

The Picture of Abjection: Film, Fetish, and the Nature of Difference

By Tina Chanter

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008. ISBN: 9780253219183. 15 illustrations, 377 pp. £19.99 (pbk)

A review by Adrienne Angelo, Angelo, University of West Georgia, USA

How do scholars and others with an interest in film studies and psychoanalysis engage with existing theoretical discourses on race, gender, culture and sexual difference in order to bypass the often polemicized and contested paradigm of fetishism and voyeurism, two critical modes that have dominated and continue to dominate film theory? It is this problematic that Tina Chanter explores in *The Picture of Abjection: Film, Fetish and the Nature of Difference*. For Chanter, drawing largely upon Kristeva's theoretical considerations of abjection, a point of entry to this endeavor lies precisely in further developing the implications of abjection as a "staging of a defensive dynamic that has the potential to significantly rework the imaginary commitments of Oedipal theory, specifically its privileging of masculinity and femininity" (17). Chanter's primary goal appears to be to develop a new critical model at the very center of which lies that which is otherwise neglected, excluded and expelled from dominant cultural discourse for being "too much", too "other". However, for as much as Chanter promotes a consideration of film and film theory, there is less an in-depth reading of films *per se* than a highly informed reconsideration of theoretical notions of subjectivity and the subject, one read through the lens of abjection and its destabilizing and thus subversive potential for considering marginalized identities and their representation in film theory.

In the first chapter, Chanter builds on Kristeva's concept of abjection in order to move beyond the Freudian paradigm and the dominant masculine and heteronormative prototypes to which, according to Chanter, Kristeva and most of feminist film theory still answer. In this chapter, Chanter develops an interesting inquiry into considering those "others" abjected by the very study of psychoanalysis and how their very difference, e.g. the reasons for their rejection, afford a certain reconsideration of unsettled boundaries.

Chanter considers the subversive potential of object art in the third chapter, examining the early photographs of Cindy Sherman, whose self-representation and self-documentation render subject/object boundaries unstable. It is in this chapter that Chanter also offers her first film reading, here on *Margaret's Museum* (Mort Ransen, 1995), a film in which the female protagonist creates a museum from object material; specifically, the cut up and preserved body parts of her deceased family members who died in a tragic coal mining accident. Chanter views Margaret's actions as taking the object and transforming it into an act of sociopolitical resistance to the greater systems that govern and reinforce capitalist values.

In the fourth chapter Chanter moves to a consideration of spectatorship. She considers Kristeva's "thought specular" and the representation and structure of fantasy afforded by the

medium of film, and questions how our own viewing experiences can be fixed or mobile, sutured or undone in certain films whose directors, for Chanter, play with spectatorial identification, expectations and (dis)pleasure in viewing and identifying with fantasies that "[inform] the social and political contexts that help to structure and produce abject moments" (125). Chanter develops this idea in conjunction with a brief consideration of films such as *Ma Vie En Rose* (Alain Berliner, 1997), *Breaking the Waves* (Lars Von Trier, 1996) and *The Celebration* (Thomas Vinterberg, 1998) -- three films which to varying degrees raise questions of gender, sexuality and class differences by offering the viewpoints or fantasies of the abjected subject. Chanter reminds us that the mobile identificatory regimes afforded by fantasy are mirrored in abjection and that in abjection, there lies a certain subversive potential for those abjected -- marginalized -- by and in the dominant culture to "re-engage" and abject others in turn.

Chanter continually refers to the ways in which fetishism, the fetish and fetishistic discourse relate to abjection, and this idea is developed in greater detail in the fifth chapter. Chanter argues that it is the abject that is covered over and disavowed by fetishistic discourses; the fetish, of course, being one of the mainstays both of psychoanalysis and of film studies. In Chanter's consideration of *Exotica* (Atom Egoyan, 1994), a film that focuses on a female exotic dancer, and so would seem to demand a reading that at the very least makes reference to the gaze, voyeurism, and the fetishized female form, Chanter instead examines what she reads as a critique of fetishism in the film, one that reworks Lacan's mirror stage in terms of identification by proffering the point of view of a racialized and sexualized "other" -- a black, homosexual customs officer, whose very duty, curiously, is to police social boundaries.

Chanter offers more in-depth film analyses (of *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942), *The Birth of a Nation* (D.W. Griffith, 1915), and *American History X* (Tony Kaye, 1998), respectively) in the sixth chapter by engaging with a discourse of abjection as it pertains to racial and gender difference and the ways in which certain identities and desires -- notably homosexuality and miscegenation -- are abjected. "A discourse of abjection can help move us beyond the implicit universalism endorsed by theories of fetishism, theories embraced by many race theorists, which reinstall the phallogocentric assumptions that are part of the fabric of Freud's work" (200).

One of the two most in-depth film analyses of Chanter's work is apparent in the eighth chapter, centered on considerations of *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992), a film that adeptly illustrates the primary focus of Chanter's work in this book: reading and creating an abject discourse in which to frame issues of gender, class, race, sexuality and nationalism. Most critics have themselves (unconsciously or not) according to Chanter, "[abjected] transgendered identity" (228). Chanter's remarks regarding the multiple identificatory positions available to the spectator are well taken. Indeed, depending on one's own gender or sexuality, one can be "in the know" as to Jordan's commentaries, and, as Chanter posits, Jordan plays with our "identificatory regimes" (244). By relegating Fergus's immediate "horror" of seeing Dil with a penis -- rather than without as would be expected, as Dil on the surface occupies the position of biologically female -- and by reading Dil as a "phallic mother", one runs the risk of regurgitating Freudian theories of castration, thus continuing to privilege patriarchal discourse embedded in psychoanalysis. Chanter writes:

By using narrative, realist conventions of mainstream Hollywood cinema to draw the spectator into a fantastical plot, only to expose the extent to which heteronormative, binary conventions of spectators help to construct that

narrative reality, Jordan draws attention not only to the conventions of cinematographic illusion but also to the social and political codes that inform the assumptions of his audience. (248)

By turning to the abject, Chanter sets out to challenge the proliferation of theories that remain primarily focused on the fetish and, by extension, the privilege granted to the fetish and castration logic in psychoanalytic theory. With the exception of Chanter's detailed and enlightening analysis of *The Crying Game*, the other readings in this work seem a bit arbitrary and not fully developed. Overall, *The Picture of Abjection* would be a worthwhile and informative read for those with a primary interest in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory; however, the book does not seem balanced enough or sufficiently developed in terms of cinematic analysis to be considered a book on film theory.

Comedy Incarnate: Buster Keaton, Physical Humor, and Bodily Coping

By Noël Carroll

Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. ISBN: 9781405155250 (hbk). ISBN: 9781405188326 (pbk). 37 illustrations, 192pp. £40.00 (hbk), £17.99 (pbk)

A review by Alissa Burger, Bowling Green State University, USA

The silent comedy of Buster Keaton is little short of magic: the fluidity of motion, the impeccable comic timing, the nuanced and subtle facial expressions of "The Great Stone Face" all combining to create a sublime cinema. In *Comedy Incarnate: Buster Keaton, Physical Humor, and Bodily Coping*, Noël Carroll explores the unique nature of Keaton's comedy through close consideration of *The General* (1927), one of Keaton's most representative and classic films. Carroll's combination of critical film theory and an unmasked pleasure in Keaton's comedic styling results in a sophisticated and engaging reading of the film and an impeccable example of non-narrative based film criticism.

Carroll's work is separated into three key sections. The first two sections present in-depth readings of *The General*, with the first chapter considering the film's themes and the second addressing its style. In his first section, "Themes of *The General*", Carroll outlines recurring concerns in the film, including automatism "involving a certain rigidity or inflexibility of behavior patterns premised on a character's inattention to changes in the environment" (34) and establishes two distinct sets of gags as those of inattention, which are contrasted with those of success, in which Johnnie Gray (Keaton) adapts to and triumphs over his situation. Carroll extends this reading of automatism to encompass concrete intelligence and the larger contemporary theme of skilled labor, arguing that the intrigue of Keaton and the locomotive are, in part, a response to the diminishing interaction of the average person with machinery and skilled labor, a shift occasioned by the transition to factory work in the 1920s (67). In his second section, "Style in *The General*", Carroll turns to Keaton's cinematography and editing, shifting from what viewers see to how they see the action within *The General*. One stylistic technique Carroll establishes as uniquely Keaton's is the frequent use and significance of the deep-focus long-shot. While other silent filmmakers used the long-shot to show the environmental setting in the tradition of the establishing shot, Keaton instead employed the long shot for a different purpose: an approach Carroll terms as "seeing how" (84). As Carroll explains, "Keaton's use of the long-shot gives the audience something above just knowing: they see that the event happens" (85), as well as how it happens. As Carroll points out, Keaton's editing approach furthers this aim of allowing the audience to "see how" the on-screen event happens, establishing a visual cause and effect relationship in the events of Johnnie's adventure (108). Through this combination of cinematography and editing, Carroll argues, Keaton connects the themes and style of *The General*, with these two elements of the film intersecting in the idea of concrete intelligence: not only does the viewer understand the significance of Johnnie's adaptability, but the style of the film itself further underscores this importance by creating a similar concrete intelligence in the viewer herself through an

investment in "seeing how" (121). The third major section of Carroll's *Comedy Incarnate* further emphasizes the unique nature of Keaton's work by comparing the actor and director to a few of his contemporaries: Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, and Harry Langdon, a comparison that distinguishes Carroll's consideration as applying specifically to Keaton and setting him apart from other silent filmmakers of the time. Finally, Carroll concludes his text with an appendix on "Narration in *The General*", which briefly examines narrative structure and comic plotting (158-74).

Carroll's *Comedy Incarnate* is an exemplary and unique work of film criticism for several reasons. First, aside from his concise appendix, Carroll devotes the entirety of his consideration of *The General* "primarily in terms of its visual elements -- the iconography of Keaton's gags and his use of filmic devices, namely his composition and editing" (2). As Carroll points out, the narrative of *The General* -- and arguably any of Keaton's films -- are a secondary consideration to the viewing experience, where the audience finds itself entranced by the magic of Keaton, epitomized in his physical comedy, the fluidity of his movement, and his distinct directorial approach to filmmaking. As such, Carroll's work fills a gap in film criticism up to this point by providing an extended exploration privileging the visual elements of Keaton's film. In addition, Carroll limits his consideration to an exclusive exploration of *The General*, though his discussion occasionally expands to include other of Keaton's films, such as *College* (1927) and *Sherlock Jr* (1924). This specificity necessarily limits the range of Carroll's project; however, the narrow scope of examining a single film allows Carroll to build a detailed reading of *The General* and a filmmaking style that can be established as uniquely Keaton's.

Finally, Carroll's theoretical framework foregrounds engagement with wider critical film discourses, establishing Carroll's position as building upon or responding to these earlier readings. For example, in his first chapter, Carroll briefly discusses readings of Keaton based on structural analysis, drawing specifically on the work of G.A. Wead, who "analyzes Keaton's gags as a play between familiarity -- what the audience expects -- and surprise -- the unexpected" (27). This reading is useful though, as Carroll argues, it is not detailed enough to account for the unique nature of Keaton's comedy; as Carroll explains, Wead's is "a theory for Keaton that basically is a theory broad enough to constitute a general theory of comedy" (28). Because of this overgeneralization, Wead's theory "cannot ever even have a chance of zeroing in on the unique elements of a gag simply because the unique elements of a gag have been stripped away by such an analysis in the process of abstraction...and this tendency of extreme generality will beset any purely structural analysis of gags, Keaton's or anyone else's" (28). Through this framework, Carroll highlights his engagement, outlining a variety of contesting theories and his responses to these, all of which combine in building and supporting his theory of Keaton's themes and style in *The General*. As such, Carroll's text serves not just as a provocative work of film criticism, but also as an accessible and exemplary sample of engaged scholarship for the film theorists and critics at whom the book is aimed.

Overall, Carroll's *Comedy Incarnate* successfully examines the minute elements of Keaton's *The General* and succeeds in heightening the unique magic of the work by exploring the elements of the film that combine to make a whole greater than themselves. In this case, demystification does not result in any loss of the original work's appeal. Largely due to Carroll's undisguised pleasure of Keaton's work, a combination of critical engagement and enjoyment establish *Comedy Incarnate* as a distinguished example of contemporary film criticism.

Hollywood Highbrow: From Entertainment to Art

By Shyon Baumann

Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007. ISBN 9780691125275 (hbk). xiv + 225 pp. £19.95 (hbk)

A review by Beth Corzo-Duchardt, Northwestern University, USA

Why are some types of cultural products eligible to be considered "art" while others are not? And how is it that these conceptions change over time? *Hollywood Highbrow* is concerned with nothing less than these ambitious sociological questions. Although its exclusive object of inquiry is film, these questions extend beyond the bounds of one medium. As a vehicle through which to illuminate the social construction of art, author Shyon Baumann takes on film history, performing a Bourdieu-inspired analysis of the historical shift in dominant perceptions of commercial film in the United States. According to Baumann, a decisive change occurred in the 1960s which opened up an "art world for film"; a field in which even Hollywood films became eligible for the prestigious designation as "art" (21). Here, in this description of "an art world for film" Baumann is drawing from Howard Becker's influential work, *Art Worlds* (University of California Press, 1982), which characterizes the sociology of art as a collective phenomenon involving a variety of players whose efforts combine to constitute an art world for a particular cultural object. Applying this theorization to the case of Hollywood cinema, Baumann traces the social history of film in the United States from its earliest days, when it was regarded as decidedly lowbrow entertainment, through its elevation into middlebrow status. In doing so, Baumann does not seek to add anything to the scholarship of film history, nor to weigh in on film aesthetics, but rather to illuminate a general process of cultural legitimation and formulate a sociological framework for analyzing this type of status shift. Thus, he proposes a three-part "legitimation framework" and applies it to the historical narrative of the social life of Hollywood film.

Baumann's legitimation framework is a hybrid analytical method that merges "three main factors that sociologists of culture rely on to explain the public acceptance of a cultural product as art" (14). They are: first, the opening of an "opportunity space" in the realm of legitimacy into which a cultural form may slide; second, the efforts of "institutional resources and activities" such as academic programs and awards ceremonies; and third, the "intellectualization through discourse" of the medium in question (14). *Hollywood Highbrow* is organized according to this framework. The first chapter provides a brief introduction to film history and Baumann's methodology. Chapter two describes changes in the culture at large such as the post-war baby boom, the advent of television, and the Pop Art movement, which lead to the opening up of an opportunity space for an art world for film. Chapter three, which deals with institutional changes within the film world, is the most ambitious part of Baumann's discussion. In the space of one chapter, he attempts to include a historical account of the rise and fall of the Hollywood studio system including a comparison with European national industries, the history of film censorship in the United States, the changing nature of

exhibition sites (such as the nickelodeon boom and the introduction of art house theatres), the institutionalization of film festivals and the creation of the American Film Institute, and academic course offerings and publications on the subject of film. Each of these points could easily occupy the space of a dedicated volume, and the condensed account that Baumann provides does not satisfy his own standards for empirical rigor.

In his fourth chapter, Bauman describes how the "intellectualization through discourse" of film in American culture at large contributed to the shift in its perception from a medium only capable of entertainment, to one capable of art. To prove this, he performs a discourse analysis on a randomly generated sample of reviews and advertisements of U.S. commercial film. It is this third element of Bauman's legitimation framework that represents the book's most useful contribution to film studies. He combines statistical data with anecdotal accounts to reveal how Hollywood cinema's perceived eligibility to produce works of art rose significantly in the 1960s by charting how film critics increasingly borrowed from the vocabulary of "high art". Furthermore, his data convincingly demonstrates the long-term development of this trend over a 60-year period: from 1925 to 1985. Baumann's methodology here will appeal to the empirically minded, for he exhaustively charts changes in the way cultural experts (critics) talk about films. In addition, Baumann controls for other historical variables such as changes in average review length and latest art jargon (121-128). Baumann's analysis of the mobilization of this discourse in film advertisements is likewise helpful, though limited, since he does not discuss the images that no doubt accompanied the text analyzed. Nonetheless, the data is presented in a transparent manner, with detailed explanations of his sampling methods. These data, presented in tables and graphs interspersed throughout the chapter may prove to be a useful resource for future film scholarship.

By Baumann's own admission, *Hollywood Highbrow* "adds little to our knowledge of facts" about film history (20). Instead, the real aim of his research is not film *per se*, but the larger question of "the ideological and organizational foundations of the valuation of art" (20). Indeed, for the film scholar, *Hollywood Highbrow*'s version of film history may appear a bit thin. But film scholars do not represent Baumann's intended audience. Rather, his intervention is targeted at the field of sociology -- particularly the sociology of art, which has, according to Baumann "neglected the social history of American film and film criticism" (20). Nevertheless, the legitimation of art forms is a topic of interest to as many film scholars as sociologists and cultural historians. As such, it is a topic that may foster collaboration between fields. Though its contribution to the field of film scholarship may be small, the cross-disciplinary effort represented by *Hollywood Highbrow* is one that should be applauded and furthered.

Beautiful TV: The Art and Argument of Ally McBeal

By Greg M. Smith

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007. ISBN 9780292716438 (pbk). 7 Illustrations, 275 pp.
Price £13.99 (pbk)

A review by Dave Sagehorn, Northwestern University, USA

In *Beautiful TV: The Art and Argument of Ally McBeal*, Greg M. Smith claims that aesthetic innovation may be the "immediately apparent legacy" of television series *Ally McBeal*, but the more exciting achievement of Smith's study comes instead from his sense of the show's argument (197). As the title suggests, *Beautiful TV* extensively looks at *Ally* as a primary case study, arguing for the value of analyzing the formal construction of a television series rather than considering content alone. The opening chapters of the book look at various textual devices utilized on *Ally* and the functions they serve (9-10), but even more suggestive is Smith's approach in later chapters to the cumulative effect of seriality. Smith discusses *Ally* both in terms of its unique aesthetic choices and how these elements build over time to affect the meanings presented by the show. Social and formal criticism are not entirely separate tasks for Smith, then, but he does establish that he is placing the social temporarily in the background to help focus on what the formal can reveal (13-4). Smith does not shy away from the idea that *Ally* may seem to some an unlikely candidate for such a project, but the series proves to be both well-chosen and convincingly defended: "If I can show the complexities and elegant narrative technique of a sometimes 'silly' show like *Ally*, it becomes easy to argue for the aesthetics of 'weightier' shows" (9). Smith more than achieves this aim, justifying not only his methodology but also sufficiently defending *Ally's* honor along the way. That he happens to do a persuasive job at both of these tasks is one of the many pleasures of this project.

The book is divided into two sections, "Aesthetics" covering the first two chapters and the following three termed "Narration and Argument". Chapter one deals with the show's extensive use of music in a variety of functions beyond a typical soundtrack. Music does not simply accompany the characters and actions of the show, but is instead a powerful force in its own right, both through the inner music characters call on to motivate themselves and through the characters' public performances. Smith identifies this not only as a stylistic choice but as indicative of the show's tendency to find uniquely coded ways to evaluate its own characters (20). Music is one of several markers of personal worth or weakness, as only certain characters are granted an internal soundtrack, and earnestness of singing is considered more important than competence. The selectivity associated with music is then contrasted in chapter two with the relative accessibility of special effects; nearly any character may be granted brief moments of exaggerated, fantastic subjectivity to reflect their inner thoughts (53).

The consequence of this difference becomes clearer in chapter three, where Smith extensively maps the show's network of characters. Smith skilfully opens up Rick Altman's notion of dual focus narratives and binary oppositions to instead look at the varied web of contrasts drawn by a serial narrative with an ensemble cast (76-7). While some of the specific character sketches that follow are the closest the book may come to trying the patience of non-*Ally* fans, the textual system that Smith reveals is enlightening. The self-centered nature of *Ally* as a protagonist is shown to be built into the very logic of the show, as all characters in turn demonstrate varying combinations of flaws or virtues designed to eventually mark *Ally*'s particular values to be the most tenable position offered. For example, *Ally*'s quirks and tendency to hallucinate are rendered as a mid-point between her co-workers, such as the relatively boring nature of Billy and Georgia Thomas and the overwhelming eccentricity of John Cage. By tracing the developments and reversals of these characterizations over the course of *Ally*'s five seasons, Smith further outlines the show's remarkably cohesive worldview.

Smith seems aware that he may be fighting an uphill battle in trying to convince some readers of the merits of the often derided *Ally McBeal*. The introduction addresses some of these concerns head-on, arguing persuasively for the study of texts that may be disregarded as both middlebrow (6) and as being neither current nor canonical (1-2). The issue of currency rings particularly true, as Smith points out that casting aside a program as outdated reinforces the emphasis in television studies on ideological criticism and risks ignoring aesthetics. Furthermore, while the idea of contrasting characters to construct *McBeal* as some sort of ideal may seem dubious, Smith is careful in establishing that an understanding of how a show argues does not require agreeing with the particular value system being constructed. Smith is consistent in his stated goal of looking at narrative form, but of course in order to do so he must include description of the content being formed. Although ideological criticism is not the task at hand here, there are aspects that nearly beg for a slightly more evaluative stance, and Smith does occasionally acknowledge the problematic nature of some of the rhetorical devices the show employs. One such point of intervention comes following a discussion of how *Ally*'s argument for tolerance includes use of eccentricity as an all-purpose "other", which Smith notes runs the risk of both conflating and trivializing the social positions being discussed or indirectly alluded to (160-4). For the most part, however, Smith is very clear in identifying the show's particular logic and values without getting too caught up in attempting to judge their worth.

The final two chapters more clearly explain what specific argument is being constructed beyond a positive appraisal of the central character. Chapter four examines how the use of guest stars enables brief digressions into debates that can't be sustained in the larger system of the series, often by way of the eccentricity mentioned above. The final chapter examines the thematic stakes that *Ally* circles around for five seasons -- sexual harassment, modern gender assumptions, the limits of the law, and the idealization of romance. Again, the real attraction here is not necessarily the specific conclusions that *Ally* comes to but rather the process that creates such a space, the levels of narrative and aesthetics that, while sometimes notable in their own right, become far more significant when viewed in tandem. Similarly, Smith's book is strongest when taken as a whole; this is not meant to suggest that any particular chapter is weaker but rather a reiteration that it is the accumulation and dialogue that matters most.

Smith states early on that he is not suggesting that all television studies should necessarily concern themselves with aesthetics, but he is more decisive in his call for the study of the full scope of serialized texts, taking into account every episode of a series that has already

completed its run. As Smith summarizes, "*Ally McBeal* creates a coherent, nuanced argument about its central issues, an argument that veers in one direction and then in the other before arriving at an overall conclusion, an argument that is only possible through serial form, an argument that we can examine best by viewing it in its entirety" (12). This is an interesting intervention that is very much validated by the comprehensive connections he draws throughout *Ally*, but as impressive as this particular feat of analysis is there is some question over the applicability of such approaches elsewhere. While Smith acknowledges the potential for an auteurist reading of series creator David E. Kelley's influence on *Ally*, he then expresses a desire to look beyond such readings to study the text itself (6-7). Still, Kelley's extensive control of the creative progression of *Ally* might render it a more unified series than most, and the kind of sustained themes and peculiarities Smith follows here may be less achievable when faced with the more collaborative nature of other programs. The methodological potentials may be slightly unclear, but if Smith's approach is not as easily translatable as he might want, the analysis is no less admirable in its demonstration of certain textual operations that would likely go unrecognized in a more limited sampling of a series.

Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond

By Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (eds.)

London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007. ISBN 9781845115104 (hbk). ISBN 9781845115111 (pbk). xx + 292 pp. £45.00 (hbk), £16.99 (pbk)

A review by David Simmons, Independent Scholar

Given the continuing prominence of Robert Thompson's now-seminal *Television's Second Golden Age* (Syracuse University Press, 1996) in the field of contemporary television studies, it is something of a coup that Janet McCabe and Kim Akass have managed to get Thompson himself to provide a brief but interesting preface to their new edited collection, *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*. Though somewhat short, Thompson's contribution serves to clearly set out the intended aims of the book, namely to debate the issue of "Quality TV", what it is, and how critics and audiences currently define it.

McCabe and Akass immediately pick up on the subject of categorisation in their introduction, appropriately entitled "Debating Quality", in which they detail the ephemeral nature of the term. Indeed, so wary are McCabe and Akass of the sometimes controversial nature of what constitutes "Quality" in the post-1996, post-network era that they consciously refrain from any Thompson-esque attempt to re-define it, supplying instead a broad overview of the critical contentiousness of "Quality TV" as a collective term.

Following this introduction, the main body of the text is divided into three parts, each of which deals with a different aspect of contemporary American "Quality TV". The five essays in part one explore the nebulous nature of "Quality TV" through the prism of criticism. Though ostensibly an examination of the distinctions between "Quality TV" and "Good TV", Sarah Cardwell's "Is Quality Television any Good?" takes up the critical baton from Thompson, with the author offering a viable set of criteria that is more relevant to contemporary examples such as *The West Wing* (Aaron Sorkin, 1999-2006), *Six Feet Under* (Alan Ball, 2001-2005) and *The Sopranos* (David Chase, 1999-2007). Amongst other unique textual characteristics, Cardwell identifies "stylistic integrity" (30) as an intrinsic part of "Quality TV", arguing convincingly that there is a higher than usual level of synthesis between the visual and the thematic in such television programming. The "primacy of the visual" (48) is further discussed by Robin Nelson in his detailed charting of the changing fortunes of "Quality TV Drama". Nelson's nuanced chapter examines some of the ideological, historical and commercial developments that have led a specific strain of American TV to rise to a position of both critical and popular dominance in so much of the English-speaking world.

One of the factors that Nelson highlights as being crucial to the contemporary valorisation of American TV is the pioneering output of the pay per view cable channel HBO. Several of the chapters discuss the channel's symbiotic relationship with both critical and popular discourses surrounding "Quality". In "Sex, Swearing and Respectability" McCabe and Akass explore the

ways in which the channel has consciously employed material censorable on more mainstream networks as a means to define its critically and artistically meritorious image. "HBO and the Concept of Quality TV" sees Jane Freur debunk many of the channel's claims to originality -- "It's not TV. It's HBO" (3) -- through an extended analysis of *Six Feet Under*. Perhaps aptly demonstrating the constantly shifting nature of television, Roberta Pearson's "Lost in Transition" discusses ABC's *Lost* as a representative example of the way in which former mainstream TV networks are now successfully aping the aesthetic, form and content of the programming found on channels such as HBO, and in the process, blurring the already indistinct boundaries between "Quality" and "conventional" TV.

The chapters in part two of the collection look at the industrial and market forces that have influenced, and are influenced by, "Quality TV". Covering topics ranging from *The Daily Show's* (1996-present) position in the political economies of Comedy Central; *CSI's* (Anthony E. Zuiker, 2000-present) role in the developing identity of the UK's Channel 5; and New Zealand television audience's differing opinions of what constitutes "Quality" in the TV arena. Of particular interest in this section are the two essays by industry "insiders", Peter Dunne (an American television producer and writer), and Dermot Horan (Director of Broadcast and Acquisitions for Irish channel RTE). Stating at one point that "Drama is a sales tool" (103), Dunne's "Inside Television Drama" offers a pessimistic reading of the profit-driven practices behind American television that is at odds with the more optimistic view of contemporary television found in the majority of other chapters in the book. Similarly, Horan's "Quality US TV" details the commercial factors that influence the ways in which American programming is bought, scheduled and promoted in international markets. What both these chapters foreground is that, despite academics' tendency to emphasise the artistic merit of much of contemporary television, at its heart, as Dunne suggests "The American television network's job is not to provide programming, it is to provide advertising" (103).

The final part of *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond* offers a varied selection of chapters encompassing critical essays on the form, content and reception of "Quality TV" in addition to interviews with noted television figures. Of particular importance to this latter section is the notion of self-reflexivity as being important to "Quality TV". In "Seeing and Knowing" Jonathan Bignell notes how self-consciousness has become "a key signifier of quality" (167), while "Quality and Creativity in TV" sees Máire Messenger Davies discuss how the plots of contemporary episodes of *Star Trek* often reflect some of the experiential elements of writing the show. This emphasis on the postmodern, intertextual and meta-textual aspects of contemporary television is aptly concluded with David Lavery's examination of television companion books, "Read Any Good Television Lately". Analysing these increasingly complex and innovative spinoffs, Lavery concludes that such books now play a significant part in granting their progenitors "activated text" status (229), contributing to a wider multimedia diegesis.

With contributions from such critical luminaries as Bignell and Lavery, alongside industry stalwarts including Brannon Braga, W.G. "Snuffy" Walden, and David Chase, the essays contained in *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond* offer the reader an engaging overview of some of the more prominent debates in the subject area. Though many issues pertaining to classification still persist (for example contributors differ on their inclusion of *CSI* as "Quality TV"), McCabe and Akass should be congratulated for producing a volume that engages with the ever-shifting sands of contemporary television studies yet appears authoritative in scope.

Celluloid Vampires: Life After Death in the Modern World

By Stacey Abbott

Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2007. ISBN 9780292716964 (pbk). 21 illustrations, x + 266 pp. £16.99 (pbk)

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

The intent of this interesting text is to look at the correspondence between the vampire, as found in film, and the modern world. The author argues that the celluloid vampire does not act in opposition to modernity, but rather "has come to embody the experience of it" (5). Abbott's text is a sound survey of the vampire movie, from its origin to his manuscript research date. However, the narrative can be uneven and frustrating at times, but in many instances Abbott's argument is illuminating and provocative.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Abbott notes, has the conflict between vampire and vampire hunter(s) as the locus for an examination of the "complexities of modernity" (16). This statement is supported in three ways: the novel's narrative takes place in London, which captures "the modern perception of the growing" metropolis and demonstrates how "the characters...negotiate and command the landscape" (16); Stoker does away with the expected vampire hunting methods and highlights modern bureaucratic systems and professionalism to manage the search for the vampire; Stoker has "rewritten the characteristics of the vampire to embody the increasingly ambiguous relationship between science and the occult" (17) -- a relationship that is in flux because of modernity. This contraposition of modernity and tradition, which is for the most part convincing, can at times be vitiated by Abbott's extreme use of the metaphor. For example, Abbott writes that just as Dracula "consumes blood, Mina uses her typewriter to consume, reproduce, and transform information. While it is her embodiment of the typewriter and telegraph that allow Mina to control the vampire hunters' investigation, it also gradually transforms her into a reflection of Dracula" (30). Moreover, Abbott's statement that the struggle between Dracula and his adversaries is not a struggle between good and evil, but rather a "war between normal and extraordinary science, between the known and the unknown" (40) is also too intricate to accept fully. Did Stoker actually envision this while writing a horror novel? Perhaps, but this reviewer does not think so. Moreover, the readership is not fully taken into account. Would the reader of the novel be so fully equipped to arrive at such an interpretation? If so, no evidence is given by Abbott. If not, too much is expected of the reader by Abbott.

Much is also expected of the reader during Abbott's discussion of F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922). Abbott suggests that Schreck's (Count Orlock) placing of his hand before the lens to project his own shadow on the screen is in point of fact a symbiosis of the vampire's body and the light, that this is a combination of vampire and technology. Good enough. It can and is persuasively argued that the characters in Murnau's film reflect and distort the advancements in cinematography. However, Abbott undermines this line of reasoning by putting forward the suggestion that "film bears striking parallels with vampirism" (43). In

other words, photographic film "embalms the ghosts of the past; film brings them back to life", which is a life not as it was lived but "trapped like the vampire and 'forced to repeat the same gestures over and over again...condemned to an eternal repetition'" (43). Abbott then writes that even though the medium and vampirism share several parallels, Murnau's movie would not be screened until 1922. Why then emphasize the connection? Abbott is on surer footing when she states that Murnau's vampire is presented as a "product of filmic special effects" (51) and that the filmic monster is not the exact replica of the literary one.

More important for the book in general are Abbott's concluding words in the second chapter: "In the symbiotic relationship between cinema and the vampire, *Nosferatu* captured the changing conception and experience of modernity. That its own modern qualities have since been overtaken by newer technologies and effects and therefore have come to represent the past in these later films, reaffirms the notion that modernity operates as a cycle, replacing what was once modern with a more up-to-date incarnation" (60). I am not too sure how to respond to a statement that is correct, but too obvious, in my opinion, to be so overly emphasized. Abbott's views on and interpretation of modernity are accurate, but tend to distract from what as a whole is a good combination of an appealing premise and sound research.

This combination can be found in the third chapter of the book, where Abbott displays subtle, yet expert control of her argument. This chapter, which is the best in the book, demonstrates that in the vampire films that date from the 1930s to the 1960s the conceptual parameters of the monster developed from "a fantasy representation of Europe and as such evoked an atmosphere of dreams and nightmares rather than a real and recognized landscape" (72). The movies from this period were an amalgamation of the fantastic and the Gothic, which referred to contemporary subjects (sex, religion, miscegenation, and the fear of communism). In the 1970s a reinvented and reformulated monster grappled with modernity with all of its difficulties and hardships. The mixture of the fantastic and Gothic gave way to the contemporary. The 1970s vampire is the focus of the fourth chapter.

In addition to acknowledgements, introduction ("A Little Less Ritual and a Little More Fun"), notes, selected bibliography, filmography, and index, the book has twelve chapters divided in to four parts: "Bram Stoker's *Dracula* from Novel to Film," "The Birth of the Modern American Vampire", "Reconfiguring the Urban Vampire", and "Redefining Boundaries". The twelve chapters are titled "*Dracula*: A Wonder of the Modern World", "The Cinematic Spectacle of Vampirism: *Nosferatu* in the Light of New Technology", "From Hollywood Gothic to Hammer Horror: The Modern Evolution of *Dracula*", "The Seventies: The Vampire Decade", "George Romero's *Martin*: An American Vampire", "Walking Corpses and Independent Filmmaking Techniques", "Special Makeup Effects and Exploding Vampires", "New York and the Vampire Flâneuse", "Vampire Road Movies: From Modernity to Postmodernity", "Los Angeles: Fangs, Gangs, and Vampireland", "Vampire Cyborgs", and "Vampires in a Borderless World". It should be noted that chapter two, "The Cinematic Spectacle of Vampirism: *Nosferatu* in the Light of New Technology", first appeared in Steffan Hantke's impressive book *Horror Film: Creating and Marketing Fear* (University of Mississippi Press, 2004).

Most of the chapters are well written and complete the task set out by the author. Unfortunately, there are some chapters that do not convince as much as they perplex. For example, chapters nine ("Vampire Road Movies: From Modernity to Postmodernity") and ten ("Los Angeles: Fangs, Gangs, and Vampireland") are desultory, repetitive, and, at times,

contradictory in their exposition of the data. Abbott has a great project in mind when she states in chapter nine that she will "trace the modernization and Americanization of the vampire movie through its integration with the western and the road movie, two genres whose shared iconographies are indelibly linked to the formation of America" (163). (Cf. page 175, where this significance is repeated). The American love affair with the automobile allows the filmic vampire genre to escape from its Gothic boundaries, but incongruously Kathryn Bigelow's association of the car with the monster, "the highway, and road movie genre...has placed the vampires more in opposition to, than in league with, the western genre conventions that are evoked by the film's desert landscape" (169). Abbott also emphasizes this view when she points out that the icons of the western genre (hat, lasso, horse) are depicted in opposition to the modern icons of the automobile. Thus, it is not clear if the western and road movies facilitate or hinder the vampire's transformation and adaptation brought about by modernity. An instance of the conflicting nature of these two chapters can be found in Abbott's discussion of the Los Angeles dimension of the vampire films. Abbott writes that the "manufactured Los Angeles landscape and its constituent communities and neighborhoods is evoked...through their refusal to emphasize realism in favor of a more iconographic representation of space" (179). After some brief explication of this statement, Abbott then incongruously observes that although the location of *The Lost Boys* is not Los Angeles "but rather the fictional town of Santa Carla, based upon the real community of Santa Cruz, its use of icons such as beaches, gangs, motorcycles, and the homeless evoke the image of Los Angeles in a more succinct way than would be suggested by actual location shooting" (179). Perhaps the California lifestyle may have served better than Los Angeles as the final transition point for vampire films that reference American iconography.

Overall, I enjoyed reading *Celluloid Vampires*, which supplied a good amount of food for thought and brought to light some ingenious observations on the development of the vampire film. Although I do have some minor objections to a small number of methodological inconsistencies, I recommend the book to anyone interested in this genre.

Andrei Tarkovsky: Elements of Cinema

By Robert Bird

London: Reaktion Books, 2008. ISBN 9781861893420 (pbk). 106 illustrations, 255pp.
£15.95 (pbk)

A review by Erik Heine, Oklahoma City University, USA

Robert Bird's first book about the films of Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky was a close reading and analysis of Tarkovsky's most celebrated film, *Andrei Rublev* (2004). Four years later, Bird has revisited the films of Tarkovsky, and takes on the massive task of discussing all of them within one book. As more of Tarkovsky's films and documents have become available to scholars in the West, there has been a growing interest in both the films and Tarkovsky himself. Bird, an Associate Professor in the Slavic Languages Department at the University of Chicago, is able to provide a unique perspective on Tarkovsky's films, as he approaches them first from a Russian language and culture perspective, and then interprets the films. Several stills, both color and black-and-white, are included in the book, which is obviously written for a largely academic audience; casual cinema fans will likely be frustrated, much as they would at the conclusion of any Tarkovsky film.

Bird does not attempt to provide complete close readings of all of Tarkovsky's films (seven full-length films, one short, one documentary), but does state that Tarkovsky is "an elusive subject for reflection and analysis, and his name is surprisingly rare in discourse on film, whether popular or academic. This book is intended to help rectify the situation by providing rigorous analyses of his films and other creative projects" (10). This statement, however, is only a secondary function of the work, as Bird declares, "It is Tarkovsky's sense of cinematic pitch, rather than any discursive 'meaning' of his films, that is my main focus in this book" (9). As one might expect, a typical layout for a book of this nature would be chronological, showing the development of the films and language of the director. The proposed layout only holds partially true. While Bird does discuss each film in chronological order, he arranges the book into four "elements": Earth, Fire, Water, and Air, focusing on the various elements that apply to the ordering of the films. As a consequence of this layout, various films are discussed in multiple chapters, which in and of itself is not a problem, but early films, in particular, *Andrei Rublev* (1969), tend to be discussed in nearly every chapter. This layout does make for a very fluid sense of connectivity over the course of the book; films are not limited to one chapter, and can affect the analyses and interpretations of other films. Bird writes, "The organization of the book also reflects my underlying argument, that the *meaning* and *significance* of Tarkovsky's films are accessible only through their direct apprehension as art works" (21).

Bird treats each of Tarkovsky's films with the seriousness and gravity appropriate to them. This is due, in part, to the fact that it is rare to find moments of levity in Tarkovsky's films. The focus of Bird's analysis rests in the primary documents of Tarkovsky's life: his films, journals, interviews, and first-hand accounts of cast and crew. Bird references other authors as supplementary information throughout the book, and those that are referenced do not necessarily focus their respective energies specifically on Tarkovsky. For example, the

Slovenian philosopher/critic Slavoj Žižek is quoted multiple times in the book, particularly in reference to the film *Solaris* (1972), but *The Films of Andrei Tarkovsky: A Visual Fugue* (Indiana University Press 1994) by Vida T. Johnson and Graham Petrie, one of the most well known books on Tarkovsky's films in English, is only mentioned as a footnote. The fact that Bird uses primary documents, and then translates them on his own, means that he can then compare what Tarkovsky wrote and said to how those ideas were, or in some cases, were not, realized on screen.

Among the central issues in analysis are Tarkovsky's use of time, uses of imagery, and use of the long shot. Tarkovsky's time is not always linear, but it is also not cut-and-pasted, like the concept of time, for example, in Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994). Oftentimes, long shots and time are strongly connected. About Tarkovsky's conception of the long take, Bird writes, "a span of film across an abyss of experience, which slips from the viewer's grasp even as it satisfies the desire for more, averting the fear of the end even as it moves, inexorably, towards a cut...This abyss is nowhere more palpable than in Tarkovsky's long takes, in which spatial folds are sewn together with seams of time" (189, 191). Bird presents examples of this phenomenon in several films, including *Andrei Rublev*, *Solaris*, and *Nostalghia* (1983). Bird also discusses the use of imagery, realized as icons, especially in *Andrei Rublev*, and as elements of nature, fire and water in particular. Regarding water, Bird writes "Over time, the ubiquity of water in Tarkovsky's films accrued baptismal connotations" (22). Bird also places a great deal of significance on burned images saying that Tarkovsky's "filmic narratives *incinerate* texts and images in order to *form* an original world out of their ashes; moreover, this world is never entirely present on-screen. Tarkovsky also understands that his film will be burnt up in the viewer's appropriation. Therefore the scenes of burnt books and desecrated images are emblematic of Tarkovsky's broad interest in how images interact with material life to create the specific density of lived existence" (92).

In addition to the feature-length films, Bird also addresses the stage productions of *Hamlet* (1977) and *Boris Godunov* (1983-4) directed by Tarkovsky. Bird provides Tarkovsky's conception of Shakespeare's play through Tarkovsky's writings, as well as his differing approach to his stage actors. Tarkovsky provided all of the motivation to his actors at the beginning of the production and then gave them "complete freedom" to perform (183). His production of Modest Mussorgsky's opera was similar to his conception of film, even though he was not fond of opera, and said about his early music composer, "Ovchinnikov must be held in check or else he'll write not a soundtrack but a talented opera" (158). For *Boris*, only one set was constructed, and the production suffered continuous staging difficulties. Bird does not focus on the failure of the opera, instead finding similarities in treatments between symbols and time in Tarkovsky's opera and in Tarkovsky's films.

Bird clearly has a fondness for Tarkovsky's work, but keeps a respectful distance between objectivity and reverence. Bird's analysis is less about overall interpretation of specific films, as he often mentions that reducing films to a single point is a poor idea, and more about techniques, images, and contexts. Bird writes, "[F]ire comprises the words, stories and imaginary that do not so much signify a presence as outline a poignant possibility" (22). Bird highlights that Tarkovsky's films explore possibilities more than actualities, folds in time more than linear time, and these elements are what makes Tarkovsky's films highlights of the Soviet film industry. Bird's analyses and conclusions are insightful, and thought provoking, but are not overtly stated, similar to Tarkovsky's films. The tone of the book, which does exalt the filmmaker, leaves the reader forced to accept the idea of Tarkovsky as a great artist. However, the rationale for this conclusion is clearly thought out and logical. Bird's access to

Tarkovsky's primary documents, his knowledge of the Russian language and culture, and his avoidance of close readings of each film, make this book an essential contribution to film scholarship.

Figures of Resistance: Essays in Feminist Theory

By Teresa de Lauretis. Edited and with an Introduction by Patricia White
Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-252-07439-4 (pbk);
ISBN: 978-0-252-03197-7 (cloth). vii + 310 pp. £13.99 (pbk), £51.00 (cloth)

A review by Flavia Monceri, Università del Molise (Campobasso), Italy

This book consists of a collection of eleven essays written by Teresa de Lauretis, one of the most renowned feminist theorists, over the period 1985-2005, to which a very interesting introduction has been added by the editor, Patricia White. The essays are divided into three thematic sections: "Representations", "Readings", and "Epistemologies", within which the essays are chronologically ordered. Reading this book implies going over the recent history of the development of feminist theory as a whole, and thereby gaining an important picture of the path through which it became what it is nowadays. Moreover, the reader is given the occasion to rethink the most important topics under discussion in different phases, as well as grasp the process through which feminist theory became more complex, for instance due to the recent rise of Queer and Transgender theories and studies. The confrontation with the body of knowledge introduced by these last disciplines surely contributed to a modification of some of the previous fundamentals of feminist theory, at the same time urging it towards a continuous redefinition of its very object and borders. Hence, Patricia White's statement that "the book challenges and refreshes feminist and queer theory alike with its insistence on retaining feminist concepts of gender in its primary consideration of sexuality" (5) seems to apply not only to de Lauretis's *The Practice of Love* (Indiana University Press, 1994), to which it directly refers, but also to this book.

However, this means that the first question to which the book should be able to give an answer is that of how to define feminist theory in such a way that it becomes clearly identifiable, despite the many ties to other disciplines. According to de Lauretis, "feminist theory is not merely a theory of gender oppression in culture...nor is it the essentialist theory of women's nature... it is instead a developing theory of the female-sexed or female-embodied social subject", whose features should not be limited to sex and gender, but also include "race, class, and any other significant sociocultural divisions and representations" (198). Therefore, if it is surely true that "feminist theory is all about an essential difference, an irreducible difference", such difference has nothing to do with the man/woman dichotomy, nor with the essence of women's nature, meaning instead "a difference in the feminist conception of woman, women, and the world" (183).

In short, feminist theory is to be conceived of more as an epistemological attitude than a disciplinary field. This seems to be also de Lauretis's position although it does not imply refusing to identify "feminism" also with a praxis, since, as she reminds us commenting on *The Practice of Love*, "my practice of critical writing, the form of address and the rhetorical strategies I chose, including what I call the politics of reference, are consistent with the

practice of feminist theory as I see it" (200). The core notion of feminist theory, as de Lauretis thinks and performs it, is that of "subject", particularly as an "eccentric subject". The subject can be defined as "a body-ego, a projected perceptual boundary that does not merely delimit or contain the imaginary morphology of an individual self but actually enables the access to the symbolic" (206-207).

The term "subject" has "the double sense of 1) being, individual, person subjected to rules, constraints, more or less rigid social norms...but also 2) subject in the sense of grammatical subject: one who exists, acts, carries out the actions described by the predicate, a subject or "I" endowed with existence, capacity to act, to want, and so on" (220). It may further be qualified as "eccentric", that is "constituted in a process of struggle and interpretation; of translation, detranslation, and retranslation...a rewriting of self in relation to a new understanding of society, of history, of culture" (77), which is "not immune or external to gender, but self-critical, distanced, ironic, exceeding -- eccentric" (219).

The notion of subject is also at the core of the two essays more specifically devoted to women's films and cinema. As de Lauretis writes "the questions of identification, self-definition, the modes or the very possibility of envisaging oneself as subject...are fundamental questions for feminism" (28). This process of constructing the individual through identification should be "all the more important, theoretically and politically, for women who have never before represented to ourselves as subjects, and whose images and subjectivities -- until very recently, if at all -- have not been ours to shape, to portray, or to create" (28-29). Women should be particularly aware of the fact that investigating what is specific to women's cinema, what is properly "feminine" or "female" in it, means acknowledging the dichotomies established by men. This is probably the reason why de Lauretis seems more interested in women as spectators than in women as filmmakers.

As she puts it, "the idea that *a film may address the spectator as female*, rather than portray women positively or negatively, seems very important to me in the critical endeavor to characterize women's cinema as a cinema for, not only by, women" (35). But this means also to address each and every spectator as female, disregarding his or her actual sex/gender. This move leads to the possibility of diffusing feminist discourse into society, and particularly its idea according to which (social) subjects are gendered from the outset, with the eventual result of a reformulation of the assumptions of contemporary social sciences. In 1985, de Lauretis concludes that "something of this process of reformulation -- re-vision, rewriting, rereading, rethinking, 'looking back at *ourselves*' -- is what I see inscribed in the texts of women's cinema but not yet sufficiently focused on in feminist film theory or feminist critical practice in general" (39).

Fourteen years later, analyzing David Cronenberg's *M. Butterfly* (1993), and extending to cinema the Gramscian notion of opera as a "historical-cultural" event, as a form of "popular epic", and at the end of the day a form of "popular culture", de Lauretis maintains that cinema also "performs, at the societal level and in the public sphere, a function similar to that of the private fantasies, daydreams, and reveries by which individual subjects imagine or give images to their erotic, ambitious, or destructive aspirations" (119). In this sense, it can be surely concluded that "the narratives inscribed in popular culture forms and their scenarios or mise-en-scène, complete with characters, passions, conflicts, and resolutions, may be considered *public fantasies*" (120). I find this position very important to understand the possibilities offered by cinema not only as a social stabilizer, so to speak, in that it

(re)produces the dominant public fantasies, but also as a means which can be used in a deconstructive, if not subversive, way.

This last possibility emerges from the very activity of "seeing a film", in that "insofar as the film is a text, there can be no one meaning, no definitive vision, no single, comprehensive or total view", since any "object of vision" is "seen by a viewing subject through a purposeful attending and a selective gathering of clues which may cohere into meaningful percepts" (142). I would only add that such a position means acknowledging the infinite possibilities of individual interpretations, by means of which the "object of vision" is "constructed" in the very moment in which the spectator is called and expected to simply *see* something given as a representation of "reality" (and this is true also with patently "invented" realities, such as those of sci-fi films). This is of course not to negate that the opposite dynamics can also be there, that is the those through which "the film's construction...contributes to the production of subject positions and the construction -- more rarely, the deconstruction -- of social, gendered identities for its viewers in the very process of viewing (a process that film theory calls spectatorship)" (123). It is only to stress that even popular culture, its products and means, can result in changing mainstream social stereotypical knowledge, also by means of the act of "individual seeing".

From what I have said so far, it should be clear that de Lauretis's book deserves to be carefully read, in that it contains much food for thought, surely much more than I can discuss here. However, I would like to conclude with some critical remarks, primarily concerning the feminist approach to which de Lauretis remains true. In many passages of her book, she points out that "radical change requires a delineation and a better understanding of the difference of women from Woman, and that is to say as well, *the differences among women*" (36). And to be honest, there are various essays in which de Lauretis complicates feminist theory's core notions by addressing "uncomfortable" questions, for instance when speaking about the figure of the lesbian as "not-woman" (72-82).

But what remains untouched, in my opinion, is the idea that something like a female identity does exist, which allows to construct the notion of "women", although in the plural. To give only one example, I find it difficult to reconcile the already mentioned object of feminist theory -- the "female-sexed or female-embodied social subject" -- as someone that *exists*, with the notion of "sexual structuring" by which de Lauretis designates "the constructedness of sex, as well as the sexual subject, its being a process", so that "neither the body nor the subject is prior to the process of sexuation; both come into being in that continuous and life-long process in which the subject is, as it were, permanently under construction" (205). But if things are so, if even the female-sexed body/subject is a process under construction, how is it possible to fix it in a stable identity by means of labels such as "woman" or "lesbian"?

The only one reason I see for this position is linked to the notion of "identity politics", that is to the *pragmatic* need for group-identification in order to perform political activism, whereas I do not find any *theoretical* argumentation leading to the possibility to attach general labels to the bodies of individuals, if not the, again pragmatic, need to categorize, that is to identify, in order to elaborate real time interaction strategies. However, I would also suggest that the impossibility to give up the very notion of "women" is a consequence of the maintenance of that of "subject", which is defined in the "traditional" terms of Western philosophical and political thinking. The "subject" and the "I" are what the vast majority of feminist theorists are not ready to dismiss, but in this way they end up by remaining caught in the language of a "male" way of thinking the world.

Moreover, it should not be forgotten that this is the language of *Western* feminist theory, which also in this book stands for *the* feminist theory, without any cross-cultural, or inter-cultural, confrontation, for instance on an issue such as the Oedipus complex, which cannot be considered as a universally applicable explication for the individual psycho-sexual development, in that it is the product of Western psychoanalytic thinking. In this sense, feminist theory may run the risk of becoming and working as a basically ethnocentric discourse, in a sense reproducing the logic of linguistic and cultural discrimination at the expenses of "women" coming from "the Rest". This seems valid as well for the discourse of feminist film theory and women's cinema, whose theoretical assumptions are still, more often than not, gathered from Western conceptual toolbox.

Watching with The Simpsons: Television, Parody, and Intertextuality

By Jonathan Gray

London: Routledge, 2006. ISBN 9780415362024 (pbk). xii + 199 pp. £18.99 (pbk)

Rome: Season One: History Makes Television

Rome: Season One: History Makes Television

Edited by Monica S. Cyrino

Oxford: Blackwell, 2008. ISBN 9781405167758 (pbk). 7 illustrations, xiii + 255 pp. £19.99 (pbk)

A review by Gareth James, Exeter University, UK

Taking a diverse approach to television series *The Simpsons* (Matt Groening, 1989-present) and *Rome* (Bruno Heller, William J. MacDonald and John Milius, 2005-2007), Jonathan Gray's *Watching with The Simpsons: Television, Parody and Intertextuality* and the anthology *Rome: Season One: History Makes Television* provide a range of fresh perspectives on the productions, with varying strengths. Gray makes the argument that "we are not only watching *The Simpsons*: we are watching with *The Simpsons*" (2), and proposes how "in this book I will actualize this observation into a workable theory of textual meaning, power, effects, and activity. In short, I will chart precisely how we can 'watch' one text while seemingly watching another" (3).

By comparison, *Rome* editor Monica S. Cyrino establishes the aim of the anthology as setting a "new charter for the study of classics, one in which we realize and appreciate the significance of how and why the ancient world is recreated by contemporary artists, writers, and filmmakers" (7), with the HBO/BBC drama as its focus. In this respect, the two books demonstrate the flexibility of contemporary television analysis within the academy, as well as some of its limitations.

Watching with the Simpsons contributes to a growing range of academic and non-academic publications on the globally successful Fox series. Aside from more official tie-ins, notable examples of this trend have included Alberti's edited collection *Leaving Springfield: The Simpsons and the Possibility of Oppositional Culture* (Wayne State University Press, 2004) and Turner's *Planet Simpson* (Da Capo, 2004), which individually range between popular and sociological accounts of the series for broader and academic audiences. By contrast, Gray's work, while drawing on the sociological and political concerns of *Leaving Springfield*, as well as content analysis studies, also draws the series more closely into a cultural studies tradition of audience research alongside critical theory and genre studies, producing a rich interdisciplinary approach.

In doing so, Gray structures the book as a blend of theory and practice that re-positions the series' depth of content around its value as an overall textual system with recurring sensibilities. Beginning with a discussion that specifies his use of intertextuality, Gray applies it through genre parody within *The Simpsons*, supported by two case study chapters on advertising and news parody. He then uses a section of extended audience research as the basis for debating the formation of a "*Simpsons* attitude" that positions the series within cultural and political debates and the broader potential of television texts for change and ideology through a form of "critical intertextuality" (3). Each section thereby creates a framework for critical revision and the establishment of a thesis for intertextuality and parody's methodological potential.

Gray's initial discussion of critical intertextuality revises a postmodernist, pastiche-oriented textual reading. Instead, he aims to reemphasize the value of parody for combining spatial metaphors of intertextuality with a temporal dimension, in which a progressive text, in this case *The Simpsons*, creates a forum for and dialogue with its surrounding media and cultural influences. Gray argues here that "the text is always in flux, being created by other texts and in turn creating other texts" (28), within a "*field of action*" (author's emphasis, 28) that creates a dialogue between different series over time. This emphasis on "polyphonic" (27) texts therefore raises several questions in the text for the intertextual nature of *The Simpsons* and how it might form part of a larger, more complex network of American television and other media.

In applying this theory more specifically, Gray concisely maps *The Simpsons* over the genre of the "domesticom", and a tradition of family-oriented sitcoms from the 1950s, arguing that this genre has been steadily disrupted over time, with *The Simpsons* as a key turning point. Here Gray draws on Mittell's *Genre and Television* (Routledge, 2001) and its theory of genre innovation and change to understand how *The Simpsons*' parody encourages "rogue texts" (46) that disrupt and question conventions of genre. This defamiliarization is then carefully separated from the blankness or "postmodern hip" (59) of pastiche in order to reassert a cyclical approach to topical change and critical commentary that Gray links back to Newcomb and Hirsch's "cultural forum" theory, and to *The Simpsons*' reflection and commentary on evolving genres and American society.

To take this argument further, Gray uses case studies of advertising parody and news media to demonstrate the complexity of *The Simpsons*' critical intertextuality in practice. In the former, he focuses on the problem of hypercommercialism in terms of resolving political economy and textual meaning in the series' dual commercial success and satirical potential. Building from Barthes' theory of "lexias" as textual fragments that require audience reassembling, Gray develops a split between regulated, internal flows and user-defined strategies that engage with the text. As a result, Gray illustrates examples from the series that deftly exploit televisual form so as to mock, ridicule, and take parodic swipes at advertising, but in doing so, are aware of the complexity of advertising's infusion into contemporary culture, and calls on audiences to acknowledge their own complicity (92).

Moreover, this parodic attitude extends in Gray's argument to *The Simpsons*' treatment of news. Gray refutes Habermas' theory of television acting as an educator within public space in order to demonstrate the value of dialogic change within critical intertextuality, whereby "parody and critical intertextuality work alongside our own efforts to teach the media" (113). He thus links *The Simpsons*' attention to the construction and the ownership context of the

news to an internal parodic critique, as well as identifying an intriguing sustained metaphor of the series as the fool to the court of Rupert Murdoch's Fox empire.

The second part of the book focuses on audience research and its relationship to attitude and political sensibility on the series. Revising Fish's concept of interpretative communities, Gray uses results from thirty five interviewees to propose that "effectively, then, while Fish saw interpretive communities as always preceding and circumventing the text, they can in fact be powerfully directed by the text, and by intertextuality" (125). He grounds this argument in the audience's recognition of the intertextual parody of the series, "circulating critical messages and evaluations of contemporary televisual genres, form, and address" (141).

To conclude, Gray contextualizes *The Simpsons* through his audience research as a blend of intelligent satire and entertainment, whereby a radical critique is restricted not by the text, but by the material realities of television production and distribution. Here Gray emphasizes one of his key arguments -- that *The Simpsons*, by occupying a range of positions between entertainment and politics, is not radical in itself, but provides opportunities for active readings through the literacy and change it promotes across genres. In this context, Gray ties the series to Sloterdijk's term "kynicism", suggesting that "where cynicism is morose, resigned, and apathetic, kynicism invokes the power of laughing and parodic/satiric ridicule, and is anything but apathetic" (153-154).

Consequently, Gray argues that "*The Simpsons*' parody offers an effective, easy, and safe way to introduce political or media discussion into the everyday" (155), while also reflecting on how "the success of critical intertextuality is never automatic, for not only must its critique actually be probing and insightful, but also, if it is to tap into its full potential, it requires a supportive interpretive community to carry on its work" (170). Audience and text therefore occupy a dual role for Gray in suggesting and reconstructing meaning through continued and diverse debate, a process that he identifies as paramount to *The Simpsons*, but also embodied by other contemporary television comedies such as *The Daily Show* (1996-present), whereby parody and intertextuality use comedy in a critical, but also entertaining way.

If *Watching with the Simpsons* represents a combination of theory and practice, then *Rome: Season One: History Makes Television* is diverse in another way, analyzing the series through various aspects of classical studies, to different degrees of success. The stronger chapters involve visual style and design, studying production context (Solomon), the opening titles (Haynes), interior spaces (Allen), battle aesthetics (Brice) and the representation of Caesar's assassination (Futrell). The anthology also covers complex issues of gender and sexuality, covering women and politics (Augoustakis), costume, gossip and slaves (Toscano), religious spaces (Seo), sexual spectacle (Raucci) and the problem of incest in the series (Strong). Less successful but still engaging in places are a range of character studies, including future Emperor Octavian (Weiden Boyd), scheming matriarch Atia (Cyrino), and Cleopatra (Daugherty). Finally, a series of chapters on historical authenticity demonstrate some of the limitations of the anthology's approach, represented by the role of truth claims (Tatum), historical consultancy (Minor), soldier life (Cooke) and the use of Latin (Briggs).

The chapters on visual style and design derive their strength from a combination of grounded formal explorations of the series and key historical details, providing the best example of *Rome*'s uniqueness as a televisual take on the Roman world. Particularly effective here are Haynes' discussion of the opening titles that emphasize the use of spectacle and shock through visual design, whereby "a great part of *Rome*'s effectiveness is its ability

simultaneously to gratify our desire for the spectacle of domination and to veil it from us" (59), in doing so paralleling Roman triumphal parades and the importance of visual aesthetics. Following a similar approach, Brice's careful breakdown of battle aesthetics, Futrell's juxtaposition of the changing representational styles of Caesar's assassination and the selective production design identified by Allen within Roman homes create persuasive arguments through a similar blend of relevant detail and close analysis.

On a broader level, chapters dealing with gender and sexuality underscore the formation of power through distinctive characterization, particularly for female figures Atia and Servilia. Augoustakis' approach emphasizes *Rome's* important re-definition of social power, refocusing "the camera from the male protagonists of the period to the less accounted for, and historically marginalized, wives and mothers" (118). When tied to Toscano's argument that "*Rome* is an effective critique on power because it realistically depicts its many facets, its subtleties, and its constant ironic elusiveness" (166) through the overlap between classes and genders, these chapters begin to reinforce a shared recognition of narrative complexity. This is then strengthened by Seo and Raucci's approach to the use of religious and sexual spectacle and the series' re-positioning of overlooked history, whereby "*Rome* insists on relocating the Roman visual dynamics to the less grandiose, more intimate, and more modern context of the bedroom" (217). The anthology also provides space though for a more negative critique of sexuality and power within Strong's argument against the use of incest as shock tactic in the series, which in turn raises relevant questions of political economy and the competition for "sexual relationships previously unseen on network television" (220).

While these threads connect specific formal elements of the series to classical research, sections on character and historical authenticity range in value. The character studies are generally informative and although touching on the revisionist historical points raised in other chapters, are less successful in producing distinctively *televisual* arguments. In this way, Weiden Boyd's questioning of "how do our ideas about Augustus, based on what we know about him from a variety of ancient sources, enable us to understand, appreciate, squirm at, or even sympathize with the fictional Octavian?" (89) runs the risk of isolating general characterization and reflection of source material from the overall effects of the series. More successful are Cyrino's analysis of Atia's power and influence as a female character, while Daugherty's overview of Cleopatra's role in the series allows for a detailed contextualization of the history of character, but again, face the problem of balancing their chapters' obligation to positioning *Rome* in a longer history of cross-media research. This is not to say that these character studies do not contribute to an understanding of the series in key ways, but rather that they have to work harder to make this balance work within a limited chapter scope.

This problem also affects chapters dealing with *Rome's* historical authenticity. At their strongest, these chapters identify key parallels between the practice of television production and Roman history, with Tatum focusing on the "impressive, and impressively authentic, retelling of Roman history" (40) through spectacle and omission. However, chapters on the value of historical consultancy run the risk of making qualitative judgements between the academy and television (albeit ironically), with Minor commenting that "I like my Rome better than theirs" (48), while Briggs' analysis of the use of Latin makes the argument that "despite anachronisms and grammatical slips, classicists will agree that *Rome* is moving in the right direction by employing colourful vernacular, ritual prayers, and high literature in a series that sets a new standard for historical and cultural accuracy" (204). I do not wish to suggest here that either critic takes an elitist attitude to faithful reproduction, as both comment on these dangers, but that in terms of understanding the series' importance, their

approaches only touch on the specific contexts of *Rome*. In the same way, Cooke's chapter on soldier life often reads as a retelling of historical fact that simply uses *Rome* as a representation of existing points on ritual and detail, without significantly expanding on specific textual features.

Although both books deal with television series, they demonstrate the difficulty of categorizing what television studies currently means to the academy. Gray's imaginative and well-written blend of theory, analysis and audience research, supported by numerous relevant examples from *The Simpsons*, motivates a significantly revised understanding of textual influence and genre, and in doing so embodies the importance of interdisciplinarity to a rapidly evolving field of research that considers television as a dynamic cultural platform. The book thus argues for the:

necessity of more intertextual study, and attempts to show how rich and bountiful such study can prove; for its and comedy's peculiar yet often awesome powers; and of television's oft-underappreciated complexities, and of the medium's potential for parody and criticality (13).

By contrast, *Rome* provides a more fragmented value, with many specific points of interest, but ultimately faces limitations in its variation between different degrees of comparison between classical and televisual analysis that is most effective when it highlights formal analysis over character and the accuracy of content. In doing so it demonstrates how contemporary television series like *Rome* generate material for multi-disciplinary research, but through an adaptation, rather than a convergence of theory. The anthology also seems incomplete, reflecting its first season focus, a point raised by Cyrino and other contributors in terms of how their arguments might be developed. Whether a revised edition will be released to tackle these questions remains to be seen. Taken together then, *Watching with the Simpsons* comes highly recommended for media and television scholars for its diverse and readable approach, while *Rome*'s appeal is perhaps more limited to classical scholars with popular cultural interests, with the series as an excellent case study.

War and Film

By James Chapman

London: Reaktion, 2008. ISBN 9781861893475 (pbk). 90 Illustrations, 280pp. £10 (pbk)
Hollywood's Cold War

Hollywood's Cold War

By Tony Shaw

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. ISBN 9780748625246 (pbk). ISBN 9780748625239 (hbk). 42 Illustrations. X + 342pp. £18.99 (pbk), £60.00 (hbk)

A review by Kevin M. Flanagan, North Carolina State University, USA

The "war film" is an international genre that has undergone almost constant revision since the silent era. It has served to unify national cultures during conflict but has also forced audiences to critically reflect on the often-ambiguous moral imperatives that start and justify such conflicts. War films usually provide figures for audience identification (heroes, martyrs) but are just as likely to tear down the reputations of the "good guys." Whether focused on battlefield combat, the home front, or the military tribunal, such films show the massive, penetrative repercussions of sustained fighting. From *The Big Parade* (King Vidor, 1925) to *Les Carabiniers* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1963) to *The Thin Red Line* (Terrence Malick, 1998), movies that treat warfare and its associated discourses have remained central to understandings of historical -- as well as contemporary -- film culture.

James Chapman's *War and Film* (part of Reaktion's "Locations" series) and Tony Shaw's *Hollywood's Cold War* both intervene into the discussion of what constitutes the genre by broadening considerations of how cinema and war interact. In fact, Chapman's thematic survey does not explicitly map the contours of the war film genre *per se*, but rather broadly seeks "to discuss the filmic representation of war" across various other genres, national cinemas, and modes of practice (10). By investigating how warfare is represented *in general* and throughout history, Chapman is able to provide insights into how the genre is constructed without being made beholden to existing canons and taxonomies. Tony Shaw's book addresses an equally underdefined, yet no less prescient, set of movies that construct the pervasive representations of the mainly bloodless and sometimes immaterial conflict between the Eastern ("communist") and Western ("democratic") power blocs during the majority of the twentieth century. While the very idea of investigating films that were touched by and evidently reflected aspects of the "Cold War" era could potentially yield an endless list, Shaw manages to investigate a wide range of historical and thematic issues through a "series of case studies" in which each issue uncovers the obscured depths of "the mechanics of cinematic propaganda production and the modus operandi of the state-film network" (5). Taken

together, both books make long strides toward pulling understandings of the "war film" out of the pervasiveness of the "battlefield combat" trope. Issues surrounding war are treated in a wide variety of films, and, as Shaw maintains throughout his book, the ideological conflicts presented on screen (sometimes subtly, sometimes propagandistically) are often surprisingly tied to the administrative and legislative struggles behind their own production.

At the beginning of *War and Film*'s introduction, Chapman notes that, "if this book were a film, it is the sort that would best be described as a 'minor epic'" (7). He makes good on the claim to this form -- understood as undertaking a massive topic on a comparatively small scale -- in his organization of the text into three lineages, groupings of films which could abstractly be regarded as understanding war images through "Spectacle", "Tragedy", and "Adventure" (11). These monikers allow the co-mingling of all sorts of different movies that would otherwise be distanced from the onset. For example, the "Spectacle" chapter begins with a long section on the reception, critical response, and general verbal discourse surrounding Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (Stephen Spielberg, 1998). The film has been understood and scrutinized more for its attention to supposed authentic combat detail than for its patriotic and slightly melodramatic narrative. In particular, Chapman looks at the way in which opening Omaha beach sequence has been understood. After considering interpretations put forward by film critics and real WWII veterans, Chapman situates the movie in the formative tradition of narrative cinema and discusses it not in its apparently realistic dimensions, but rather in how it manipulates through editing and sound techniques. In this way, Chapman situates the film with similarly over-determined fare that have been understood as hyper-realistic, as a mode interested in "realistic detail achieved through special effects" (29). But rather than reduce it to this fate and write it off as pure technophilic exaltation, Chapman concludes that the film is interesting -- and useful as an entry into understandings of the war film -- precisely because it "demonstrates a tension between realism and spectacle that has been a consistent feature of responses to war and film since the early history of the medium" (33). To provide an historically important point of contrast, Chapman next examines the pre- and early history of motion pictures and war. The key text here for early audiences is *The Battle of the Somme* (1916), a largely staged actuality film that purported to show the British people how the Great War looked and felt. Chapman explains that it was received in much the same way as *Saving Private Ryan*, yet it achieves its realism-through-trickery not by meticulous reconstruction and sophisticated post-production, but rather through its authentic battlefield locations, as well as the relatively unsophisticated film literacies of its audience (45). This sort of thematic and historical contrasting illustrates Chapman's central success in *War and Film*: he is able to summarize most of the academic, ontological, and popular debates that have underscored receptions of war on screen and economically cast them in a broadly applicable, continuously prescient light.

Tragedy is a widespread and complex literary mode that has lent itself to the emergence of the "anti-war" film (117). Using Elem Klimov's *Come and See* (1985) as an example, Chapman charts how war can be contained in films that reveal (and sometimes tacitly support) the blood, guts, and glory of battle while simultaneously showing the pathos inherent in widespread death and devastation. The tactic of presenting war as ultimately and fundamentally tragic has been employed both on the fringes of cinematic practice and in the mainstream. As Chapman shows over the course of this chapter -- through diverse offerings like Andrzej Wajda's *Kanal* (1957), Joseph Losey's *King and Country* (1964), and Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) -- the tragic is internationally used as a means of questioning the popular memory of war, even from the point of view of the victor.

Casting war as "adventure" has often fed into the blockbuster action market, but even this focus on individual maneuvers on and off the battlefield can still yield fairly complicated issues. The thrill element of warfare is persistent in most films that breach the subject, and Chapman deploys Graham Dawson's concept of the "pleasure culture of war" to illustrate its larger ramifications. Broadly speaking, this "pleasure culture" idea accounts for the heroism, performed masculinity, and desirability of certain aspects of war that help recuperate its less desirable aspects. Thus, British films contemporaneous with World War II cast the conflict as a continuation of an Edwardian era *Boy's Own* tale in the service of creating a "consensus" on the importance of, and sense of nobility behind, the war effort (184, 187). This leads to one of the best sections of Chapman's text, his discussion of "men on a mission narratives" that have proved successful for over 40 years. If *The Dirty Dozen* (Robert Aldrich, 1967) remains a paradigmatic example of this tendency, then contemporary re-imaginings will certainly come with Quentin Tarantino's recently announced film *Inglorious Bastards* (a title borrowed from one of the most successful exploitations of this subgenre).

War and Film somehow manages to account for a huge variety of films and does succeed in breaching most of the major issues at stake in the cinematic representation of war, but really could have benefited from a bigger format. Reaktion's "Locations" series are great at mapping the thematic complexity of a broadly conceived group of films, but they often tantalize as much as they inform. As it stands, *War and Film* is a sophisticated and well-written survey of the relationship between war and cinema that provides plenty of compelling strands for further investigation.

Tony Shaw's *Hollywood's Cold War* is positioned very differently than Chapman's book though it is likewise able to account for a huge corpus of films without ever feeling forced. Where Chapman seeks to show some degree of unity across very diffuse historical junctures (namely, the international history of warfare since the birth of cinema), Shaw's book takes a slightly more condensed period of time -- the 70 or so years that account for the hysteria over communism in America, from the first "Red Scare" of 1917 through the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 -- and attempts to show the widely different strategies that were used in service of the anti-conflict known as the Cold War. While Chapman's book is mainly concerned with "hot wars," Shaw's book is just as concerned with "Cold War" representations that have ideologically-charged lacunae that seem to have nothing to do with the direct depiction of combat, battle, and massed armies. Shaw sees the Cold War as a total conflict that required an unprecedented level of cooperation between the government and the private sector, authoritarian officials and the citizenry (4). Through nine "case studies" that span "Hollywood's most popular genres," Shaw shows "the full range of propaganda messages and techniques deployed during the conflict, therefore showing how certain films sought bluntly to instill hatred of the enemy among the American people," while also addressing films that "tried in a more measured fashion to persuade Third World audiences of the virtues of Western-style democracy" (5).

What immediately stands out about *Hollywood's Cold War* is the depth of its scholarship. Shaw had done exhaustive research and weaves government documents, contemporary reviews, academic scholarship, and more into his case studies. Especially fascinating in this regard is his chapter "Projecting a Prophet for Profit", in which Shaw discusses the surprising extent to which the US government was involved in British adaptations of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (Joy Batchelor and John Halas, 1954), and *1984* (Michael Anderson, 1957). For example, *1984* was produced by the United States Information Agency's Motion Picture service, through former RKO president Peter Rathvon's Holiday Films Productions (87).

Conceived as an anti-communist feature rather than as an anti-fascist or generally anti-authoritarian parable, this version of *1984* was set in the near and recognizable future and boosted a transcendental, heroic ending not found in the novel (89, 92). Here, the U.S. was able to covertly back a popularized version of an important literary work that was to thereafter be read through a pro-democratic frame of reference. Even though *1984* did not live up to the desired level of critical and popular success, U.S. intervention in foreign film markets "had the added advantage of encouraging indigenous hostility towards the Soviet Union", and gave the implication that "opposition to communism had found its roots in countries other than the United States" (94). Hollywood's Cold War was largely fought by other nations, on countless cultural battlefields.

Shaw tackles a multitude of genres, from the 1950s Biblical epic -- *The Ten Commandments* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1956) -- to the 1970s conspiracy thriller -- *Three Days of the Condor* (Sydney Pollack, 1975)). Most impressively, he politically contextualizes nearly uncategorizable cult films like *Red Dawn* (John Milius, 1984) and *Walker* (Alex Cox, 1987), which represent the two sides of the highly politicized Reagan years. *Red Dawn*, and its ideological kin *Missing in Action* (Joseph Zito, 1984) and *Rambo: Part II* (George P. Cosmatos, 1986), show the contemporary struggles (sometimes real, sometimes imagined) against communism as conventionally winnable. Paradoxically, these films show that the only way to really beat the enemy is to adopt their strategies, in a sense inhabit their tactical position. Thus, after the U.S. is invaded in *Red Dawn*, the protagonists "become a crack guerrilla unit, sweeping down on the occupying forces and liberating groups of Americans," but rather than directly imagine these boys as North Vietnamese soldiers, the film ensures that "their hit-and-run tactics evoke popular images of underdog militiamen fighting for freedom against British colonialists, or fearless Indian braves struggling to preserve their way of life" (273-274). By contrast, Alex Cox's radical *Walker* condemns colonialist William Walker and his adaptive mercenary forces. Walker invaded Nicaragua in order to secure U.S. business interests and promote the righteous destiny of his nation. After installing himself as dictator, he and his men effectively choked the nation of resources and bullied it into submission. Cox's use of anachronisms and his insistence on various distancing techniques draws unmistakable parallels between U.S. actions in the nineteenth century and U.S. policy toward the Nicaraguan Contras in the mid-1980s. Shaw does an admirable job of assessing the film's reception in the context of the Reaganite political climate and illustrates how financially unforgiving the decade could be to filmmakers who disrupted the historical expectations of their audience (284-285).

Hollywood's Cold War pursues many other compelling narratives and touches on most conceivable areas American cinematic production. It is a worthy companion to his 2006 book *British Cinema and the Cold War: The State, Propaganda and Consensus* (I. B. Tauris), which could pair to form the backbone of any course focusing on the films of the Cold War era.

Writing History and Film

By William Guynn

Abingdon: Routledge, 2006. ISBN 0-415-97924-2. 225pp. £15.99 (pbk), £60.00 (hbk)

The Hollywood Historical Film (New Approaches to Film Genre)

The Hollywood Historical Film (New Approaches to Film Genre)

by Robert Burgoyne

Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2008. ISBN 978-1405146036 192pp. £16.99 (pbk), £50.00 (hbk)

A review by Laura E. Ferguson, University of Glasgow, UK

William Guynn's *Writing History in Film* and Robert Burgoyne's *The Hollywood Historical Film* both approach the subject of portraying history in cinema, yet do so in different ways. Guynn presents a rich, highly detailed examination of a multitude of theoretical threads within issues surrounding the representation of history in film, whereas Burgoyne takes his structure from a series of diverse and fascinating case studies, through close analysis of which he identifies the way in which historical events are portrayed on-screen.

The first of these two publications, *Writing History in Film* by William Guynn, opens with a useful grounding of the subject within the context of emergent American and European debates among historians in the 1970s and 1980s. Paying particular attention to French theorists such as Michel de Certeau and Jean Chesnaux, often overlooked in other historical cinema books, Guynn discusses thoughts on long-standing issues such as film's distortion of the truth and the bridging of gaps in knowledge with fictive elements, to provide a clearly defined base for his own clearly defined theories to follow.

The subsequent chapters are broken into different areas within the field of historical film in which Guynn lays considered, well-referenced arguments that combined provide a comprehensive study of the genre. His first chapter, "Historiography: Stories of a Particular Kind" engages with writing on the philosophy of history to bridge the gap between film and documented history. Concluding that the historian, too, works "on representations and not on real objects" (44), largely based on R. G. Collingwood's (1946) argument that the narrative structure of both fiction and history are the same, Guynn is able to begin his examination of the historical film by arguing its strong similarity to traditional interpretations of history and asserting its place within academic historical analysis.

His second chapter, dedicated to non-fictional films, moves on to identify not only the distinction between the fictional and non-fictional film but also, perceptively, through this to illuminate their similarities with regards to the representation of historical reality. Emphasising that, as opposed to fictional texts, non-fictional films are "pragmatic rather than aesthetic" (46) in that they are intended to alter or shape the viewer's perspective, Guynn asserts that non-fiction is not to be considered simply the "truth" to fiction's "lies". He bases his analysis of non-fiction film on literary theory to relate it back to both the fictional and historical narratives he identified in the previous chapter, and in an illuminating case study of *The Rise to Power of Louis XIV* (Robert Rossellini, 1966) demonstrates "the synthetic and mediated quality of historical representation" (95).

It is the third chapter, however, that takes the debate in a new direction. Focusing on the imaginary nature of the terms "character" and "actor", Guynn considers whether it is possible to re-create a historical character in film. He credibly argues:

The historical character exists, more or less latently, more or less formed, before the historian begins to research or write about his existence. In contrast to the *fabulations* of the costume drama, the historical character is constrained by the trace of his existence and all the other histories of which he has been the subject. However, he retains something of the fictional protagonist because the historical character is not prewritten: the historian assigns the historical actor to his proper place in the chain of events, charting his role in the teleology he is reconstructing. (103)

Linking back to the question of filling in historical gaps with fiction or speculation, the detailed exploration of character in historical film is the most original and compelling section of Guynn's work. It is enriched with cinematic evidence from case studies of *La Marseillaise* (Jean Renoir, 1938) and *I am Cuba* (Mikhail Kalatozov, 1964) and presents a strong theoretical basis on which to build further study of this aspect of historical cinema by dissecting the projection of historical characters, revealing it in these cases to be emblematic of a "transpersonal, transcollective character of the Nation" (110) that "reduces complex historical situations to conventional imagery" (119).

In the fourth chapter he opens the discussion back up to consider not just the relationship between a historical character and the past reality, but now the relationship between a historical narrative and the past reality to which it is referring. Taking a documentary in the form of *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (Esther Shub, 1927) and the fictional example of *The Travelling Players* (Theo Angelopoulos, 1974-75) Guynn excellently deconstructs the active reading of these texts by the viewer. In *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* he identifies the ironic manipulation of archive footage to reverse the perspective portrayed and illustrates the process of iconic figuration in which the spectator makes an intellectual reading of the images they are being presented with. The historical background action in *The Travelling Players* provides the practical application of "analytic interpretation" with which the director "disengages events from their linear sequence to resituate them in the present of the discourse" (155).

From this culmination of his thorough research into historical film, Guynn uses his experience to address the issue of collective memory. Its academic status often diminished by historians for being a "social endeavour" (165), Guynn finds this quality makes the subject of particular interest. Discussing two documentaries of very different cultural origins, *The*

Civil War (Ken Burns, 1990) and *S21 – The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (Rithy Panh, 2003), he links collective memory to oral history traditions in which a social bridge between the past and the present is created and innovatively analyses the use of sound and camera techniques, such as zooming and panning, and how "such techniques of presence run the risk of transgressing the boundaries of historical narrative" (184) if not used with the degree of discretion employed in *The Civil War*. With the focus on minor narratives to history's grand narrative and the living past rather than the archived past, collective memory proves a large, distinctive and complex branch of the study of historical film, and one to which Guynn could quite possibly devote a whole separate book. While his discussion of the subject is, as always, well-structured and considered, there is far more to be written about and the topic would benefit greatly from the same in-depth and focused analysis Guynn has applied to historical film as a whole.

Nevertheless, *Writing History in Film* is undoubtedly a valuable addition to the cannon of writing on history in film being a highly detailed examination and interpretation of a multitude of theoretical issues surrounding debates on the subject.

Robert Burgoyne's *The Hollywood Historical Film* also endeavours to analyse historical film as a genre but instead approaches it by dividing the subject into what he refers to as sub-types with common roots that have developed along distinct paths. These he defines as the war film, the epic film, the biographical film, the metahistorical film and the topical historical film, and he devotes a chapter to the close textual analysis of examples of each after an introduction to the topic and a brief theoretical chapter discussing the genre, charting its evolution and describing further its sub-genres.

During the introduction Burgoyne outlines his aims for the remainder of the book. His main goal is to illustrate "the specific codes that govern how the past is represented in different types of film" (5) but other themes woven into the study include the relationship between historical film and an emerging or changing understanding of national identity, the link between historical films and other forms of organised remembering inspired by them, and the historical film as a vehicle of artistic ambition or studio prestige and the manner in which the genre is both "valorised for its cultural importance and denigrated for its commercial orientation" (20). *The Hollywood Historical Film* does this neatly and well in a book that is very easy and interesting to read for both academic and non-academic audiences.

Burgoyne chooses perfectly in opening his film analysis with a chapter devoted to the war film. A highly significant part of history and the subject of an extremely successful type of film, war is without a doubt one of the major components of the historical film genre. In this analysis of *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1999) he finds the presentation of a "case for the legitimacy of war" (52) and contrasts this with the predominant anti-war attitude in most other post-Vietnam war films. He also provides an excellent comparison between the "hyperrealistic" (56) combat images in the film and the dioramas, panoramas and 360-degree paintings from a century before.

The epic film chapter also brings a meaningful comparison -- this time between modern and classic epic films in an analysis of *Gladiator* (Ridley Scott, 2000) alongside *Spartacus* (Stanley Kubrick, 1960) in terms of how *Gladiator* "both rehearses and revises the epic tradition" (74) with ancient Rome as a metaphor for America. Although this metaphorical aspect of the epic film has received previous attention, Burgoyne illustrates the effect of the passing years through the comparison of texts.

It is in the following biographical film chapter based on a reading of *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), however, that he makes his best contribution to the study of historical film. Viewing the biographical film as the representation of a collective historical event through an individual story, his main argument is that:

Schindler's List reinvents and repurposes the biographical film as a modernist form, communicating to a world audience in a popular, comprehensible idiom while at the same time utilising advanced visual, acoustic and narrative techniques... I argue that *Schindler's List* can be understood as an innovative project of historical representation, closer to *Citizen Kane* than to mainstream Hollywood cinema, one that uses a modernist vocabulary to refashion an established genre form. (103)

Burgoyne's detailed descriptions of scenes and shots proceed to build a picture in support of this and illustrates the way in which *Schindler's List* reverses the traditional biopic format of showing the ordinary home life of someone of great genius to depict the greatness of a seemingly ordinary man.

The final two chapters of the book provide an analysis of *JFK* (Oliver Stone, 1990) as an example of a metahistorical film and *United 93* (Paul Greengrass, 2006) and *World Trade Center* (Oliver Stone, 2006) as case studies for the topical historical film. The primary point of interest in *JFK* is the mixing of documentary and fictional footage to challenge the verdict of the Warren Commission that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone and present a counter-history. This raises issues of historical authenticity and the blurring of the fact/fiction boundaries and provides Burgoyne with much to discuss in terms of historical film. In contrast, it is not what is referred to in the 9/11 themed films that proves of interest as much as what isn't. Defining both *United 93* and *World Trade Center* as "politically neutral acts of memorial representation" (148), Burgoyne considers them an attempt to "act out" rather than "work through" the trauma in order to commemorate the incident whilst retaining the focus narrowly on the event itself whilst avoiding the wider context.

His analysis of the cinematic texts in these two and previous chapters is extremely vivid and detailed. The case studies format he utilises to explore the sub-types of the genre is undoubtedly interesting and entertaining. However, the book is most useful for those wishing close analysis of the particular texts Burgoyne has selected rather than a greater discussion of the topic, in which the book is slightly deficient, and this is particularly noticeable when compared to Guynn's work.

The two books, then, both contribute to the subject of the historical film but will prove useful to different readers in different ways. For a thorough analysis of a group of key historical film texts and new readings of these popular Hollywood movies Burgoyne ably assists in *The Hollywood Historical Film*. However, to discover strong theoretical foundations in the field and for an interesting and comprehensive study across both fictional and non-fictional cinema Guynn's *Writing History in Film* would be a better selection and should leave any reader feeling thoroughly informed.

"Evil" Arabs in American Popular Film: Orientalist Fear

By Tim Jon Semmerling

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006. ISBN: 0-292-71342-8. 35 b&w illustrations, ix+303pp, £14.99 (pbk) £41 (hardcover)

A review by Martin Fradley, University of Manchester, UK

It is in many ways entirely fitting that Tim Jon Semmerling concludes his otherwise sober and largely polemical volume on (anti-)Arab representation in post-classical Hollywood cinema with a discussion of Matt Parker and Trey Stone's gleefully irreverent *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* (1999). In this primitively animated film, Saddam Hussein is satirically depicted as an unhinged maniac driven by megalomania and unfettered homosexual libido: an Islamic monster so cruel that his lover -- Satan *himself*, no less -- appears gentle and sensitive by comparison. Alongside Parker and Stone's *Team America: World Police* (2004) -- which, at the time of writing, still remains perhaps *the* definitive post-9/11 American film -- the *South Park* movie's insistent *de*-aestheticization of high-concept cinematic politics and mocking contempt for the insidious gloss of American pop culture is unavoidably redolent of Walter Benjamin's influential thesis, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935). Indeed, the *South Park* movie's wildly hyperbolic depiction of Saddam Hussein as a pathological icon of sadism and malevolent "Middle-Eastern" decadence has added pathos since his capture and subsequent trial and execution. Indeed, the gulf between propagandist depictions of Hussein as a brutal and borderline-genocidal Iraqi despot and the reality of his pitifully dishevelled appearance upon capture by coalition troops was telling on many levels and only served to underscore and entirely legitimise Parker and Stone's crudely nihilistic but intelligently barbed commentary. For Semmerling, then, *South Park* stands out as one of the few popular US cultural productions which readily and self-consciously takes to task the anti-Arab discourses that have been so prevalent (and so infrequently challenged) in recent American cultural and political discourse.

Although there is certainly a long history of racist representations of the Middle East

and its inhabitants in mainstream cinema, "*Evil*" *Arabs in American Popular Film* focuses on what the author perceives to be six key films: William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Rules of Engagement* (2000); *Rollover* (Alan J. Pakula, 1981); *Black Sunday* (John Frankenheimer, 1976); *Three Kings* (David O. Russell, 1999) and CNN's documentary-cum-memorial, *American Remembers* (2002). Semmerling's rationale here is to examine the tangibly growing anti-Arab feeling within American culture from the early 1970s through to the present day via the narrative and semiotic litmus paper of the Hollywood imaginary. That

is, the author explores these shifts against the backdrop of an escalating Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Arab oil embargo of 1973 through to the ongoing neo-imperialist military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. As the subtitle of his book suggests, central to Semmerling's thesis is Edward Said's concept of the overtly paranoid mechanisms of Orientalist thought. For the author, then, the construction of the Arab "other" and the stereotypical 'Ali Baba-isms' so willingly embraced in the popular imagination reveals much more about the collective national anxieties and insecurities of an increasingly frustrated United States than they do about the various populations of the Arab regions. "Our filmic villains," suggests Semmerling, "are narrative tools used for self-presentation and self-identity to enhance our own stature, our own meaning, and our own self-esteem in times of our own diffidence. Therefore ...

"evil" Arabs in American film [are] actually oblique depictions of ourselves" (2). Thus, as the commercial significance of the Middle East's oil reserves profoundly undercut the U.S.'s hallowed sense of autonomy and self-reliance in the 1970s, the complex economic and geopolitical shifts of the period become condensed into demeaning (and depressingly enduring) Orientalist tropes and discourses, "an amorphous Otherness that was often symbolized by the image of the oil-rich, Islamic terrorist Arab" (18).

At its best, the volume can be extremely compelling. For example, it is difficult to argue with Semmerling's sustained critique of *Rules of Engagement*. Arguing that the film is best understood as a neo-conservative backlash film which effectively allegorises right-wing Clinton-era discontent, Semmerling understands the movie's climactic courtroom drama as representing "a battle in a war, as perceived by cultural traditionalists, against the threat of multiculturalists, the assault against truth, and the tyranny of political correctness" (194). Elsewhere, an examination of the reflexive self-congratulation of CNN's commemorative *America Remembers* highlights the manner in which the events in Manhattan on 11th September 2001 "have become reified, epicized, and elevated from atrocity and terror into purposeful war through an American patriotic and political discourse" (205-6). Indeed, as with other symbolic events in which the United States has suffered national trauma the key tropes which have been used to narrate 9/11 are in themselves generically melodramatic. As with Pearl Harbour or the Kennedy assassination, the central motifs are remarkably consistent and always already all-American: virginal blue skies; the unsullied state of *a priori* innocence; blissful normalcy of an unremarkable American day violently interrupted by an unforeseen and hitherto unimaginable horror; the painful shock of misrecognition; etc. *America Remembers* is thus understood as an ideological back-formation designed to re-establish a sense of mythic national self through the construction of a series of convenient binary oppositions (good/evil, us/them, innocence/malevolence, civilized/barbaric, modern/archaic) masquerading as objective documentary. As ever, rapacious assaults on American confidence and security become re-imagined and ideologically worked-through, the painfully torn hymen of national dogma conveniently restored and the purity and fundamental guiltlessness of the homeland magically reinstated.

"*Evil*" Arabs in American Popular Film is perhaps more intriguing in its analysis of the regressive anti-Islamic undercurrents of *The Exorcist*, a film regularly cited as being "the most frightening horror film in American cinema" (30). As so often in the book,

Semmerling outlines the ways in which economic and geopolitical anxieties *vis-à-vis* American-Middle East relations are regularly mapped onto insecurities concerning gender and sexuality. Invariably, this displaced and metonymic conflict becomes reworked as an allegory of an imperilled and previously assertive and masculine United States being threatened by the supposedly feminising malevolence of the Middle East. As with the volume's interrogation of *Black Sunday* (John Frankenheimer, 1977) (wherein the United States' sense of political and economic castration finds a model of national remasculinization through the regenerative violence and quasi-frontierist zeal of Robert Shaw's imposing Israeli agent), *The Exorcist* is understood to play out its angst through the mobilisation of an extremely dubious and reactionary gender politics. Indeed, Semmerling understands this tale of demonic possession as effectively a contemporaneous re-working of *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956), with an angst-ridden Catholic priesthood here replacing John Wayne's pathological anti-hero in their efforts to rescue a young woman's body from the rapacious domination of a sexually licentious "'Arab demon'" (44). Key to the author's revisionist thrust here is *The Exorcist's* opening sequences set in Iraq, and Semmerling's discussion of the persistent critical marginalisation (or, indeed, outright elision) of the significance of this prologue carries no little rhetorical weight. Indeed, the author is extremely alert here to the Orientalist tropes and racist semiotics which characterise these scenes, with Iraq depicted as a bewildering, irrational and hellish metonym for an innately pernicious Middle East. Although the analysis and political contextualisation of this re-reading of the film as a gendered allegory of fears about Middle Eastern threats to the national security of the United States played out across the abject and helpless body of Regan (Linda Blair) is certainly persuasive on its own terms, its concerted revisionist efforts to understand the film as being primarily about a demonic Arab threat necessarily elides all other interpretations of the movie. In other words, the majority of the film's narrative becomes sidelined, and the critical wrongs enacted against the opening ten minutes are systematically (and somewhat disingenuously) reversed as the Iraq prologue is fetishistically re-imagined as the ideological epicentre of Friedkin's movie. Elsewhere, *"Evil" Arabs in American Popular Film* is impressively sharp and incisive on the national-masculinist mythologies satirized in *Three Kings'* exploration of the waning of "victory culture". Like *Jarhead* (Sam Mendes, 2005), the film explores the nationalistic and psychosexual investments of military conquest the warrior cult, the premature ejaculation of the Persian Gulf War here refigured as the stage for an ironic war movie in search of a heroically Oedipal plot. Yet, once again, the oppositional potential and prescient intelligence of *Three Kings* is undermined by Semmerling's insistence upon the always already Orientalist restrictions of mainstream American filmmaking. Although the author is right to draw attention to the film's recuperative trajectory, his contention that *Three Kings'* potential for an introspective critique of American foreign policy "is displaced by the audience's reaction of shock, fear, and anger at the stereotypical Arabs and their behaviour" (151) in a solitary sequence is somewhat overdetermined. With Abu Ghraib still fresh in the memory, *Three Kings'* darkly humorous commentary on the aggressive homoerotics and barely displaced sexual sadism self-evident in recent U.S. military adventurism really required a somewhat more balanced and/or nuanced critical approach.

And herein lies the book's main problem. Semmerling's preoccupation with national mythologies and "deep" binary structures -- while sometimes compelling -- can often seem somewhat anachronistic in their adherence to a ponderous structuralist methodology. Indeed, with its sometimes laboured prose, extensive plot summarising and repeated references to the likes of Will Wright and Richard Slotkin, the volume is too rigid for its own good at certain junctures. Again, the lack of critical self-consciousness when employing terminology

like "suture" and "interpellation" means that *"Evil" Arabs in American Popular Film* is too frequently hindered by an unappealingly didactic - even patronising - tone. For example, how many viewers would actually fail to treat the likes of *America Remembers* or the controversial *Rules of Engagement* with some degree of scepticism? Indeed, with his book published by an established academic press with a very specific scholarly audience in mind, one wonders quite who Semmerling imagines his readership to be (*and* precisely what he perceives the divergent cultures of Middle Eastern nations to share as "Arabs") when he states that his book is "a film study written to encourage the American cinematic audience to look with a more critical eye ... and to call forth a differentiation between the Arabs-as-the-are-portrayed and the Arabs as-they-are" (2). Whilst *"Evil" Arabs in American Popular Film: Orientalist Fear* does exactly what its title suggests, readers interested in this area of critical inquiry may well find that this is both the book's strength and, simultaneously, its most glaring weakness.

Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in Film and Television since 1933

By Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman (eds.), Preface by David Cesarani
London: Wallflower Press, 2005. ISBN: 1-904764-51-7 (pbk). 63 Illustrations, xxiii + 317
pp. £16.99 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk)
Haunted Images: Film, Ethics, Testimony and the Holocaust

Haunted Images: Film, Ethics, Testimony and the Holocaust

By Libby Saxton

London: Wallflower Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-905674-35-0 (pbk). 15 Illustrations, vii +
162 pp. £16.99 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk)

A review by Nathan Waddell, University of Birmingham, UK

Slavoj Žižek suggestively contends in *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?* (Verso, 2001) that the depoliticization of the Holocaust enabled by those who view it as "the Void, the black hole, the end, the implosion, of the (narrative) universe" (66-67) elevates that Event of events into "the properly *sublime* Evil, the untouchable Exception beyond the reach of 'normal' political discourse", potentially resulting in a "*political* act of utter cynical manipulation, a political *intervention* aimed at legitimizing a certain kind of hierarchical political relation" (67, original emphases). For Žižek, such a move has two important consequences: a reduction in the perceived criminality of Western and West-sponsored acts of aggression in the Third World; and a kind of co-opting of all revolutionary agendas into a logic that culminates in charges of Holocaust-thinking, wherein going against the ideological grain is perceived as an inevitable prelude to the ultimate pursuit of criminally enforced difference.

Žižek's work plays a key role in Libby Saxton's *Haunted Images*, where it is cited as alerting us "to the uncomfortable possibility that imaginary images of trauma can work to screen us from the Real rather than allowing us to approach it" (60). That said, both books under review here are centrally concerned with these issues, as they map the variegated efforts of film-makers to depict, interpret, explain, justify, and condemn the Holocaust, that nightmare which has been seen as the final horizon of post-Enlightenment failure and ethical atrocity. Theodor Adorno's famous claim that the Holocaust defies and reveals its own sadism through the act of representation acquires particular resonance in two massively illuminating and engaging studies (the first a book of essays derived from a five-day symposium entitled

"Holocaust, Genocide, and the Moving Image," held at the Imperial War Museum in London in April 2001) that demonstrate the rich plurality of filmic responses to the Holocaust, a plurality which defies Adorno's warning and, in places, bears out the implications of his critique. Though he himself eventually problematized his own claim, Adorno's original warning against Holocaust representation in the filmic image, as Libby Saxton notes, has both become too convenient a shorthand in modern ethical scholarship and, more importantly, frequently misread as a blanket injunction against Holocaust representation. Following Dominick LaCapra's influential reading of Adorno's claim as a commentary on the *difficulties* of Holocaust representation, rather than as a ruling out of representational analysis altogether, Saxton suggests that "it is more helpful to discuss Holocaust representation in terms of obstacles and challenges rather than prohibitions and taboos", a view reinforced by her reminder that "[w]ith increasing frequency over the past two decades, survivors and scholars have expressed misgivings about prohibitions on representation and rhetorics of ineffability which have been variously criticised as imprecise, obscurantist, viciously circular or simply unfounded" (7).

Both *Holocaust and the Moving Image* and *Haunted Image* fully engage with and attest to the ongoing importance of these misgivings, resulting in a pair of studies that will surely become standard reference points in the overlapping fields of Holocaust studies, ethics, and film criticism. In the case of *Holocaust and the Moving Image* these misgivings are given an especially prominent expression in a chapter entitled "The Survivors' Right to Reply", which offers a transcript of a special session held at the Imperial War Museum conference in which Holocaust survivors were provided with a space to air their own views about an event upon which they have a traumatically unique and informed perspective. This transcript makes for compelling and illuminating reading, notably at those moments where the selectivity of popular Holocaust accounts such as Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) is variously given short shrift as a form of fraudulence, reluctantly welcomed as a benefit to education and popular learning, and criticized for its unnecessarily dominant significance in the history of Holocaust film-making. Indeed, both *Holocaust and the Moving Image* and *Haunted Images* are post-Spielbergian in their make-up: if they chronologically come after *Schindler's List*, they also disclose views shaped through the cultural initiatives to which that film contributed (such as Spielberg's USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, founded in 1994) and lines of reasoning against its narrativization (and thus, in some respects, *falsification*) of history. This latter critique, as Saxton points out, concentrates on what some have seen as *Schindler's List*'s ostensible immorality, grotesque distortionism, and near-pornographic voyeurism (17). At the same time these books consistently try to place "misrepresentative" films such as *Schindler's List* and Roberto Benigni's *La Vita è Bella* (*Life is Beautiful*; 1997) within the broader trajectories of the American, British, and European cinematic and televisual cultures within which they play such problematic roles.

A review as short as this cannot hope to do justice to the breadth and range of views put across in both of these books, especially in the case of *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, which, at over 300 pages and comprising over thirty essays, is a considerable tome. As David Cesarani puts it in his "Preface" to the book, this is a volume that offers to "our recorded and screened times" a toolkit "for understanding modes of production, commercial constraints, techniques for exerting influence, aesthetic dilemmas, standards of accuracy and question of authenticity", issues that, in the case of the Holocaust and the post-Holocaust genocides of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, acquire signal levels of urgency, relevance, impenetrability, and horror.

The volume is centrally concerned with the interrelated ideas of film as eyewitness, misinformation, documentation, and feature-length "entertainment", and is divided into five thematic and generally chronological sections ("Film as Witness", "Film as Propaganda", "The Holocaust Documentary in Film and Television", "The Holocaust in Feature Films", and "Legacy and Other Genocides"). Each section is introduced by a brief framing essay. The range of issues covered here is impressive, from the filming of the liberation of the Bergen-Belson concentration camp, undertaken by the British Army's Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU) in 1945, to films such as the BBC's investigation into the Rwandan genocide in *Panorama: Journey into Darkness* (David Harrison, 1994) and *Les Voix de la Muette* (*If the Walls Could Speak*; Daniela Zanzotto, 1998), which details the history of La cité de la Muette in the Parisian suburbs, a community that among other things functioned as a French-operated concentration camp for Jews to be deported to Auschwitz between 1941 and 1943, after which time it came under Nazi control. *Holocaust and the Moving Image* explores in a wealth of detail the tension between film as "objective" account and film as "constructed" representation, a conflict shown by the book's editors to be between, on the one hand, the filmic image's capacity for instantly describing "a scene, such as an atrocity, with a facility and scope that would normally defy words or description" (5), and, on the other, film as "a highly mediated and constructed account of the past", a version of history the objectivity of which "should be questioned as much as that for any other form of primary evidence, be it document, letter, oral testimony or drawing" (6).

I do have some concerns over the reductive thematic structure of *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, a potential point of criticism anticipated by the volume's editors (2), but it seems futile to raise these concerns here since the book as a whole accomplishes so much, and with impressive professional care and ethical diligence. Rather than go through each essay case by case, I want instead to pick out some of the points made by contributors across the volume that, in my view, represent a small sampling of its central arguments. One such argument is the need to adjudicate carefully between different rolls of film stock when dealing with the filmic accounts made by Allied soldiers as they discovered and evacuated Nazi concentration camps at the end of the Second World War. In his essay "Filming the Liberation of Bergen-Belsen", Toby Haggith makes the important point early on in the volume that "the promiscuous use of the Belsen footage" by historians and documentary film-makers "has distorted popular understanding of the Holocaust itself" (33), leading to a bias in perceptions of "the Final Solution" as operative in *all* concentration camps rather than in the extermination centres of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Chelmno, Sobibor, and Treblinka. This is not to underplay the suffering experienced by those in the camps not listed here, but to draw attention to the need for careful historical scholarship when dealing with horrifying documentary material. Helen Lennon's essay "A Witness to Atrocity: Film as Evidence in International War Crimes Tribunals" is similarly concerned with the need for care when analyzing particularly sensitive filmic images, leading her to the important point that "it is necessary to confront the question of what is *not* shown at [tribunals], asking: in what ways are these moving images directing our attention toward certain violations, and away from others?" (72, original emphasis).

Terry Charman's contribution, "Fritz Hippler's *The Eternal Jew*", discusses Hippler's film *Der Ewige Jude* (1940), an especially disturbing work of propaganda which portrays the Jewish people as subhuman animals. Charman places the film in the context of the approval it received from Nazi figures such as Joseph Goebbels. Matthew Lee's essay "The Ministry of Information and Anti-Fascist Short Films of the Second World War" discusses the work of propaganda from the Allied perspective, but it is Stephen Tuck's essay, "Fight the

Government with its Own Propaganda: the Struggle for Racial Equality in the USA during the Second World War", that I found of particular note here, discussing as it does Frank Capra's *The Negro Soldier* (1944) with regard to racial tension in African-American communities and in the light of the film's valorization of black participation in democratic, anti-fascist resistance. As Tuck notes, "the consequence of *The Negro Soldier* was a widespread publicity coup for black Americans and the army was integrated four years later" (119), even if "a close reading of post-war evaluations suggest that the film had little immediate impact on individual soldiers' opinions about race relations" (122). Tuck adds the fact that the film "did not act as the catalyst for a dramatically improved presentation of blacks on film in Hollywood" (122). An essay like Tuck's enlarges the scope of *Holocaust and the Moving Image* beyond its ostensible remit, contextualizing its account of predominantly Jewish suffering with a broader emphasis on the race relations of the mid-twentieth century. Ian Wall's essay, "The Holocaust, Film and Education", discusses *Schindler's List* and Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985) in the pragmatic context of classroom education, and bears out the point made by Anna Reading in the essay immediately following, "Young People's Viewing of Holocaust Films in Different Cultural Contexts" -- that Spielberg's film, despite its shortcomings, has had a positive influence in cultivating and creating "knowledge and understanding of the events" (212) it depicts.

This last point is made by Libby Saxton in *Haunted Images* when she points out that films such as *Schindler's List*, Benigni's *La Vita è Bella*, and Roman Polanski's *The Pianist* (2002) "have brought the events of the period to the attention of a wider international public", even if "these incursions into the mainstream have regularly divided opinion and courted controversy, and thus prompted fresh stock-taking of the broader legacy of the camps in cinema" (3). As with *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, Saxton's book is mainly unconcerned with these filmic texts, but it includes interesting side discussions of them, particularly of *Schindler's List*. Through a close and impressive reading of the film's subtle and ethically manipulative camerawork, Saxton demonstrates that *Schindler's List* can be read as offering "false views both of the vulnerable other and of the irresponsible self, affording the semblance of moral clarity while exacerbating ethical disorientation" (79). Saxton locates this feeling of disorientation in the infamous shower/gas chamber scene near the film's conclusion, at which point "[m]oral confusion is created as Spielberg deceives us into mistaking one trauma scene for another and exploits our fear that we are about to witness the prohibited image of asphyxiation", before "the film ultimately guarantees the safety of our position as innocent onlookers, denying our investment in the violence and suffering shown" (79). Such points are important ones when we consider the cultural hegemony exercised by *Schindler's List's* depiction of the Holocaust, and they are points which feed into Saxton's wider attention to less commercially successful representations such as Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-98), Jack Gold's *Escape from Sobibor* (1987), Christopher Olgiati's *Child of the Death Camps: Truth and Lies* (1999), and Elida Schogt's experimental *Zyklon Portrait* (1999), among many others.

The centrepiece of *Haunted Images* is Lanzmann's *Shoah*, and a large portion of Saxton's arguments are framed with reference to it. Saxton's key point is that "the concern to articulate moral limits or interdictions on representation can become a strategy for evading a properly ethical confrontation with the [Holocaust]" (2), a point she articulates with reference to the broader critical shift away from the discourse of filmic ineffability that has been dominant in studies of the Holocaust for several decades. Against such a view, and with reference to Martin Jay's important work on the denigration of vision in the history of French philosophy, Saxton upholds the "increasingly powerful counter-current in recent debates [which] argues

for the rehabilitation of vision and defends the capacity of photography and film to grant us access to history without falsifying or betraying it" (5). As with the first section of *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, Saxton's argument targets "the ethics of the image as witness" and suggests that "[r]ather than abstracting suffering and death into philosophical lenses, critical discussions about ethics and representation can equip us with the tools to view these images differently, and bring us closer to the traumatic realities that lie behind them" (6). *Shoah*, "Lanzmann's nine-and-a-half-hour filmic meditation on memory, testimony, annihilation and oblivion" (23), plays a key role in this respect, providing Saxton with a foil against which she provides a series of illuminating arguments about the ethics of representation and the sanitization at the heart of certain kinds of filmic projects. Saxton provides deft and compelling readings of the history of *Shoah* scholarship, in particular its "privileging" as *the* film in the light of which all subsequent and previous artworks of Holocaust representation ought to be measured, as well as offering close readings of the film's generic and institutional underpinnings. In Saxton's words: "If *Shoah* can serve as a paradigm for exploration of the challenges the Holocaust poses to representation, this is not in the privileged capacity of an ethical monolith, but, rather, because it opens up a space for us to explore conflicting ideas about what it means to bear ethical witness" (45).

In my view, the achievement of both *Holocaust and the Moving Image* and *Haunted Images* lies precisely in their shared opening-up of a comparable critical space, one in which academic scholarship is forced to question its own representations and dissections of Holocaust film-making. If these are not the first texts to have done so they are certainly the most important ones in recent years. Accordingly, I want to conclude this review by imploring readers to take up the challenge these texts, and the filmic texts they discuss, offer to us at our historical moment of under-represented genocide and oppressed cultural memory; a moment in which, as Rex Bloomstein puts it in his contribution to *Holocaust and the Moving Image*, "every day we see and hear evidence that suggests [that the] dense but valiant attempts to bind nations to codes of conduct in the treatment of their citizens, and the citizens of other countries, in peace and war, are blatantly ignored" (260).

International Adventures. German Popular Cinema and European Co-Productions in the 1960s

By Tim Bergfelder

Oxford; New York: Berghahn Books, 2005. ISBN 1-57181-539-2, pp. 278. £14.95(pbk)
£36.50 (hbk)

A review by Nick Hodgkin, University of Sheffield, UK

Histories of postwar German cinema have tended to leapfrog from one decade to another, usually from the postwar Trümmerfilme, those "rubble films" which purported to detail life among Germany's physical and mental ruins, but which were generally dismissed as poor imitations of Italian Neo-Realism, to the New German Cinema of the late sixties and seventies. This latter period in particular has, over the years, resulted in a large number of academic accounts which consider Germany's counter-cultural cinema from a number of perspectives, including its relation to German modernism, its connection to radical politics and its relevance for social and cultural historians. The critical interest in the period's radical filmmakers far outweighs the films' commercial success. By contrast, the popular cinema of the 1950s and 1960s was for a long time largely ignored by scholars, who paid little attention to genres that they considered lowbrow, artistically inadequate and somehow typical of the social and political conservatism of the Federal Republic's first post-war Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer. Those that did contemplate the mainstream productions of these decades tended to condemn the genres as formulaic kitsch, predictable genre cinema that was not worthy of any serious scholarly analysis.

Recent years have witnessed a change in tack. The cinematic output of those postwar years is increasingly fashionable as a focus of enquiry and new accounts offer a more nuanced view of genres such as the Heimatfilm - long-reviled by critics though perennially popular with domestic audiences. Recent research has offered fresh insight into these films even if they have not revived their reputation. Tim Bergfelder's important contribution to German post-war film history, *International Adventures* is part of the new scholarly interest in a period of German history that has largely been ignored or at least only seen as the interlude between National Socialist filmmaking and New German Cinema. Bergfelder announces at the outset that his research was motivated by the "significant gaps and critical misconceptions in histories of German cinema" (1), a counter position that he highlights repeatedly throughout the book.

That none of the directors and producers on whom Bergfelder focuses is featured in either of the two authoritative reference companions to German cinema, Thomas Elsaesser's and Michael Wedel's oft-cited *BFI Companion to German Cinema* (BFI, 1999) and Hans Günther Pflaum's and Hans Helmut Prinzler's *Cinema in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Inter Nationes, 1993) gives some measure of the scholarly neglect of this period. *International Adventures* compensates for the dearth of analysis of Germany's popular postwar cinema (a

period that has been well covered in studies of other European film industries) by providing a meticulous account of developments in the German film industry during this time with special emphasis on key directors and influential producers.

After justifying the importance of studying popular genres traditionally dismissed by film scholars as "low art", Bergfelder outlines his preferred methodological approach, which borrows from contemporary reception studies and new American film history (Janet Staiger's influential book is mentioned *en passant*). But he also acknowledges the methodological problems in any too rigid a framework, settling finally for a rather broad approach that "requires attentiveness both to the material contexts of production, distribution, and exhibition and to the textual operations of the films themselves", but one which also "demands acknowledgement that economic considerations interact with specifically national developments, but that they are equally informed by the dynamics of an international media market" (11).

The bulk of the book is split into two sections, "Historical and Cultural Contexts" and "Case-Studies". The chapters comprising the first of these provide a detailed account of material, economic and institutional developments in (west) German post-war cinema and trace the rapid recovery of an industry that had few well-wishers among the Allied administration, which initially regarded the German market as a captive audience for their industries' own output. Some of this will be familiar to scholars of German film and media industries but Bergfelder's assessment includes much new information, especially regarding the distribution sector, which he discusses in a separate chapter.

Though the discussion is weighted towards a survey of the industry's financial and business development, it also briefly considers the audience's changing tastes. Of particular interest is that during this period, which is often associated with the Americanization of German society, German audiences were rather resistant to Hollywood, favouring domestic or European (including British) productions over American imports. Disappointingly, Bergfelder does not provide any analysis to explain German audience's preferences. This is a shame since the reasons he briefly mentions are often interesting and further sociological analysis would have brought some balance to an account whose focus is predominantly on the economic context. Similarly, Bergfelder tends to privilege the factual details regarding the West German film industry over the discussion of the films in the second section. This is a pity, not only because the few brief analyses demonstrate perceptive interpretation but also because Bergfelder often challenges prevailing attitudes towards some of the genres that are central to his discussion.

The chapter addressing the influential producer, Artur Brauner, often regarded as "exemplifying everything that was wrong with and derivative about German film culture of the 1950s and 1960s" (and still able to provoke three decades on), provides a more nuanced account of a man who was often disparaged as a shrewd businessman interested only in producing undemanding commercial entertainment. Bergfelder's discussion of Brauner and his company, Central Cinema Company, challenges this reductive view and points to a man whose original motivation was to "reinvent the culture of Weimar cinema" rather than destroy the indigenous film culture (his later films, which often return to the war experience certainly provide evidence of Brauner's interest in social-critical and political filmmaking). One way of realising this ambition was to tempt émigré directors such as Lang and Siodmak back to Germany. Though the return of these exiled UFA stalwarts was not the success that Brauner hoped -- since domestic audiences were either sceptical of their Hollywood exile or

felt uncomfortable precisely because of their origins with UFA -- Bergfelder argues that some of the CCC's productions are certainly equal to contemporary Hollywood films and that alone the presence of these star directors was enough "to internationalise West German film production" (125).

In the two chapters in Part II, Bergfelder turns his attention to two of the most successful genres of German post-war cinema, the Edgar Wallace adaptations and the westerns based on the novels by the prolific German author Karl May, films which continue to have resonance for modern German audiences. Like the Heimatfilm, which as a genre has become an increasingly popular subject of study, these genres were, according to Bergfelder, escapist and "articulated an evasion of the country's present situation and recent past", though unlike the Heimatfilme, these franchises were exportable beyond German-speaking countries. The book's subtitle, *German Popular Cinema and European Co-Productions in the 1960s*, might suggest some analysis of transnational dialogue, but this is seldom the case. Bergfelder regularly references the overlap in audience tastes on the continent but does not offer any explanation as to why, for example, the Edgar Wallace adaptations should have the same appeal in Denmark as in Germany, or the German westerns should also strike a chord with audiences in Italy, France and Spain.

That the films to be released in Britain and in the US (as B-Movies) were often poorly dubbed and sometimes cut in order to fit double-bill screenings would seem to be an indication of the reception in English-speaking markets (an interesting account of the short-lived Anglo-German Wallace productions exemplifies the difference in national tastes). However, Bergfelder has uncovered some surprisingly positive reviews of the "sauerkraut westerns" among British critics. Some even went so far as to suggest that the German series had managed to "bring back the straight western", thus restoring the simple pleasures that the genre had originally afforded its viewers before succumbing to complicated characterisation, psychological-orientated narratives or self-referentiality - hallmarks, of course, of some of the critically revered examples of the genre. In fact, the German westerns were not simply aping Hollywood's iconic originals (which, as Uta G. Poiger has suggested, had a troubled history in postwar Germany where they were regarded as a corrupt influence on the nation's youth) but had their origins in German popular literature, specifically the popular novels by Karl May written at the beginning of the last century. For Bergfelder, then, these films are not simply about German directors replicating the American genre but "manifestations of an alternative tradition of imagining the Wild West that run parallel to the aesthetic codes and ideological concerns of the Hollywood western" (173). Whether this explains their popularity among German audiences is a moot point and Bergfelder provides alternative explanations including the films' Yugoslavian locations that, though never convincing as the Wild West, did indulge the Germans' post-war appetite for foreign travel and emphasized German cinema's "international flair". The mountains, lakes, and rivers that regularly featured in these films were thus as much an advert for the Yugoslavian tourist board as the Heimatfilm was for the alpine regions in which they were often filmed.

Elsewhere, Bergfelder relates the success (in Germany) of these genres to "a nostalgic revival of older traditions of popular culture", an explanation frequently invoked in Heimatfilm literature. Where the Heimatfilm was rooted in a definable Germanness, the westerns and the crime thrillers offered a utopia that provides a "pleasurable fantasy of loss of identity" (200). This is an important point and Bergfelder's observation that the popular genres shared with contemporary political discourse "an underlying uneasiness with a diffusion of the notion of

national identity and a concomitant emergence of a cosmopolitan, consumer-orientated, and individualist identity" requires further elucidation (200).

In addition to the detailed study of the period's popular genres, the westerns and the Wallace films, *International Adventures* considers the decade's B Movies in the penultimate chapter, particularly those exploitation films produced by Rapid under the helm of the "reviled" Wolf C. Hartwig (208) and the Tefi films produced by Ernst Ritter von Theumer (which frequently, albeit improbably, were co-financed by South American and Turkish producers), which films eventually paved the way for the sex-film boom including the infamous *Schulmädchen Reports*.

For those who are unfamiliar with the series of films discussed in *International Adventures*, there is much to discover. Those acquainted with the Wallace and May adaptations may suspect that Bergfelder's reluctance to discuss the films in any depth is not a reflection of the author's critical talents but further evidence that the films are, as scholars like Ulrich Gregor have noted, "of no artistic consequence" ("The German Film in 1964: Stuck at Zero"). *International Adventures* might seem a somewhat extravagant title given the rather pedestrian films that were the product of intercontinental cooperation during the sixties, but the account is ultimately a lucid study of a long neglected period of German filmmaking and the author has, during the course of his research, uncovered much that is of interest to scholars wishing to broaden their knowledge of postwar film and will provide students of New German Cinema and contemporary German film with valuable contextual information.

Conscientious Viscerality: The Autobiographical Stance in German Film and Video

By Robin Curtis

Berlin: Edition Imorde, 2006. ISBN 978-3-9809436-4-2. 203pp. £61.81

A review by Sarah Heinz, Passau University, Germany

When you open Robin Curtis' study on autobiographical film and video in Germany one thing immediately catches your eye: the film stills on the right and left margin on the bottom of each page. If you turn the pages from back to front and the other way round, these film stills become two flip-books which are more than a mere visual detail or gimmick. In a study focusing on the specific characteristics of the autobiographical, Curtis presents the basic paradox of a visual autobiography in her two "short films". The autobiographer can never be behind and in front of the camera at the same time. This makes an autobiography on film seemingly impossible as most definitions of (literary) autobiography include the identity of author, narrator and protagonist as their primary criterion. The best-known example for such a definition is possibly Philippe Lejeune's formulation of the "autobiographical pact." Here, Lejeune speaks of the importance of the inter-identification of all three instances which is covered and guaranteed by the author's proper name on the book jacket. The autobiographical narrative thus signs a referential pact and is basically about sincerity and truth. The two flip-books show that a filmic autobiography can never comply with this definition. Oskar Fischinger's film *München-Berlin Wanderung* (Munich-Berlin peregrination) from 1927, which can be found on the left margin of Curtis' book, puts the recipient into the place of the autobiographer who is never visible in the film (or in this case the flip-book) himself. Instead we see what Fischinger sees on his journey. On the right margin we see Adolf Winkelmann's film *Kassel 9.12.67 11.54h* from 1968. Here, we exclusively see the author, Adolf Winkelmann, as the sole protagonist filming himself via a camera fastened to his shoulder. Time and Place are indicated by the title of the film itself. This approach of course brings about the fact that the author as protagonist is always situated in front of the camera. We as his audience see him, but we never see what he sees.

In her study Robin Curtis convincingly demonstrates how the linguistic splitting of the autobiographer into narrating present subject and narrated past object which seemingly guarantees for our belief in the truth and authenticity of the story in literary autobiography is dissolved in filmic autobiographies. Instead, films like Fischinger's and Winkelmann's give the recipient a central role in giving the filmic life story depth and believability. Only in the interplay of filmic autobiography and its individual reception can the truth of the presented individual life emerge. Now the threefold unity of the producer of the autobiographical document is the generic criterion. In its place, the empathetic and bodily reception of the audience comes to the fore. The recipient is asked to take up the position of autobiographer and addressee at the same time. Curtis' goal therefore is to explain the role of reception in autobiographical film, a reception which is defined by her as the act which first and foremost gives autobiography on film the status of a true and sincere document of someone's real life.

In this context, she addresses the body as the medium for the sensual experience of the filmic image which is not received consciously but viscerally.

For Curtis, the body turns into a paradigm for an empathetic, close but nevertheless culturally determined perception as she argues in her examination of the "bios" and the "autos" of autobiography in the first part of the study (23-68). Neither turning the body into a merely discursive product nor into the last point of authenticity she makes clear how human beings locate themselves and others temporally and spatially through the body as well as through culturally imparted schemata. Autobiography therefore is not the mere literary or visual description of the author's life in a chronological sequence. It is rather the description of the way the autobiographer creates meaning and his life's story in a specific cultural context through bodily connecting present and past. The crucial and innovative move that Curtis' study makes is the emphasis on the recipient's activity as an "embodied spectatorship":

"I argue in Chapter Two that film's capacity to function in an autobiographical fashion is closely related to its capacity to facilitate a haptic mode of reception. The focus on the meaning of body and viscosity for film reception begs a more detailed consideration of the place of a phenomenological approach to film analysis ..." (9)

The viewer has to retrace the bodily connection of the autobiographer's past and present in the visual images of the autobiographical film. In the second part of the study Curtis proves this point by analysing numerous representative and illuminating examples from the Weimar Republic till today (71-184). The filmmakers are not only Germans but also people from other countries living in Germany. Their experience spans urban life as well as life in the country, and shows change and continuity in the perception and presentation of life stories. The major result of this second part of the study is the discovery of a striking dominance of spatial representations of the self that anxiously avoid connecting the self with the past. Curtis states that all of the analysed German films conspicuously exclude collective and national identities and mainly refer to the individual and the way it represents and describes itself. For an explanation of her diagnosis Curtis uses German national history and self-images as well as formal aspects of the filmic medium. In her analysis of the effects of this exclusion of temporal connections between past and present she finds a striking paradox. Instead of a self-affirmation through the bodily presence in the here and now of the film the recipient experiences the insecurity and fragility of the autobiographers' constructed identities:

"... the relentless emphasis placed in these works on the value of visceral experience for the sensation (and indeed location) of selfhood suggests they more often indicate an inclination to isolation and self-absorption to the point of anxiety and existential uncertainty, rather than a simple affirmation of collectivity". (185)

The autobiographers' identities are presented as culturally contingent and fundamentally dependent on the addressee who intersubjectively has to construct, not reconstruct, the authors' life stories. Therefore the analysed films illustrate more than the different authors' individual views on their lives. Rather the role of the recipient's self-perception is scrutinised who must bring in his or her own body, identity and location to understand and experience the autobiographical films and make them believable accounts of someone's life. In this sense, Curtis answers the questions with which she starts off her study: what does the filmic

medium provide for autobiography that literature and writing cannot offer? Film creates a proximity and closeness between producer and recipient who both become individual, bodily and self-conscious unities that intersubjectively position themselves through each other in the space of the filmic image.

What Curtis points out in her study using an impressive and versatile corpus of films and videos is the role of the recipient for filmic autobiography as a genre that tells the story of a life in images. For their truth-claim and effect these images are dependent on the viewer who is asked to "take a particularly empathetic and corporeal stance to the particular kind of intersubjective experience filmic autobiography offers" (41). Thus, the study is not only a contribution to research on filmic autobiography in Germany but moreover a book on reception theory that offers a new and promising view on autobiography in general. Writing as well as filming or telling life stories become both the experience of a different subjectivity and a culturally contingent, narratively transported and changeable construct that must first and foremost be produced in an interchange between producer and recipient.

Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland: Cityscapes, Landscapes, Soundscapes

By Martin McLoone

Dublin, Portland OR: Irish Academic, 2008. ISBN: 978-0716529354 (cloth); 978-0716529361 (pbk). x + 214 pp. £45 (cloth), £19.95 (pbk)
Emeralds in Tinseltown: The Irish in Hollywood

Emeralds in Tinseltown: The Irish in Hollywood

By Steve Brennan and Bernadette O'Neill

Belfast: Appletree, 2007. ISBN: 978-1-84758048-1 (hbk). 240 pp. £17.99

A review by Sinéad Moynihan, University of Nottingham, UK

These two titles reflect the growing scholarly and commercial interest in Irishness on screen, an unsurprising turn given that Irish Studies has "gone global" and Film and Television Studies offers a means of historicising the global circulation and consumption of images, at least over the last century. Indeed, one of the recurring preoccupations of the first of the two titles is the extent to which Ireland "joined the global economy by commodifying its past and the traumas of its history, and by offering to the global tourist an escape from the consequences of the global economy" (McLoone 94).

In the introduction to *Film, Media and Popular Culture*, which comes some seven years after his well-received and widely-cited *Irish Film: The Emergence of a Contemporary Cinema* (2000), Martin McLoone proposes to examine contemporary Irish popular culture by emphasising three important contextual shifts that took place in the 1990s: the growing importance of the diaspora and global Irishness, the Celtic Tiger economy and the Northern Ireland peace process. In the opening chapter, McLoone frames the debates quite effectively by employing RTÉ's dramatisation of *Strumpet City* – first broadcast in 1980, but re-televised in September 2003 – in order to reflect upon the changes that have taken place in Ireland and representations of Ireland not only between 1980 and 2003 but also between 1913, the setting for the drama, and 2003. The juxtaposition of the eighties and the noughties is a useful device and one deployed to great effect, for example, in the recent *Irish Times* Magazine devoted to the 1980s, albeit to a different end: to remind readers what the "bad old days" were like now that Ireland is feeling the effects of the global credit crunch.

The structure of the book could be assessed a number of ways. How successful is it as a book that takes the diaspora, the Celtic Tiger and the peace process as its contextual backdrop? How successful is this as a book about "Film, Media and Popular Culture in Ireland"? How successful is it as a book that is structured by "Cityscapes, Landscapes, Soundscapes"? Without a doubt, the overwhelming achievement of the book is its integration of debates on cinematic and musical traditions in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. This is perhaps unsurprising, but no less commendable, given that McLoone is based at the University of Ulster. The paired chapters on screen representations of Dublin and Belfast (chapters two and three), of Presbyterianism in Northern Ireland and Catholicism in the Republic of Ireland (chapters six and seven) and chapters devoted to Van Morrison's music (ten) and cinematic and television portrayals of Ulster Unionists (twelve) provide a richly-textured sense of the diversity of Irish identities. The peace process – sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly – provides the context for these interventions. Too often, scholarly articles and books that include "Ireland" in the title – and, I confess, I include my own here – are not self-conscious enough about exactly what or whose "Ireland" they are discussing. McLoone's wide-ranging and capacious examination of the historical "two traditions" on the island of Ireland serves to underline the assumptions implicit in such other scholarship.

McLoone is less convincing, I think, on the Celtic Tiger context. In chapter two, he worries that the "social problems that global consumerism throws up cannot simply be imagined out of existence," as the films he discusses seem to suggest (50). However, some critics claim that there *are* productions that challenge images of contemporary Ireland as a culture of "hip hedonism". As Michael Gillespie and Mark Schreiber have argued separately, the work of the writer/actor-director team Mark O'Halloran and Lenny Abrahamson deals with heroin addiction (*Adam and Paul* [2004]), rural isolation (*Garage* [2007]) and, in the four-part RTE television series *Prosperity* (2007), single motherhood, adolescent bullying, alcoholism and the challenges faced by an African immigrant to Ireland. Meanwhile, Seán Crosson contends that the recent cycle of Irish-set horror films (*Dead Meat* [Conor McMahon, 2004], *Boy Eats Girl* [Stephen Bradley, 2005], *Isolation* [Billy O'Brien, 2005] and *Shrooms* [Paddy Breathnach, 2006]) – a very new venture in Irish cinema – confronts the failures and complacencies of the Celtic Tiger by providing a counter-tourist vision of rural Ireland.

Equally, and this is an issue which relates perhaps to the "Film, Media and Popular Culture" claim of the book's title, there are some glaring omissions in terms of primary and secondary material. I was disappointed that McLoone did not devote greater attention to *Bachelors Walk* (2001-2003), not only because it would have borne out his intention to focus on the "popular cultural field" (8) – and this comedy drama was, by his own admission, "enormously popular" (12) – but it would also have allowed for greater nuancing of his discussion of the "cityscapes" of the book's title. While *Bachelors Walk* may be about "bubbly urbanites" (38), the show's aesthetic is deeply invested in an "old Dublin" rather than "a city of luxurious apartments and well-appointed offices" (46). In fact, Michael's reluctance to move out of this house to cohabit with his girlfriend is, in part, motivated by his disdain for space-constrained modern apartments. Very improbably, the housemates share an enormous four-storey Georgian on Bachelors Walk that overlooks the Liffey, a location that allows for lovingly-constructed shots of the Ha'penny Bridge and the boardwalk. Their favourite pub is Mulligans on Poolbeg Street, which Barry describes as "a real old Dubliner," founded, as it was, in 1820. Also absent from McLoone's discussion of Dublin is an engagement with the (now *passé*?) Northside / Southside divide, an issue on which *Bachelors Walk* is also illuminating: while the house is located (just) north of the Liffey, all of the characters'

preferred haunts are on the southside. In terms of visual aesthetic and tone, *Bachelors Walk* is also an extremely important precursor to the Oscar-winning film *Once* (2006). Writer-director John Carney, along with his brother Kieran and Tom Hall, also co-wrote and co-directed the television show. RTÉ drama's other conspicuous critical and popular success of recent years, *Pure Mule* (2005) – which explodes some of the stereotypes of the Irish rural experience that McLoone discusses in chapter five – is not even mentioned.

In chapter seven, McLoone explores the issue of secularisation in recent Irish cinema, a phenomenon which he traces through the disintegration of the alliance between the Irish priest and the devout Irish mother. How curious it is, then, that McLoone fails to mention *Father Ted* (1995-1998) which, although broadcast originally on Channel 4, boasted Irish writers, actors and directors. One of the most absurdly comic aspects of *Ted* is that the priests *themselves* are almost wholly secularised. Such omissions lead me to question the extent to which this is a book about "Media and Popular Culture" as well as "Film" in Ireland and whether a title such as "Film and Popular Music in Ireland" would not have been more appropriate.

McLoone does not cite Debbie Ging's "Screening the Green: Cinema under the Celtic Tiger", although it has profound implications for the arguments he makes in chapters two and five in particular. Also absent is an engagement with Diane Negra's groundbreaking edited collection, *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture* (2006), despite the fact that essays by Amanda Third, Michael Malouf and Lauren Onkey could have informed considerably chapters eight (on Maureen O'Hara), nine (the section on Sinéad O'Connor's articulation of cross-racial sympathy between black British and Irish subjects) and ten (on Van Morrison). More generally, Negra and fellow contributors' arguments concerning the global consumption of Irishness surely deserved some of McLoone's attention.

Described on the back cover as a "collection of essays", this volume is certainly a series of loosely-connected essays rather than a unified project with an overarching theme and argument. While there is nothing intrinsically problematic about this approach, some of the essays cohere better than others, with the inclusion of a chapter on Maureen O'Hara being the most anomalous. This is because the book is primarily concerned with popular culture in Ireland and while McLoone necessarily touches on Hollywood's relationship to Ireland along the way, it is not a sufficient preoccupation to merit or explain a chapter devoted exclusively to O'Hara.

Furthermore, McLoone's "collection of essays" approach to the material sometimes precludes useful links being made across the chapters. For instance, in chapter nine, McLoone (with Noel McLaughlin) draws upon Gayatri Spivak's notion of "strategic essentialism", or "a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" in his examination of issues of Irish musical hybridity. It struck me that this would have made a very useful framework for chapter twelve, in which McLoone identifies and discusses the pervasive tendency to depict Northern Irish nationalists as fun-loving and spontaneous and unionists as "neurotic, perverse and somehow incomplete" (199). While McLoone's analysis is insightful – I immediately thought of Marie Jones's play *A Night in November* (1998) as a further example, and confirmation that it is not just those from Catholic backgrounds that engage in this kind of essentialising – what is surely at stake in the cinematic and television examples he deploys is exactly such "strategic essentialism". In other words, the works he discusses attempt to bring the two communities together (at least imaginatively) by having unionists inhabit the "positive" (but equally essentialised) characteristics of nationalists.

Notwithstanding issues of structure and selection, McLoone's is an original contribution to and important intervention in studies of Irish popular culture in at least two ways: in its combination of discussions of Northern and the Republic of Ireland and in its integration of analyses of film and popular music. The "Cityscapes, Landscapes, Soundscapes" subtitle is thus, arguably, the most appropriate.

If Maureen O'Hara is included somewhat anomalously in McLoone's volume, it is not surprising that she also features, alongside Grace Kelly in a chapter entitled "Irish Screen Royalty", in Steve Brennan and Bernadette O'Neill's *Emeralds in Tinseltown: The Irish in Hollywood*. The book, which historicises the Irish presence in Hollywood from the beginning of the movies to the present day, takes as its point of departure the fact that "Irish actors and directors are a hot commodity in Hollywood these days" (7). In twenty-nine short chapters, *Emeralds in Tinseltown* presents chronologically the growth of Los Angeles as a city, the arrival of the movie makers and the specific contributions of Irish-born or Irish-American men and women to Hollywood's movie industry.

In conception, approach and scope, the book seems to fall somewhere between that of Kevin Rockett and Eugene Finn in *Still Irish: A Century of the Irish in Film* (Red Mountain, 1995) and Ruth Barton in *Acting Irish in Hollywood: From Fitzgerald to Farrell* (Irish Academic, 2006).

Like Rockett and Finn's book, *Emeralds in Tinseltown* is in many respects a visual journey, featuring over a hundred arresting black-and-white and colour images documenting Irish movers and shakers in Hollywood from Irish-born engineer, William Mulholland, who is credited with bringing water from the Owens Valley to Los Angeles at the turn of the century, to present-day film stars such as Colin Farrell and Cillian Murphy. However, there is much more text here than features in Rockett and Finn's book and Brennan and O'Neill are as concerned with those who influenced the growth of Hollywood behind the scenes as those who were directly involved in the movie industry as actors or directors.

Like Barton's (and, to a lesser extent, Áine O'Connor's book of interviews *Leading Hollywood* [1996]), the book offers a chronological overview of Irish acting talent in Hollywood, beginning with the Abbey Theatre émigrés (chapter 9) and terminating with the Jonathan Rhys-Meyers, Farrell and Murphy triumvirate (chapter 28). There is considerable overlap here in terms of material (George Brent, Maureen O'Sullivan, O'Hara, Richard Harris, Gabriel Byrne, Colin Farrell), but Barton's is a far more scholarly intervention in the territory of film acting and performance. Barton provides a clear and methodical framework for her analysis, including, crucially, "[t]he place of accent as a marker of authenticity" (5).

While this is a useful and handsome addition to the Irish film critic's library, it represents synthesis and commentary rather than a scholarly contribution to or advancement of existing debates on Irishness in Hollywood. These have been most persuasively articulated, to date, by Barton and, in *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (2001) by Diane Negra.

Documentaries...and how to make them

By Andy Glynne

Harpenden, Herts: Kamera Books, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-1-904048-80-0. 20 illustrations, 336 pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Stefano Odorico, University College Cork, Ireland

There have been a large number of manuals published on filmmaking and, more specifically, on documentaries; but Andy Glynne's is the first that cleverly combines different aspects of this cinematic field, such as: documentary making and all that regards the process of production of a documentary; the history of the documentary, with a list of recommended films and a DVD included; and interviews bringing us the voices of well-known directors.

Documentaries...and how to make them, for its simple and direct approach, will surely play an important role in promoting documentaries among new directors and the general readership at which the book is aimed. Published by Kamera Books, this book is part of the series known as Creative Essentials that provides, as declared by the editor, a one-stop solution for experts and beginners alike, for experienced and aspiring writers, directors, filmmakers, for teachers and students. Providing affordable and wide-ranging how-to guides to a large range of different subjects, all the manuals of this series include specific case studies, in-depth analysis, practical experiences, interviews with experts, resource guides and, as is the case of *Documentaries...and how to make them*, a DVD containing samples and additional material such as templates, spreadsheets, forms etc.

This manual, inside a soft green and black cover adorned with a picture of a voracious Morgan Spurlock eating French-fries in *Super Size Me* (Morgan Spurlock, 2004), is linearly and simply organised in seven chapters/sections, each offering an incisive analysis of aspects of filmmaking, sources and resources, interviews with well known authors. Section one, "Pre-production", deals with starting ideas ("Does the Documentary Have Legs?"), researching, developing, project proposal and funding; section two, "Production", includes all the fundamental elements that support a documentary, such as the technical tools, direction, interview techniques, managing the production etc.; section three, "Post-production", is devoted to editing and distributing; section four (probably too short, only five pages) is about subjects and ethical issues; section five, "Resources", offers a list of sources and resources, libraries, commission editors, DV shooting guide, recommended films and reading; section six is devoted to "Interviews with filmmakers"; section seven, "Glossary", lists some of the most common terms in documentary filmmaking.

Moving from practical filmmaking tips, through archives, funding, managing, casting, and pitching, this manual provides a good starting point for beginners but also a valuable tool for more expert directors. Generally, all the chapters are well written and full of information on specific areas. For this reader, two of them are especially incisive and noteworthy. Chapter five, called "Resources", is formally divided into five sub-chapters, each of which consists in a list of vital elements for all documentary filmmakers. In "Sources for research", a list is

provided of a large number of small and specialist archives and footage libraries; as the book asserts: "if you are looking for something historically, geographically or stylistically specific then you should certainly explore those options" (219). The second sub-chapter, "Recommended films", is, obviously, an introductive and chronological list of the most significant documentary films from 1920s to present; in order to have a basic idea of the evolution of the documentary genre over time, Glynne (who is a documentary filmmaker himself) mentions a few masterpieces such as *Nanook of the North* (1922) by Robert Flaherty, *In the Year of the Pig* (1968) by Emile de Antonio or *Shoah* (1985) by Claude Lanzmann but it is in the last section, 2000-present, that the author give us an interesting variety of titles, including films that can not be taken for granted, such as *The Last Peasants* (2003) by Angus Macqueen, *A State of Mind* (2004) by Dan Gordon, and *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004) by Hubert Sauper, along with the most famous and therefore expected titles, such as *Grizzly Man* (2005) by Werner Herzog or *Touching the Void* (2003) by Kevin Macdonald.

The following sub-chapter, "Recommended Reading", consists of only two pages and, while it cannot be considered a satisfactory and updated bibliography on documentary films, it represents a smattering for those readers who for the first time discover the world of documentary studies and filmmaking; ten titles only, which include very well known books such as: *Documentary: A History of the Non-fiction Film* (Oxford University Press, 1993) by Erik Barnouw or *Writing, Directing, and Producing Documentary Films and Videos* (Southern Illinois University, 2002) by Alan Rosenthal. This is followed by a "List of Commissioning Editors"; the commissioning editors, usually connected to a TV channel, are probably the most important element in the process of documentary making, especially from an financial point of view. For this reason, *Documentaries...and how to make them*, provides us with a list of the leading commissioning editors for documentaries in the UK and, at the same time, invites us to consult the "Television Handbook" by the European Documentary Network for a more European outlook. Finally, in the last sub-chapter, "The DV Shooting Guide", the author makes a summary of all the practical procedure for making a film; this shooting guide (also available as a PDF in the DVD provided with the book) is, as reported in the book: "a quick reference for when you are on a shoot" (277) – basically a sort of useful checklists to bear in mind before shooting.

Very interesting, as previously pointed out, is also the following chapter, which contains interviews with four filmmakers: Esteban Uyarra, Erik Bäfving, Marc Isaacs and Ben Hopkins. All the interviews focus on the director's personal experience of making a film, and this approach allows the reader (both expert or novice in filmmaking) to gain a more in-depth and concrete overview of film funding, the starting idea, narration, the unforeseen, and so on.

Obviously, this book's main purpose is not to provide the reader with a full and exhaustive explanation of all the elements involved in the process of documentary filmmaking, but an efficacious, short and comprehensive introduction; a manual that can be easily carried in the pocket and used "in case of necessity".

Bound by Law? Tales from the Public Domain

By Keith Aoki, James Boyle and Jennifer Jenkins

Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8223-4418-6, vii +72pp. £9.99 (pbk)

A review by TJ McIntyre, University College Dublin, Ireland

You seldom find lawyers writing comic books. It's not that we have anything against them. We're happy to litigate about them (as fans of Alan Moore's *Watchmen* can testify, having seen Zack Snyder's film adaptation delayed by litigation between Twentieth Century Fox and Warner Brothers). We're even sometimes their subject (just consider the central role of Harvey Dent / Two-Face in the *Batman* canon). But *writing* comic books? What might the clients think? Or the tenure committee? And how might a profession known for its verbosity cope with the tight constraints of the speech bubble?

This makes *Bound by Law?* a rare beast indeed – a comic book written (and drawn) by lawyers which also manages to be a clear and entertaining introduction to the legal issues faced by filmmakers in the minefield that is intellectual property law. The authors are academics at UC Davis School of Law (Aoki) and Duke University Law School (Boyle and Jenkins) with a track record of innovative research at the point where law, creativity and the public domain intersect. In this book they set out to look at the position of documentary makers and how intellectual property law constrains what they do, with a view to illustrating the wider argument that the law has become imbalanced and is in need of reform.

The focus of their work is neatly set out by this example:

A cell phone happened to ring during the filming of Marilyn Agrelo and Amy Sewell's *Mad Hot Ballroom*, a documentary about New York City kids in a ballroom dancing competition. The ring tone was the *Rocky* theme song ... EMI, which owns the rights to the *Rocky* song asked for – guess how much? \$10,000. In another scene, they were filming a foosball game and one of the players spontaneously yelled "Everybody dance now" – a line from the C&C Music Factory hit. Warner Chappell demanded \$5,000 for the use of the line (14).

This demonstrates an ongoing problem for documentary film makers -- the problem of documenting the world when certain aspects of the world (music playing in the background, artwork on the walls, even trademarks appearing on products) may be off limits. This book is full of examples of situations where documentary makers have found their work stifled as a result. But how did we arrive at a situation where rights holders demand payment of large sums for transient and incidental excerpts of their works? And what should we do about it?

In order to answer these questions, the book sets out an introduction to the fundamentals of copyright and trademark law -- an introduction which manages to cover more in just a few pages of witty imagery than many texts manage in chapters of dense prose. Despite the problems they identify elsewhere, the authors are at pains to stress that a balanced system of copyright is a good thing for artists and society -- that it's not "just about locking things up" but serves to encourage creativity (34). They also stress that US copyright law has traditionally recognised a strong element of fair use -- allowing reasonable use of another's copyrighted material without permission or payment for purposes such as reporting, parody, criticism and research.

In doing so, they feel the need to justify the legitimacy of copyright as a system -- attempting, perhaps, to counter the growing trend towards a wholesale rejection of the norms of intellectual property law amongst file sharers and others. Elsewhere in the book they explain why, stating that they are "stodgy believers in the copyright system, not revolutionaries eager to scrap the whole thing" but that nevertheless "the system has gone astray ... lost sight of its original goal" so that "many young artists only experience copyright as an impediment, a source of incomprehensible demands for payment, cease and desist letters, and legal transaction costs" (67-69).

Consequently, this work is intended to serve both as a description of the law as it stands and also as a discussion of the ways in which it has gone wrong -- the ways in which a balanced system allowing for fair use of material has come to be challenged by what Lawrence Lessig in *Free Culture* (Penguin, 2004) has termed a "permissions culture" where rights holders believe that they are entitled to control and demand payment for every type of use of their work, however fragmentary. A typically absurd example, albeit in relation to trademarks rather than copyright, is the case of *Caterpillar Inc. v. Walt Disney Co.* 287 F.Supp.2d 913 (C.D.Ill.2003) in which Caterpillar sued Disney, alleging that *George of the Jungle 2* infringed its trademarks by showing the villain using Caterpillar bulldozers to destroy a fictional jungle.

The authors identify a number of factors which have caused this outcome -- notably ever lengthening terms of copyright (which in the US have expanded from 14 years to the life of the author plus 70 years), increasingly aggressive rights holders and overly cautious lawyers and filmmakers. This last point -- increased caution and self-censorship -- has in turn, they argue, been fuelled by the need for filmmakers to take out errors and omission insurance if they want to show their work through conventional channels. As a result, insurers can become the final arbiters of what is permissible, often applying standards which go beyond even what the law requires.

But the message isn't all negative -- the book closes by offering an alternative vision of an intellectual property system which encourages creativity by reinstating a balance between ownership of rights and a public domain in which material is free to use without permission or fee. This vision, described by analogy as a form of "cultural environmentalism", has since been elaborated on by one of the authors -- James Boyle -- in *The Public Domain* (Yale University Press, 2008) where he outlines the risks presented by "a second enclosure movement" for the intangible commons of the mind.

Overall, this book succeeds in its aim of presenting an important argument to a wider audience who might not be eager to read the "gray lawyerly prose" of law review articles (70) -- and manages to be accessible without oversimplifying the complex issues it raises. It is

strongly recommended to anyone interested in either the legal issues of documentary making or the wider issues of law and the ownership of knowledge and culture -- particularly as the authors have practised what they preach by making it available for free download and reuse / modification under a Creative Commons licence at <http://www.law.duke.edu/cspd/comics/>. James Boyle's *The Public Domain* is also available on the same basis at <http://www.thepublicdomain.org/>.

Undead TV: Essays on Buffy the Vampire Slayer

By Elana Levine and Lisa Parks (eds.)

London: Duke University Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0-8223-4065-2 (hbk), ISBN 978-0-8223-4043-0 (pbk). 41 illustrations, vii + 209 pp. £45.00 (hbk), £11.99 (pbk)

A review by Lucia Blanchet, Northwestern University, USA

Academics love *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. So much so that a veritable cottage industry in "Buffy Studies" has sprung up in the years since the program first began its seven season run on broadcast television (1997-2003), as evidenced by the existence of a bi-annual interdisciplinary academic conference and associated online scholarly journal ("The Slayage Conference on the Whedonverses" and *Slayage: The Online International Journal of Buffy Studies*, respectively), the publication of a number of essay collections as well as hundreds of articles, and even the instruction of university level courses featuring *BtVS* as a primary object of study. The relationship between the *BtVS* production staff and academia is generally a friendly one, with film scholar Vivian Sobchak appearing as a talking head interviewee on one of the "featurettes" in the seventh season DVD set special features section (entitled "Buffy 101: Studying the Slayer") to discuss narrative complexity and feminist allegory on the show, and show creator Joss Whedon publicly commenting (favorably) on the academic community's use of his show (and indeed, scholarly writing on television in general). Clearly a great deal has already been said about the cult show with the tiny, blond heroine and the wacky title. Indeed, books could be written about the fascination this pop culture phenomenon has held for bookish types: an ethnography of "Buffy scholars" perhaps, focusing on affective investment in textual objects, comparisons to less culturally validated forms of fandom, or discourses of defensiveness within academic study of mass culture. *Undead TV* is not that book, however.

What distinguishes this collection of essays from the voluminous corpus of existing scholarly work on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*—and also creates a sense of internal coherence among the variety of methodologies and foci offered in the essays themselves—is, quite simply, that this is a book that considers *BtVS as television*, situating itself within the discipline of television studies. Of course, television studies is itself multifaceted, and surely these essays may be of interest within the (wider?) field of "Buffy studies" (indeed, Cynthia Fuchs's piece in this volume is also available at *Slayage* online). But the "TV" in the main title of this book is not merely incidental. Neither, for that matter, is the word "undead"; written after the series finale of the show aired on broadcast television, editors Elana Levine and Lisa Parks's introduction to *Undead TV* pointedly reflects on the project of considering a television program after the conclusion of its initial series run:

The active 'afterlife' of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* makes clear the program's popularity, but also raises a broader set of questions about television and endings, whether we imagine them in terms of cancellation, replacement, or

death. If American dramatic television had a cemetery, it would be overflowing with coffins by now, since nearly six decades' worth of series have ended. Yet one of the most distinctive features of commercial television series is that they rarely disappear. Television series, like vampires, are made to return from the dead. Indeed, the American commercial television economy is predicated upon such revivals, re-emergences, and re-appearances (4).

The "afterlife" of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in syndication, on DVD, via official and unauthorized tie-ins, the continued accumulation of the "star texts" of series actors, fan activity, and more dispersed cultural resonances is, the editors stress, both a commercial and a cultural phenomenon -- as was its "life." But this metaphor is not only a clever pun on the supernatural premise of *BtVS* -- it also engages with one of the primary conceptual themes within television studies, that of television's ontology of "liveness" or the immediacy made possible by the televisual capacity for direct broadcast. In this way, *Undead TV* enters into the contemporary discussion within television studies about the changing and permeable borders of what constitutes the television text and how viewers engage with it. Furthermore, while Levine and Parks do get rhetorical mileage out of the "undead" qualities of a program that *literally* "narrativizes the resuscitative patterns of commercial television by making interaction between the living and the dead a central programmatic premise", claiming for *BtVS* a metonymic relationship with larger structures of the televisual apparatus (6), they and several of the other contributors to this collection also make a grounded case for *BtVS* as both indicative of late nineties television (typical) and also influential (extraordinary) -- either way, significant for its historical moment. Of course, as they seem to suggest, *BtVS* may also be significant for future historical moments, albeit in ways we cannot yet entirely predict.

The first four essays featured in the book, grouped together for the ways that they consider *BtVS*'s "position in the production and reception of commercial television culture" (11), are those most obviously focused on Television with a big "T" -- as an industrial form of media. Mary Celeste Kearney's "The Changing Face of Teen Television, or Why We All Love *Buffy*" considers *BtVS*'s generational address, arguing that the show was not only marketed to teenaged audiences but rather to a larger age range of viewers defined by a cultural sensibility of "youthfulness" if not always literal youth. She situates this discussion in relation to the "teen show" genre and the history of the two fledgling networks *BtVS* appeared on during its run (the WB and UPN, which have since merged into the CW network) as well as sociological shifts in audience composition. Connections between marketing tactics and audience dynamics are also salient in Susan Murray's piece, "I Know What You Did Last Summer: Sarah Michelle Gellar and Crossover Teen Stardom". Here Murray discusses the intertextual phenomenon of *BtVS*'s titular star within the context of media conglomeration and an emerging group of media consumers who have grown up with cable television and the Internet. In "Vampire Hunters: The Scheduling and Reception of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* in the United Kingdom", Annette Hill and Ian Calcutt venture into the more empirical branch of television scholarship with their study of the differences and difficulties produced in the airing of *BtVS* and its spin-off show *Angel* in the UK, notably the relegation of these programs to the earlier "family" time slot and resulting censorship of material that was deemed suitable for the (US) primetime audience. Not surprising considering television's status as a time-based visual medium and this book's espoused interest in *BtVS*'s evolving cultural status, all of the aforementioned essays have some investment in "time", be it historical or in terms of the television schedule. In the last essay in this section, "The Epistemological Stakes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: Television Criticism and Marketing Demands", Amelie Hastie also considers *BtVS* in relation to temporality in a particularly self-

reflexive manner by suggesting how scholarly work on television may be itself implicated in the temporal and economic structures of television itself, making illustrative connections between the text of *BtVS* itself, the nature of its tie-in merchandise, and "Buffy Studies" as all part of an "epistemological economy" that "regulate(s) a desire for and production of knowledge"...about *Buffy* (83).

The second half of *Undead TV* shifts focus to an arena perhaps more familiar to readers in "Buffy studies" -- the representational politics of the program. Cynthia Fuchs's "Did Anyone Ever Explain to You What Secret Identity Means?": Race and Displacement in *Buffy* and *Dark Angel*" compares and contrasts *BtVS* with another contemporaneous serial genre program with a more multicultural cast of characters (and a young female protagonist), arguing that both programs ultimately present race and age as related, and constructed, categories. Although she finds marked differences between the two series, Fuchs also finds similarities in the ways that they both perform race metaphorically, and at least partially through the "otherness" of monsters (or in the case of *Dark Angel*, bio-engineered "transgenics"). Allison McCracken's chapter, "At Stake: Angel's Body, Fantasy Masculinity, and Queer Desire in Teen Television" touches on two ubiquitous themes in discussions of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* -- gender construction and queer readings -- but rather than focus on the prominent female characters or the canonical lesbian relationship presented on the show, McCracken considers the representation of the male character Angel and the possibilities for a transgressive space of female viewing pleasure to be found in his "endlessly penetrable" body as "a playground for sadomasochistic fantasies" (119). This essay, more than any other in this volume, assumes previous familiarity with fan studies (with which "Buffy Studies" frequently intersects, given the particularly active online *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fandom), in particular the phenomenon of "slash fan fiction" in which (usually) female fans produce homoerotic readings of ostensibly straight fictional characters from primary texts. But, that said, McCracken performs provocative textual analysis of the "fantasy spaces" made available within the text, as well as ways in which the evolution of *Angel's* gendered narrative dynamics arguably closed down some feminist or queer pleasures.

The last two essays also engage with one of the more common lines of inquiry in relation to *BtVS* -- its relationship to feminism -- while also making interventions in other, overlapping, discourses. In "Buffy as *Femme Fatale*: the Cult Heroine and the Male Spectator", Jason Middleton presents a narrative of fans "reading against the grain" that complicates the progressive slant of much of the body of work produced in fan studies on female genre fans' appropriations of dominant media texts. In this essay, Middleton analyzes how Buffy (the character) was portrayed in comic books and science fiction fanzines aimed at male audiences, arguing that these represent a fetishistic viewing position that works against the preferred, feminist reading of the series and its protagonist. Editor Elana Levine's piece "Buffy and the 'New Girl Order': Defining Feminism and Femininity", in a sense sidesteps more simplistic debates about whether or not Buffy (character or television program) is feminist in order to consider ways in which the show negotiates multiple articulations of feminism (and femininity) available at the time of its production. In this essay, Levine places Buffy at the intersection of debates within feminist theory and historiography regarding "post-feminism" and "third wave feminism" and television scholarship's description of the "New Woman" character type, thereby concluding the book with a piece that situates *BtVS* within both televisual and larger cultural discourses.

Although the general tone of this review has suggested that *Undead TV* is more a "Television Studies book" than a "Buffy Studies book," it is, of course, a book of essays about *Buffy the*

Vampire Slayer. As such, it is naturally more accessible to a reader who is familiar with the text of *BtVS* and some of the more contentious aspects of the arguments presented here will be more available if one is acquainted with existing discourse on *BtVS* across a range of disciplinary standpoints. However, the editors' commitment to considering *BtVS as television* is carried out in the organization of this collection, particularly in the first half of the book. The bulk of these essays are also highly concerned with production/text/audience dynamics rather than closed textual analysis. And these are, by and large, "critical" (although not flatly condemnatory) accounts of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* position within cultural and economic flows. In the introduction, Levine and Parks describe their affective yet analytical stance towards *BtVS* as "critical communion", suggesting that television criticism necessarily involves "communing" with television, given the sustained and intimate engagement characteristic of the medium, while also working to retain a critical edge. They also express "hope that this volume will contribute to the dialogue on just what television criticism is, and what it should or could be" (11). In this light, *Undead TV* is a worthy experiment, and its choice of object perhaps especially apt, considering the emotional hold *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* has on so many academics.

Understanding the Global TV Format

By Albert Moran and Justin Malbon

Portland, OR : Intellect, 2006. ISBN 1-84150-132-8. 23 illustrations, 187pp. £27.50
Television Entertainment

Television Entertainment

By Jonathan Gray

NY: Routledge, 2008. ISBN 978-0-415-77224-2. 20 illustrations, xi + 209pp. £19.99

A review by Baerbel Goebel-Deigert, University of Kansas, USA

Many see television as on its "way out" or at least on the verge of immense reconstruction. The recent shifts within the media industry force advertisers and producers alike to rethink their position, their viewers and their product. Albert Moran's book, *Understanding the Global Television Format*, explains in great detail the format's evolution and marketing world and presents a detailed look at one of the industry's still rising products.

Moran's work gives answers to what the television format is, and how it functions. It is cheap, low risk, and after its development quick to distribute and reproduce. The format is possibly among the most profitable items of trading within the industry at a time where anything low-risk is a welcome relief to producers worldwide. Introducing its readers to proper terminology from the get-go, *Global TV Format* looks at the product's origin, and the creative endeavors necessary to turn an idea into a marketable item.

Moran has written about this subject before, in essays and in book form, titled *CopyCat TV: Globalization, Program Formats, and Cultural Identity* (University of Luton Press, 1998), but has therein focused more on format's rise and effects than its structure and trading. This work clearly speaks to those interested in pursuing a career within the television format industry and those that wish to gain more knowledge about the processes involved in devising, developing and distributing a format, before analysts. The opening chapters explain in detail the trajectory of the argument to follow, and the format as an entity. Devising, developing and distribution of the TV format are each individually handled in consecutive chapters.

These three steps, Moran points out, speak effectively to the difference between format and other products of the television industry. While most 'programs' have finished their 'first run' after production has ended and the program has aired, the format only now begins to take true shape and remains an always changing, living entity on our television screens, while being a 'recipe' that can be flavored to whichever taste a region requires (29). Formats are not reruns;

they are not history. The format bible, a handbook guiding producers through the process of creating their version of the format, grows with each new territory', including all alterations made along the way (60).

For those working in the realm of media research, the more salient chapters are those that follow the exploration of creation. A discussion of agents and markets lead the way (71). This chapter grants a brief overview of trading events, their respective histories, hierarchies within the business, procedures and specifically addresses agents and their interactions with producers and developers. Timothy Havens, author of *Global Television Marketplace* (BFI: 2008), presents a rather detailed image of the trading place for those interested in a deeper understanding of the market culture after having developed a taste reading Moran. And Moran has the most detailed and representative map of companies within the field I have seen to date. The top ranking companies have spread globally much as their programs have, through offices in foreign territories, merging with local providers, or joining forces with equally high-ranking players of the TV format trading game. Among these company outlines is a longer section on Endemol, a company originating in the Netherlands, quickly growing and now owned by a Spanish company with foreign businesses Endemol Globo (Brazil) and Endemol Argentina joining its massive operations, aiding in maintaining Endemol's top position among format traders worldwide (91).

All of the companies, however, Moran points out, are constantly struggling with copyright issues. Much talk has been generated within media studies and the industry alike, concerning copyrights, their infringement, and the overall concept of intellectual property rights (IPR). Many studies here look specifically to the East, such as the work of Andrew C. Mertha on *The Politics of Piracy: Intellectual Property in Contemporary China* (Cornell University Press, 2007). It easily escapes us that there are no true guidelines in handling the copyright of a format on a global level. Even more pressing, can the TV format claim copyright in the first place? Moran surveys the laws of Germany, the UK and follows this question by way of case studies.

Among the case studies chosen by Moran is the lawsuit between *Survivor* creators and Endemol, concerning the latter's hit show *Big Brother*. The decision lies with the judge handling the case. Invoking the idea of a franchise, *Global TV Format* states that it is the judge that has to decide when serving a fast burger over a counter, goes from general idea to copying McDonalds outright. In the mentioned case of *Big Brother* vs. *Survivor*, the decision was clear: there are similar elements, but one is indoors and one is set in an exotic location, *Big Brother* is not copying *Survivor*'s model. Reacting to the need within the industry, many larger companies have now joined in the "Cologne-based Format Registration and Protection Association (FRAPA)" (12).

As long as not all of the licensors and licensees join this organization there is no global standard. Hence, there is no clear law protecting the format from copycats, to use one of Moran's terms. The fact that it is within the nature of the format that it is easily adapted to local taste makes the problem only worse. Michael Curtin in *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (University of California Press, 2007) presents the case of the Taiwanese version of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*. Here the licensee attempted to save money, spent on the license itself, by not utilizing all of the elements presented in the format bible, such as lights, audience space, and sound, leaving a secondary channel open to appropriate some of these elements in their own, unlicensed version and surpassing the actual licensee in revenue quickly after the show began to air. The

format could not be sold a second time, and all of the elements hold part of the format's charm and thus marketability.

The rules the industry employs in its attempt to self-regulate through the formation of FRAPA are outlined as well as common laws that could be helpful in understanding how copyright can be protected without direct laws existing. Among these are contract formulations, competition law, and the protection against unjust enrichment.

Global TV Format is a rich resource for those that are willing to try and break into the industry and also those of us engaged in television studies. Moran, in his conclusion, points to the larger ramifications of the format within the field and that of arts and humanities in general. Though attached as an afterthought, his argument that repetition and difference have developed a new relationship and generate an exchange of cultural form is valid for the television format. His prior book grants more insight in this specific arm of the discussion however, as this work is rather focused on the format in and of itself rather than utilizing discourse in the analysis.

Therefore the difference between Moran's book and Jonathan Gray's work *Television Entertainment* could not be greater. Whereas the former presents a tightly controlled study, the latter promises to cover an enormous amount of material concerning television as entertainment. And though the sheer ground this study covers creates a little disorganization and is sometimes too brief in its mention of relevant scholars and ideas, *Television Entertainment* represents promising new scholarship arguing for a more inclusive and serious study of the form.

Gray organizes his argument within six chapters addressing different aspects of television entertainment. The questions asked here regard television's status as art, audience identity formation, political economy and new media in overflow, expansion and synergy, the reality in fiction ad representation, politics and agency and power structures in television and the viewers. These are some of the biggest questions in media studies and all have ample material to choose from to build a logical argument for TV's importance in daily life and society as a whole, especially with the often mentioned media saturation age we all live in today.

Television entertainment here is rather an all-encompassing term as the author binds it to the notion that the term really refers to all programs created with entertainment as its "primary goal" (3). In a world of niche marketing and one that still sells audiences to advertisers for the most part (pay stations not necessarily excluded) this truly refers to all programming. Gray does not take this generalization lightly though; he invokes Neil Postman's work *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (Penguin, 2005) stating the risks of "just" seeing entertainment, but extends this argument to warn of not oversimplifying entertainment as such in the first place. And while aware of discussions concerning the "threat" that is TV reminds us in Ien Ang's words from *Desperately Seeking The Audience* (Routledge, 1991) that television does not truly possess the power to force audiences into watching. Why then is it that we often feel we are coerced? Here we may find many arguments but the 'water-cooler' talk certainly no longer is among them as the industry is at a point of over production everything but unifying groups of viewers. At this point the book begins to refer back and forth to itself amongst abundance of scholars, due to the nature of the subject and the breadth of the research presented. Each aspect here is looked at from various angles in addition. The viewer, the product, and the industry are all considered when discussing television as art, its affect for audiences or its integration of and migration to New Media.

Gray does enforce limitations for himself however, in the case studies he chooses to discuss in this work. These help to keep the confusion at a minimum. Focusing on the most successful contemporary programs not only limits this work, but instead it allows the discussion to be applicable to many non US markets, as these programs are amongst those that are traded to foreign territories most frequently, such as *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999), *The Simpsons* (FOX, 1989), or *Lost* (ABC, 2004). A downside to this is that public television is a mere side note here, mentioned in respects of freedom of creativity and stifling economic issues that narrow the possibilities for this freedom to come to fruition. But all things considered, in the many channels most Americans have access to, public broadcasters supply a rather small percentage of programming to the tidal wave that is TV.

This work again demonstrates immense breadth in its approach to representation, identity formation and the construction of meaning. Whilst displaying different arguments it ties these together and unifies them by arguing that the viewers' often ignored agency on all levels, those of fans, anti-fans and non-fans, actively partakes in these processes and possibly more so than the programs themselves do. Gray does not gloss over the problem of under-representation of race, gender, and ethnicity. Calling for a more demanding audience and in effect larger audiences so that the weight of representation does not reside with but one African-American character, one gay man, or one female character. This is examined in *The Wire* (HBO, 2002), a show that has more than twenty recurring African American characters. Admittedly many of these fall into the realm of stereotypes, but protagonists that counter these tropes, work against the perceived prejudices.

The worlds created by television programming are un-real and utopian in nature though, and many viewers now can avoid watching programming that reflects fiction closer to reality without much trouble. Therefore the shows that maintain a white-washed America still will be watched by those that want to see it. Utopia, after all and in Gray's work explicitly, is one of television entertainment's "gifts" to its fan viewers, whilst a thorn in the eyes of many anti-fans and simply background noise for non-fans. The participation of all three groups in television discourse is present in the inclusion of New Media. Whether forums, chat rooms or fan sites, television is quite alive and well in the new technologies. Maybe it is even more so in its old format considering Nielson's problems in presenting anything but a distorted image of viewer demographics.

As Amanda Lotz's *The Television Will be Revolutionized* (NYU Press, 2007), Gray's book is a must-read for all interested in television, new media and culture studies alike. *Television Entertainment* is a book that presents a near-perfect base for those beginning their work in the field, and reminds the more seasoned scholar of all that is out there and needs consideration when addressing the screen much of the world spends most of their time on.