, Machinic, Molecular/Molar, Movement-Image, Schizoanalysis, Singularity, Time-Image, and Vitalism, *flan Vital*. The glossary is meant for the reader familiar with the language and neologisms of Deleuze, Guattari, and Bergson. In fact, the glosses themselves are at times somewhat convoluted or moving toward the unintelligible. For example, the definition of "Haecceity":

> Haecceity is the quality of 'this-ness' in a 'thing-in-itself'. Haecceities are intensive states experienced by the automatic or auto-erotic movements of machinic desire rather than by psychoanalytic subject. The use of colour, the timbre of a voice or the rhythm of a movement are cinematic haecceities. Horror film offers distinctive aural experiences, such as the different tonal qualities in *The Shining*, when a tricyle [sic] rumbles over the wooden floorboards of glides over the carpet. Such sensory haecceities are not reducible to symbolic meaning. (212)

This explanation is one of the easier entries to understand. This is not to say the theoretical vocabulary drowns out completely what Powell is trying to say, but rather the discussions that precede the analyses of the films create a dissonance with what has been said previously or is said afterwards. The sophistication of the argument disappears when Powell proceeds to apply her conceptual methodology to the films.

Another wrinkle in the presentation is the lack of a clear-cut definition of what the author means by horror. Powell's statement that not all of her texts fall into a "strict generic category . . . but all contain horrifying material of an uncanny nature" (7) does not help the reader understand why the author chose the films that she did for her inquiry. Nor does her reliance on the Oxford English Dictionary entry that specifies the inclusion of violence and the supernatural help clarify the selection of films. The brief etymological review of the Latin *horrere* only creates further complication. For example, *Alien Resurrection* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 1997), *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1926), *Cat People* (Jacques Tourneur, 1943), *Demon Seed* (Donald Cammell, 1977), *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1932), *Event Horizon* (Paul Anderson, 1997), *Hardware* (Richard Stanley, 1990), *The Haunting* (Robert Wise, 1963), *Hellraiser* (Clive Barker, 1987), *The Hollow Man* (Paul Verhoeven, 2000), *Jacob's Ladder* (Adrian Lyne, 1993), *The Masque of the Red Death* (Roger Corman, 1964), *Mulholland Drive* (David Lynch, 2001), *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994), *Nosferatu* (F. W. Murnau, 1922), *Repulsion* (Roman Polanski, 1965), *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968), *Suspiria* (Dario Argento, 1977), *The Vampire Lovers* (Roy Ward Baker, 1970), *Vampyr* (Carl-Theodor Dreyer, 1931), *Videodrome* (David Cronenberg, 1982), and *Les Yeux san Visage* (Georges Franju, 1959) are included in her collection of texts. It can be argued that the films by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Donald Cammell, Paul Anderson, and Richard Stanley belong to the science-fiction category, and those by Adrian Lyne, David Lynch, and Oliver Stone to the psychological thriller or suspense genres. Works by No‘l Carroll (*The Philosophy of Horror, or, Paradoxes of the Heart*, Routledge, 1990) and Yvonne Leffler (*Horror as Pleasure: The Aesthetics of Horror Fiction*, Almqvist & Wiksell, 2000) or similar works which could have been used to explain Powell's motivation for her choice of films, are absent from this book's bibliography.

However, *Deleuze and Horror Film* is a fine book in that it does what it sets out to do. It moves away from the customary psychoanalytic focus on "the genre's unconscious mechanisms to embody the experience of horror" (205). It applies Deleuzian models to horror film and demonstrates that the mind of the spectator is indeed transformed, his perceptions altered, and the "mundane modes of consciousness" (201) are extended and changed. Most importantly, Powell's examination should begin to reset the way in which films are discussed and explored.

Sex and the Cinema

By Tanya Krzywinska
London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2006. ISBN: 1-904764-73-8 (pbk). ISBN: 1-904764-74-6 (hbk). 15 illustrations, v+230pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Florian Grandena, University of Ottawa, Canada

Tanya Krzywinska's *Sex and the Cinema* is a dense and ambitious book that deals with one of cinema's recurrent and oldest themes: human sexuality. More precisely, it is the tension between the intimate and its cinematic modes and representation of such a *risquŽ* enterprise that Krzywinska aims to map and explore throughout these 230 pages. This volume lives up to its promises by, on the one hand, dissecting many of the factors involved in the mediated representation of sex and sexuality and, on the other hand, by paying particular attention to representations of so-called transgressive sexual practices.

The book is divided in two parts. Part I ('Defining Sex in Cinema: Forms and Frameworks') is divided into five subheadings. The first of these ('Forms and Contexts') examines some of the ways that film representation of sex is framed by different forces: aesthetic and formal; industrial and marked-based; institutional, discursive and socio-cultural-historical (6).

In the next section ('Knowledge Frameworks'), Krzywinska pays attention to the discursive frameworks that shape our understandings and our experiences of sex and sexuality. Such frameworks and key intellectuals are presented rather briefly in only eight pages: psychoanalysis and Sigmund Freud; sexology, Richard Krafft-Ebing and Alfred Kinsey; and the concept of civilisation and the way that it supports binary divisions (such as civilization/animal and civilization barbarian). Marxist theories, feminism and queer theory-based approaches are also briefly mentioned.

In 'Formal Conventions of Cinematic Sex', two sets of formal and rhetorical systems are discussed: idealism and realism. Idealism is typical of romances, which "often [frame] sex in the normative terms of ideologies of heterosexual love and courtship" (31). The author also identifies three different types of realism: social realism that focuses on the realities of sex; psychological realism; and 'pornographic' realism. To illustrate her point, Krzywinska refers mostly to European films, thus suggesting that English-speaking films may be less willing and/or able to represent graphic cinematic sex.

In the penultimate subheading of Part I ('Narrative Formulas'), attention is paid to the main types of "sex narratives." Four such narratives are identified: the "proper / improper couple"structure includes themes such as the "fallen woman" and the "duped man." Films belonging to the "circuits of desire" category usually offer a sophisticated and intellectually challenging representation of cinematic sex. The motifs of "initiation and self-discovery" also correspond to a specific type of narrative: here the passage from "innocence to experience" (63) is naturally emphasised, "male sexual initiation films [being] far less concerned with the emotional aspects of sexual initiation, replacing melodrama with the

generic attributes of comedy" (66). The third type of narrative format presents sex as fundamental to the human experience and is often "inherently pro-sex, anti-monogamy and not exclusively heterosexual" (69). Finally, the "Return of the repressed" narratives often put emphasis on the disruption of certain norms and conventions (but these are usually reinstated in mainstream films) (70).

The next section ('Institutional Frameworks: Censorship and Regulations') concentrates "on the way that sex in film has been regulated, by whom and why" and more precisely "on aspects of censorship history that have often played -- and still play -- a fundamental role in the way that sex and sexuality appear on film" (84).

Part II ('Themes of Transgressions') is divided in five sections that all focus on particular expressions and manifestations of sexual desires on the big screen. The first of these sections ('Adultery: Domestic Transgressions') starts with a contextualization of its key concepts ('adultery' and 'marriage') but as the author remarks, what is really at stake in films dealing with adultery is actually the family. Key moments in the adultery narrative are identified: 'The Meeting,' which "sets the narrative chain into action" (124); 'The Affair,' characterised by "elation, furtiveness and riskiness" (126). The drama found in 'The Affair' usually can be enhanced by 'The Crisis' and 'The Choice' (not necessarily in that order).

The section 'The Beast Within: Animal Transformation and Bestiality' provides the reader with an interesting discussion on the challenge to the human/animal dichotomy. Here the focus is less on cross-species sex as such than the expression of sexual desires by animals for humans. Emphasis is put on animal transformation, which

> has a strong connection to the release of repressed desires, thereby making a claim on transgression, but like their mythical forebears these tales are often used to shore up definitions of civilisation and socialisation, particularly through the common thematic focus on the tension between personal agency and external determinant forces. (141)

Together with the human / animal dichotomy, prohibition against incest represents one of the foundation stones of human civilisation. It is argued that, surprisingly, incest is not necessarily represented as regression or degeneration in the films under discussion ('Family relations: Incest in the Cinema'). The starting point of the author's discussion is that "cinematic representations of incest are informed by and articulate ideas that originate within the broader arena of academic thought" (160). Given the influence of psychoanalytic understandings of sexuality and civilization, Krzywinska duly dedicates quite a few pages to Freud and Lacan. Two different types of films are distinguished here: films where incest is shown as fundamentally horrifying, e.g. *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* (David Lynch, 1992), and brother/sister incest films "where representation draw on rhetorics of transgression in a way designed to titillate," e.g. *Close My Eyes* (Stephen Poliakoff, 1991) (166).

The fourth section, 'Bondage, Domination and Sado-Masochism' (BDSM), examines "the conditions that are at work in many of the films discussed to ensure that BDSM-style fictional activities are legitimised" (186). The films discussed here cover a great variety of formal style and are mostly concerned with the figure or the works of the Marquis de Sade. After a lengthy introduction to relevant key concepts, the author embarks on a listing of film representations of BDSM: backdrop BDSM, subculture, fantasy, high-art, political, horror/sexploitation and hard-core. "These categories," Krzywinska explains "reflect in fairly

broad terms how BDSM activities are regarded more generally: from harmless, consensual erotic fun, through to manifestations of deeply psychopathic behaviour that feeds on non-consensuality" (196-7).

Part II comes to a close with the shortest section of all, 'Real Sex'. Here Krzywinska discusses the formal presentation of non-simulated sex. The interest of such films mostly lies in the blurring of the authenticity/performance dichotomy as well as the confirmation that "established hierarchical regimes of 'good' taste are still in operation in the circuit between production and regulation" (227).

Sex and the Cinema is a well edited and finely written book. It is also a very ambitious book and covers a lot of ground. Its scope is indeed considerable and shows the book's main appeal but also its main limitation. In effect, one has to welcome the publication of such a fascinating study that provides an excellent overview of key texts and theories related to sexuality and the cinema. Although the contextualization of key concepts is slightly repetitive at times, it remains thoughtful and interesting. However, one can also have legitimate doubts about the author's very ambition. For it is obviously difficult to cover more than 110 years of international film production dealing with such a universal subject matter. Bestiality, incest, BDSM and adultery in films would definitely deserve more than one book *each*, and it is indeed difficult not to think that the author does little more than skim the surface at times. Although fascinating and often challenging, these particular chapters are better seen as introductions to specific problematics related to sexuality and films rather than in-depth discussions and theorisations of vast subjects.

Krzywinska obviously does show focus by concentrating mostly on themes of sexual transgression in mainly English-language features films, something that the all-encompassing book title unfortunately does not reflect. However, it seems that the author often resorts to non English-language cinematic works to fill in the blanks left by a lack of pertinent anglophone films: 'Real Sex' is a case in point as many of the chapter's key films are French-speaking productions -- *Last Tango in Paris* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972), and *The Piano Teacher* (Michael Haneke, 2001) to name two. One noticeable omission in this chapter is *Ken Park* (Larry Clark and Edward Lachman, 2002), also not mentioned in the text at large, and which includes several non simulated sex acts -- such as a self-strangulation/masturbation scene, and a male-to-male incest attempt. Thus the fact that non English-language films are used to compensate the absence of suitable anglophone works indicates an insufficient acknowledgement of linguistic and national contexts in the cinematic representation of sex and sexuality (which does seem a bit at odds with Part I and its stress on the various forces shaping cinematic sex). That said, Krzywinska's book both answers and raises many important questions related to film representations of transgressive sexuality / sexual desires. In that sense, *Sex and the Cinema* is indeed intellectually arousing and a very valuable contribution to its field. Once past the reservations mentioned above, the reader will find many an open door for more interrogation and future research.

Cinematic Savior: Hollywood's Making of the American Christ

By Stephenson Humphries-Brooks
Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2006. ISBN: 978-0-27598-489-2. 168 pp. £22.95 (hbk)
Religion and Film: An Introduction By Melanie J. Wright

Religion and Film: An Introduction

By Melanie J. Wright

London: I. B.Tauris Publishers, 2006. ISBN: 978-1-85043-886-1. 272 pp. £15.99 (pbk)

A review by Louise Smith, University of East Anglia, UK

Written at a cultural moment when the subject of religion is at its most problematic and fascinating, Stephenson Humphries-Brooks's book *Cinematic Savior: Hollywood's Making of the American Christ* argues that the depiction of Jesus Christ in the popular imagination is integral to the nation's process of self-identification. Considered through an objective examination of seven of the best known Hollywood films portraying the life and death of Jesus Christ, Humphries-Brooks questions the popularity of these "Jesus" films for a mainly secular audience, and asks whether the very different cinematic representations he discovers in his analysis sheds light on the relationship between America and religion.

According to Humphries-Brooks, the varied representations "of Jesus, his disciples, his betrayer, his temptations and his mission" (1) can only be understood if "we are willing to recognise the cultural conflicts that have led America to mix the mission of Christ, the mission of Christianity, and the mission of the United States in the world" (1). Thus, working as a religious scholar, Humphries-Brooks book begins his transition from what he describes as operating within the tradition of "New Testament Studies"(x) to a cultural studies-based approach. As a consequence, he rejects the domination of 'adaptation theory' in previous debates about cinematic representations of Jesus by outlining his argument that "Jesus films" provide fruitful insights into "what the Cinematic Savior can teach us about what is distinctive in American culture" (4). Central to his book is examination of how Hollywood has, to coin his own phrase, made "the American Christ." It is perhaps worth mentioning that the pivotal text in his argument, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Franco Zeffirelli, 1977), was in fact produced for, and shown as a mini-series on American television rather than a Hollywood production. That aside, through close textual analysis of films such as *King of Kings* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1927), Nicholas Ray's 1961 remake of DeMille's epic, *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (George Stevens, 1965) and the controversial text *The Passion of Christ* (Mel Gibson, 2004), Humphries-Brooks endeavours to demonstrate how Hollywood's filmic depictions of Jesus reflect the cultural moment in which they are produced, thus providing a particularly useful tool in charting the "changing religious culture of mainstream America" (6). Clearly this

statement has its problems, and Humphries-Brooks might do well to theorize his argument more succinctly within the already established debates about the relationship between cinema and the social. Nevertheless, the texts he foregrounds certainly provide fascinating insights into the way that Hollywood conceptualizes Jesus Christ, and support Humphries-Brooks proposition that "the filmic treatment of the Cinematic Savior is one of continual change, but also of gradual accumulation of a set of visual symbols, common themes and camera styles that form a tradition of their own" (117).

Charting the trajectory of the cinematic shifts in representations of Jesus from the "sacred other" as depicted by Cecil DeMille's passive peaceful imagining; to Ray's "new man" or "Messiah of Peace" in *King of Kings*; and foregrounding mainstream cinemas incorporation of the "all American hero" narrative in *The Last Temptation of Christ* (Martin Scorsese, 1988), Humphries-Brooks concludes his account with a compelling analysis of Gibson's *The Passion of Christ*, which he describes as explicit in its depiction of a preferred version of America, symbolized through the body of Christ as a "suffering hero" (138). His observations about America as the "suffering hero" are particularly pertinent for this post 9/11 era where the narrative, or image of Jesus, whether explicit or implicit, has been incorporated into mainstream cinema across the generic spectrum. Who could forget the close of *Superman Returns* (Bryan Singer, 2006), when we witness the resurrection of Superman looking down from the skies at the world as his body takes the form of the sacrificed Jesus? And yet Humphries-Brooks does not elucidate any further, other than a paragraph in which he briefly details his argument that the aftermath of 9/11 has seen film as a religiously-laden cultural product. This is where the problems in this book come to the fore. Whilst he argues more for a cultural studies approach, Humphries-Brooks seems to be more concerned with comparing the films to their original source, the Bible, than to the social context.

From the outset, Humphries-Brooks assumes readers come to his book with an established knowledge of the Bible and of cinematic and social history. He begins by suggesting the reader might want to watch the films whilst reading about them; this might prove useful, because the textual analysis is wandering and extremely dense. Without grounding each film within its specific cultural, historical and political context, Humphries-Brooks arguments have no firm foundation, and when he does endeavour to do so, it is often a fleeting comment, which, if unpacked, could transform this interestin but highly subjective book into an astute comment on religiosity and American culture. Take for instance his observations of the film, in Chapter Two, beautifully titled 'I Was A Teenage Jesus In Cold War America: King of Kings, 1961.' Humphries-Brooks conceit that the imagining of Jesus as a human man concerned with the "so-called secular influences of the American "doctrines" of individualism" (24) requires, at least, a brief introduction that examines the shifts occurring within cinema at the time and society as a whole. Although it is fair to say Chapter Eight, 'The Passion of Christ: Jesus As Action Hero,' does chart the rise of Hollywood's action hero and its relevance to America's imagining of Jesus to great effect. On the whole, *Cinematic Savior: Hollywood's Making of The American Christ* seems to be written for an audience well versed in religious studies but with a keen interest in the cinema, rather than a film scholar with interests in representations of religion. Humphries-Brooks attempts to explore Hollywood's influence on our imaging of Jesus is interesting -- even more so on second reading -- but the lack of cultural, political, and social specificity, and some structural problems, lessen the impact this book should have on its readers.

In comparison, Melanie J. Wright's book *Religion and Film: An Introduction* almost functions as a response to the problems of the *Cinematic Savior*. Reading as an excellent

example of 'how to do film and religion,' Wright's contention that religious scholars are amiss if they concentrate solely on matters of cinematic authenticity is reinforced by her insightful observations on the cultural, political and social milieu in which her coice of films were produced. Her theoretical framework allows her to call for a change in the pedagogical approach to film and religious studies which she claims has shown "little or no awareness of critical approaches in film and cinema studies although it routinely professes interest" (5). As an antidote, Wright's book offered attempts to "offer an informed understanding of not just specific films, but of key concepts, questions and themes that can be applied more generally" (6). As such, *Religion and Film*, unlike Humphries-Brooks' *Cinematic Savior* has much more appeal to a general reader unversed in the intricacies of religious dogma. Incorporating several key film studies critical approaches (reception studies, auteur theory, genre theory, gender theory, national and cross national film studies, distribution studies etc), Melanie Wright engages fully with the industry, the field of scholarship and the central text, thus producing an informed account of the importance of religion and spirituality within our popular imagination. For example, highlighting the importance of distribution in relation to *Wicker Man* (Robin Hardy, 1973) in Chapter Four of the book, Wright charts the history of this 'cult' film and highlights the paradoxes inherent in studying a film that has such a chequered distribution history.

Most noticeable about Wright's book is that she veers away from solely focusing on Christianity as of primary importance by noting the significant impact that Islam has had on the religious makeup of British society and representations of religion within the national cinema. Chapter Five takes a close look at the film *My Son the Fanatic* (Udayan Prasad, 1997), exploring what the film says about national identity and the "national qualities of British cinema" (107). Recognizing the issues that arise for film scholars attempting to rethink national cinema, Wright draws our attention to the problems inherent in this debate by observing the events that took place in 2001, when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science "rejected Britain's nomination of the Hindi language film, *The Warrior* (Asif Kapadia) as its entry to the Oscars" (106) because the Academy "ruled the film ineligible on the grounds that Hindi was not an indigenous language" (108).

Taking as her foundation the commonalities between the ritual of church-going and the cinema experience, and the similarities between film and "religion as a narrative producing mechanism[s]" (4), Wright's wonderfully argued, and fluently articulated account of the potential value of exploring the relationship between religion, cinema, and pedagogy, is a compelling read. It will prove itself a valuable resource to those in both disciplinaes, and to a wider general readership that has recognized that themes of religion and spirituality are at the heart of most cinematic narratives.

La Dolce Morte: Vernacular Cinema and the Italian Giallo Film

By Mikel J. Koven
Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006. ISBN: 978-0-81085-870-1. x + 195 pp. £23.99 (pbk)

A review by David Church, San Francisco State University, USA

Mikel J. Koven's *La Dolce Morte: Vernacular Cinema and the Italian Giallo Film* is the first in-depth study of a cycle hugely popular amongst cult and horror fans but largely neglected by the academy. The *giallo* is a particular tradition of Italian murder mysteries cinematically pioneered by Mario Bava in the 1960s but popularized by Dario Argento in the early 1970s, displaying recognizable narrative formulas and iconography that quickly characterized the entire cycle. *Gialli* often feature an amateur detective witnessing and investigating a series of gory murders, and their fetishization of excessive, stylized slaughter more commonly associates them with the horror genre than traditional crime or mystery films. Koven presents a detailed analysis of the *giallo*'s defining traits in the context of its original audience, but while this strategy shines in certain areas, its central premises are beset by several potential contradictions.

In his first chapter, Koven provides a substantial definition and history of the *giallo*. Culturally specific terms like "genre" and "subgenre" do not translate well into the context of Italian film markets, he argues, instead suggesting the term "*filone*" (v) as more appropriate, described through the visual metaphor of streamlets (traditions or cycles) branching off from, and sometimes returning to, a larger river (genre). Thus the *giallo* should not be considered a distinct genre or subgenre, but rather a cluster of concurrent *filone* (displaying similar narrative patterns and iconography) deviating from the broader genre of crime films (5-7). He suggests that:

> [T]he classic *giallo* existed as *filone* in the first half of the 1970s and emerged out of an existing demand for more traditional *poliziotto* [police procedural] films. Once the cycle had run out of steam, the *filone* returned back to the more familiar cop dramas. (8)

However, Koven neglects to add that many *giallo* directors did not return to *poliziotti* in the late-1970s, instead favouring more explicit sex and horror *filone* to counteract the approximately fifty percent decline in Italian ticket sales from 1975-1979, as moviegoers increasingly turned to an exploding pornography market and newly-liberalized independent television networks. Drawing upon studies of other popular Italian *filone*, the chapter ends with an excellent contextualization of Italian exploitation films, explained as derivative of Hollywood product, yet often profitably remarketed to the USA, Britain, and elsewhere.

Similarly compelling is a second chapter laying out the principles of "vernacular cinema," Koven's alternative to more problematic categories like "popular" or "mass/mainstream"

cinema. Vernacular cinema is a type of genre product specific to a particular (often lower-class) audience, and these films, although sometimes technically sophisticated, typically lack high-art/modernist pretensions. Vernacular cinema like the *giallo* often fails when placed in a non-vernacular context -- such as when high-minded (British and American) critics deride their low budgets, flimsy scripts, and emphasis upon violence -- but the reverse is also true when non-vernacular films fail among vernacular audiences. The term encompasses localized viewing practices, a sort of "'filtration' process from high-art predecessors," and/or an "intentional opposition to a 'high style'" (29). There are different classes of Italian cinema: *prima visione* (urban, first-run cinemas with middle-to-upper-class patrons), *seconda visione* (second-run houses), and *terza visione* (rural cinemas serving lower-class workers); while popular *prima visione* films eventually trickled down to *terza visione* venues, many exploitation films (including *gialli*) only played at the latter due to daily demand for new product. According to Koven, *terza visione* viewers were far less concerned with auteurs and aesthetic contemplation than strong moments of visceral sensation (sex and violence) regularly punctuating the social activity of "going to the pictures" -- hence the *giallo*'s emphasis on excessively violent set pieces over logical, cohesive narratives (27). While vernacular cinema "is often criticized for its lack of introspection and self-reflexivity" (35), it is said to operate primarily through orality (unlike modernism's "readable texts"), displaying oral cultural traits like formulaic narratives, redundancy and repetition, agonistic tone, and conservative ideologies. Echoing Koven's background as a folklorist, this contention opens up fascinating avenues for thinking about forms of cinema marginalized by the academy's dominant, modernist-inflected optics.

However, despite his stated intentions, a troublingly traditional high/low cultural opposition emerges between the literacy/contemplation/modernism of the *prima visione* and the orality/sensation/vernacular cinema of the *terza visione*. While he briefly notes that it "is not necessarily *always* the case" that *prima visione* audiences want quiet aesthetic contemplation over sensation (27), this point deserves further elaboration -- perhaps through examining *seconda visione* viewership or how "high art" filters down to the *terza visione* -- but at present, Koven inadvertently advances certain overgeneralizations about class-based viewing pleasures. Well-taken is his earlier observation that Italy's high-art directors like Fellini and Antonioni could only be viable in a national film industry built upon exploitation cinema profits (11), but he provides no solid statistics concerning how many *gialli* were exclusively *terza visione* fare and how many trickled down from more "reputable" venues. For example, Argento's *gialli* exhibit all the qualities of vernacular cinema, but can also be highly self-reflexive and artistically composed, proving financially successful in all classes of Italian cinema. Vernacular cinema supposedly allows for no critical distance, but here Koven does not fully account for how the same film might elicit different viewing strategies in different venues. While the majority of Italian cinema has indeed been neglected by self-serious modernist viewers, his purely anti-auteurist perspective also leaves certain critical gaps (even if self-reflexive filmmakers like Argento are the minority).

Koven criticizes some cult film theorists for attempting to raise exploitation films into the high-art/modernist canon without concern for the films' original vernacular context. Although several well-intentioned academics do indeed bend over backwards to justify their interests, his overgeneralization that all *gialli* are exploitation films unfit for modernist analysis ignores how certain films are polysemic enough to successfully transcend a high/modernist vs. low/vernacular cultural divide. The concept of "vernacular cinema" situates films in the lived experiences of their intended audience, but does not consider unintended reinterpretations of these films. It may be "even easier [for critics] to dismiss certain films if they are 'foreign,' or

someone else's exploitation trash" (10), but should we dismiss as incorrect all recontextualizations of vernacular cinema (especially when remarketed to foreign audiences not directly paralleling *terza visione* viewers)? "Vernacular cinema" as a contextual category could be used to question the cultural colonialism present within American and British cult networks (which frequently reinvest *gialli* with meaning as "exotic" continental spectacles of sex and violence), but the non-vernacular realm of cult viewership goes largely unexplored here, perhaps owing to the modernist reading practices employed by (predominantly bourgeois) cult viewers to differentiate their object choices from "mass/mainstream" cinema.

The consumption of "Italian-ness" in *gialli* receives attention in Chapter Three, which analyzes space and place in relation to modernity. The "economic miracle" of Italy's modernization between the mid-1950s and mid-1970s opened up the country as an alluring travel destination for outsiders, also giving middle-class Italians enough capital to jet around Europe. Koven argues that *gialli* are often set against touristic backdrops because they reflect this newfound mode of leisure/transportation, becoming "the cinematic equivalent of 'vacation novels'" (47). His central thesis is that *gialli* are "shadows of jet-set European sophistication: a simplified, more vernacular commentary on the 'economic miracle' than Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* [1960]" (49), betraying a profound ambivalence about the effects of modernity. Travelogue-style footage is often juxtaposed with extreme violence, indicating the possible dangers of tourism in and out of Italy, and also a discrepancy between the violence of modern life and Italy's glamorous advertisements of itself to the world. Foreigners and foreign ideas could now enter Italy freely, and it is typically an "outsider" to hegemonic society who serves as amateur detective, victim, or killer. These suspicious outsiders are blamed with breaking down a sense of community in urban areas, and disrupting traditions and long-buried secrets in rural areas.

The analysis here is presented very convincingly, but leaves a number of unanswered questions that bleed over into subsequent chapters. Beyond the obvious lure of violent spectacle and Koven's passing references to escapism or wish fulfilment, it remains unclear why lower-class *terza visione* audiences would be so attracted to these stories of middle-class jet-setters (usually tourists or professionals) becoming *fl‰neur*-like amateur detectives amongst Italy's high-class, high-fashion environs. While the advances of modernity certainly affected the *terza visione* as well (as Koven observes), this cannot fully explain the *giallo*'s appeal if only a minority of viewers paid attention to the narrative itself, nor account for the films' successful remarketing into countries that did not similarly experience Italy's "economic miracle." He explains elsewhere that because vernacular narratives are intrinsically formulaic and conservative, *gialli* "suggest and recognize a variety of social problems, inherent in modernity, but the solutions to those problems, while hardly 'sophisticated' or 'sensitive,' are intended to be debated, not merely accepted" (79). However, one wonders if the *giallo*'s ambivalence toward modernity is significantly different from the tensions expressed in other *filone* (to say nothing of Italian high-art/modernist films), and it remains questionable just how much debate ensues if *terza visione* audiences are (according to Koven) only seeking visceral thrills.

Chapters Four through Seven examine different aspects of *gialli*, including methods and motives for murder, the roles of amateur detectives and killers, and the place of superstition in an otherwise "realist" horror cycle. Koven paints a very full picture of the *filone* and provides some very fine observations in these chapters, but they are sometimes dominated by long surveys of diverse examples that can feel somewhat unfocused. His central thesis is less compelling in these chapters, given that such disparate depictions of modernity may not be

part of a general ambivalence, but rather the filmmakers' lack of concern for modernity altogether. In Chapter Ten, he explores the influence of *gialli* upon slasher films, explaining how certain slashers could be better termed "North American *gialli*." While this concluding chapter is quite adequate, Koven nevertheless seems reluctant to consider the *giallo* outside of its original vernacular context, devoting relatively little space to the ways that slashers have re-influenced Italian horror.

Chapters Eight and Nine are more problematic, as Koven examines the different kinds of set pieces so endemic to *gialli*. These "sublime" moments of excessive and technically virtuosic spectacle must be approached without the larger context of narrative, he claims, quite reasonably comparing them to musical numbers. However, he invokes Pasolini's theory of a "cinema of poetry" to explain the appeal of these dreamlike, quasi-oral moments when classical continuity and narrative verisimilitude break down to reveal truly "filmic" images. Modifying Pasolini, he argues that the connotative power of these poetic images "is not purely intellectual and distanced, but also visceral and empathetic" (155). The "double nature" of cinema supposedly allows these films to stimulate visceral affect, yet also call attention to their own constructedness through stylistic excess, Brechtian distanciation, and continuity violations similar to cinematic modernism. While *gialli* can surely stimulate multiple viewing pleasures, Koven's emphasis upon such moments encouraging personal self-reflection in the *terza visione* viewer largely contradicts his earlier argument that vernacular cinema allows for no critical distance and demands audiences seeking sensation over contemplation. By privileging set pieces as "poetic" instead of "modernist," Koven differentiates vernacular audiences from more high-minded viewers, but potentially depoliticizes lower-class viewers' stirrings of critical self-reflection. He even claims that "[I]f sloppy editing and cheap special effects are indicative of a 'cinema of poetry,' then any 'bad movie' could be seen as poetic," no matter if continuity violations are intentional or accidental (151). Various cult film theorists have argued along similar lines, comparing continuity errors to a counter-cinematic aesthetic, so Koven's suggestion validates the same kind of "ridiculous" (22) modernist readings of vernacular cinema that he earlier scorns. He finally falls back upon the bourgeois standards of 'artworthiness' that he elsewhere rejects in relation to the *giallo*, concluding that some *gialli* are clearly better than others, because "identifying something as poetry is no guarantee of *quality*. [É] As *vernacular* poetry, these films may be poetic, but that is not to say they are necessarily very good poetry" (157).

Despite these caveats, the first two chapters of *La Dolce Morte* are essential reading for devotees of Italian popular cinema, plus a solid third chapter nicely exemplifying Koven's argument about the *giallo*'s ambivalence towards modernity. His concept of "vernacular cinema" remains a significant addition to the current academic debates over exploitation films, provocatively advancing primary orality as a key to understanding these much-maligned pictures. The subsequent chapters prove somewhat more disposable, but will be eagerly consumed by anyone with more than a passing interest in Italian horror. As Koven admits in his preface, this book is not intended as a definitive study of the *giallo*, and it will hopefully entice further research into this and other *filone*. The types of European cinema best described as vernacular have only recently begun receiving scholarly attention, and one hopes that this commendable task continues, helping to redress the academy's still-incomplete view of international film culture.

Sound Design and Science Fiction

By William Whittington
Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007. ISBN: 0-292-71431-9 (pbk), 0-292-71430-0 (hbk).
41 illustrations, 304pp. £12.99 (pbk), £33.00 (hbk)

A review by Douglas King, Gannon University, USA

Starting from the axiom that "sound is half the picture," William Whittington's *Sound Design and Science Fiction* argues forcefully not only for sound's equality with the visual in contemporary cinema, but perhaps for its preeminence. Whittington's book resonates best in his case studies of several seminal science fiction films, beginning with *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) and carrying through the *Matrix* series (Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski, 1999, 2003). He also contextualizes film sound historically, charting its evolution from the classical Hollywood mimetic conception of capturing sound, through the monumental advances in technology and in the artistry of sound design.

Whittington marks *2001: A Space Odyssey* as *the* film that elevated science fiction from its 1950's roots as a "B" genre to an "A" genre. While this observation is hardly new, Whittington unfolds very nicely how this film's groundbreaking achievement came largely through its use of sound -- particularly music. He recounts director Stanley Kubrick's struggles with MGM over his desire to use classical music rather than an original score for the film, noting that "Kubrick's innovative approach challenged not only the traditional music-image model but also the traditional mode of music production . . ." (44-45). Whittington keenly analyzes the effects of each piece of classical music in the film and delineates how Kubrick stripped away their traditional associations -- as the director stated, [Johann Strauss's "The Blue Danube"] "gets about as far away as you can from the clichŽ of space music" (46) -- to substantially supplant dialogue and to usher in a new era of sound consciousness among filmmakers and filmgoers.

In a different but equally groundbreaking way, *THX-1138* (George Lucas, 1971), though a box office failure, changed the history of sound in cinema. Whittington charts first the influence of French New Wave science fiction on up-and-coming film school auteurs such as Lucas, Coppola, Spielberg, and Friedkin, analyzing in depth *La JetŽe* (Chris Marker, 1961), *Alphaville* (Jean-Luc Godard,1965), and *Fahrenheit-451* (Fran ois Truffaut, 1966) for their deconstructive and revolutionary uses of sound. Drawing from these influences, Lucas's film pioneered the use of "suggestive fragments," as the director and his "Sound Montage" person, Walter Murch, asserted independence by working outside the Hollywood sound systems, gathering and creating new sounds to create the sterile, dystopian universe of *THX-1138*.

THX-1138's pioneering of the concept/title "Sound Montage" paved the way for that of "Sound Design," as exemplified by that other Lucas film, *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) -- and its sequels. As Lucas (and the other new Hollywood filmmakers) began to embrace the notion of the blockbuster, he abandoned the more avant-garde, formalist sound aesthetic of *THX-1138* in favour of "a more commercial style that emphasized a new kind of image-sound unification, anthropomorphism, and spectacle" (94). However, Whittington notes, this

concern with commercial appeal did not come at the expence of sonic advance. On the contrary, sound designers such as Ben Burtt created new aural landscapes that matched the visual dimensions of films such as *Star Wars* and both drove and benefitted from new multichannel technologies such as Dolby Stereo. *Sound Design and Science Fiction* excels when it elucidates specific techniques such as the elaborate ones Burtt used to attain the familiar and usually unexamined sounds such as light sabers, laser blasters, and Wookie language.

Also outstanding is Whittington's chapter on 'Surround Sound and Science Fiction,' in which he charts the advent of various new systems, including Dolby Digital, Digital Theater Systems (DTS), and Sony Dynamic Digital Sound (SDDS). He effectively argues that these surround sound technologies "offer access into areas the image is not willing or is unable to go. In these instances, the sound design has not just achieved an equal status with the image. It has in fact surpassed it" (126). Less compelling is another argument Whittington develops in this chapter and beyond: that surround sound technology "demands participation by filmgoers" and encourages audiences to "get into it" (123). Although the author attempts to bolster this case by discussing audience involvement through home theatre technology, video games, and other film offshoots, it would seem at least equally valid (and perhaps equally subjective) to assert that ever greater spectacle in sight and sound can desensitize and lull audience members into an orientation of -- to quote Kurt Cobain -- "Here we are now; entertain us."

Whittington's book structure -- pairing a technical/theoretical concept with a case study -- works well. For example, Part IV, titled 'Sound Effects,' includes a chapter on 'Genre Splicing: Horror and Science Fiction' and then a chapter/case study of *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979), with both chapters elucidating the recent history and development of sound effects. In the genre splicing chapter, Whittington effectively weaves in discussion of the history of Foley effects with more theoretical concerns such as invisible referents, placing these discussions in the context of films including *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), *The Thing* (John Carpenter, 1982), and *Predator* (John McTiernan,1987). The author notes that scholarship regarding sound technique has long been hampered by Hollywood conventions and codes of realism:

> One of the key obstacles is the compositive nature of a sound track that hides much of the material work of the mode of production. Isolation of specific sound cuts, fades, and even effects is extremely difficult . . . . Cue sheets, sound logs, and mixers [sic] notes would be useful in scholarly research, yet these documents are rarely preserved. (149)

This dearth of primary documents of sound design makes a study such as Whittington's all the more valuable.

Whittington uses *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982) as the case study for his discussion of voice design. He notes that while the human voice has long been accorded privileged status in film, voice-overs are unstable and often highly subjective. Harrison Ford's voice-over as Blade Runner Rick Deckard is further complicated by the production history, in which neither the director nor the star wanted the addition. The voice-over thus falls flat (a fact almost universally agreed upon), and also befuddles the bridging of science fiction and film noir that the film otherwise achieves. Whittington engages in an extended comparison of the original with the 'Director's Cut'of *Blade Runner* (1992), which eliminated the voice-over. As

have others, Whittington argues that the newly edited and remixed version succeeds brilliantly where the original release failed:

> Without the voice-over, new image-sound relations appeared that significantly altered the narrative and plot structure . . . the . . . *Director's Cut* encouraged filmgoers to swim in the dense sonic and visual world of *Blade Runner* as it foregrounds the music composed by Vangelis and the film's ambient backgrounds and sound effects. (173)

Covering ground less well- trodden , Whittington also discusses automatic dialogue replacement (ADR), using a scene from *Blade Runner* to point out the delicate nature of voice flow in a film and demonstrates how botched ADR can disrupt that flow.

The book's penultimate section explores sound mixing and the blending of human and mechanical sound in *Terminator II: Judgment Day* (James Cameron, 1991). Convincingly making the case that film sound has become at least equally powerful as image, Whittington points out that when the film was broadcast on television, numerous potentially disturbing sound effects were removed, while the majority of images were left intact (219). The author demonstrates how many previously discussed elements of film sound -- ambient sound, music, voice, Foley, and sound effects -- are blended to create the filmmakers' coherent sonic visions for *Terminator II* and other films.

The concluding chapter of *Sound Design and Science Fiction* deals with *The Matrix* series (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999, 2003), but focuses beyond the films to discuss extended phenomena such as bonus dvd release features (commentaries, behind the scenes looks, and so forth); home theatre systems; and computer games. Here the analysis devolves into areas Whittington argues are essential and the wave of the future, but which actually seem tangential and trivial (is it really significant that lots of people bought *Matrix* posters and action figures and placed them in their home theatre settings?).

Sound Design and Science Fiction is a stimulating and well researched work that can expand our appreciation for film sound. It includes thorough notes and helpful appendices, including an overview of the sound production process and a sound term glossary.

Pedro Alm—dovar (Contemporary Film Directors Series)

By Marvin D'Lugo
Chicago: University of Illinois, 2006. ISBN: 0-252-07361-4. x + 184pp. £12.99 (pbk)

A review by Heather Macdougall, Concordia University, Canada

In *Pedro Almod—var,* Marvin D'Lugo undertakes the complex task of interpreting and summarizing the work of Spain's most prominent and celebrated contemporary filmmaker. Almod—var's own life is as eccentric as many of his characters', and his colourful, irreverent films have earned him an international cult-like following while also bringing non-judgemental representations of marginalized communities (prostitutes, transgendered people, and gypsies, among others) to mainstream cinemas and multiplexes around the world. His commercial success outside of his domestic market, combined with the relative lack of other internationally prominent Spanish directors, has led to a widespread misinterpretation by contemporary cinema audiences (outside of the Spanish-speaking market) of Almod—var's films as emblematic of Spanish national cinema. This book addresses this misconception by emphasizing the auteur nature of his films, and by demonstrating the ways in which his work either subscribes to, or departs from, the various cinematic spheres of which it is a part: Spanish cinema, European cinema, gay cinema, and genre cinema.

D'Lugo points out, for example, that when Almod—var found himself involuntarily representing Spain at international festival screenings of *Entre tinieblas* (Pedro Almod—var, 1983) in the early 1980s, "it was an ironic position for him, since at home the industry ignored him, and establishment critics mocked his films as amateurish" (8). Furthermore, D'Lugo compares Almod—var's films to those of directors that could be considered more typical of Spanish film, such as Carlos Saura, V'ctor Erice, Jaime Ch‡varri, and Manuel GutiŽrrez Arag—n, to conclude that "Almod—var's films seem antithetical to the patterns of Spanish film production that had been lionized since the early 1980s as auteur cinema and *the* national cinema" (9).

As well as providing critical analyses of Almod—var's films, the book includes numerous references to the Spanish cultural, political and economic developments which help to provide a context in which to consider the films. While some important aspects of Almod—var's career are dealt with perhaps too superficially, as will be discussed below, the author writes clearly and competently within the scope he has chosen. As such, this book is a suitable resource for film students (or any interested movie-goers) who have seen and are intrigued by Almod—var's films but would benefit from some additional background in Spanish cinema and history to better understand them.

The book opens with a section on how the director's life, "or at least the autobiography he constructs for interviewers" (1), follows a number of patterns of melodrama, the movie genre that has been most closely identified with his own films. D'Lugo prefaces the ensuing

biographical portion of the book with a proviso:"[T]hese are the details as he [Almod—var] has 'invented' them" (11). Despite numerous further insinuations that there are more (or, just as likely, fewer) juicy anecdotes in Almod—var's past than those included in the self-scribed official version, D'Lugo disappointingly does not propose anything to contradict it. The book addresses Almod—var as a personality only so far as it is necessary for an understanding of his work, so if one is looking for an incisive biography, one may do well to look elsewhere.

Nevertheless, the introductory chapter outlines clearly the most significant highlights of Almod—var's early life as they relate to the themes of his later films, including his migration from rural Extremadura to urban Madrid, his religious education, and the development of his sexual identity. D'Lugo also includes the briefest details of important Spanish movements which deeply influenced Almod—var's work, such as the Franco regime (which Almod—var rejected) and the Madrid *movida* (which Almod—var embraced). These movements shaped Almod—var's aesthetic preferences, and his early films were identified with "various clichŽs of Andalusian folklore that had long been the hallmark of Francoist kitsch culture" (5) such as folk songs, religious Catholic imagery, gypsy culture, and bullfighting. D'Lugo explains, however, that

> Almod—var's embrace of popular culture was not a frivolous identification with these nostalgic elements but part of an aesthetic process of recycling the 'desecho hist—rico,' the historical dregs of cultural forms and styles identified with Francoist culture that his films endow with countercultural meanings. (5)

The subsequent chapters each focus on one or two of Almod—var's feature films, following his career in chronological order beginning with *Pepi, Luci, Bom, y otras chicas del mont—n* (1980) up to *La mala educaci—n* (2004). Unfortunately, as with other volumes in the Contemporary Film Directors series, *Pedro Almod—var* is out of date almost as soon as it is published, with no mention of his latest offering, the critically acclaimed *Volver* (2006). It is regrettable also that D'Lugo does not find a little more space, beyond a brief mention in the introduction, to devote to Almod—var's short films shot on super-8. It was through these early creations that the director learned his craft, and the "happenings" surrounding their exhibition played an important role in cementing Almod—var's position as one of the star creators in the *movida*. Their inclusion in the book would perhaps be all the more relevant since of all Almod—var's films, they would be the most difficult (and in many cases impossible) for a reader to procure for personal viewing and analysis.

The author, however, has chosen to focus exclusively on Almod—var's commercially released feature films, and this he does quite competently. D'Lugo brings together insightful criticism and analysis from a variety of sources, presenting a wide spectrum of perspectives from Spanish, European, and North American critics while also pointing the reader towards further resources for more in-depth analysis. Particularly interesting are the plentiful quotes from Almod—var himself, which serve to illuminate his directorial choices and intended meanings. Meanwhile, the book also includes references to important movements in Spain's cultural, economic and political development as they tie into the themes in Almod—var's work. The films are analyzed in chronological order, so it is easy to notice how Almod—var's technical skill and appreciation of the international market improve with experience, but D'Lugo also carefully ties the films together by drawing attention to recurring themes throughout Almod—var's oeuvre. Some of the themes discussed include the relationship between artifice and authenticity, the contrast between rural and urban life, the negotiation of sexual/gender identity, the role of the family, and the use of violence as entertainment.

Naturally, the focus is on Pedro Almod—var as an auteur filmmaker, and D'Lugo highlights the signature aesthetic that the director has created for himself, as well as the autobiographical influence apparent in the films. D'Lugo should also be commended, however, for giving due credit to other players who have contributed to Almod—var's success. For example, Agust'n Almod—var, Pedro's brother and business partner, was instrumental in the realization of most of the films and co-founded the production company El Deseo, S.A. D'Lugo notes

> Almod—var's notable distribution success may be attributed to the collaboration with Agust'n, whose business acumen was balanced with a sensitivity to his brother's artistic needs and a keen sense of the markets to which El Deseo's films could be directed. (53)

One might argue that one of Pedro Almod—var's prime strengths is his ability to find the perfect actor for each of his admittedly demanding characters. D'Lugo chronicles Almod—var's "discovery" of actors such as Antonio Banderas and PenŽlope Cruz, who subsequently became globally sought-after movie stars. He also gives background on other actors, which gives readers an idea of what connotations their performances would have for an audience familiar with their past roles. For example, D'Lugo explains that:

> when [Victoria] Abril starred in *Tie Me Up!* [AKA *Áçtame!,* 1990] she already had a well-established screen persona. The thirty-year-old actress had appeared in fifty motion pictures, securing a reputation for powerful dramatic performances but also for portrayals of female characters with strong sexual identities, often of a humble or marginal social class. (71)

Any analysis of Spain's most controversial director would be incomplete without an appropriate explanation of the scandals that regularly accompanied Almod—var's commercial releases. The author provides readers with the reactions of audiences, critics, and the establishment both in Spain and abroad. For example, D'Lugo points out that of all Almodovar's films, only *La ley del deseo* (1987) and *La mala educaci—n* (2004) were completely ignored by the Goyas (Spanish film awards), in what was considered by many to be "a generalized homophobic response among Spanish film critics and members of the film industry toward what amounted to the groundbreaking treatment of the normalization of gay romantic narratives in Spanish film" (59). D'Lugo also relates Almod—var's trouble with the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), which originally gave an X rating to *Áçtame!* (1990), effectively disqualifying it from general distribution:

> Indignant at the classification and defiant at what he saw as a variation on the kind of censorship tactics used under the Franco regime, Almod—var and his U.S. distributor, Miramax, sued the MPAA. [É] Miramax and Almod—var eventually prevailed, and a new category, NC-17, was designed that reflected more appropriately the film's mature subject matter. (75)

The book closes with two interviews, the first a reprint of a 1987 interview from *Film Quarterly*, and the second a "self-interview" from 2004. These interviews are a real treat, as they allow the readers the chance to compare Almod—var's perspective on his films at two very different points in his career. The fact that the recent interview was penned entirely by Almod—var himself also brings the book full circle to the point made in the introduction that

Pedro Almod—var has both the desire and the ability to be in complete control of his own public image.

Throughout the book, D'Lugo concentrates only on Almod—var's role as director of feature films and is therefore able to keep the book focused and concise. Some more information on Almod—var's early short films would have been relevant, as mentioned above, as well as some discussion of Almod—var's other roles in filmmaking, such as his role as the producer of such acclaimed films as *My Life Without Me* (Isabel Coixet, 2003), and *The Secret Life of Words* (Isabel Coixet, 2005). While the critical analyses of Almod—var's films are interesting, the real strength of this book is the background it provides for readers who have seen Almod—var's films, but who are not completely familiar with the contexts in which they were made. The information provided about Spain and its national cinema is basic but adequate for the purpose at hand. Similarly, the notes explaining the significance that a domestic audience would glean from certain directorial choices, such as casting, add layers to the reader's understanding of the films. In all, it is a good introduction to Almod—var for film students or general audience members; readers who have found his films bewildering or distasteful may at least begin to understand why he made some of the choices he did, and those who are already fans will appreciate the films all the more when provided with additional contextual information and critical perspectives.

Ancient Greece in Film and Popular Culture

By Gideon Nisbet
Bristol Phoenix Press, Exeter, UK, 2006. ISBN: 1-904675-12-3. 170 pages. £12.99

A review by Monica Bontty, University of Louisiana at Monroe, USA

The success of the film *Gladiator* (Ridley Scott, 2000) resulted in a number of epic films and projects such as Troy, Alexander and the HBO/BBC mini-series *Rome* (2005). At the same time, there has been an increase in scholarship and courses on ancient history and popular culture. Based on works such as Wyke's *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome and Popular Culture* (Routledge, 1997) or Cyrino's *Big Screen Rome* (Blackwell, 2005), there is no doubt that films on ancient Rome have had a great impact on American popular culture.

Despite these and other remarkable works, it is extremely rare to find books on ancient Greece and popular culture based on the fact that cinema's Greece has always played second fiddle to ancient Rome. Why not ancient Greece? After all ancient Greece was the cradle of Western civilization and influenced not only the Romans but the Byzantines and Islam. It also influenced Western Europe during the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Fortunately recent works such as Winkler's edited collection *Troy: From Homer's Iliad to Hollywood Epic* (Blackwell, 2006) are helping to even the critical playing field. However *Troy* (Wolfgang Petersen, 2004) and *Alexander* (Oliver Stone, 2004) both performed very poorly at the box office and were panned by critics. Gideon Nisbet's extremely user friendly book explains why this happens and why ancient Rome is preferred to ancient Greece.

The author concentrates on major films such as *Troy* and *Alexander* as well as other underappreciated films that a mainstream audience might enjoy. He wisely omits films and tragedies from Greece and Italy since many English speakers are not comfortable with subtitles.

Through this careful choice of films, Nisbet demonstrates how and why Greece is such a hard sell. First of all, audiences have no idea of what to visually expect when it comes to Athens. Secondly ancient Greece brings up thoughts of intellectual elitism and the "Western Tradition." Most of all, society's unease with "Greek-ness" and the fact ancient Greece is associated with same sex desire has led audiences to prefer to make like Nero instead of making like Plato. Stuffy, colourless Greece just cannot compete with Rome and its standardized orgies, gladiatorial contests and large scale cinematic productions.

Chapter One, 'Socrates' Excellent Adventure,' sets up the framework for understanding why films set in ancient Greece fall short in cinema. *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* (Stephen Herek, 1989) is examined along with Roger Corman's *Atlas* (1960), Sergio Leone's *Colossus*

of Rhodes (1961), Robert Wise's *Helen of Troy* (1956) as well as various cinematic productions of Cleopatra.

Bill and Ted's trip to Athens shows Greece to be a dull boring place full of equally bored philosophers until the ultra cool and laid back Bill and Ted appear and spice things up. Even Socrates is grateful for a chance to leave Athens behind.

Modern audiences have the false impression that they are more familiar with Rome based on modern architecture such as courthouses and city halls. Movies fail because of these popular cultural prejudices of what it means to be Greek. Even when films have used actual Greek locations they have failed. Roger Corman's *Atlas* (1960) suffers from the use of old Roman standbys such as aqueducts, amphitheatres complete with Roman letters, Roman banquets and dancing girls. Despite bad dialogue, the author rightly praises this film, since it is well-informed about some aspects of classical antiquity. Sergio Leone's *Colossus of Rhodes* (1961) is also confused as to what Greece should look like. Here, in addition to the Roman themes, Hellenistic, Minoan, Assyrian and Egyptian motifs are used.

A clever adaptation of Homer, *Helen of Troy* (Robert Wise, 1956), benefited from classicist Hugh Gray. As a result, the script made use of primary documents in a respectful manner. Visually the film looks great since it is set in Greek prehistory. Homer's Achaeans are identified with the Mycenaens while the palace of Minos stands in for Troy. Despite its merits this film is not much fun, and also fails because the romance between Helen and Paris is too bland and boring to interest the audience. The chapter concludes with a discussion of various productions of Cleopatra, who also turns out to be more Roman than Greek in film.

Hercules, the only mythological hero to make it in Hollywood is the topic of Chapter Two: 'Mythconceptions.' 1960's treatments of Hercules starred a series of unknowns and resulted in a blurred image and interchangeable identities. Hercules's transformation to the small screen, in the form of *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (Christian Williams, 1995-1999), was more successful because of its infidelity to the ancient sources. Similar to other productions on ancient Greece, Rome figured prominently in this series as well as its equally successful spin off *Xena: Warrior Princess* (John Schulian, Robert Tapert and R. J. Stewart, 1995-2001). A recurring problem with Hercules was what to do with Hylas, his boyfriend. *The Legendary Journeys* builds up the character of Iolus and therefore gets around this thorny issue.

Vin Diesel's plans to direct *Hannibal*, provisionally entitled *Hannibal the Conqueror*, may never be completed because of fan and critical reaction to the star. The Battle of Thermopolae is the subject of the in-production film adaptation *Gates of Fire*, and of Zack Snyder's *300* (2006). However, both suffer from the urge to make the Spartans icons of democratic machismo. Eric Shanower's Eisner-award-winning comic *Age of Bronze* (2001-) is far more authentic and ground breaking because it remains true to archaeological and literary sources. Petersen's *Troy* (2004) struggled from its inception and faced the same fate as most other films on Greece.

Chapter Three, 'The Wars of the Successors' looks at a string of film and film projects on Alexander the Great. Even though Robert Rossen's *Alexander the Great* (1956) promised to present "the real" Alexander and even used HRH Prince Peter of Greece as its historical advisor, it falls short and is an iconographic mess. Rossen's denial of spectacle and avoidance of nudity contribute to the film's bland portrayal of Alexander. A surprising exception is the "lost" 1964 pilot of *Alexander the Great* (Phil Karlson, 1964) starring William Shatner,

whose portrayal of the conqueror as a charismatic but rootless drifter should be considered as the most significant version of the myth of Alexander. The final projects discussed in the chapter reveal more about modern myths of nationhood and masculinity than the "real" Alexander. These include the once and future Alexander, the "best" Alexander, the passion of Alexander, an Alexander for Hellas, as well as Oliver Stone's *Alexander* (2004).

Stone's *Alexander* starred Colin Farrell and had the benefit of Robin Lane Fox as the historical advisor. Unfortunately, this film failed because it tried to please the needs and wants of various interest groups, and panders to academics by depicting Alexander as dreaming of spreading the "civilized" Greek culture. However, since this film is a remake of Rossen's 1956 epic, it too depicts a map of Latin place names like the original. Despite the cool reception and lack of success of movies like *Troy* and *Alexander*, the recent success of the film *300* (2006) should result in the production of more films and more scholarly works on ancient Greece and popular culture.

The structure of this book is very accessible because of the author's writing style and lively explanations. This work will appeal to a variety of audiences and assumes no previous exposure to the subject. Nisbet engages the reader because of his obvious passion for films, cinema, and popular culture. The glossary of key terms will prove useful to those unfamiliar with the terminology. Moreover, the guide to further reading provides ample material for those eager to learn more about Classics, film studies or on Rome, Greece and the cinema. This book is lots of fun to read and is highly recommended.

Spectatorship: The Power of Looking On

By Michele Aaron
London: Wallflower, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-90567-401-5. 12 Illustrations, 139 pp. £12.99 (pbk)

A review by Sarah Arnold, National University of Ireland, Galway

In *Spectatorship: The Power of Looking On*, Michelle Aaron re-examines the various theories that have emerged in the field of spectatorship, with the agency of the spectator as the central focus. Aaron seeks to reconcile considerations of audience as subject and audience as spectator, and sets about achieving this through an assessment of the various theoretical frameworks included in spectatorship studies. This seems a bold task, considering the world of cultural studies, cine-psychoanalysis and sociology vary rarely find common ground. The first half of the book is dedicated to a historical account of the development of spectatorship studies and the remaining half concentrates on textual analysis, where Aaron proposes her "counter model of spectatorship."

In the first chapter Aaron traces the origins of interest in spectatorship to the Paris Riots of 1968, which she sees as having led to the emergence of structuralism. The brief explanation of structuralism and its relationship to film that follows proves surprisingly concise and here, and throughout the book, Aaron reduces huge amounts of theory down to digestible pieces. The emphasis in this chapter is on the process of illusion, and so Aaron takes the reader through Althusser's Apparatus Theory through Baudry and Metz and beyond, finally closing with an introduction to Laura Mulvey. Although the chapter is brief, it does provide a who's who in the field of spectatorship, and clearly outlines the origins of various theories. Aaron takes pains to explain the connection between psychoanalytic theory and cinematic identification. Sometimes the chapter can feel a bit hurried but perhaps this is to avoid repetition of work already done on the subject, as well as self repetition later in her own book, where the same issues are explored in further detail.

Chapter Two moves on to a discussion of gender and spectatorship, although this seems largely dominated by female spectatorship. Taking up where she left off in the first chapter, Aaron details the influence of psychoanalysis in spectatorship debates, primarily Laura Mulvey in both 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'(*Screen*, 16(3),1975) and 'Afterthoughts' (in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Indiana University Press, 1989). While she gives a detailed account of how Mulvey's theories work in film analysis by looking at *Rear Window* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954) and other films, she makes clear her scepticism of psychoanalytic film theory, which she feels universalizes women's experiences and position as spectator. Mention is given to other dominant players in feminist film theory such as Doane and her account of the female masquerade, Modleski and her reading of Hitchcock's *Rebecca* (1940), as well as Williams and multiple identification. With psychoanalysis as a method of examining spectatorship proving limiting and problematic for Aaron, the focus is then shifted to spectatorship and the social subject. Television and Reception studies are cited as moving the spotlight from psychoanalysis to the spectator as agent and, so, issues of difference are raised, albeit never explored in great detail. Although Aaron seems to favour

reception studies and the social subject, it reads more as an afterthought, as does the short piece on male spectatorship at the chapter's end.

In Chapter Three Aaron concentrates on masochism in relation to the film text and spectatorship. She returns to Freud to explain how and why people take pleasure from pain, but moves beyond Freud to argue that there is active engagement in pain or "pleasure in unpleasure" (57). Relating this to *Letter From an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophuls, 1948), Aaron suggests that the protagonist engages in a fulfilling masochistic fantasy. The bulk of this chapter concerns film noir and its genre successors. Aaron discusses more how masochism is constructed and represented in the text, rather than how it is experienced by the spectator. The contemporary erotic thriller is examined, and here the spectator's masochism is directly linked to the sadomasochism of films such as *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992) and *Bound* (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1996). Interestingly, the emergence of this genre is related to what Aaron feels is a change in patterns of spectatorship. She connects the blatant masochism of contemporary films to the growth of mainstream masochism (tattooing, body piercing) in 1990s culture, as well as the rise of the internet and VCRs which enabled private viewings in the home.

Chapter Four moves on to a discussion of the ethics of spectatorship, and asks what it means that the spectator can watch acts in films that would otherwise be considered abhorrent or unconscionable. She asks if there is any kind of responsibility involved in spectatorship, particularly when modern films appear more explicit, sometimes immoral, and can often blur the line between the real and the unreal. Aaron states that, usually within film, spectators can engage in a suspension of disbelief, but that this is often made difficult by certain contemporary films or film practices. She cites a number of self-reflexive films that break this by disrupting conventional filmmaking practices and stretching the borders of what is morally acceptable (for example, *Peeping Tom* (Michael Powell, 1960) and Kathryn Bigelow's 1995 film, *Strange Days*).The self-reflexive text, she says, draws attention to the distance or lack of distance between spectator and image. A discussion of a few Dogme '95 films follows, a movement which tries to seek a truth not found in mainstream cinema. The unconventional filmmaking of Dogme highlights the role of the spectator, and in some of the Dogme films, spectatorship of uncomfortable events is a key theme. Again, as in previous chapters, Aaron does not delve into what outcome this might have for film spectatorship. In the last part of the chapter Aaron continues with the ethics debate, which she feels has been neglected in cultural studies. She views the Dogme films as ethical because the spectator must acknowledge their position and relationship to the text. For her, films that lack ethics are those that do not encourage responsibility (she mentions Stephen Spielberg's 1998 film, *Saving Private Ryan*).These may be moral films, but the emotional response activated by the film denies the viewer any sense of complicity or responsibility. Aaron is particularly interested in spectatorship of the real (news) and the unreal (film) and the implications this has on spectatorship. She closes by suggesting that contemporary postmodern culture makes necessary a case for further debates on spectatorship.

The book works well as an introductory guide to spectatorship, and navigates the last forty years of the subject in a very coherent and readable manner. Aaron makes some interesting points along the way, and avoids taking the easy route of selecting primarily canonical films. Her inclusion of recent independent, popular film is an attempt to bring spectatorship into the new millennium, although at times Aaron has a habit of raising interesting and provocative questions and then moving on all too quickly. Ultimately, *Spectatorship: The Power of*

Looking On is recommended reading for undergraduates or as a starting point for anyone interested in the topic.

Manly Arts: Masculinity and Nation in Early American Cinema

By David A. Gerstner
Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006. ISBN: 0-8223-3763-0. xvi + 320pp. £14.95 (pbk)

A review by John Saddington, University of York, UK

A consistent theme throughout this very interesting book is that American art, be it theatre, cinema, painting and so on, has long been felt to be authentic, tough, everyday and manly, while European art was instead thought to be soft and effeminate. There can even be a class dimension to this, as we find in the disagreements between two actors in the late 1800s, William Macready, a faux-aristocrat Englishman, and Edwin Forrest, a working-class American. They differed in their approaches to acting styles and representations of manliness and, as Gerstner reports, there was occasional rioting by the respective audiences. Out of this debate came the idea that to be a true American was, in fact, to be masculine. As Gerstner later points out, European soft and unmanly civilisation was to be contrasted with American tough primitivism. As we shall see later in this review, these feelings extended to whether a particular cultural activity was embraced or rejected by the Americans. In the Forrest/Macready spat, it was manliness and perceived authenticity which prevailed.

Gerstner outlines how strong such notions became, which were not only restricted to matters of gender but also common sense versus elitism and realism versus dramatic licence. As the debate between realism and expressionism raged in Europe, so too did it simmer within the ranks of the pioneers of American cinema. At one point, the term 'realism' is cited as a standard measurement of beauty, owing to an association with common sense. This was adopted by a number of film producers of early cinema, who were at pains to ensure their films looked and felt like real life, and they tried to achieve this by using narrative and filmic techniques which were felt to be plain, non-elitist and natural. We can debate whether they achieved their objectives, but we have to accept their aims as reported contemporaneously, for instance PathŽ boss J.A. Berst commenting in 1916 that "realismÉis the essential quality in a picture -- that goes without saying" (58).

The book is very useful at mapping conflicts and partnerships in cinematic history, such as that between Macready and Forrest, or American and European styles as already mentioned, and another is introduced early in the book which centres on Hugo Munsterberg, Theodore Roosevelt and J. Stuart Blackton. Blackton was a film producer who collaborated with the statesman and icon Roosevelt, while Munsterberg was an academic at Harvard University. Blackton produced and directed *The Battle Cry of Peace* (1916) and this was intended to rouse America from its slumber and ill-preparedness for war and tough decisions about its future. Munsterberg was initially supportive of Roosevelt's interventions in the arts scene, but this film was a step too far. The two men quarrelled about the use of films as propaganda and never really resolved their political and aesthetic differences. Blackton and Roosevelt felt that at times of war, "all means, including art, were to be pressed into practical service" (77) and

that "artÉ[was to be]Émandated to galvanise American spirit, efficiency and, above all, patriotism" (80) whereas Munsterberg felt that films "should strive for 'wholesome influence' and 'upbuilding of the national soul'" (77) instead. This debate rattled on for some time, and Gerstner's account of it is interesting and well-referenced.

Another conflict referred to in the book concerns American sensibilities during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century and their search for a cultural identity. Gerstner refers to the prevailing thought that photography hinted at how art could develop in a way befitting the American urge towards machinery, modernism and primitivism at the time, but it was considered essentially European (taking us back to the debate between Macready and Forrest referred to above). So instead, the movies were heralded as the way forward, "the cinema stood in position as America's art form precisely because it was derived from the machine" (140).

Gerstner includes an insightful aside in relation to a seminal film called *Manhatta* (Paul Strand and Charles Wheeler, 1921). This film, at seven minutes long, was considered by many to be America's first avant-garde film. Indeed, it contributed to New York's ever expanding skyline being regarded as America's new frontier. About the same time a suggestion was made -- in all seriousness, it seems -- that the ideal length of a film should be between one quarter and one half of a film reel. The reason given was that imagist poetry at the time tended to be between one quarter and one half of a page in length! It is not reported whether this 'advice' received serious consideration by anybody.

So who is this book for? Students looking at early American cinema will do well to refer to this book in the early stages of their work, as it contains an excellent notes section, good bibliography and helpful index. In addition, researchers interested in the development of American cultural issues from the early days of cinema will find a lot to interest them in this book. It is probably not for the general reader, as it deals directly with some complex issues without trivializing them, and subsequently requires diligence and an "active reading." However, I believe that the work required to understand the arguments and piece together the narrative is well worth it. Gerstner has put together a book that does not shirk from its ambitious goals and succeeds where lesser texts would have failed. It contains many well-crafted phrases and original ideas which should recommend it to those keen to expand their understanding of this topic and interact with an engaging text. By way of an example, during a discussion of racial tension and conflict, Gerstner refers to a series of negotiations between Roosevelt and Booker T Washington by saying that Roosevelt had "offeredÉan olive branch dipped in white paternal benevolence" (85). This is but one of a number of examples of attractive phrasing from Gerstner throughout this fine and recommendable book.

Multimedia Histories: From the Magic Lantern to the Internet

By James Lyons and John Plunkett (eds.)
Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-85989-773-0 (pbk). ISBN 978-0-85989-772-3 (hbk). 38 illustrations, xxv+275pp. £15 (pbk), £47.50 (hbk)
Picture Perfect: Landscape, Place and Travel in British Cinema Before 1930 By Laraine Porter and Bryony Dixon (eds.)

Picture Perfect: Landscape, Place and Travel in British Cinema Before 1930

By Laraine Porter and Bryony Dixon (eds.)

Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-90581-601-9 (pbk). ISBN 978-1-90581-600-2 (hbk). 34 illustrations, xii+143pp. £14.99 (pbk), £39.99 (hbk)

A review by Tom Ruffles, Anglia Ruskin University, UK

The University of Exeter Press is well-established as a publisher of film and television titles, and these two volumes are useful additions to their list. Both are collections of essays based on conference presentations, and each displays the strengths and weaknesses of that approach: on the one hand contributions usually have something new to say (though perhaps not so new after the four-year gap between initial delivery and publication); but they sometimes feel like works in progress, and do not always appear to be directly relevant to the titles of the collections, a heterogeneity that comes from taking what comes in from a call for papers rather than a planned overview of a topic.

Lyons and Plunkett's *Multimedia Histories* (in the *Exeter Studies in Film History* series) is the more substantial of the two. It is based on a conference held at the University of Exeter in 2003 (as reviewed in *Scope*, May 2004), which was the springboard for a project run by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (as was) Centre for British Film and Television Studies, called *Screen Practice Before Film*. This remediation of conference talks has been worth the wait, because these are in the main very strong essays. The results range widely as the sub-title indicates, from Victorian optical toys to the latest developments in the internet, and while including likely contenders for a volume on multimedia culture in the shape of photography, cinema, radio, video games and the internet, has some that are more intriguing, such as avant-garde music, dance, automata and cosmetic surgery. The result is a rich blend of historical and theoretical insights that yields dividends despite the occasionally stodgy style.

The sixteen essays are divided into four sections, designed to maximize the sense of interconnectedness rather than as a strictly linear exposition. The first begins with a plea by

Ian Christie to consider the hardware in our exploration of the development of cinema's antecedents, while avoiding a teleological approach which sees the emergence of cinema as the culmination of technological developments that retrospectively can be seen feeding into it. It can be regarded as a motif for the book as a whole, emphasizing how much the modern media landscape is indebted to its forebears, an indebtedness that is too often obscured, and also how important it is to keep the past constantly in view as we confront the media landscape of the future.

The other pieces in the first section develop another major theme of the book, the ways in which technological developments influence how we view the world, with Damian Sutton writing about Henri Bergson's theories of perception in the context of the growth of the cinematograph; and an analysis by Charlie Gere of the relationship between perception and real-time systems developed during the cold war (though perhaps more emphasis could have been placed on their origins in the Second World War) that influenced the production and reception of John Cage's *4'33"* (1952). Lastly William Boddy enquires what 'convergence' actually means (by probing past moments when claims were made for converging technologies), precisely what aesthetic and institutional autonomy meant in the first place, and who stood to profit by convergence. He also asks what causal relationships electronic media have with social change.

The next section focuses on how old forms adapt to new media, with contributions comparing collecting photographs in albums and on a computer (Patrizia Di Bello); how the World Wide Web functions in a manner reminiscent of a cabinet of curiosities (Michelle Henning); how the concept of the android has been utilized by cinema in the form of the 'synthespian' (Dan North); and an examination of the evolution of dance manuals from the 1920s to their redundancy in the days of disco (Jonathan Bollen). The third section reinforces the longevity of interactivity. It covers the usage of the stereoscope, and how it relates to a longer tradition of optical toys (John Plunkett); the early film shows in Britain, and how they can be seen as embedded in a class-based sensationalist entertainment industry (Andrew Shail); a case study by James Bennett of the BBC's interactive services, particularly the way it presented *Walking with Beasts* (2001); and a description by Andrea Zapp of gallery installations linked to the internet that allowed remote participation in developing a scenario.

The final section, 'Visions of Convergence: Bringing Media Together,' suggests a summary and speculations of how the media landscape of the future might look, but actually comprises a scrutiny of visual motifs in Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* (by Isobel Armstrong); the work of the magic lanternist Alexander Black and how his shows -- "slow movies" -- echoed the structure of the narrative film, far in advance of the form as it then existed (Kaveh Askari); the interactivity afforded by DVD (less than initially promised by the industry) and video games, and the overlaps found in media types and delivery mechanisms (Richard Grusin); and, last of all, an analysis by James Lyons of the discourses surrounding a drama series and associated website about cosmetic surgery.

Apart from a tendency to opaque language, my only substantial criticism is the assertion that chemical-based photography has an "indexical link with reality," that is, corresponds "point by point to nature" as Charles Peirce puts it, a correspondence now under threat from digitization. This demonstrates a misunderstanding of how photography works, implying that the scene captured is an unmediated slice of reality. It ignores the extent to which meaning is determined by issues of framing, lens quality, distance from subject, camera movement, f-stop, focal length, exposure time, filters, paper grade, dodging, burning, composite printing,

and all the other ways in which a non-digital photograph can be manipulated. Such control did not begin with Photoshop.

Overall, this collection, while mapping the terrain, does so in a way that promises exciting developments for future scholarship. It shows how fruitful connections between cultural expressions past and present can be, and suggests how much more work there is to be done in extending the notion of convergence from the usual diachronic emphasis on multimedia to a synchronic one. The editors have done a good job of emphasizing the contemporary relevance of old technologies, not just their antiquarian interest.

Where some of the items in *Multimedia Histories* require an effort to decode them, the thirteen in Laraine Porter and Bryony Dixon's much shorter book *Picture Perfect* (in the *New Research in British Film and Television Studies* series) are models of clarity, though it too suffers from an arbitrariness that is unavoidable when gathering contributions from disparate authors, in this case presentations made to the 2003 British Silent Cinema Festival held at Nottingham. Their brevity is presumably caused by time limitations imposed on speakers.

The editors are well placed to edit this collection, one being the co-ordinator of the festival and the other a curator at the British Film Institute's National Archive, specializing in the silent period. The volume begins with a description by Bryony Dixon of the sixth festival and some of the themes that emerged, and indicates some of the potential entries that were omitted. The term 'landscape' would seem to privilege the rural, perhaps emphasized by the cover illustration showing Alma Taylor *Comin' Thro' the Rye* (Cecil M. Hepworth, 1923), but depictions of the urban environment are also dealt with, although not to such a great extent. A constant theme throughout is the extent to which cinematic representations of place, both fiction and non-fiction, have helped to construct an image of nation, whether it be grimy inner city or rural idyll.

An essay on realistic depictions of society's criminal underbelly (complementing Shail's on sensationalist entertainments in *Multimedia Histories*) by Tony Fletcher gives a brief overview of rural and urban violence in early British films, some familiar, others less so. A surprising quantity of crime is displayed, showing how filmmakers took Northcliffe's 'Get me a murder a day!' to heart. There is clearly much work to be done in disinterring early cinema's relationship to the tradition of crime reporting in the sensationalist press, as well as the crusading investigative journalism typified by W. T. Stead. Paul Moody looks at ancillary print materials -- advertising and press books -- showing how landscapes in early films were exploited for marketing purposes, again highlighting an area too often neglected by the focus on the films themselves.

An examination of pictorialism in Cecil Hepworth's films by Simon Brown concentrates particularly on the period 1908-13, contrasting unfavourably Hepworth's grasp of narrative structure with that of his international competitors, and is followed by a consideration by Christine Gledhill of the concept of pastoral and how it subverts a simple polarization between town and country: individuals move between the two realms, which in the process take on an ideological freight as pastoral becomes a site of transformation. Two further essays, one by Judith Cowan, the other by Judith McLaren, feature leisure issues in urban and rural setting respectively. In the first, the city as depicted in the *Rogues of London* (Bert Haldane, 1915) is seen through a lens inflected by class. The second is on the popular genre of horse racing films in the silent period.

An essay on filming in Iceland, by Ivo Blom, though interesting, seems tangential to the aims of the collection, while one on the film industry that flourished on the French Riviera (by Amy Sargeant) is linked much more firmly to British cinema. Closer to home, an investigation by the prolific Ian Christie of how filmic depictions of the Boer War were consumed in a small part of North London makes a fascinating but all too brief case study. Patrick Keiller's essay on the city of the future is largely a reprint of an article that appeared in the AHRB's Centre for British Film and Television Studies' newsletter Winter 2003/4, in which Keiller reflects both on his own filmmaking practice, and how film can make us aware of changes in the built environment. And Alan Burton excavates some examples of Labour movement films of parades, and discusses how these records show the ways in which public space was contested.

In a lively collection of recent scholarship quibbles are few. There is surprisingly little reflection on the emphasis on pastoral nostalgia that emerged during the Great War, nor the social upheavals that followed it. A two-colour additive process was certainly 'experimental' in 1906, when George Albert Smith was granted a patent for what would become Kinemacolor, but it was hardly experimental by the time Claude Friese-Greene made *The Open Road* (1926). And although it is true to say that little work has been done on the role lecturers played as accompanists to silent film, mention should be made, in addition to Nick Hiley, who is cited, of Martin Sopocy, who discusses the role of the narrator at great length in his *James Williamson: Studies and Documents of a Pioneer of the Film Narrative* (Associated University Presses, 1998).

Part of the enjoyment of this volume, which sheds new light on old favourites and brings to light pleasures yet to come in the form of hitherto unknown films, is that, unlike the one-off *Multimedia Histories* conference, the Silent British Cinema festival occurs every year. This book provides encouragement -- if any were needed -- to book tickets to Nottingham for the next one.

The Gospel of the Living Dead: George Romero's Visions of Hell on Earth

By Kim Paffenroth
Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-93279-265-2 (pbk). 175 pp. £16.99

A review by Steffen Hantke, Sogang University, Seoul, South Korea

Kim Paffenroth's *Gospel of the Living Dead* is a thematic study of George Romero's four *Living Dead* films -- *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), *Day of the Dead* (1985), and *Land of the Dead* (2005), as well as Zack Snyder's remake of *Dawn of the Dead* (2004). Given the importance of this cinematic cycle in American horror cinema, this is hardly a surprising project. What is surprising, however, is the book's place of publishing -- Baylor University Press -- and the author's institutional affiliation -- he is a professor of Religious Studies. Both indicate that the book and its author operate somewhere and somehow in relation to a Christian agenda. The book's goals are twofold -- to provide a basic introduction to the cycle of films by, and associated with, George Romero, and to read the moral and social issues in the films, which is where the author's Christian agenda enters the picture. At first glance, one may suspect that primary texts and critical agenda require considerable effort to be made to fit. Instinctively, one might say, the approach feels extraneous to the films, an odd superimposition, a contrivance. What new insights could such an approach possibly produce with such a body of work?

To begin with, Paffenroth's book is part of a larger movement of critical assessments of horror auteurs in recent years, which includes, among others, Ian Conrich's and David Woods' collection of essays on John Carpenter (*The Cinema of John Carpenter*, Wallflower Press, 2005), William Beard's massive study of the films of David Cronenberg (*The Artist as Monster*, University of Toronto Press, 2001), or Tony Williams' *The Cinema of George Romero* (Wallflower Press, 2003). Dismissed in the 1970s and '80s as mere provocateurs working below the radar of serious cultural engagement, directors like Romero have not just endured, but have gained in status and have achieved comfortable degrees of canonization. Revered, referenced, and remade, films by these idiosyncratic directors of 1970s and '80s neo-horror are now recognized not only for the innovations they brought to the genre, but as an integral part of American cinema.

With undisguised affection for his topic, Paffenroth subscribes to this canonical assumption about Romero. Though he acknowledges that his zombie films are too violent, disgusting, and politically radical ever to become popular with American mainstream audiences, he is nonetheless framing them as examples of artistically conscious social and political critique. As much as he cautions the conservative, perhaps conservatively Christian, segment of his readership about the graphic nature of the films, he continues to insist on their cultural value and lasting relevance.

With this readership in mind, the book presumes little or no knowledge of Romero's *Living Dead* films on the part of its audience. The considerable body of scholarship on the horror film in general and on the zombie film and Romero's work in particular, is relegated to the extensive textual and bibliographic notes, where it functions as second, more theoretically informed tier of the book's larger argument, available to more academically minded readers, but not essential for the broader audience. A lengthy synopsis at the beginning of each of the five chapters introduces the films' plots and characters. Each synopsis is followed by an analysis section, which, in turn, is followed by a brief conclusion, both of which provide discussion on the films' significance.

Paffenroth's analysis is a straightforward reading of the films in terms of their social and moral content, some of which is cast in theological terms whenever it seems appropriate. Some comments on individual shots or scenes aside, there is little discussion of technique or style or the medium of cinema itself as contributing to the films' meaning. Instead, the discussion focuses almost exclusively on plot and character, with a special emphasis on what the films have to say about communities, the mechanics of their internal functioning, and the individual and collective values that make it possible.

The terms in which Paffenroth examines the films' moral content tend to be so abstract as to be ahistorical and essentialist. This is not to say that Paffenroth is not aware of historical contexts; brief comments about the specific conditions under which the films were made demonstrate that the deemphasizing of historical context is simply a result of relying on essentialist notions like "human nature" or "original sin" without questioning these notions as to their own status as ideological constructs (i.e. as concepts that, in themselves, depend on historical context for their validity). Readers might like or dislike this critical approach, but nobody can fault Paffenroth for inconsistency.

Paffenroth's frame of reference for Romero's work is, for the most part, the moral universe described by Dante, to whose *Divine Comedy* the argument frequently returns for analogies and elucidation. This choice signals a readiness on Paffenroth's part, which he often acknowledges explicitly, to recast the religious terms of his analysis in secular terms. It is true that the exegesis depends heavily on Christian concepts of original sin, redemption, and faith; also, there is a larger narrative running through all five chapters in which Paffenroth emphasizes a move on Romero's part from grim desperation in *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) to a sense of reconciliation and hope in *Land of the Dead* (2005) -- a reading that might be inspired less by a change in Romero and more by a predilection in Paffenroth. Still, this opening up of the argument from a Christian to a secular perspective, and vice versa, is more than just a grudging concession to an audience not limited to Christian readers. Though not exactly a fan of Romero's work, Paffenroth is an admirer of its critical stance, its ability to ask tough question to its American audiences, and its potential for politicizing its audiences and granting them, ultimately, a sense of catharsis. Though his admiration sometimes manifests itself in a personal excitement that exceeds the common level permissible in academic film criticism, the seriousness with which he treats Romero's moral, social, and political is genuine, contagious, and thus difficult to dismiss.

Overall, the book's appeal is mostly to those coming fresh to Romero's work, or those opposed to it on grounds of surface morality. For these readers, Paffenroth makes a convincing case that graphic violence and distasteful subject matter does not equal depravity. Hence, his book might broaden Romero's audience and move his films more firmly into the cultural mainstream, a mainstream in which, at least in the U.S., Christian beliefs and value

judgments do play an important role. For those readers unfamiliar with a Christian approach to horror film, the book provides a test case of their own boundaries and belief systems. Since a Christian approach, by and large, constitutes a sideline in academic film criticism, it may sometimes create a sense of cognitive and rhetorical friction for readers immersed in the secular mainstream of academic film criticism. But for those same readers, it also provides a unique new angle from which to review these films about which so much has already been written. A such, the book is neither a radical break from existing scholarship -- for that, the foundational research in the notes is too thorough and conscientious; nor is it a breakthrough into a rich, new vein of inquiry. Intelligently and sympathetically argued, it is what all scholarship on a canonical topic can aim for -- a small yet valuable addition to the already existing state of research. With this in mind, *Gospel of the Living Dead* is a book well worth reading.

Screens Fade to Black: Contemporary African American Cinema

By David J. Leonard
NULL
Dark Designs and Visual Culture By Michele Wallace

Dark Designs and Visual Culture

By Michele Wallace

Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. ISBN: 978-0-82233-413-2 (pbk). 49 photos + 462pp. £14.99

A review by Michele Prettyman Beverly, Georgia State University, USA

Black cinema studies and black cultural studies are both areas of study that continue to grow. David Leonard's recently released book entitled *Screens Fade to Black*, and Michele Wallace's compilation*Dark Designs and Visual Culture*, both make unique contributions to these sub-genres respectively. Leonard focuses his attention on critical analyses of contemporary black American cinema, while Wallace's extensive volume documents her critical perspectives on issues ranging from blacks in academe and the Million Man March to feminism, art history and black visual and popular culture.

Leonard articulates his critical premise in the title of his introductory chapter, 'Screens Fade to Black, But Little Has Changed.' Taking an admittedly political stance, he critiques a number of films made by black filmmakers, including *Baby Boy* (John Singleton, 2001), *Training Day* (Antoine Fuqua, 2001), *Love & Basketball* (Gina Prince-Bythewood, 2000) and *Antwone Fisher* (Denzel Washington, 2002). Leonard's analytical approach integrates the cultural studies perspectives of scholars like Stuart Hall with social science theory from the likes of Patricia Hill Collins and Craig Watkins. His approach evaluates black film not as an artistic endeavour, but primarily as a political and sociological entity that both reflects and constructs social ideology.

Using the 2002 Oscar wins of Halle Berry (*Monster's Ball*, Marc Forster, 2001) and Denzel Washington (*Training Day*, Fuqua, 2001) as pivotal historical moments, he evaluates the state of cinema and race. He argues that the current discourse on African Americans and cinema should centre not so much on the film industry and its representation of blacks, or on the surge of African American filmmakers, but rather on the importance of the ideologies present in much of contemporary black cinema. He argues that many films made by blacks perpetuate ideologies of 'new racism' and 'colour-blindness' that have not altered the

traditional problematic ideologies and representational patterns of Hollywood cinema in any substantive way. Ultimately, he claims that the identity and race of the filmmaker makes little difference in how the films continue to code race. Furthermore he bemoans racial ideologies that minimize racism, demonize the poor and working class, and reinforce notions of dysfunction in communities of colour.

Screens Fade to Black is organised as an analysis of particular genres of black cinema, Chapters One and Five being introduction and conclusion, and Chapters Two through Four offering critiques of black urban films, black family dramas, and black comedies. Leonard's analyses do not valorize much of the current academic film methodologies, but again he draws from social scientific data and sociological explanations. For example he does not mention the work of Paula Massood who has written extensively on black urban cinema, but cites scholars Robin Kelley who has written about how popular culture images ghettoes and poverty. While Leonard's arguments about the films tend to place more emphasis on the relationship between sociology and ideology, he does offer alternative readings of these films, noting contradictions that surface. For example, he discusses how the film *Antwone Fisher* was described as an empowering tale of black male survival, but could also be read as "a story of several evil black women" (48). Both readings he suggests belie the real narrative of a failing nation with inadequate resources geared towards children of colour.

Chapter Three, entitled 'Is this Really African American Cinema? Black Middle-Class Dramas and Hollywood,' looks at *Soul Food* (George Tillman Jr., 1997), *Love & Basketball* (Prince-Bythewood, 2000), *Drumline* (Charles Stone III, 2002), *Brown Sugar* (Rick Famuyiwa, 2002), and *Good Fences* (Ernest R. Dickerson, 2003), as films that focus on black experiences, themes and communities. Here, Leonard again challenges the notion that these films connect to African American viewers in familiar and non-threatening ways, arguing, instead, that they oversimplify racism by focusing on traditional middle-class values like education, hard work and the pursuit of the American Dream. Chapter Four examines possibly the most controversial genre of African American Cinema -- comedies -- by exposing how recent black comedies conceive and construct blackness, sexuality and gender. He focuses particular attention on the films *Soul Plane* (Jessy Terrero, 2004) and Queen Latifah's *Bringing Down the House* (Adam Shankman, 2003), which he cites as deploying overt and particularly offensive stereotypes.

The concluding chapter of *Screens Fade to Black* again returns to a theme that Leonard raises in the first chapter -- that the success of black film actors and actresses like Queen Latifah and Will Smith, and of directors like Singleton and Lee, in his estimation only "blackens screens," but does little in the way of changing dominant ideologies. Leonard concludes by reifying the connection between film and socially scientific methodologies, saying

> *Screens Fade to Black* is not a collection of denouncements against a series of films that I don't like, but rather an effort to talk about representation politics and ideology. I do, however, hate oppression and white supremacist discourses and practice -- I loathe violence, poverty and despair. In this sense, *Screens Fade to Black* is not so much about film but about the ways in which films aid and abet structural inequalities. (194)

This passage goes far in ascertaining Leonard's intent. These films are measured primarily against his belief, which he does not explicitly acknowledge, that films produced by African Americans are, in part, responsible for challenging white supremacist ideologies. Leonard

should however acknowledge that black filmmakers and audiences do not all share his belief that black films must fulfil this particular purpose.

Screens Fade to Black is most effectively geared towards undergraduate students, and sophisticated laypersons who want to strengthen their understanding of how film narratives, and characterization can both influence and challenge our constructions of race. While Leonard eschews the discourse that focuses heavily on African Americans and stereotypes, he ultimately gets sucked back into this discussion. As a result, some of his readings of the films in terms of racism, colour-blindness and stereotypes seem a bit antiquated, reverting back to discourse that was prevalent in the 1980s and early 90s. He also presumes that the reactions of his peers and classmates are indicative of the reactions of the broader spectrum of African American viewers. Additionally, the book could have benefited from additional proofreading, as there are a number of errors in sentence structure and a few glaring inaccuracies. Overall, *Screens Fade to Black* does its best work when it does not presume what black film should be, but rather trains the reader to re-examine and reinterpret images, characterizations and ideologies.

Dark Designs and Visual Culture is an anthology of work that Michele Wallace has compiled throughout her lengthy career as a cultural critic. In close to five hundred pages, Wallace traverses the annals of art and feminist history, multi-culturalism, post-modernism and queer theory, but directs her piercing analytical lens particularly toward a construction, or re-formation, of African American cultural studies. She draws a timeline, better still a map, of moments and phenomena that expose how blacks have created cultural products and interacted with them.

The reader of *Dark Designs* is on a guided tour of recent developments in African American cultural history, making frequent stops in feminist theory and art history, but also exploring theoretical junctures, i.e. structuralism and post-modernism, that are often sharply contested by black artists and theorists. In the extensive introduction and first section of essays Wallace shares her personal photographs and memories of her family, personal relationships, details of her own journey as writer/critic/academic, and most poignantly of her struggle with illness that has plagued her for decades. This rare glimpse into the mind of a writer/critic whose lens is often directed at others, endears Wallace to us in a particular way that softens and humanizes her razor sharp wit. Wallace courageously parallels her personal journey as a writer, as the daughter of an early black feminist/artist, academic and cultural consumer, with the reader's journey through the labyrinth of black visual and popular culture.

Beyond being a critic, Wallace encourages, perhaps admonishes, us to remember cultural studies not simply as something that happens to us or around us, but as something with which we must actively engage. She would perhaps argue that the Million Man March was not a pivotal moment simply because of who showed up, but also because of who did not show up. Wallace's introspections about her role in early feminism, academe and as a parishioner experiencing a local Christmas pageant remind us that culture is happening all around us, and that cultural studies and criticism need not be reserved exclusively to the academic domain, but can be a part of a dynamic public discourse.

Wallace does, however, offer unique and compelling theoretical insights, as in her essay entitled, 'Race, Gender, and Psychoanalysis in Forties Films,' where she delves into the murky waters of race and psychoanalytic film theory. She also weaves a compelling narrative about the converging worlds of black feminists and artists from her own insider's perspective

in essays: 'To Hell and Back: On the Road with Black Feminism in the '60s and '70s,' 'The French Collection' and 'Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Problem of the Visual in Afro-American Culture.' These essays are peppered with the lived experiences of Wallace and her pioneering feminist/artist mother Faith Ringgold.

Offering personal insights, alongside theoretical jargon, Wallace positions herself as an authentic narrator of this history, but also as one who challenges its embedded ideologies. Wallace's style is at times dogmatic and unforgiving of other thinkers/scholars, but she seems well aware, and almost comfortable with this notion. Also, some of the shorter essays might not have been included, as the reader might better be served by focusing on the more densely theoretical material. This anthology does not have a neat target audience, as it mixes short journalistic essays with densely academic ones, but parts of it would be relevant for sophisticated undergraduates and graduate level work as well.

There is not nearly enough space here to discuss the details of fifty-plus essays in this volume that is not only a critical compilation of interpersonal musings but is also an invaluable manual for black cultural studies theory. Wallace offers a new paradigmatic challenge for cultural critics, one that encourages personal introspection and theoretical exploration. This work is critical to the advancement of black cultural and visual studies.

The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century

By Zhang Zhen (ed.)
Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-82234-074-4 (pbk). 60 illustrations, x + 447pp. £14.99

A review by Peter C. Pugsley, University of Melbourne, Australia

Introducing this collection, editor Zhang Zhen defines the Urban Generation as marking out a position for post-1989 Chinese cinema that moves beyond the restrictive definitions of the Fifth and Sixth Generation. The Urban Generation emerges as a "minority" cinema peopled by "a motley crew of plebeian but nonetheless troubled people on the margins of the age of transformation -- ranging from aimless bohemians, petty thieves, KTV bar hostesses, prostitutes and postmen" (3). Set against a background of "the bulldozer, the building crane, and the debris of urban ruins" (3) Urban Generation films reflect the fallibility of China's modernization drive, best exemplified by the migrant worker struggling to make good in the increasingly wealthy urban sprawls of Beijing or Shanghai. Marked by its "badge of independence" (9), the Urban Generation emerged from the shadows of the state-sponsored studio system with a body of "video-film amphibious" (18) directors showing a keen awareness for international networking. The book's convenient and effective division into three major parts: 'Ideology, Film Practice and the Market'; 'The Politics and Poetics of Urban Space'; and 'The Production of Desire and Identities', allows each section to feed into the others -- moving from the more prosaic elements of how the films manage to get made to analyses of how (and why) urban space is a key feature of post-socialist China, and ending with insights into the aesthetic beauty of the end product(s).

In Part I, Zhang Yinjin looks at how the production of state-subsidized and commercial films increased in the 1990s, while art films decreased, even though both "moved closer to official ideology" by the end of the 1990s (49). This chapter proposes that the Sixth Generation directors are more aligned with "post-socialism" because of their "institutionally imposed but self-glorified status of marginality," (53) with the "MTV-style" *Dirt* (AKA *Tou fa luan le*, Guan Hu, 1994) "symptomatic of the Sixth Generation in their formative years" (54). The lack of state support was evident in the utilisation of overseas funding from Hong Kong and Taiwan, with state bans merely adding to "generate more overseas investment" (62). Zhang also ponders the recurrent use of "disclaimers", where characters openly recant their actions -- reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution's self-criticisms -- either as a way of "clearing censorship" or a "tactical indictment of political oppression" (64). But Zhang's most unique claim is that "the notion of truth has been appropriated as a strategic position by the new Urban Generation" (70). The tripartite division of leitmotif/art/entertainment film is joined by the underground film as a marker of marginality, but with "all four players" similarly centred on market responses (71).

Focusing on Jia Zhangke's films as "a type of aestheticised long-take realism" (82) Jason McGrath sees this style as reflecting "both an intervention into a specifically Chinese cultural discourse and a cultural commodity that appeals to contemporary global art film aesthetics" (83). McGrath feels that "post-socialist realist cinema" not only voices opposition to the state, but "indirectly critiques mainstream ideology by foregrounding the suffering of ordinary people" (85). Jia's use of a "distended post-socialist time" (90) counters "any master narrative of teleological progress" (89) -- a telling commentary on the failure of China's modernization process. Realism also features in Chris Berry's probe of the post-1989 independent documentaries that distanced themselves from earlier, formally-structured, "illustrated lectures" (117) by moving toward renegade documentary styles featuring spontaneity and spotlighting contemporary urban life. The "on-the-spot realism" of these documentaries emerged in parallel with the Urban Generation's fictional output, each offering a sense that time was "passing in a seemingly uncontrolled manner" (124). Berry also questions the term "independent" in an environment where state facilities (including television station equipment) are frequently utilized in the production of such documentaries.

Part II begins with Sheldon H. Lu's look at the visible reappropriation of China's urban landscapes by media artists intent on capturing the era where "residual traditional culture and socialist habits clash with the emergent capitalist economy" (138). Lu's brief cinematic gaze falls upon the destruction of Beijing presented in Zhang Yang's *Shower* (AKA *Xizao*, 1999), Shi Runjiu's utopian/dystopian Shanghai in *Beautiful New World* (AKA *Meili xin shijie*, 1998), and the impersonal hotel rooms in Feng Xiaogang's *A Sigh* (AKA *Yi sheng tan xi*, 2000). The "remaking" of China's urban spaces is not only reflected in the *auteur* works of those working on the silver screen, for Lu also explores the importance of the "avant-garde" photographers and video artists whose work rarely penetrates beyond Beijing's privately-owned galleries (149). Yomi Braester also discusses *Shower*, noting how Zhang's characters make a video record of the bathhouse demolition -- an important gesture, mimetic of Zhang's own attempts to record "history." Braester examines the "documentary impulse" that draws urban filmmakers to "focus on their use of demolition as a symbol for the need to chronicle the city's transformation" (161) and lists more than a dozen films that dwell on demolition, with "disoriented protagonists" watching the dismantling of their city (164). But rather than a confrontational approach, these films "foreground social issues" in an almost detached manner (165).

In her comparative overview of Yuan Muzhi's *Street Angel* (1937) and Shi Runjiu's *Beautiful New World* (1998), Augusta Palmer finds a "similar iconography, particularly the image of the skyscraper, to express entirely different ideologies about the nature and repercussions of cosmopolitan consumption" (182). *Street Angel* opens with a Shanghai skyscraper, panning from top to subterranean bottom, yet the skyscraper remains inaccessible, impenetrable, to the film's key protagonists -- the whole image an obvious nod to Fritz Lang's dystopian *Metropolis* (1927). Palmer claims that the 1990s was littered with nostalgic references and with "products that attempt to re-create the cosmopolitan aura of pre-liberation Shanghai" (181). While Beijing-based films highlighted the "radical break" from "party-centred public life to individual-centred consumerism," Shanghai-based films romanticized the city as returning to "its cosmopolitan past" (185), and thus *Beautiful New World* emerged as "a virtual consumer primer" (191), and the Shanghai skyline itself as the very "image of success" (200). These cities, according to Linda Chiu-Han Lai, are "the nation's key evidence of modernization" and are "best approached as *heterotopia* [É] a single space with multiple orderings, encounters, cores and planes" (207). Lai's central concern is with films based on the "walker/drifter" character who "bears the scar of displacement or suffers from immense

loneliness" (206, 213). Drawing from Lefebvre's thoughts on the "spatial practices" in which walking makes space meaningful, Lai concludes that walking and/or drifting "is a metaphor of the narrative materialization of the filmmaker's quest and critique of urbanity" (216). This chapter concludes abruptly with a brief word on the freedoms afforded by overseas investment and the ability to (partly) circumnavigate censorship issues.

Part III begins with three chapters exploring gender issues. Shuqin Cui investigates Ning Ying's cinematic 'Beijing trilogy' (*For Fun/ Zhao Le* (1992), *On the Beat/ Min jing gu shi* (1995), and *I Love Beijing/ Xiari nuanyangyang* (2001)) that draws on the "familiar mise-en-sc ne of Beijing behind its affluent districts" to create "an articulation of reality" rather than "an absolute authenticity" (244). Cui balances descriptive plot outlines with a considered critique of Ning's ability to play with stereotypical notions of gendered space. Cui exposes the seemingly contradictory aspects of this female director who "relies on a male fl‰neur and a male perspective for her exploration of urban experience" (256), and questions whether Ning's "seeming lack of concern for feminism" is responsible for "consciously subverting or simply ignoring the major figures, trends and conventions" in her films (242).

BŽrŽnice Reynaud reflects on Zhang Yuan's cinematic contribution to the "marginalised" and the rapid transformation of the cityscape which allows Zhang to create films where "the bastardization of the space and that of the subject overlap" (270). Concerned with the "proliferation of male-directed Sixth Generation films that reinsert the prostitute (or its many incarnations, from karaoke hostess to hairdresser) at the centre of the urban landscape" (288), Reynaud claims that Zhang has thankfully avoided "casting his female protagonists as whores" portraying them as "lost but not fallen" (288). Xueping Zhong, on the other hand, focuses on masculinity in the Shanghai-based *Mr Zhao* (AKA *Zhao xiansheng*, Lu Yue, 1998), and its intriguing conclusion with its mute, incapacitated protagonist sitting serenely in a wheelchair. Zhong unpacks the theme of male desire in relation to Mr Zhao's fall from grace as a "complete" male: husband, father and adulterer, and ponders the significance of Zhao's infirmity in the light of China's massive socio-economic reforms, and whether he represents "a tragic figure, or a redeemed one" (296). She notes the common theme of extramarital affairs in Urban Generation films, perhaps a reflection, or extension, of the liberalization of contemporary China and its "supposedly value-confused society" (299).

Yaohua Shi finds that using police officers as central protagonists is "not only narrative mastery but also a provocative tease of state authority and state discourse" (328). Shi distances these films from generic Hong Kong or western "cop films," instead offering them as "a way of exploring the complex dynamics between an often antagonistic triad: the city, police and film" (317). Shi's clever historicisation of these three "antagonists" argues that film's arrival in early twentieth century China coincided with the onset of "explosive urbanization and rampant crime" (318).

Editor Zhang's final chapter looks at similarities between Wan Quan'an's *Lunar Eclipse* (AKA *Yue shi*, 1999) and Lou Ye's multi-award winning *Suzhou River* (AKA *Suzhou he*, 2000). Not only do both films introduce enigmatic plots involving "phantom sisters," but they share cinematic arthouse styles including the use of "nonlinear narrative, jostling camera movement [and] jump cuts" (345). In harking back to 1933's *Sister Flowers* (AKA *Zi mei hua*, Zheng Zhengqiu), Zhang highlights the lure of the sister/twin as a thematic device. But it is the two contemporary films that best exemplify the "casualties inflicted by the ideology of progress" (379) of which the Urban Generation filmmakers have so successfully captured.

This is a magnificently presented work providing an extremely comprehensive and accessible overview of contemporary Chinese cinema. The briefly annotated filmography of the key Urban Generation directors (by Charles Leary) is a most helpful inclusion.

Incongruous Entertainment: Camp, Cultural Value, and The MGM Musical

By Steven Cohan
Durham and London: Durham University Press, 2005. ISBN: 978-0-82233-595-5 (pbk). 103 illustrations, viii + 368 pages. £14.99

A review by Nadine Wills, Bielefeld University, Germany

Incongruous Entertainment is an incredibly ambitious work, one that resembles an MGM musical in many ways: it entertains you with a cavalcade of stars, glorious details and impressive skill. Cohan's book presents an astounding amount of information, and is an inter-disciplinary triumph rooted in film and gay and lesbian studies, but not limited to these areas. It brings together Hollywood industry history, audience reception and fandom analysis, queer studies, musical/genre studies, masculinity studies, star studies, cultural studies, alongside the overall argument about camp.

What is clear is that the research behind this book is impeccable and builds upon past work on masculinity and musicals (like Cohan's earlier classic essay on Fred Astaire). However, Cohan does not simply reproduce past work here. Some of his main focuses are: detailing the gay workforce in the Freed Unit, Judy Garland and her fans, Gene Kelly and his dance style, *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly, 1952), the *That's Entertainment* series (1974-1994), and the emphasis on whiteness in the MGM style.

Cohan's main approach stems from the idea that "camp situates the films in their industrial production, marketing, and ongoing consumption on home video, and it raises still additional questions about the presumed heterosexualization of the studio-era audience and the homosexualization of contemporary fandom" (40).What he ends up concluding is that, despite its no longer simply being a gay domain camp is ironically more queer than ever: it now goes both ways. Camp was much more institutionalised at MGM in its production and original reception than most previous historians and theorists have previously allowed for. Camp appreciation is also no longer only a queer viewing practice. Heterosexual "friends of Dorothy" abound in his discussion of Garland's contemporary fandom. While his multivalent approach works, I found that his argument about camp was not the strongest contribution that his book has to offer. Instead, it seemed most useful as a starting point for developing a fascinating inter-disciplinary approach which opens up an analysis of the musical and stars on a whole series of levels.

In this book, the most successful chapters were Chapter Three, 'Dancing with Balls: Sissies, Sailors, and the Camp Masculinity of Gene Kelly' and Chapter Six, 'Judy on the Net: Garland, Camp, and Contemporary Fandom.' All of Cohan's strengths come together in these two sections, offering new perspectives and ways of thinking about musicals and preconceptions about sexuality and fandom.

In his chapter on Kelly in particular, Cohan re-thinks and challenges what have long been accepted truisms by analysing extra- and intra-diegetic commentaries. Cohan's analysis of Kelly and his dance style is his strongest textual analysis in the book. His title for Illustration 64 "Gene Kelly dances macho but in cut-offs" (178), is an example of the sort of dry commentary that accompanies his analyses. Cohan points out that although there was continual insistence that Kelly was an excessively macho star, in fact on-screen he was often sexually indeterminate at best. Cohan makes an important point that Kelly's identity was constructed very differently as a star throughout his career and as a performer *inside* the MGM musical:"[T]he camp dialectic of his screen presence as a dancer 'with balls' at the height of his film career stands in bold contrast with what he came to symbolize decades afterward as the MGM poster boy" (198).

Cohan excels at contextualizing stars and their reception. Tracing Garland's relation to camp and its importance in her early career (and in her personal life), Cohan underlines that Garland is no longer as important a figure for gay culture as she once was, in the context of his argument about camp, and then says:

> Deemed irrelevant to explanations of Garland's historic gay following, young female fansÉhave traditionally been absent in accounts of her star text, yet they seem equally attracted to its marginalizing stance toward mainstream culture; moreover, they are now making their presence evident on the Internet. (308-309)

Cohan goes on to analyse the negotiation of fan hierarchies based not just on gender and sexuality, but also on their amateur versus professional status. This is a nuanced and interesting inter-disciplinary cultural studies research. Cohan spends a lot of time considering Garland's star persona, her performances and her fans in this book (as is appropriate based on the subject matter) and provides a thorough consideration of her appeal and role in camp culture.

In Chapter Five, Cohan gives some long overdue attention to the *That's Entertainment* (1974-1994) series of musical clip compilation films. Long ignored by other theorists because of their incongruity, they fit perfectly into this book and Cohan's approach. Indeed, this is where the book really seems to come together. This chapter leads seamlessly on from Chapter Four -- where *Singin' in the Rain* is situated as "the first camp picture" – bringing in these compilation films which are arguably the campiest of films. Providing a fascinating history of the marketing and reception of the series alongside his textual analysis, points from previous chapters, about Esther Williams and Debbie Reynolds, are drawn upon by Cohan to good effect.

However, some of the chapters do get bogged down by the sheer weight of what Cohan is trying to accomplish, especially at the beginning of the book: all the information he is trying to convey can begin to feel disjointed at times. This happens particularly in Chapter Two, 'The Lady Is a Camp: Glamour, Star Turns, and the Boys in the Chorus.' Here Cohan traces "The Great Lady Has 'an Interview'" number through a number of texts and stars from Greer Garson, to Judy Garland, Debbie Reynolds and finally Lana Turner. He also looks at racial marking in MGM films and the chorus boy trope. It is too much for one chapter. In fact, my favourite part of this chapter is arguably a relatively unimportant tangent on tap-dancer Eleanor Powell's in-between-ness. It reminds me of watching an over-produced musical number and getting caught up in how the sequins move on a chorus girl's headdress.

The metaphor seems imminently appropriate. If one was to compare this book to a musical number, perhaps it would be most like one of the Gene Kelly ballet numbers. "Broadway Ballet" in *An American in Paris* (Vincente Minnelli, 1951): entertaining and excessive, perhaps a bit too long and complicated at times, yet still impressive and undeniably skilled. This book is, in another way, like an extended DVD version with all the outtakes and extras right there for you just in case you wanted to know. *Incongruous Entertainment* is certainly worth reading in all its extravagant camp glory. I am definitely a fan.

Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees

By Christian Keathley
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006. ISBN: 0-253-34648-7 (hbk); ISBN 0-253-21795-4 (pbk). 13 illustrations, xiv + 212pp. £38.00 (hbk), £12.95 (pbk)

A review by Jason Sperb, Indiana University, USA

Academic film studies can be hostile territory to open declarations of love. Like a gentle breeze, Christian Keathley's new book, *Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees*, offers a refreshing respite to scholars throughout this often harsh and desolate landscape. Articulating a nuanced discussion of cinephilia's historical origins and continuing theoretical possibilities, Keathley puts forth a broad-ranging discussion that proposes an intellectually rigorous space for discussing cinephilia in academia (which has shunned, in recent years, explicit discussions of pleasure when examining the cinematic text). By these standards, *Cinephilia and History* works remarkably well.

Keathley bases a great deal of his theoretical argument on Paul Willemen's famous conversation on cinephilia with Noel King, first published in 1994. In the article/interview, 'Through the Glass Darkly,' Willemen first posited a more theoretically perceptive concept of cinephilia -- one less rooted in cultural movements (i.e., the Parisian *Cahiers* group of the 1950s and 1960s) that traditionally (and often indirectly) defined the subject. Willemen centres his discussion on the 'cinephiliac moment' -- an epiphanic moment of intense joy, brought on by some indescribable experience during a particular sequence in a film. Keathley clarifies this as "the fetishizing of fragments of a film, either individual shots or marginal (often unintentional) details in the image, especially those that appear only for a moment" (7). This moment gives rise to the book's title -- The Wind in the Trees," which refers to the famous anecdote where many early viewers of the Lumiere films were reportedly enthralled more by the wind blowing through the trees in the background, and less so by the foregrounded action staged for the camera. Willemen's suggestion has proven to be profoundly influential on young cinephiles, particularly those within academia; however, he raises the notion of the cinephiliac moment without much of a sustained discussion that could have articulated both its constitution and its usefulness beyond that first epiphanic impulse. It is the first of Keathley's accomplishments to enhance and develop this possibility into a more rigorous theory. He does this by expanding Willemen's idea into two other concepts -- the "cinephiliac anecdote" and "panoramic perception."

Keathley begins his discussion by recounting one of his own cinephiliac moments (repeated verbatim at the end) -- a long fascination with the particular way in which, for him, Jeffrey Hunter's body seems to float through the air during a sequence late in John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956). Despite this image's powerful hold on Keathley, established models of critical thinking fail to yield a sufficient explanation for the phenomenon. This, he argues, demands an intervention. "The extraordinary pleasure I take in this moment would surely be classified as a kind of fetishism -- something I would quickly and proudly acknowledge," he

writes, "but then it is likely to be dismissed with a condescending snigger" (2). Although the ideas in Keathley's work will be valuable for a wide range of cinephiles, *Cinephilia and History* explicitly posits itself as stemming from, and speaking back to, an academic void. How can academics articulate and find discursive value in this "kind of fetishism"? The negative "reaction is strange, though, when one considers that Film Studies as an academic discipline owes much to cinephilia in all its forms and manifestations" (2). In the early days of scholarship, Keathley argues an intense passion for film caused so many to seek legitimacy through a formal articulation of film studies as a discipline. Yet, he adds, as soon as film gained that recognition, it immediately turned its back on issues of pleasure -- now seen as something that was, at the very least, frivolous and pointless, and, at the very worst, deceptive and destructive.

Keathley understands, however, that for academics to regard cinephilia seriously again, it must also move beyond the fetishism of a moment. He argues that, while idiosyncratic to a point, the cinephiliac moment is something shared by cinephiles throughout the years. Many writers, from Fran ois Truffaut, to Peter Wollen, to James Naremore, to David Thomson, have articulated a particular fascination with fragments of existing films, isolating specific peripheral details -- such as, to use one oft-cited example, Gary Grant's red socks during the famous crop-duster chase scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959). To perceive these fragments, meanwhile, Keathley suggests a particular mode of viewing entitled "panoramic perception," which he regards as "the cinephile's defining mode of vision" (30). This requires grazing the entirety of the cinematic image, taking in all the details -- intended or otherwise. This demands too looking around and beyond the foregrounded action, that which is staged for the camera with the particular agenda of moving forward the narrative. Keathley argues that the cinephile has long privileged this mode of perception, where cinephiliac moments can and do emerge.

Keathley use this as a seed for what he calls the "cinephiliac anecdote" -- something whereby a particular fragment builds, almost stream-of-conscious-like, into a more substantive discussion of the film in question and even film history more generally. "With the cinephiliac anecdote," Keathley writes, "the cinephile tells a story about -- or a story that embodies -- his or her relationship with the cinema, a story that has an effect on knowledge in the generalizable sense about its object, as well as in some personal sense" (151). This anecdote is difficult to define, except by example, and so Keathley wisely concludes his book with a series of five cinephiliac anecdotes (most of them written or co-written by him) relaying moments and information on such films as *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956), *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955), *Shadow of a Doubt* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1943) and others. In *Shadow*, for example, Keathley begins with a fixation on the background presence of a child extra in one outdoor scene who appears, then disappears and then reappears, to build an historical narrative which touches upon: aspects of the making of the film; Hitchcock's traditional use of off-camera space and of actors; hypothesizing about the actor himself (whom Keathley cannot identify for sure); and tying the entire discussion back to the film's much-discussed subtext of vampirism. As an experimental model only now being put forth, the cinephiliac anecdote works stronger in some instances than in others. However, with further reflection and revision, such a mode of writing could prove to be a valuable addition to established forms of critical discourse.

What then is the value of the cinephiliac anecdote? Keathley sees it as a form of historical writing that disrupts previous assumptions about film and film history, rather than re-enforces them. Writing about Natalie Wood's red lips in *Rebel without a Cause*, for example, provides

a shock to thought which compels the attentive viewer to look deeper into the film's production, and to rethink -- like many 50s Hollywood melodramas -- the film's heavy Freudian undertones, but often in unexpected ways (while also disrupting the traditional reading of *Rebel* as a James Dean star vehicle). This form of a *cinephiliac history*, writes Keathley, "engag[es] with history via a form that, like the filmic detail itself, challenges the dominant discourses of historicism" (140). Keathley believes a cinephiliac history of the cinema -- via the anecdote (a term he borrows from New Historicism) -- can offer a history precisely by disrupting established history. This becomes a way to extend the cinephiliac moment he finds so powerful, while also finding a way to build it into a useful scholarly tool. It is a remarkably powerful suggestion, and a welcome academic challenge to the discourse itself -- both what it shows, and what it conceals.

Like all books, *Cinephilia and History* is not perfect, even while it admirably fulfils the project it sets out to. For instance, the distinctions between "intended" and "unintended" fragments which provoke the cinephiliac moment are not always clear. Keathley begins by placing emphasis (in a nod to Willemen and Andre Bazin) on what the camera supposedly catches unexpectedly as that which provokes a spark (hence the need for panoramic perception), but later seems to backtrack a bit, acknowledging that such moments can be either intended or not. His touching example from *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967), fixated on a particularly gruesome shot of violence, clearly falls into the latter category of an "intended" fragment. A bit of ontological cloudiness regarding what exactly constitutes a cinephiliac moment thus ensues. One could also quibble with Keathley's decision to recycle canonical writers such as Benjamin, Barthes, and Kracauer (though they are all in need of a re-evaluation in regards to cinephilia), while also falling back upon established cinephiles such as Wollen, Bazin and Truffaut. This decision, coupled with his use of much-celebrated classics (featuring major *auteurs* like Hitchcock and Ford), could end up re-enforcing the dominant film hegemony he seeks to disrupt, and solidify the elitist perception of which cinephilia has often been accused. For offering a model of "unofficial" and "non-traditional" histories of cinephilia and film, *Cinephilia and History* often treads some fairly well established historical and theoretical paths. Still, most cinephiles are not likely to concern themselves with this issue, and it should not detract anyone from taking a good look at Keathley's achievement, which comes highly recommended to academics and cinephiles alike.

The Man and His Wings: William A. Wellman and the Making of the First Best Picture

By William Wellman Jr.
Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006. ISBN: 978-0-27598-541-7 (hbk). 65 illustrations, xvii + 184 pp. £27.95

A review by Timothy Shorkey, Wayne State University, USA

Celebrity biographies are, generally speaking, usually a pretty dicey proposition, particularly when the author knows his subject on a personal level. On the one hand, the relationship may have turned sour, and so the author uses the text as a chance to write a (sometimes scathingly) slanted tell-all to satiate a personal vendetta. On the other extreme, the author might place his subject on a high pedestal and write a glowingly positive review, casting his subject in the best possible light (possibly sacrificing fact in favour of glowing hyperbole). *The Man and His Wings* stands as an example of the latter, for William Wellman Jr. is so intent on casting his father in the most favourable light possible that he eagerly and optimistically comes off as little more than a cheerleading fan on a "recognition crusade for my father and his work" (xiii). His misguided, unabashedly slanted attempt to salvage the reputation of "DadÉmy fatherÉmy companion, and my best friend" (xvi-xvii) comes off as a light fluff piece. William Wellman Jr. is apparently unable or unwilling to separate his position as the son of the director and write from an objective, scholarly standpoint. And this is a real shame, for there is the potential here for a great scholarly/archival examination of the unpublished sources that Wellman apparently examined, if only a true scholar had been given the chance.

The Man and His Wings is by no means a serious, scholarly tome. The two-page bibliography will stand as testimony to this; the fact that Wellman does not even bother to cite half of these scant 'sources' also casts doubt on the legitimacy of this contribution to the author's "lifelong quest to bring recognition to his vast and versatile body of work" (xi). Pages -- entire chapters -- of uncited, unsubstantiated claims seriously undermine his writing. Wellman's typical practice is to transcribe pages and pages from unnamed sources, and only occasionally offer an endnote in identification of a short quote from another published source (for example, out of all the claims made in Chapter Four, the only one he bothers to cite is that Will Rogers was remembered for saying, "I never met a man I didn't like" (70)) or a brief clarification of a factual claim (like Chapter Two's only note, identifying a source for statistical data regarding American pilots flying with the French in World War I (47)). Chapter Six contains thirty-three pages with text, largely filled with claims that go unsubstantiated; the only endnote appears to identify a five-line quote from Jesse Lasky's *I Blow My Own Horn* (Doubleday, 1957) (118). The rest, commonly prefaced with an entry like "Wellman wrote" (43, 56, 128, 139, 141), "Wellman recalled" (45, 64, 71, 119, 125, 150), "Wellman reminisced" (68, 89, 136), or "Wellman later wrote" (114, 123) apparently come directly from one of a string of unpublished Wellman sources (166).

This is probably the main problem with *The Man and His Wings* -- Wellman Jr. often does little more than merely transcribe unpublished writings by his father. The result feels like little more than historical narrative and contributes little in the form of research. At times Wellman exhibits a writing style that seems more suited for narrative prose, like when he sets the scene, "Except for the sounds of distant bombardment, Luneville was a quiet little town" (25). When the author does, on that rare occasion, insert his own, original writing, the result is usually an awkward aside, such as this one near the beginning of Chapter Three, detailing Wellman's return home after fighting alongside the French in World War I:

> Upon returning, William Wellman and other veterans were treated as heroes. There had been a great deal of media attention praising the gallantry of those young Americans who risked their lives for France before America entered the warÉAs amazing as it sounds, Wellman's old dog, Taffy, partly deaf and blind and quite arthritic, was waiting also. Man's best friend took his last breath the evening of his master's return. Wellman buried Taffy in the back yard, where both had spent much of their youth. (49)

These ill-fitting space-fillers might actually be preferred, however, to those other times when the author makes or repeats certain historical claims without any evidence to support them, or otherwise comes across as laughably inept. For example, he refers to intertitles as "the on-screen words" (110). He claims that "Beery spoke the first words in a Wellman picture" (145) when discussing *Beggars of Life* (William A. Wellman, 1928) -- but doesn't say what those words are. And he calls *Wings* (William A. Wellman, 1927) "the first film to receive the Academy Award for Best Picture of the year" (xv), as well as "the first movie to receive the Best Picture award from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the last great silent film, the *Star Wars* of its generation" (1). In claiming that "*Wings* became the first Best Picture" (152) even though the award was, at the time, equal to that of the "Best Picture, Unique and Artistic Production" awarded to *Sunrise* (F.W. Murnau, 1927), Wellman Jr. attempts to dismiss the recognition of *Sunrise* as somehow secondary and inferior to *Wings*. This bias should be clear to even the most casual observer, though, because it is also included in the book's subtitle.

In this day and age, it is puzzling to justify trying to elevate William Wellman to the status of auteur among the pantheon of directors (which presumably is the author's ultimate goal in this personal crusade), particularly based on the strength of one film. Surely his argument for a case to be made regarding his father would only be strengthened with further emphasis put on some of his other films, like the award-winning *A Star Is Born* (William A. Wellman, 1937). I sincerely hope, for Wellman's sake, that his son does not plan to continue down this line on his own.

Don't get me wrong. I wholeheartedly applaud Wellman's intention and agree that *Wings* (1927) deserves greater recognition. Out of currently unavailable films that are deserving of DVD release, I would definitely put *Wings* near the top of the list. But this attempt falls well short of achieving any semblance of that goal. Wellman Jr. would be better served honouring the memory of his father by letting other, more objective scholars continue the struggle on his behalf. *The Man and His Wings*, on its own, unfortunately contributes very little in the way of new research to this topic.