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"May Contain Graphic Material": Comic Books, Graphic Novels, and Film

By M. Keith Booker

Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2007. ISBN 978-0275993863. Xl + 226 pp. £25.95 (hbk).

A review by David Simmons, University of Northampton, UK

Following a brief lull in output, caused by the critical and commercial failure of Joel Schumacher's *Batman and Robin* (1997), the last ten years have seen the comic book movie rise to ever greater prominence on the cinematic landscape. The last few years alone have witnessed films based on both famous comic book characters (*Spiderman, Superman, Batman*) and texts that are less well known (*Hellboy*, *Sin City*, *300*). While often wildly divergent in quality and tone, one thing these adaptations seem to share in common with each other is their commercial appeal, and with 2008 seeing the release of the first major film*; Iron Man* (Jon Favreau, 2008), to be self-financed by the comics company Marvel, now seems like an appropriate time to explore the increasingly interdependent relationship between sequential art and cinema.

Booker's *"May Contain Graphic Material": Comic Books, Graphic Novels, and Film* attempts to make sense of the increasingly symbiotic relationship between the comic book or graphic novel and filmic forms, charting the more significant developments in the field. As such Booker starts his introduction by reminding us of Will Eisner's statement that film "is an extension of comics" (ix), a sure signal perhaps that the author intends to reassess more culturally conservative estimations of the comic book as a poor source for cinematic adaptation. Instead, the book offers us a more radical interpretation, suggesting that the two forms have, and continue to be, mutually beneficial for one another, with comic books assimilating the narrative intricacies of film and film borrowing many of the visual techniques of comics.

The lengthy introduction proceeds to detail the history of comic book material on screen (what Booker terms 'graphic cinema'), from the popular 1930's and '40's serials through notable successes such as *Superman: The Movie*(Richard Donner, 1978) and notorious failures such as *Popeye* (Robert Altman, 1980). This early part of the book establishes Booker's knowledge of the subject matter, and his clear understanding of the contributory factors behind the rise of graphic cinema. Hypothesising that progress in this most symbiotic of forms has been largely determined by developments in another; digital technology, the author notes how advances in the field of CGI since the 1990s have seen a marked

increase in successful adaptations as directors have gained an ever greater ability to ape the range and scope of the most visually complex comic material.

Booker continues his comprehensive survey of graphic cinema over the main body of the text, dividing *"May Contain Graphic Material"* into fifteen chapters, each of which examines a different example of the form that the author deems to be significant in some manner.

The main part of *"May Contain Graphic Material"* begins with chapters on arguably the two highest profile examples of graphic cinema; the *Superman* and *Batman* franchises. Seemingly aimed more at the novice fan than the expert, these chapters have a tendency to recount the plot and production details of the aforementioned films while suggesting something of the context and cultural impact of the franchises as a whole (television series, comics and computer games are all mentioned). Though Booker's extended comparisons of both the original *Superman* and *Batman* (Tim Burton, 1989) films with their most contemporary iterations, *Superman Returns* (Bryan Singer, 2006) and *Batman Begins* (Christopher Nolan, 2007), are particularly interesting, one feels that in these chapters Booker struggles to add anything significant to accepted knowledge on either set of films. Indeed, although the material provided would undoubtedly prove illuminating for the uninitiated reader, it is perhaps testament to the success of both of these franchises that any individual with either a passing interest in film or comics will be more than likely to have come across a great deal of the information before.

While the book duly examines the better known superhero based graphic cinema franchises such as *Superman*, *Batman* and *Spiderman* it is perhaps at its most appealing when exploring lesser known examples of graphic cinema. Booker's examination of films based on 'underground' comics such as *The Crow* (Alex Proyas, 1994), the *Blade* trilogy, and *Hellboy* (Guillermo del Toro, 2004) raises many interesting points about these films' contributions to the stylistic and thematic developments of their more famous brethren, postulating a postmodern view of graphic cinema that sees it as being at once derivative yet constantly innovating in terms of both visuals and storytelling techniques. Thus we are told how *The Crow* borrows from the conventions of "a crime film, a love story, a superhero film, and a horror movie" (40) but is able to combine this "unique mixture [into a] success" (42). Similarly, Booker suggests that del Toro's *Hellboy* is able to combine "the superhero, action, and horror genres with a liberal dose of comedy" (147) to produce a film that "feels like a comic book" (149).

The freshness of such discussion is an indication that while the more well-known superhero films have been heavily written about there is perhaps a gap in academic analysis when it comes to adaptations of more 'serious' graphic novels. Consequently, *"May Contain Graphic Material"* is often at its most interesting in those chapters which examine examples of graphic cinema that do not easily fit

into the superhero mould. The book's readings of films based on more 'adult' source material are frequently enlightening: such as *Ghost World* (Terry Zwigoff, 2001), "highly reminiscent of James Joyce's A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man" (97); *Road to Perdition* (Sam Mendes, 2002), "a beautiful film" (127); and *A History of Violence* (David Cronenberg, 2005), "a condemnation of American hypocrisy" (182). This is in part because such films are usually not covered to the same degree by the mainstream press as their superhero based cousins, but also because their inclusion in Booker's discussion creates a broader, more multifaceted picture of the maturing state of contemporary graphic cinema.

Booker ends *"May Contain Graphic Material"* with a brief final chapter in which he reiterates the cinematic significance of comic book adaptations. Stating that though relatively new, graphic cinema "has a rich legacy, producing some of the most important and memorable films of the past three decades" (197), Booker's short denouement suggests the likelihood of further growth in the field, outlining those films either due for release, or in production, at the time the book went to press.

In conclusion, though Booker's study of graphic cinema is frequently informative — who knew that Blade has established a much greater presence in comics *since* the advent of the first film? — one cannot help but wonder what could have been achieved had the analysis provided attempted to tackle the relationship mentioned in the introductory passages in a little more depth. While this would have lead to a book with an arguably more technical focus the results may have proven a little more innovative. As it is, *"May Contain Graphic Material"* is most successful in its presentation of a more fully inclusive survey of graphic cinema, providing the reader with a classificatory overview that begins to go beyond more critically dominant superhero based readings to suggest something of the true variety and complexity of the form

Investigating Firefly and Serenity

By Rhonda Wilcox and Tanya Cochran (eds.)
London, I.B. Tauris, 2008, xiii + 290 pp., 13: 978-1845116545 and 10: 1845116542, $22.50, £14.99 (pbk).

Special Issue on *Firefly* and *Serenity*

By Rhonda Wilcox and Tanya Cochran (eds.), *Slayage* 25, winter 2008 [7.1]

http://www.slayageonline.com/Numbers/slayage25.htm

A review by Ronald Helfrich, SUNY, Oneonta, USA

Books on the television and film work of Joss Whedon (*Buffy*, *Angel*, *Firefly*, *Serenity*, *Dr. Horrible's Sing-along-Blog*, *Dollhouse*) continue rolling off the presses rivalling even those published on those old film warhorses Alfred Hitchcock and Orson Welles. *Investigating Firefly and Serenity* edited by Rhonda Wilcox and Tanya Cochran, the latest in Tauris's Investigating Cult TV series, and its companion special issue (issue 25, winter 2008) found at the online journal *Slayage: The Online International Journal of Buffy Studies* focusing on Whedon's hybrid sci-fi/western *Firefly* and the film based on that short lived television series, *Serenity*, are among the latest.

For those unfamiliar with the series *Firefly* is the brainchild of creator/writer/director Joss Whedon and creator/writer/director Tim Minear (*X-Files*, *Wonderfalls*, *Drive*). The show debuted in the dreaded Friday night-time slot on the Fox network in the US on 20 September 2002. It lasted for eleven episodes before Fox gave it the axe. Cancellation didn't spell the end of *Firefly*, however. When Fox released all fourteen episodes of the show on DVD in December 2003 it became a hit. Universal took notice and three years later released the Whedon written and directed film *Serenity* which reunited the *Firefly* crew in an adventure set sometime after the events of the television series.

Firefly, as I mentioned earlier, is a science fiction/western and more—Whedon's shows are invariably genre blenders. The show is set in a 26th century where the two remaining superpowers, China and the US, have merged to form the Alliance. There are essentially two worlds in this future, the antiseptic "utopia" of the wealthy core planets and the "primitive", "dystopian" poverty stricken planets of the new wild frontier (metaphors for the first and third worlds of today?). On these frontier planets settlers, out of necessity, live in frontier towns, ride horses, speak in a kind of nouveau western slang with a bit of Mandarin thrown in now and again for good often expletive deleted measure, and engage in an awful lot of good old vigilante "justice". As we learn in the first

episode (Fox didn't broadcast this until the end of the shows run) there was a civil war between the Alliance and the Browncoats (many fans of the show refer to themselves as Browncoats). The Alliance won. The show centres around the crew of nine aboard the Firefly class ship Serenity (at least two of whom fought for the Browncoats) who sail "the black" trying to stay out of the way of the Alliance all the while trying to eke out a living through a variety of barely legal and not so legal means. Lurking in the background of *Firefly* is the mysterious Blue Sun corporation which, as we find out in *Serenity*, works in tandem with the Alliance to create the warrior/spies of the future. Like all of Whedon's work *Firefly* is full of dense and complex narrative and character arcs and themes revolving around existentialist social ethics, chosen families, friendship, love, conflict, disillusionment, and the possibility of redemption. And like all of Whedon's work it contains his trademark wit and humour.

The essays in both *Investigating Firefly and Serenity* and the *Slayage Special Issue on Firefly and Serenity* reflect a growing international interest in the work of Whedon. In both, scholars from the US, Canada, the UK, and Italy explore the representation of gender (Beadling, Aberdein, Magill, Buckman), the representation of race and ethnicity (Mandala, Lerner), the representation of the "savage" (Curry, Rabb and Richardson), Orientalism (Brown), contemporary politics (Jencson, Bussolini), genre (Battis, Jowett, Money), themes (Battis, Jencson, Sutherland and Swan, Wilcox, Erickson, Pateman), character (Gelineau), music (Lerner, Neal), design (Maio), rhetoric (Masson), fandom (Abbott, Cochran), the resurrection of *Firefly* as *Serenity* (Abbott), and even Whedon Studies itself (Cochran and Wilcox).

Some of the essays in both collections reflect unfortunate tendencies in some contemporary media explorations of television shows and films. Cynthea Masson's "'But She was all Naked! And All Articulate': The Rhetoric of Seduction in *Firefly*", for example, reflects a trend in media studies to use popular culture as a way to talk about academic subjects (a trend particularly prominent in Open Court's Philosophy and Popular Culture series). Masson uses rhetorical analysis to explore the character of Inara in *Firefly* and *Serenity* and the nature of companionship in the *Firefly* verse. The essay reads more like an academic introduction to rhetorical analysis than an analysis of*Firefly*. Neil Lerner's "Music, Race, and Paradoxes of Representation: Jubal Early's Musical Motif of Barbarism in 'Objects in Space'" reflects the trend in much contemporary popular culture analysis to jettison primary source research beyond the text in favour of a kind of text as crystal ball approach, an approach which sees the text as a crystal ball revealing all about itself, its production, and its contexts. Lerner, despite having interviewed *Firefly* composer Greg Edmondson, focuses exclusively on a textual reading of the *Firefly* musical text and links musical motifs in *Firefly* to previous musical motifs and their ethnic and racial connotations in previous film and television texts. Not only does Lerner neglect to explore the possible contradictory nature of musical motifs both from a production and audience

perspective, but he does not take advantage of the potentially rich vein of primary source material for television analysis.

Other essays offer insight but sometimes do not go far enough or go too far. Wilcox's and Cochran's excellent "Introduction: 'Good Myth": Joss Whedon's Further Worlds" and Mary Alice Money's "*Firefly's* 'Out of Gas': Genre Echoes and the Heroes Journey" rightly note the influence of John Ford's *Stagecoach* on *Firefly* but fail to note the influence of Hawks (the chosen family of professionals), Anthony Mann (themes of revenge and damaged men—the latter stretches from Homer to Austen and the Brontes through film noir and to Mann and beyond), and Richard Slotkin (regeneration through violence) on Whedon's work in general and *Firefly* and *Serenity* in particular. Matthew Pateman's typically outstanding "Deathly Serious: Mortality, Morality, and *Mise-en-Scene* in *Firefly* and *Serenity*" rightly points out the omnipresence of death in *Firefly* (and Whedon's work in general) but fails to place it sufficiently in the context of Whedon's humanist existentialism with its concern for social ethics. It is this that gives death its meaning in Whedon's work.

Academic readers with an interest in contemporary textual criticism (what David Bordwell calls therapeutic criticism) will probably find much to like in the essays focusing on representation in both collections. Academics with an interest in using popular culture to explore academic disciplines and disciplinary concerns are likely to find some of the essays intriguing and helpful. Academics with an interest in auteurism are likely to find the essays exploring Whedon's themes interesting. Academics who believe that sound textual analysis must be grounded in extra textual primary research (like myself) are likely to be somewhat disappointed in both collections—only a few of the essays draw, in varying degrees, on primary source material usually interviews with Whedon or other writers and DVD commentaries by Whedon and Company. Beyond the ivory tower I suspect that both collections are too academic and hence too arcane for readers interested in *Firefly*, *Serenity*, or the work of Joss Whedon. They are likely to find more insight into the *Firefly* verse in the two Benbella readers on *Firefly* and *Serenity*, *Finding Serenity* and *Serenity Found*, both edited by Jane Espenson (2005, 2007), and in the two volume *Firefly: The Official Companion* published by Titan (2006, 2007).

Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film

By Adilifu Nama

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008. ISBN 0292716974. 54 Photos, xii + 200 pp. £17.99 (pbk), £43.00 (hbk).

Mixed Race Hollywood

Edited by Mary Beltrán and Camilla Fojas

New York: New York University Press, 2008. ISBN 9780814799888. 20 Photos, vi + 325 pp. £18.99 (pbk), £58.00 (hbk).

A Review by Augusto Ciuffo de Oliveira, University of Bristol

Adilifu Nama's *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film* explores America's racial landscape from a Film and Media Studies perspective. It identifies and reads race issues in Science Fiction (SF) films identifying how they affect the genre. The author enquires whether the contemporary readings one makes of such films can transform the future of race history and change its cycle of violence, racism, and inequality. Released in 2008, the same year an African American reached the highest political post he/she could have ever aspired to since the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, this book is timely for us to understand the fictions of reality and the realities hidden in science fiction films.

As a media phenomenon Barack Obama not only overcame all easy associations of his name and religious past with that of Osama Bin Laden, but also appealed to a sufficient number of Americans, as well as international public opinion. Black presidents have appeared before Obama, in science fiction at least. Actor Tommy 'Tiny' Lister played President Lindberg in Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element* (1997). The film *Deep Impact* (Mimi Leder, 1998) had Morgan Freeman as President Tom Beck.

In 1926, Monteiro Lobato, a businessman and successful author of children's books wrote *O Presidente Negro* (The Black President, Editora Globo, 2008). Dedicated to the adult public, Lobato's uncanny novel was a flop but it anticipated with a certain degree of precision the use of eugenics, the creation of the Internet, and the election of a black man to the most important job on planet Earth in the year 2228. His exercise in futurology rendered a fairly similar story as that of Obama's presidential campaign in 2008 where race and gender played invaluable parts.

Through the analysis of a wide variety of sci-fi works in film and TV, Nama composes a fairly consistent mosaic of the shadowy presence of black people in one of Hollywood's most innovative genres. Although set in unrealistic surroundings, he demonstrates nonetheless how SF re-enacts the black versus white conflict, time and again informed by the socio-political developments

taking place in America's contemporary history. *Black Space* deals with all the disparaging elements that pass by us almost unnoticed, as we comply with rule number one of SF viewing — "suspension of disbelief" (126) — and travel at the speed of light, or defy gravity, forgetting that the real piece of futuristic fiction is taking place right by us.

According to Nama, SF films have been abnormally resilient to black people and racial themes. He uses James Snead's idea of the "perpetual historical stasis for black representation in film" (11) to peruse the antiseptic environment of space which, he points out, has been professed as unsuitable for black individuals, their bodies, and their plights, unless they represented the infected, the invader, the alien, in sum, the "Other". Nonetheless, his book reveals several ways in which black representation and racial issues are still embedded in such films, and that "albeit implicit—as structured absence, repressed or symbolic—blackness and race are often present in SF films as narrative subtext or implicit allegorical subject" (2).

Nama applies a conceptual framework inspired by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Vintage, 1979) in order to analyse this forced absenteeism and minimal presence. He uses the overarching category of temporal speculation, modelled in Said's inquiry about what really might constitute East and West, to account for the symbolic and allegoric existences of black people in SF film. In this way Nama is able to demonstrate how African Americans became an imagined minority shaped to fit in a future laden with race issues that are anchored in the past and the present of North America. In this process he also lays bare the tokenism with which blacks in America have been treated in sci-fi films and shows the complexity of this state of affairs. Its foundations can be traced back to the impact of black nationalist movements and leaders from the 1960s onwards, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, the Nation of Islam, and the Black Power movement; but also to the influence of the "red menace" that powered the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and illegal immigration, to name just a few. All these factors contributed to maintain African Americans presence in SF films to very specific roles and niches.

Black Space deals with the most strident aspects of racism identifiable in Science Fiction: the fear of racial contamination (through blood, viruses, saliva) and the black body (the repository of all white establishment fears). Nama uses these SF characteristics as categories through which to expose race as the ultimate Science Fiction. He illustrates his point with an analysis of *The Omega Man* (Boris Sagal, 1971) and concludes that "although considered an imaginative canvas, not only is [SF film] constrained by the racial logic operating outside the film but also is understandable only in relationship to that logic" (47). Nama's criticism easily comes across as we look into a more contemporary film which, for a question of timing, was not included in his volume. In *I Am Legend* (Francis Lawrence, 2007), the remake of *The Omega Man* starring no less than Will

Smith, the newer version is watered down to skirt racial issues woven into the original even though the star is one of the most influential African American actors.

In the chapter entitled "White Narratives, Black Allegories" Nama deepens the scrutiny of racial allegories and symbolisms that, he believes, reaffirm myths and historical relationships that are uncritical and revisionist falsehoods. The main one is America's capacity and legitimacy to deliver racial justice, which he illustrates through an analysis of *Planet of the Apes* (Franklin Schaffner, 1968). Other highlights are *Fahrenheit 451* (François Truffaut, 1966), and *The Matrix* trilogy whose first instalment, *The Matrix* (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999), is considered by Nama the first black sci-fi epic ever made.

The author explains somewhat late in the book the method being used all along for reading these films: against the grain. However, there is not a thorough discussion of Stuart Hall's perspective on encoding and decoding intentionality and meaning, which Nama refers to as source. He also tardily informs the reader that, even though one can oppose the preferred meaning superficially assigned to a film, "from an audience-centered perspective, the racial meaning of any SF film is up for grabs" (124). These minor slips do not invalidate Nama's sharp perspective that the genre is indeed a fertile ground to question the meaning of race in America and how that country imagines it.

Finally Nama explores the increase in black representation in sci-fi films over the past decades and how it has failed to translate directly into an improvement over issues regarding black cultural identity and politics. In "Subverting the Genre" he points to the margins of American SF cinema, and to literature and music, as locations where we can find destabilizing examples of 'radical expressions' of blackness. Nama observes with some irony that in his perspective two of the most self-consciously black films to date were made by white men: *Space Is The Place* (John Coney, 1974) and *The Brother from Another Planet* (John Sayles, 1984). On the periphery of the genre we can also find the unassuming *Mars Attacks!* (Tim Burton, 1996), which portrays the marginalization of blackness in America. However, Nama credits George Clinton's music and the graphic art of his albums — *Mothership Connection* (1975), *Motor Booty Affair* (1978), and *One Nation under a Groove* (1978) — for the origins of Afrofuturism, and thus far black people's most lasting participation in this genre.

Regarding the future of race and Science Fiction, Nama sees the literature of black authors Octavia Butler, Samuel Delaney, Walter Mosley, and Derrick Bell as true examples of innovative perspectives on SF that could and should be taken to the screen. However, he asks, disenchanted, that if the time to come does not hold a history of race unspoiled by acts of violence, inhumanity, and fear of the "Other" (as the one we currently have), where else could we look for it?

In your favourite TV/Film programming featuring a mixed race star, I should say. At least this is a reality in America as described by Beltrán and Fojas's *Mixed Race Hollywood*. Also produced during Obama's pursuit of the American cabinet, this book broadens the spectrum investigated by Nama by analyzing mixed-race individuals, families, and their stars in a variety of genres, themes, and historical periods, from early to contemporary cinemas. The array of contributions on such an evasive topic does not prevent us from finding in this edited volume several connections with Nama's perspectives on SF film. Beltrán and Fojas also believe sci-fi to be a fruitful ground to discuss America's race issues, but they remain focused on the bigger picture of how borders and categories are being re-drawn.

The premise of their book is that we can learn about the evolving notions of race and the history of mixed race representation in America by scrutinizing film, TV, and publicity industries, that is, Hollywood. As "Generation Mix" has now surpassed Generation X (less gracefully and with more friction than Beltrán and Fojas would like to portray), we need only to turn on our TV sets to acknowledge the staggering number of mixed race actors, presenters, athletes, models, and politicians, to be convinced of their perspective on this current state of affairs.

Mixed Race Hollywood offers a vast panorama on the slippery terrain of race and ethnicity issues in America. A myriad of terminologies (old and new) reveal the challenges being presented to binary racial oppositions and evolving notions of race in the country that epitomized the tragic mulatto/a figure in the screen, as in *Night of the Quarter Moon* (Hugo Haas, 1959). The 'one-drop' rule and the 'passing' that plagued the imaginary of African Americans who wanted equality, now have for company the idea of "covering" as an equivalent for mixed race folks, who obliquely are within the purview of black people and vice versa.

The essays in this volume lead us through real, imagined, and virtual borders and frontiers where multiracial profiles are now negotiated, such as in the Internet. Prominent bi-/multiracial contemporary Hollywood stars now profit from teasing the public over their genetic heritage, unlike the past, when they most likely would shun it. In order to understand this change, the authors begin by introducing us to the Production Code Act (PCA) and representations of mixed race relationships during the pick of the classical Hollywood studio-era of the 1930s. Despite being clearly forbidden by the PCA, plots including interracial love were inexplicably made and screened. From the 1960s onwards, with the implementation of the Civil Rights Act, there is a rapid change on the racial landscape of America. Mixed race couples, families, and their progeny proliferated (as the mixing of races is inextricably linked to sex and reproduction). Thus, all of these aspects as well as others discussed in the book can be directly linked to and inscribed on the female mixed race body.

The mixed race female permeates the majority of the essays present in this book where Gender Studies are applied to a range of films, from the classical

western to the mixed genre of Horror, Action, and Science Fiction. The first part of the volume discusses the role of mixed race women in the construction of national identity. J. E. Smyth's essay, for example, demonstrates how the female mixed race body becomes the motor used by other female authors during the 1920s and 1930s to carve out a space of their own in the Anglo white male world of public historians and seriously acknowledged authors. The adaptation of literary works of female novelists, such as Edna Ferber, Helen Hunt Jackson, and Margaret Mitchell, to the screen served to write interracial mixing into early cinema's history via films such as *Cimarron* (Wesley Ruggles, 1931), *Ramona* (Henry King, 1936), and *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939). Another essay, "Mixedfolks.com", crosses the frontiers of cyberspace to show an Internet identity community based on 'outing' celebrities that are not comfortable yet with their multiracial background, especially when their multimillion film profiles are laden with Caucasian references and representation.

The second part of *Mixed Race Hollywood* focuses on the imagined mixed racial community. Besides the female mixed race body, they also pay specific attention to gay, lesbian, and Asian American discourses. Parts three and four are centred on demonstrating the variegation of "Generation Mix" and the development of what Adam Knee considers to be 'a new awareness' of America's "racial identity as inherently complex and hybrid" (157). The authors analyse various degrees of mixed race stardom, identity, and gender, questioning discourses based on mixed race characters found in current films from popular genres, such as Horror and Science Fiction. This resonates with Nama's *Black Space* and it is possible to perceive connections between both works, indicating the complementarity between Black Studies and Mixed Race Studies in the fields of Film and Media Studies. Although established as two independent fields in their own right, they share several authors and theoretical approaches, but none of the authors reviewed here strived to bridge this epistemological gap.

The films and television series under scrutiny in the last sections of *Mixed Race Hollywood* belong mostly to Science Fiction or they are a mixture of the latter with other genres, such as Horror, for example. The 'otherness' of black and mixed race peoples find no better terrain to be scrutinized than genres where they are symbolically or allegorically constructed as monsters or genetically enhanced humans, as in the TV series *Dark Angels* (James Cameron and Charles H. Eglee, 2000) and the films *Jeepers Creepers* (Victor Salva, 2001) and *Underworld* (Len Wiseman, 2003). Or as aliens, as in *Enemy Mine* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1985), *The Fifth Element* (Luc Besson, 1997), and *Alien vs. Predator* (Paul Anderson, 2004).

Black Space and *Mixed Race Hollywood* seem to converge once again as they find abundant material for analysis in *The Matrix* trilogy. The sheer number of examples and essays dedicated to them on these books indicate how Black and Mixed Race Studies overlap more than their authors would like to admit. Whilst

Nama sees these films as part of a black SF epic triumvirate, some contributors to Beltrán and Fojas's volume perceive Neo's tribulations as the ideal slippery, ambivalent, and conflictive terrain where mixed race characters thrive.

However, in "*The Matrix* Trilogy, Keanu Reeves, and Multiraciality at the End of Time", LeiLani Nishime points out to the inherit contradictions of a hybrid racial future devoid of boundaries and limitations rooted in phenotype when that is epitomized by characters such as Neo, played by Reeves. Resonating with Beltrán's own essay on Latino ambiguity in Hollywood, she believes such actors and actresses reify standards of whiteness not only because they often play Caucasian roles but also because of their own undefined racial affiliation. Eventually we can only conclude that if on one hand mixed race stars are indeed wealthier and more influential than their counterparts in early twentieth-century Hollywood, on the other hand they continue to occupy repressed and exploited positions, unable to claim any affiliation other than to stardom.

Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright

By Lucas Hilderbrand
Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009. 320pp. £15.99 (pbk).

From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video

By Joshua Greenberg
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008. 216pp. £18.95 (hbk).

Video and DVD Industries

By Paul McDonald
London: BFI, 2007. ISBN: 1-84457-183-0. 247pp. £16.99 (pbk).

A review by Daniel Herbert, University of Michigan, USA

Around the turn of the millennium, and in large part responding to the advent of new digital technologies, there began a continuing discourse about the 'end' and/or the 'death' of cinema, as such technologies seemed to undermine the ontological and cultural conditions of the medium. Television studies, meanwhile, has wrestled with television's many slippages beyond its traditionally-construed techno-apparatical bounds. Video, however, has gained comparatively limited scholarly attention, regardless of its ubiquity and despite the fact that it serves as a zone of connection between 'film' and 'television.' There have been, of course, landmark studies of video from both the moment of its ascendency and from the more recent past (e.g. Lardner and Wasser, et. al.) as well as ingenious explorations of video in non-industrial contexts, such as with 'video art' (Sturken, et. al.) and 'home movies' (Moran). There have also been productive works that integrated analyses of video within broad-minded discussions of cinematic, philosophical, and cultural changes (e.g. Corrigan, Friedberg, Klinger, et. al.). Paul McDonald's *Video and DVD Industries*, Joshua Greenberg's *From Betamax to Blockbuster: Video Stores and the Invention of Movies on Video*, and Lucas Hilderbrand's *Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright* therefore demonstrate a more recent, dedicated interest in video aesthetics, technologies, and cultures within cinema and media studies. The dominance of video as a technology and technique for producing and receiving moving-images understandably merits the current work devoted to the subject. In this endeavor, all three books make substantial contributions to the field and will likely gain widespread appreciation among a diverse range of media scholars.

In addition to their analyses of video, Macdonald's and Greenberg's books each

have the 'bonus feature' of indicating compelling, if different, methodological openings within cinema, media, and cultural studies. As per its title, *Video and DVD Industries* coordinates with the development of industry studies, as seen in the work of Miranda Banks, John Caldwell, Jennifer Holt, Vicky Mayer, and Janet Wasko, among a number of other scholars. Typically deferring questions of aesthetics for, with varying degrees of overlap, corporate history narratives, critical political economy, ethnography, policy analysis, and several other approaches, industry studies has lately appeared as a distinct area of inquiry. *From Betamax to Blockbuster*, on the other hand, comes out of science and technology studies, a field where there has been a rich (re)thinking about technology in social terms, yet one that has not been applied regularly to discussions of media. *Inherent Vice* follows a culturalist approach more common to media scholarship following the impact of 'cultural studies' on the academy, interweaving analyses of aesthetics, policy, technology, and public discourses. Yet the material it presents is strikingly fresh and, most remarkably, Hilderbrand sets his book apart with his voice, which is often intensely – sometimes even shockingly – subjective. Indeed, *Inherent Vice* seems so connected to its author that one might say its style, its 'inherent voice,' constitutes something of a methodology in its own right – akin, I think, to what Roland Barthes once called a "mathesis singluaris."

Paul McDonald's *Video and DVD Industries* aims toward a comprehensive narrative overview of the video industries' disparate and transnationally diffused activities. Toward this, it integrates abundant secondary materials regarding the development of video technologies, the companies that struggled within this commercial arena, as well as the governmental and economic policies that have shaped their behavior. Readers intimately acquainted with the existing discourse about video may find this book confirming their understandings; McDonald's clearest achievement lies in his synthesis of this material into a well-organized, single volume. His introduction lays out "three lines of tension [that] have repeatedly emerged in the commerce of video," (6) and these echo throughout his text: the conflict over specific video formats, the ability to control the dissemination of video software, and the relation of consumer video to other media that compete for audiences. For McDonald, this entails a discussion of how Japanese hardware manufacturers and Hollywood film companies formed a symbiotic relationship with commercial home video as its result, as well as an analysis of the parallel, illicit system of video distribution called 'piracy.' Such a large view of the topic makes *Video and DVD Industries* a handy and accessible resource for students with questions regarding the history of home video; it could also find utility among cinema and media instructors wishing to integrate home video within their courses on, for instance, 'screen arts' rather than merely 'film.'

The book begins by detailing the development of video as a cultural practice that grew out of a history of attempts to bring filmed entertainment into the home.

This required a transformation of the home into a site for consuming commercial entertainment and numerous efforts to capitalize on this potential market; thus the widespread adoption of VCRs was anticipated by numerous forbearers, including the phonograph and the television. Following the use of magnetic tape by television broadcasters to record and replay their programs, there were numerous, if uncoordinated, efforts to bring similar technology to consumers. This was eventually achieved by Sony with Betamax and by JVC with VHS. McDonald also describes the numerous attempts to deliver moving images through disc-objects, which foreshadowed the invention of the digital versatile disc (DVD). In turn, DVD supplanted VHS as the home video device of choice with astounding speed, just after the VCR had reached market saturation. Advertised for its better quality and its extra features, the DVD also signaled the digitalization of cultural forms, at once facilitating the ability to distribute movies cheaply yet straining the ability to contain their spread.

Video and DVD Industries continues by examining the international dispersion of home video technologies and industries, including the 're-energizing' of global video markets enabled by DVD. The author distinguishes these markets as nationally and/or regionally variegated through brief examinations of the markets in Japan, Ethiopia, and Israel as well as the regulatory schemes impacting video in the USSR and Britain, among other case studies. McDonald devotes an entire chapter to the development of home video within the United States, and he pays particular interest in Hollywood's initial wariness of the technology and the financial windfall it eventually garnered from it.

Indeed, McDonald situates Hollywood centrally within the global matrix of the video industries. This can be seen particularly well in the Hollywood studios' coordination with Japanese hardware manufacturers to support the production and sale of DVD players during the 1990s. Moreover, through the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and their international arm, the Motion Picture Association (MPA), Hollywood has been able to support its stance regarding intellectual property rights, which the author states are, in fact, "the very lifeblood of the video business" (181) within the global media marketplace.

Following a discussion of the multiple format battles among digital media, including HD DVD vs. Blu-Ray (Blu-Ray had not yet won this conflict at the time of this book's publication) as well as a discussion of various VOD services, McDonald's book closes by engaging with media piracy. In this effort to outline the conditions of piracy on a global scale, the author draws predominately from information disclosed by the MPAA, their British affiliate, the Federation Against Property Theft (FACT), and the International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA). He relays concerns regarding the financial losses that the Hollywood studios suffer from piracy as well as concerns regarding links between piracy and organized crime. Although this final chapter concludes with brief critiques of these official sources' characterization of piracy – questioning their ability to

accurately calculate piracy figures, for instance – this chapter remains troubled by the author's portrayal of piracy almost solely within the terms provided by the copyright industries; it may have been strengthened by looking at debates around 'fair use' or by invoking discourses around 'free culture.' Nevertheless, the inclusion of this chapter underscores the admirable scope of *Video and DVD Industries*, helping to make it a productive survey of the history of and current issues related to the business of video.

How else might one weigh the contemporary conditions of video against its history? When Walter Benjamin wrote, "only in extinction is the collector comprehended" in his essay "Unpacking my Library," he made an astounding claim regarding the relations among archives, subjectivity, and historiographical practice. However, he was looking specifically at book collecting in the early part of the twentieth century, just as the aura of printed books began its dissolution as a consequence of unprecedented mass reproduction. Somewhat similarly, Joshua Greenberg's remarkable and enjoyable *From Betamax to Blockbuster* documents the video rental store just at the moment of its own dissolution, as it is increasingly passed over for VOD, rent-by-mail services, as well as, most recently, the Redbox video vending machines that seem to have sprouted overnight across the United States.

Told in a style that is eminently accessible, even friendly, Greenberg's book narrates the history of the VCR and the rental store. Yet telling this story also requires a consideration of the relations among social agents and material technologies, which Greenberg does by proposing some basic definitions in such casual prose that it nearly effaces their depth. Positing that any technology is only as good as the *techniques* by which it is used, the histories of the VCR and of video rental demonstrate a number of re-thinkings of the functions of magnetic tape, the role of movies in the world, and the social networks through which they could be used together. For Greenberg, "any technology can be constructed as a communications technology," and further, the difference between a communications technology, or medium, and its message entails a learned ability to differentiate those parts of a technology that are 'saying' something from those parts that are not (11). Implicitly prompting scholars to look to those agents that shaped the range of *techniques* of a technology, Greenberg maintains (sounding a bit like Raymond Williams) that it is the particular uses of a technology that endow it with 'meaning,' with a status of 'medium' that delivers messages.

Hence the two-pronged thesis of Greenberg's book:

> [F]irst, that the VCR was refashioned from a time-shifting appendage for broadcast television into a medium in its own right for movies and other prerecorded content; and second, that this refashioning was performed not by producers or consumers, but by those distributors and retailers who occupied the space between them. (13)

Drawing from copious materials, including interviews and trade magazines, Greenberg convincingly upholds and elaborates this thesis throughout the book. He first describes the emergence of the 'videophile' as an outgrowth of a collection of cinephiles and technophiles in the 1960s and 1970s, mapping their formation as a community that disseminated information about video through magazines and public gatherings. He then situates various early home video technologies within the retail spaces which sold them, taking note of the divergent business models that set parameters for particular uses of video. Here we find VCRs increasingly used to deliver pre-recorded material, including pornography as well as Hollywood features. What arises as historically significant is that although upstart independent video distributors eventually conceived of and used video as a movie delivery device, there were an astounding number of players that vied to 'invent' the medium, including electronics retailers and music distributors.

The next several chapters of *From Betamax to Blockbuster* analyze the video rental store and the social agents that constitute it. This is particularly impressive in relation to the field of cultural geography and given the fact that the*space* of the video store has been so overlooked in cinema studies. Greenberg details the astounding growth of the video rental store in the 1980s, the power dynamics among and within stores (between, for example, customers and clerks), and the standardization of these zones through the systematic elimination of independent stores and the growth of corporate chains like Blockbuster. Greenberg also describes the struggle for industrial coherence at conventions and tradeshows and through the formation of trade associations. The final chapter describes the formal transformations that typically accompanied the transfer of a movie from celluloid to magnetic tape, including 'pan and scan' image-cropping and, notoriously, the colorization of previously black-and-white films. As throughout, Greenberg is not merely interested in technical details but also in the social and conceptual conditions of such details. In this case, he describes how debates about transformations rendered in video transfer implied a kind of 'Platonic ideal' of a movie that it was the job of the videotape to reconstitute; for Greenberg, these serve as further indications of how a medium undergoes conversion through competing assertions about its proper uses.

There are two features of *From Betamax to Blockbuster* that may strike readers. The first is its rather innovative use of the internet as a tool for gathering personal histories from social subjects. Greenberg developed the website videostoreproject.com (located at http://mars.gmu.edu:8080/dspace/html/1920/2054/index2.php.1.html) where subjects could respond to a series of questions regarding their histories as owners, employees, or customers of video rental stores. The author concedes that because the respondents were self-selecting, his argument does not rely upon the information gathered through the website (164). Yet he does refer to

these responses throughout the book, adding a layer of personal, if anecdotal, narration to his already impressive analysis. The second issue is a boundary the book appears to set for itself, that it does not critically interrogate the ways that video cultures and communities, such as 'hobbyists,' 'clerks,' and 'customers,' intersected with social stratifications along such axes as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and generation. This relates to a larger issue of the book; for all that it does explore an admirably wide range of social and industrial agents involved in home video and video rental cultures, it tends to privilege the more socially dominant practices in any particular moment (which admittedly could be outside mainstream culture of the time).

Lucas Hilderbrand's *Inherent Vice* addresses this issue rather directly, and moreover, provides just the alternative evaluation of copyright impelled by Paul MacDonald's account of 'piracy.' Of course, *Inherent Vice* should not be weighed solely in terms of the other two books. Yet, as marginal video practices and a rethinking about copyright figure centrally in the book, it does provide a fantastic counterpoint to the others while being an engaging, thoughtful, and thought-provoking work in its own right.

Hilderbrand is centrally concerned with 'access,' and it is this keyword that generates and interconnects his discussions of copyright, of socially marginal video practices and communities, and further, of video aesthetics, most specifically what the author calls "bootleg aesthetics." Not only does 'access' provide the intellectual point of entry into these analyses, which are often exciting in their range, insight, and originality, but it also undergirds the ideological thrust of the book's argument; *Inherent Vice* seems to ultimately function as a polemic for copyright reform and an unabashed celebration of video, transforming all its supposed deficiencies into objects of adoration. Indeed, as the author generally does not interrogate the limits and problems of his case studies or the issues they raise, his account appears a bit one-sided and perhaps overly optimistic. One gets a sense of Hilderbrand's enchanted voice and position as an advocate early in the book. The preface, for example, details the book's intervention into discussions of 'new' and 'old' media, asserting that the history of analog video reveals oft-ignored continuities between new and old technologies and practices; but this moves into a passage where the author offers his "own memories of video tape," because, he admits, his "readings of historical documents and legal codes are inevitably subjective" (xiv). In fact, *subjectivity* may well be the problematic suffused within Hilderbrand's theorization of 'access,' particularly in aesthetic and social terms.

Following this preface, the introduction explores the book's major issues; it is concerned with video in its formal and technical specificity and with the history of analog video, to the extent that this history provides an opening in discussions of copyright and helps clarify changes in audiences' uses of and relations with media. In contrast to some other analyses of video, Hilderbrand

places its materiality front and center, asserting that "the specificity of videotape becomes most apparent through repeated duplication, wear, and technical failure" (6). The author celebrates this fact, arguing that video presents an aesthetic of access, or a "bootleg aesthetic," precisely through these "failures," where each layer of technical degradation signals "indexical evidence of use" and provides "historical records of audiences' interactions with the media objects" (15). In this, Hilderbrand's aesthetics at once presents a collapse of object/subject relations and, further, positions analog flaws as a residue that resembles but ultimately exceeds "the residual," in Raymond Williams' terms, thereby collapsing the formal and the social. In other words, 'access' serves as a means of accessing some rather profound theoretical and experiential problems.

Chapter one traces the technical development of videotape as well as the changes it facilitated in audiences' relations to media texts. Beginning with developments in magnetic audiotape, the author details how audio audiences were enabled to do home taping, which provided a precedent for the use of videotape for transforming television through 'timeshifting.' Hilderbrand traces the historical change in uses of video from hope taping, to movie rental, to sell-through. He juxtaposes this corporate success story, however, with an enthusiastic account of bootlegging practices and the elusive social networks that sustained them. He closes the chapter with a counter-intuitively progressive interpretation of celebrity sex tapes.

Chapter two engages in a sustained 'copyleft' re-evaluation of US copyright laws, particularly as they were worked over in pivotal moments in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s; it further shows how analog video was central to these changes. The author begins with the 1976 revision of copyright laws, and details, particularly in the *Sony vs. Universal* or 'Betamax' case decision, the myriad tensions around notions of 'fair use,' 'free use,' and 'non-infringing use.' Although nearly every book about video discusses the Betamax case, Hilderbrand's analysis is novel, as it emphasizes the malleability and interpretability of copyright laws. Thus, the author positions the case as illuminating the possibility for altering some of the severities of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) of 1998, which he analyzes along with the subsequent lawsuits against the Grockster peer-to-peer network.

The second part of *Inherent Vice* is comprised of three, chapter-long case studies that elucidate the arguments presented in the first two chapters. The first of these is an institutional history of the Vanderbilt Television News Archive (VNTA), which was initiated in the late 1960s with the intention of providing a resource for understanding political bias in the media. CBS eventually sued the VNTA for copyright infringement as a result of the archive's activities recording and providing access to news recordings from that network; this case provided an arena in which copyright, fair use, and the Fairness Doctrine were debated

and reconsidered. The second case study is an intensive analysis of the formal features and reception contexts of Todd Haynes' 1987 film *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story*. Notoriously, the film used Barbie-type dolls as actors amidst its collage-style biographical portrait of Karen Carpenter and her battle with anorexia. But it was the film's unauthorized use of The Carpenter's music that placed it on the wrong side of the law, which in turn prompted the film's extensive dispersal via bootleg videotapes; and it is here that Hilderbrand provides a compelling account of "bootleg aesthetics," where the technical flaws of each tape make it unique as well as evidence of the "impossible-to-retrace and unwritten history of [its] circulation" (183). The final chapter examines the Joanie 4 Jackie "video chainletter", where women from a diverse range of social backgrounds produce short video segments that are compiled onto tapes with ten or more pieces and subsequently circulated among the contributors. Although Hilderbrand persuasively situates this endeavor as an important form of identity performance and community building for marginalized females, the real power of this chapter lies simply in his description of various segments, which are all deeply moving. Finally, the author closes the book with an epilogue that studies the rise of YouTube and its continuation and reconfiguration of an aesthetics of access, transposed from analog video to a digital environment and in the era of the DMCA. Here, as throughout, the lessons learned and recuperated by Hilderbrand's account of analog video provide means for understanding the forbearers of new media forms and cultures, and further, present opportunities for thinking more progressively about copyright –cultural rights, really – in the present and toward the future. Thus this book, like *Video and DVD Industries* and *From Betamax to Blockbuster*, reveals that although a certain kind of video may be dead, it lives on in myriad related forms and remains vital to understanding our cultural identities. Long live video, or at least, as enabled by these three remarkable books, our intellectual engagement with it.

Stanley Cavell's American Dream: Shakespeare, Philosophy, and Hollywood Movies

By Lawrence F. Rhu

New York: Fordham University Press, 2006. ISBN-10: 0823225968. 256 pp. £48.95 (hbk).

A Review by Áine Kelly, University of Edinburgh

Stanley Cavell's American Dream is at once an inviting and intimidating book. Its provocative title (one that Rhu doesn't entirely justify) and arresting cover art (a film still from Hitchcock's *North by Northwest*, featuring Cary Grant and Eva Marie Saint atop Mount Rushmore) suggests an opening to the non-academic reader. This suggestion of accessibility, however, is comprehensively belied by the density and allusiveness of Rhu's writing. Presuming a familiarity not only with Cavell's favoured thinkers and writers (beyond Emerson and Shakespeare – Kierkegaard, Heidegger, JL Austin and the later Wittgenstein) but with the philosophical regions and concerns that have guided Cavell's criticism from the beginning (romanticism, scepticism and moral perfectionism), Rhu is further prompted to explore Cavell's affinities with such "audible American voices" as Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison and Walter Percy. Though inviting a non-academic audience, and concerned throughout to stress the "availability" of Cavell's thought, Rhu's book undoubtedly targets the specialist.

Rhu presents his book as a work of meta-criticism, examining the convergence of three major subject areas in the philosophy of Cavell: Shakespeare, Philosophy and Hollywood Movies. In highlighting this convergence, Rhu's express intention is to show how Cavell's writing - often perceived as self-indulgent, even eccentric - is in fact quite widely available. One challenge Rhu faces, however, is that the relationship between Shakespeare's plays and Hollywood films is not in itself central to Cavell's writing. Cavell is interested in Shakespeare and he is interested in film, but he is only occasionally interested in the disciplines together. All those who follow Cavell's writing, of course, must answer how these regions of thought (drama, fiction, poetry, film, philosophy) exist independently of each other, prior to Cavell's intervention in their autonomy. In the book's foreword, Cavell allows that his work has always encouraged "a certain idea of separation" as fundamental. That Rhu's work seeks to bypass this idea of separation, and focus instead on moments of convergence, is not wholly inconsistent with - though it certainly challenges - Cavell's allowance. Herein lies the problem and the promise of this demanding book.

Within the over-arching areas of its investigation, Rhu's book unfolds by considering detailed crosscurrents within Cavell's readings of Shakespeare and film. He is concerned, primarily, to highlight a cluster of recurrent concerns: the

relation between popular and elite culture, the genres of film and Shakespearean drama, the provocation of Emerson as a founder of American thought and a forerunner of ordinary language philosophy. Thus, the most representative passages ("*Othello* and *The Philadelphia Story*", "*Macbeth* and *Gaslight*", "*North by Northwest* and *Hamlet*") take a Shakespeare drama in tandem with a Hollywood film, and are usually followed by lengthy philosophical exegesis (sometimes taking the form of analogue, sometimes of aside). Rhu's synthetic approach manifests his guiding intuition that Cavell should, as much as possible, be approached with a kind of dialectical awareness of his contexts. The opening section, "Meeting Places", announces this intuition by attending to Cavell's own practice of movie-going as well as the inspiration he drew from undergraduate teaching at Harvard.

Rhu, seemingly, wishes to bring all of Cavell into some kind of coherence. In Chapter 4, for example, a discussion of tragedy and scepticism (primarily in *Othello* and *The Philadelphia Story*) extends to a consideration of "receptivity" in Emerson, and the connection between the natural and the conventional in Wittgenstein's later philosophy. It is not at all clear, however, that this grand tour of Cavellian concern goes very far in explicating the philosopher's approach to Shakespeare or to film (or, for that matter, to the relations between them). The discussions of Emerson and Wittgenstein, particularly, feel incongruent, almost tacked on. Indeed, not only does Rhu make little attempt to relate these texts within Cavell's own work, but he only gestures at bringing them together within the argument he is constructing. He gives the impression, at times, that he is citing texts arbitrarily as evidence for this or that point. An elucidation of Philip Larkin's poetic revision of Philip Sydney, for example, drops into the middle of Chapter 3, with only an oblique relation to the broader topic of discussion (moral perfectionism).

Proceeding in this manner, Rhu gives the sense that his writing does not hold itself accountable to the subject matter and forms of his professional filed. We might say that he is writing for the sake of writing, following out intuitions and taking up philosophical hints in a range of writers and thinkers. His own project is epitomized in the detailed attention he gives to Walter Percy, whose novel *The Moviegoer*, appears throughout the book. Apart from the fact that his favourite philosopher is Søren Kierkegaard, however, the links to Percy feel strained at times (as in the strange passage in the introduction, when Rhu connects Binx Bollig's "wonder" at movie-going with Cavell's idea of thinking "in its active and passive modes"). Moreover, Rhu is repetitive at times (most gratingly, in his frequent praise of Cavell's transgression of the boundaries between popular and elite culture and his companion insistence that Cavell's writings on Shakespeare and film have not been central to the critical discourses surrounding those subjects).

I find Rhu at his best in Chapter 3, where the cacophony of allusion is quieted, and he is content with considering the affinities between Cavell, Emerson and Montaigne. Throughout the book, Rhu demonstrates a Cavellian ability to move gracefully between the disparate fields of philosophy, literature and film; his own training as a Renaissance scholar is everywhere apparent. His detailed attention to Cavell's reading of *The Winter's Tale* in Chapter 5 is both fascinating and instructive, and in his best passages he demonstrates a poise and grace that beautifully recalls the quiet gentilities of Cavell's own prose.

Undoubtedly, Rhu displays an ambition that his writing be accepted as other than professional academic prose. This is presumably a kind of homage to Cavell's own ambitions (as are, we might suggest, the touches of autobiography throughout *SCAD*), but it causes a number of problems for the reader of *SCAD*. Someone unfamiliar with Cavell's work will be hard put to fully appreciate what he means as a philosopher *per se*, or what precisely his contributions to the study of Shakespeare and film have been. Readers who respond sympathetically to Cavell's writings on Shakespeare (and who are familiar with the broader corpus of his work) will still be challenged by Rhu's seemingly arbitrary leaps between contemporary critics (an entire chapter, strangely, is devoted to Cavell's relationship with Harold Bloom), creative writers (many of whom – Percy, Ellison, Bellow - Cavell never mentions) and specific movies, actors and plays. In his foreword to *SCAD*, Cavell writes approvingly of Rhu's ability to "introduce expansions or extensions of my texts of a most welcome kind." Unfortunately, however, for the reader who isn't Cavell, these extensions lack a sense of overall clarity or purpose. Rhu provides extensions of Cavell's work, certainly, but more elucidations are needed.

Scorsese

By Roger Ebert

Chicago and London, 2008, ISBN 978-0226182025, xvi+314pp. £17.50 (hbk).

A Review by John Berra, Nanjing University, China

Martin Scorsese is arguably the most important and influential American filmmaker of his generation, a director whose thematic concerns and inner compulsions, not to mention a lifelong love affair with cinema itself, have manifested themselves in some of the most memorable movies of the last forty years. Although his name has come to be identified with American independent cinema, Scorsese has largely worked within the confines of the Hollywood studio system, utilising its enviable resources of big budgets and big stars to deliver intimate stories on an epic scale, with his projects ranging from the Mafiosi drama of *Goodfellas* (1990) and *Casino* (1995), to the religious controversy of*The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), and the grand historical sweep of *The Age of Innocence* (1993) and *Gangs of New York* (2002), while he finally accepted his long-overdue Academy Award for Best Director for his gripping Boston crime saga, *The Departed* (2006). Even when tackling such commercial assignments as *The Color of Money* (1986) and *Cape Fear* (1991), the sheer vitality of Scorsese's filmmaking is so infectious that such entries in his oeuvre transcend their origins in the studio development pool and become major cinematic events, as the director burrows his way into potentially restrictive material, subverting what could be impersonal exercises in genre aesthetics into expressions of faith and morality. While some of his contemporaries, such as his occasional collaborator Paul Schrader, have delivered films that are intelligent yet emotionally detached, Scorsese's work is altogether more volatile and cinematically energised, visceral widescreen experiences which encourage a deeply personal response.

From the opening passages of Roger Ebert's *Scorsese*, it is evident that the author, undoubtedly the leading mainstream film critic in the United States, is prone to such responses, so much so that he insists that his first viewing of Scorsese's debut feature was the moment in which, "I *became* a film critic instead of just working as one" (2). However, what distinguishes this latest addition to the long line of texts that have discussed the work of Scorsese is not Ebert's critical relationship with the director's films, but his personal relationship with the director himself. Their association stretches back to 1967, when Ebert wrote the first review of any Scorsese feature, an enthusiastic endorsement of *Who's that Knocking at my Door* (1967), which was then titled *I Call First*. Scorsese himself has admitted that the film, "was not widely released or reviewed" (xiv), but acknowledges that Ebert, "saw something in it that most people did not" (xiv). The two men formed the basis of a long and lasting professional friendship when Ebert interviewed Scorsese about his first feature,

and later projects such as *Boxcar Bertha* (1972) and *Mean Streets* (1973), with the critic witnessing the director's evolution from a promising young talent, investing his own money in shoestring independent productions, to a becoming a protégé of the Roger Corman school of quick-and-cheap exploitation fillers, to emerging as an in-demand Hollywood player. It is this relationship between critic and filmmaker that is the major strength of this consistently interesting and involving book.

Scorsese benefits from a unique structure which allows Ebert to revisit his earlier assessments of the director's films, and the book re-prints the critic's initial reviews alongside recent reappraisals of Scorsese's work, with a number of lengthy interviews with the director at key junctures in his career also included. This provides an insight into both the role of the critic within society, and some of the limitations of evaluating films as a journalist working to a tight deadline, as opposed to adopting a more rigorous academic approach over a less restrictive schedule. It soon becomes obvious that Scorsese, regardless of his cinematic brilliance, owes his early success to critics such as Ebert or Pauline Kael, both of whom championed his work when it was being screened selectively at festivals. Such cultural commentators perform a vital, if often unheralded, role in identifying new movements in popular art forms and bringing their directors to the attention of both audiences and the industry through print media, although this function is perhaps now filled by online journalists and film-related websites. Ebert's earlier reviews often exhibit an immediate enthusiasm, and occasionally some confusion, regarding Scorsese's work as he was assessing the film based on a single viewing, with a deadline looming, and was not able to fully explore the themes with which he so intensely identified, while the reconsiderations allow Ebert the opportunity to re-examine such established classics as *Raging Bull* (1980) and *Goodfellas*, and often unjustly overlooked offerings such as *The King of Comedy* (1982) and *After Hours* (1985), with the benefits of time and distance.

Ebert's early review of *The King of Comedy* finds the critic unable to form a fully developed opinion or interpretation of the film because it is an admittedly difficult character piece which is "frustrating to watch" (69) and "seems ready to explode – but never does" (68), while his reconsideration thoughtfully explores the theme of rejection and relates some of the most emotionally awkward scenes in the film to Scorsese's personal life at that time. He initially admired*Kundun* (1997), Scorsese's visually striking film about the fourteenth Dalai Lama, for being "so unreservedly committed to its vision, for being willing to cut loose from audience expectations and follow its heart" (217) but also admitted that it was the first Scorsese film that he "would not want to see again and again" (217) because the director seemed to be "searching for something that is not in his nature and never will be" (217). His reconsideration does not express a greatly revised opinion of the film, but it does allow him to further speculate on why Scorsese wanted to tackle such subject matter, and asks if

perhaps the director had "wanted not so much to understand the Dalai Lama, as to become him, or at least to learn from his serenity" (226) and praises *Kundun* was an example of 'pure cinema' in which "images speak for themselves" (227).

In other cases, such as *Goodfellas* and *After Hours*, Ebert's initial impressions of the films are simply reinforced by his reconsiderations. There is some sense of repetition in his second piece about *Goodfellas*, as he once again discusses the director's unflinching deconstruction of the mythology of the mafia, reaffirming his appreciation for the film but not necessarily offering any fresh insight. However, the review and reconsideration of *After Hours* offer careful consideration of how the film is so effective as an urban nightmare, evaluating it as, respectively, a black comedy and an example of film making technique, initially enthusing that "each of his characters is sharply drawn, given quirky dialogue, allowed to be offbeat and funny" (83), and later praising its use of film grammar, noting that Scorsese has made a film "in the spirit of Hitchcock, fetishizing close-ups of objects like light switches, keys locks, and especially faces" (86). Strangely, there are no reconsiderations of *The Color of Money* or *Cape Fear*, films which Ebert seems to consider to be perfectly fine on their own terms as star-driven Hollywood vehicles, but also as projects which were beneath the talents of their director. As such, these are titles which may have benefitted more from a reappraisal than the widely acclaimed *Goodfellas*, if only for the critic to find Scorsese's attachment to the material, as he does so skilfully with *Kundun*.

The interviews which Ebert conducted with Scorsese reveal the fluctuating moods of a major talent and his inability to separate his relationship with cinema from his personal life, which has been hindered by multiple marriages and a serious cocaine habit in the early 1980s that resulted in his hospitalisation, and these conversations provide a fascinating insight into a director for whom filmmaking is more of a compulsion than a profession. Perhaps the failing of Ebert's book is an inability to tie things together and to provide an overall analysis of Scorsese's work to date, although this reflects his position as a critic of a medium that is still evolving, and the fact that Scorsese will make more films in the future, each of which Ebert is eager to experience. This is also not a book for anybody who is looking for a more detailed technical analysis of Scorsese's work, as although Ebert identifies many signature shots, such as the manner in which the director introduces his female protagonists from the point of view of his leading men, his reconsiderations are more concerned with his own relationship with the director's films rather than with their stylish construction, and such readers may want to seek out the revised edition of Ian Christie's *Scorsese on Scorsese* (Faber and Faber, 2003), which offers a thorough account of the director's career, with the interview format retrospectively focussing on the filmmaking process. However, devotees of the director, or students of film criticism, will find Ebert's *Scorsese* to be immensely

rewarding reading and will probably revisit Scorsese's work themselves as a result.

Contemporary British Cinema: From Heritage to Horror

By James Leggott

London: Wallflower, 2008. ISBN 978-1-905674-71-8. 15 illustrations, 148 pp. £12.99 (pbk).

Roman Polanski

By James Morrison

Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0-252-03205-9, 14 illustrations, 191 pp. £14.99 (pbk).

A Review by Paul Newland, Aberystwyth University, UK

James Leggott's book *Contemporary British Cinema: from Heritage to Horror* is a very welcome addition to Wallflower's successful and growing series, *Short Cuts*, the aim of which is to provide clearly put together introductions to distinct areas of Film Studies. This short book manages to provide a comprehensive overview of the British film industry in the contemporary period. It covers a very wide range of films, and pays particular attention to key genres. As such, it certainly gives the reader a very clear sense of the range of filmmaking that we have seen take place under the auspices of a British national cinema over the last few years, offering concise and useful analysis of well known films such as *The Full Monty* (Peter Catteneo, 1997) and *Billy Elliot* (Stephen Daldry, 2000), but also lesser known films like *Red Road* (Andrea Arnold, 2006) and *Babymother* (Julian Hendriques, 1998). Moreover, Leggott's book serves as an excellent introductory survey of the current state of the British film industry and British film studies. And it is here that I personally found the book most useful – in its very careful and clear mapping of the type of work (and the pleasingly wide range of work) which has been done on British cinema by scholars in recent years. What comes across is the richness of this terrain. Leggott is of course right, too, when he powerfully advocates that contemporary British cinema is worthy of our attention, and what his book does extremely well is provide a clear map of this highly fertile terrain for students to draw upon as an aid to navigation. Indeed, this accessible, clearly written and structured book should be particularly useful book for undergraduate and postgraduate students.

But the book might also be a useful guide to the territory for those of us engaged in academic work in the field. It is structured coherently, offering chapters on approaches to British film, an overview of the current state of the industry and British film culture, the centrality of genre to approaches to the field, and representations of Britain in contemporary films. Leggott carefully maps out many of the enduring genres of British filmmaking – 'heritage' drams,

comedies, horror films, gangster films and romantic comedies, while also noting that "British film culture has tended to be characterised by an ambivalent relationship to genre" (53). I was particularly pleased to see Leggott outlining the importance of the mavericks working on the margins of the industry, individuals like Terence Davies, Peter Greenaway, Patrick Keiller, and visual artists such as Steve McQueen, Sam Taylor-Wood and Tracey Emin, who have made undeniably important interventions into contemporary British visual culture.

Important questions are asked in the introduction to the book about how we might distinguish British cinema, and the problems inherent in discussing a coherent national identity. Leggott loosely defines the contemporary era in terms of the political landscape of the country – and the Blair years in particular (the contemporary era thus stretching from 1997 to the present day – how long will it go on for?) Here perhaps we are reminded of criticisms of Lester D. Friedman's useful edited collection *Fires Were Started* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993) which similarly, perhaps, placed too much emphasis on the career of seminal political figures in order to try to locate and define a key period in British film history (although, to his credit, Leggott acknowledges these types of periodisations as critical constructs).

Leggott is sure right on the first page of this terrific book when he states that "contemporary British cinema is perhaps most usefully defined as a debate" (5). Interesting and valid points are briefly made elsewhere about the relationships between British cinema and the cinema of Hollywood and Europe. But the work here on the state of the British film industry serves to introduce readers to its complexities rather than to make new interventions into this history. This is not really a criticism. But I do have a handful to make.

My impression is that the chapter on representation feels rather short. But it does still successfully manage to point out some of the key issues that undergraduate students might be expected to consider when studying British film: namely the ways in which sexuality, class, men, women and ethnic groups are represented in British films. Films from Northern Ireland are not examined (due to 'space'), which seems like a missed opportunity. And, lastly, the lack of film titles in the index is rather frustrating.

Leggott does ask the key question, though: 'what is a British film?' But here he does not really get any further than making choices based on the ways in which films can be constituted as 'British' because they might somehow capture or evoke an Andersonian 'imagined community'. He also argues (rightly in my opinion) that a definition of British cinema "should be replaced by an acknowledgement of the differing kinds of British *cinemas* aimed at different audiences [...]" (38), but while the book does gesture towards these 'cinemas', the introductory approach perhaps doesn't allow for the development of these ideas in great detail.

James Morrison's book *Roman Polanski* certainly does engage with the complexities of national cinemas, and the ways in which the study of particular key figures might allow us to further critique such neat taxonomies. After all, Polanski is known, at least in part, for his artistic adaptations of canonical British texts such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1971). And early in his career the Polish director made a handful of films that might conceivably be considered under the rubric of a 'British national cinema': *Repulsion* (1965), *Cul-de-Sac* (1966), and *Dance of the Vampires/ The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967).

Roman Polanski is a very welcome addition to the impressive *Contemporary Film Directors* series published by the University of Illinois Press, which also features a range of books on, for example, the Coen brothers, Wong Kar-Wai, Pedro Amaldóvar and Jane Campion.

This is a beautifully written, interesting and engaging book. It is well researched and powerfully argued. Like James Leggott, Morrison appears to be alive to the ways in which particular critical positions within film studies can often begin to feel inadequate. Morrison chooses here to offer a study of the output of one well-known film *auteur*, which serves as a nuanced history of Polanski's considerable achievements. He acknowledges, on the first page of the book, that here we have a filmmaker who has seemingly mined both high and low culture in his work; work which "has challenged such traditional divisions as consistently as that of any world-class filmmaker" (1). According to Morrison, then, Polanski's career is "among the most representative of the dispersions, crises, victories, undoings, rehabilitations, and fissures of international cinema in the last fifty years" (1). The comparisons made to Kubrick elsewhere in the book are thus clearly justifiable.

What comes across in this excellent book is that, according to Morrison, Polanski's career has gone through clearly discernable phases, the first two of which fall "neatly in line with the consolidation of the European art film of the 1960s and the rise of the New Hollywood at the end of the 1960s and through the early 1970s" (2). Then in the 1980s and 1990s we see Polanski producing work that falls within the 'international cinema' genre; films which, according to Morrison, reflect 'the confusions of plot, theme, and style that seem to come with the territory" (3). He notices the 'foreign' nature of these films; the ways in which Europe's 'imagined communities' are in fact characterised by "multiple identities and shifting forms," and that, allied to this, "the idea of homeland is a sentimental fantasy, that there is no *place* to go back to" (3).

Morrison employs film theory (and literary critical theory) in interesting and engaging ways in his study, deftly employing Deleuze's work on cinematic abstraction in order to explore the director's seeming interest in "the ontology of matter as the death of spirit" (135), for example, and arguing that Polanski's interest in the oppressive nature of social utility could in some senses be termed 'Foucauldian'. This is particularly useful because central to this book runs the

thesis that Polanski's work tends to engage with the processes of modernity; specifically, the psychological effects of social repression and a way of life determined by (and echoing) industrial capitalism. Here we see a surprising (but welcome) focus on the themes of Dickens' novels and a consideration of Bentham's utilitarianism, which are placed alongside concepts 'modernity'. This allows Morrison to further contextualise Polanski's career-long critique of "an all-encompassing instrumental rationality […] especially as it manifests itself in the institutionalization of post-Enlightenment utilitarian social structures" (5). This of course can clearly be seen in the British films, *Repulsion* and *Cul-de-Sac*, for example, which are about "isolation, paranoia, voyeurism, and the irrational" (12). Moreover, *Cul-de-Sac* offers a secluded setting for the action which is "idyllic to the extent that (it) stave(s) off the imperatives of administered society" (12), so this location proves nightmarish because it ultimately fails to do this.

Polanski is depicted in this book as a figure whose career clearly demonstrates the critical problems inherent in examining notions of authorship and national cinema. The British films of the 1960s discussed here, particularly, point to the problem of how to place these films within a clearly discernable critical framework. Morrison is thus careful not to suggest that Polanski's style is always definable. For example, the first paragraph of the book uses the stylistic differences of the director's recent two films, *The Ninth Gate* (1999) and *The Pianist* (2002), to highlight the problems inherent in trying to deal with the long and varied career of an *auteur*. But he does locate the director's *oeuvre*not within the horror genre, but instead within two main other genres, comedy and melodrama, and interestingly, advocates that "Polanski's principle interest is in the visible, the material, the concrete – in what is out in the open, and why it is so often *not* seen" (5). Morrison argues instead that the identification of Polanski with the horror genre is "something of an accident of history" (18), which he states is primarily down to critical responses to *Rosemary's Baby*(1968), a film he elsewhere describes as the director's "funniest movie" as well as "his most emotionally charged melodrama" (22). Morrison goes as far to say that Polanski's work is "*post*-generic" (25).

While there is unfortunately no clear introductory chapter, the book is usefully structured in two pain parts: the first part pertaining to the critical work on Polanski and his films (titled "Captive Minds: Polanski and Modernity"), and the second part providing space for interesting selections from interviews with the director. This very useful section really functions as a bibliography of key interviews Polanski has given over his career, followed by key comments drawn from these materials. These comments are not chronological, but are instead listed under headings, such as "On building character in film" and "On moving away from Poland in his work". I found many of Polanski's comments here particularly enlightening, especially when you consider that he is a notoriously difficult and spiky interviewee.

Here, though, the book includes the inevitable questions about the effects the murder of Polanski's wife, Sharon Tate, by the Manson family in 1969, had on his subsequent work. I actually thought that it was refreshing to see Morrison move away from the potential trap of reading the director's work through the lens of his richly complex and controversial biography in the major first section of this book, while at the same time acknowledging how 'irresistible' this approach can be, as Polanski's life experience ranges from the horrors of Nazi Germany to the "ravages of postwar countercultures and their woeful discontents" (16). It seems, then, that the complex biography of this director is hard to overlook after all. But overall this is a very personal, insightful book, which sheds welcome new light on the career of a major talent, while at the same time highlighting the complexities of transnational film culture.

Cities In Transition: The Moving Image and the Modern Metropolis

Edited by Andrew Webber and Emma Wilson

London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2008. ISBN: 9781905674312, 256 pp. £16.99 (pbk).

Cinematic Countrysides (Inside Popular Film)

Edited by Robert Fish

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007. ISBN: 9780719072666, 256 pp. £55.00 (hbk).

Dance Hall and Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity

By Jill Julius Matthews

Sydney: Currency Press, 2005. ISBN: 0868197556, 342 pp. £18.99 (pbk).

A Review by Peter C. Pugsley, The University of Adelaide, Australia

The concept of place plays a large role in determining identities within local, national and regional boundaries. Cinematic representations of place are therefore important in a number of ways. In real estate parlance, it's all about location, location, location. These three books each consider the historical significance of place in relation to cinematic images and to the broader film industry in which location plays a key role in the production and the eventual dissemination to audiences seated in purpose-built theatres. While Jill Matthews presents the more focused of the three books (as a sole-authored, historically-defined text), Andrew Webber and Emma Wilson, and Robert Fish use their collected essays to track cinema's links to the urban and the rural (respectively) from late 19th century to the present day.

Matthews takes a historical look at the rise of Sydney as an Antipodean cosmopolis, and while the book's primary focus is not cinematic content, it does look at the role of the "picture palace" as an important feature in the city's development, and at the cinematic projections of the rural/urban divide that portrayed Sydney as vastly different to Australia's far-flung image as a predominantly rural landscape. Matthews clearly sets out her position in this regard, noting that:

> Sydney was always cosmopolitan. It was already modern, which brings into play an insoluble conundrum. Modern implies a pre-modern, or tradition. But as a nation of white settlement Australia had no before; this Australia was born modern. (12)

The arrival of touring moving-picture shows as early as 1896 included the opening of Sydney's Salon Lumière, just months after the Parisienne premiere of the world's first cinema program. This is testament to the speed at which Sydney was incorporated into the global modern, and reinforces Matthews' focus on "the processes that shaped the everyday practices and experiences of what was understood as the new and the modern" (15) and its central motif of cinema's ability to "choreograph" the changes in the lives of urban Australians. Matthews also discusses the work of Australia's fiercely nationalistic poets (at the turn of the 20th century) and their efforts that "placed all moral and aesthetic virtue in the country [rural] and evoked for the city images of disenchantment and loss, of an alienated mass" (26).

According to Matthews the rise of purpose-built picture theatres not only changed the landscape of the city, but allowed for a greater integration of new technologies in the early 1900s (including slot machines and soda fountains) (56-9). Gradually these buildings became more grandiose to the extent they "enveloped picture-goers in theatrical fantasies of aristocratic romance" (59). Given her interest in the performing arts (and dance) Matthews draws attention to the theatricality involved in the presentation of moving-pictures, with events hosted by flamboyant illusionists and vaudevillians who were instrumental in bringing film to the urban masses.

The theme of the architecture of the movie theatre is also explored in Webber and Wilson where they argue that the "fiction of the city transfers even to the anatomy of the movie house"; those opulent buildings that become "shrines to the cultivation of pleasure" (16-17). Webber and Wilson's nicely packaged collection presents a range of black and white images to illustrate particular articles. Essentially featuring three stages of development: the early history of film; recent developments in film and other media; and a survey of the chequered cinematic history of London, the editors could have more clearly marked these out as Parts 1, 2 and 3 – to provide a more cohesive structure to the extraordinarily wide range of topics covered in the book's seventeen chapters. However, the unifying topic of the city in transition does allow for the free examination of a number of signifying factors, including a focus on the railway station as a site of critical importance in urban development, and as a filmic device upon which many a story unfolds. They refer to the early infatuation of the Lumière brothers with railway stations, which cleverly highlight the "dialectical relationship between moving and holding" (2).

Webber and Wilson point to another urban trope used by filmmakers: the criminal underbelly prevalent in cities where "transition can develop in the direction of paranoia; and the spectre of criminality duly activates the camera as an apparatus of surveillance and the fantasy of urban cinema as panopticon" (8). In other words, the audience plays a voyeuristic role as both inhabitant of, and spectator within, the crime-ridden city. Webber and Wilson contend that in the

"cinè city, the framing of space and the succession of space and the succession of sites organised as shots from different viewpoints … constitutes a montage of forms of dwelling", and it is through these "dynamics of space, movement and lived narrative" that the cinema recreates the urban experience (23). They claim that "the architectural-filmic ensemble has ended up revealing maps of psychogeographic mobility", in which the city itself shapes the behaviours of its inhabitants (25).

Patrick Keiller's chapter "Urban Space and Early Film" extends this debate on the geography of the city and the ways in which the electric tram was able to be incorporated not only into the cinematic experience through its depiction as a modern form of transport, but was also utilised for mounting cameras, aligning them favourably with film production companies. Looking more closely at urban streets, Keiller notes that the "distinction between pavement and roadway was less marked than it is today, suggesting a space not unlike the 'urban room' so widely sought by postmodernist urban designers, typically achieved now only by banishing or severely restricting vehicular traffic" (in Webber and Wilson, 37). Similarly, the chapter by William Uricchio notes the importance of the use of panoramic cinema in US films made at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century in which an abundance of films showed "boat-mounted views of waterfronts; carriage-drawn shots of passing storefronts, pedestrians and traffic; street-level tilting shots of skyscrapers" etc. all of which "attest to the 'naïve' fascination with movement of any kind" (104). Uricchio suggests that the "use of near-seamless expanses of time and space" in such shots "seems to speak to the spirit ... of the traditional [painted] panorama"; a medium long familiar to mass audiences (105).

The chapter by Henry Jenkins looks at the way the unidentified city in *The Matrix* "franchise" (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999, 2003) mirrors the role of the city in sci-fi imagery, with its obvious links as far back as *Metropolis*(Fritz Lang, 1926). Jenkins sees the city as "ultimately not a physical place but rather a structure of information" in which the audience regularly see "signs of the human effort to map, decipher or comprehend the structure of the city" (189). Jenkins's use of multiple screenshots clearly illustrates the use of the urban landscape in *The Matrix* series, and the way tightly framed laneways and streetscapes highlight tensions "between mobility and constraint" (181). Such tensions are further explored through Elena Pollacchi's chapter on urban noise and its role in Chinese cinema. This chapter presents a fascinating insight into the ways in which sound is able to "articulate a crucial discourse on Chinese society, moving away from the controlled tradition of state studios while recalling the fascination of the film pioneers for urban space" (193). Noise, for contemporary Chinese cinema is suggestive of development, of the modernisation project writ large. Refering to Li Yu's 2001 *Fish and Elephant*, Pollacchi notes how the use of subtitles becomes necessary for even native Chinese-speakers, so loud is the natural soundscape of passing trucks and the

ever present construction machinery. Partly as a result of Li's guerrilla shooting tactics, partly due to the almost non-existent budget, Li Yu's film and its drowned out dialogue becomes an even more accurate reflection of the Beijing urban experience. Pollacchi also refers to the use of incessant ring-tones throughout Feng Xiaogang's 2004 *Cell Phone* (*Shouji*) as an indication of China's technological transformation and inability to escape from the reliance on such technologies (n. 4, 201).

Other notable chapters in this collection explore close readings of the "built environment" in European cinema. Citing the use of a prison setting (modelled on the real Stammheim prison) as the key location in Margarethe von Trotta's*The German Sisters* (*Die Bleierne Zeit*, 1981), Charity Scribner effectively links the film's recurring architectural motifs with broader agendas of state surveillance. The chapter by François Penz takes a topographically focused look at the principle Parisian sites featured in *The Aviator's Wife* (*La Femme de l'aviateur*, Eric Rohmer, 1980) and *Le Pont du Nord* (Jacques Rivette, 1981). Interestingly, Penz juxtaposes each film by its adherence to either a "topographical coherence" in which "the city is correctly described and fully identifiable" (130) and its geographical continuity is maintained, or a "creative geography" in which the canny viewer will notice geographically implausible movements between scenes (134). For Penz, the interest lies in the fact that these illusory tactics go largely unnoticed by cinema audiences.

In contrast to Webber and Wilson's collection and their readings of the city as a site of cinematic importance, Robert Fish introduces his edited collection stating that "Cinematic countrysides are the iconographic backdrop to national founding myths and the broken landscapes of the border zone" (1). Fish's work is "designed to explore the reciprocal relationship between film and the rural: how film makes rural and rural makes film" (1) He argues that cinema has long been situated in relation to the urban, or the city itself, at the expense of contributions to national identity through images of rural countrysides and villages. Fish divides his collection into four: nations, borders and histories; mobile productions and contested representations; identity and difference and; mediating experiences and performing alternatives. Within these parameters, the various authors explore the dichotomy of city/country in film, which is invoked through "uses of light and colour; the application of diegetic and non-diegetic soundscapes, as well as the spatial patterning and juxtaposition of narrative events" (5), a key theme which finds itself expressed in terms of mobility and the varying motivations of protagonists leaving/arriving the city or country; fleeing from or to another destination. However, Fish warns of the reliance on "neat but problematic distinctions about cinema's material relationship with the urban and rural" (6) where the countryside represents an "absence of a cinematic experience".

The countryside is anything but absent in Jonathon Rayner's chapter on rural Australia which tracks through iconic Australian films such as *The Man From Snowy River* (George Miller, 1982). Rayner argues that such films present "a disingenuous depiction of the white male's harmonious co-existence with nature within the narrative's celebration of a mythologised male potency" (20). Rayner also explores the issue of indigenous Australia on the screen. In *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (dir. Phillip Noyce, 2002), for example, he sees the fence as symbolising "arbitrary attempts to control and compartmentalise the continent (and by implication its indigenous inhabitants, who are equated with the continent's fauna)" (32). Rayner's reading of *Rabbit-Proof Fence* is, however, a positive one because Noyce effectively ties the "Aboriginal experience" to a long-held intimate relationship with the land itself.

One of the strongest chapters in this collection is Ian Goode's exploration of the use of rural Scotttish landscape in *Local Hero* (Bill Forsyth, 1983) in which the small village of Pennan and its surrounding hills and coastline are intrinsic to the look and feel of the movie. Utilising a scenario of a US oil company trying to bully its way into the Scottish landscape, Goode argues that the film sets this up as "an exchange between rural nature and urban culture" (115). *Local Hero* posits the rural as an innocent, idyllic place steeped in folk traditions and natural wonders: a site that "outsiders are drawn to" (116), initially for economically exploitative purposes, but ultimately by the beauty of the landscape and the quaint village lifestyle. The problem with this, of course, is the temptation to fall back on clichéd images and caricatures of 'real' rural communities.

Rachel Woodward and Patricia Winter examine the relationship between depictions of war and rural locations remarking that "it is unsurprising that war films reflect so consistently on the meanings of the spaces of home and the spaces of foreign engagement" (93). They confine their argument to three types of rurality: rural as hostile territory; the rural as a site for national defence; and the rural as a site for playing out anxieties about armed conflict. The authors link the first of these types to American films about Vietnam: *Platoon*, *Hamburger Hill*, and even *Rambo, First Blood: Part II* in which the US Army repeatedly finds itself in hostile, rural, territories. Interestingly, the authors posit that this is "not so much hostile enemy territory as temporarily enemy-occupied friendly territory" in which the US forces are "at home" in the "foreign rural" (96). In looking at the second type of rurality, the authors (unfortunately) defer from using contemporary examples, instead drawing on older films such as *The Bridge of the River Kwai* and *The Dam Busters*. A more consistent approach may have made this section stronger. The anxieties about armed conflict are highlighted through the example of *Southern Comfort* in which the swamplands of Louisiana prove a Vietnam-like landscape, with the successive disappearances (and ultimately violent deaths) of a team of National Guardsmen, out of depth amongst the well-armed locals.

While all three of these books operate under different spatial readings of the cinematic process, their common link lies in the importance of cinema in identity construction. Throughout each book, the recurring motif of the individual finding him/herself in a predicament firmly related to their physical surroundings, and dichotomised along urban/rural locations is paramount to the story/plot. As an uncredited protagonist in over a century of film, the cinematic location is vital to our understandings of cultures, peoples and their stories.

Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World

By S. Brent Plate

London and New York: Wallflower, 2008. ISBN 978-1-905674-69-5. Sixteen illustrations (including cover), x + 112. £12.99 (pbk).

Crowd Scenes: Movies and Mass Politics

By Michael Tratner

New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8232-2902-4. Twenty-eight illustrations (including cover), vii + 161. £28.00 (pbk).

Male Jealousy: Literature and Film

By Louis Lo

New York: Continuum, 2008. ISBN978-0-8264-9955-4. No illustrations, viii + 188. £65.00 (hbk).

A Review by Douglas C. MacLeod, Jr., Fulton-Montgomery Community College, USA

S. Brent Plate, in his work *Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World*, takes the position that both areas of study (religion and film) "function by recreating the known world and then presenting that alternative version of the world to their viewers /worshippers" (2). He continues:

> Religions and films each create alternate worlds utilising the raw materials of space and time and elements, bending each of them in new ways and forcing them to fit particular standards and desires. Film does this through camera angles and movements, framing devices, lighting, costume, acting, editing, and other aspects of production. Religions achieve this through setting apart particular objects and periods of time and deeming them 'sacred', through attention to specially charged objects (symbols), through the telling of stories (myths) and by gathering people together to focus on some particular event (ritual). The result of both religion and film is a re-created world: a world of recreation, a world of fantasy, a world of ideology, a world we may long to live in or a world we wish to avoid at all costs. (2)

Plate, in essence, tries to equate the two worlds in such a way that he wants to ultimately start a discourse he calls "critical religious film theory" (15). To create a theory of this magnitude, however, one must have the breathing space to do so; in other words, Plate only has a short amount of time to prove his theory, and because he misses one key element, one may think that he lacks

the proof for his theory to hold water. Certainly, his text is well-written and well-thought out, but does *Religion and Film* (and Plate) fall short?

Religion and Film is broken up into three parts: myths, ritual, and symbol. Myths, according to Plate, are "mash-ups" that have enough power to alter the world around us, and the world around others (20). Using *Big Fish* (Tim Burton, 2003) and *The Matrix* (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1999, 2003) as examples, Plate does make a compelling argument here, stating that in both films they show how myth is constructed within the narrative of the films themselves, while also constructing myth using film techniques such as *mise en scene*, editing, and lighting. Equally as compelling are Plate's thoughts on ritual as being an act of performance driven to transform (40) and on symbols (the human body, in particular) as being important to the visual nature of the two worlds. Throughout the text, Plate uses contemporary and well-known films (including *Star Wars, The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Wavelength, Rocky*) to attempt to get his points across, making *Religion and Cinema* accessible and convincing. Most impressive is his incorporation of *Man With a Movie Camera* where, according to Plate, "film viewers experience a collapsing of time and space" with the use of montage editing (52). With his incorporation of such a film, Plate implicitly brings about the larger question of documentary in his "critical religious film theory", how documentary is really a representation of reality, and not actual reality.

So, Plate never once delves into high-theory, which can sometimes be an issue with works of this ilk; but, very much like the religions and the films he studies, Plate himself attempts to re-create the theoretical world, proving that theory, in and of itself, can very well be like religion and film. By using symbols (the written word), by using ritual (the theoretical work of others), and by using myth (the telling of a story about the telling of stories), Plate weaves a tale that "provides a built-in ambiguity that makes [it] applicable to a variety of people in a variety of times and places" (25). That "built-in ambiguity" comes in the form of leaving out one key element: that there are many people in the world that believe their religious beliefs are real; that, although ritualistic and symbolic, religion is not mythic. For some, a text like *Religion and Film* may be insulting or untrue, in that it takes seriously the possibility that all religious belief is boiled down to storytelling, rather than having some level of truth to it. If Plate wants to create "critical religious film theory", he has to successfully include all modes of thought, and all modes of belief.

In Plate's defence, because the work is a monograph of sorts, he does not have much time to formulate a comprehensive overview of his theory. At one point, for example, he mentions that he has "no space to go into an extensive definition of myth" and that it is not truly "necessary for [his] interests" (21). Yes, his interest here is to prove a thesis in the span of one hundred and twelve pages; but, this may be where he falls short. Theory must take into account all

sides of the issue for it to be both successful and fruitful; discourse must bring about more discourse to be viable. One thinks that his "interests" should include the idea that myth can be mythical; that the creation of the definition of myth was created by myth (theories created by humans) and may be myth. Also, one thinks that Plate should take into account that it may, indeed, not be myth, that religious belief is real, and that certain beliefs can be true. Who is to say that Jesus is not the son of all humanity? Who is to say that God does not exist? Who is to say that prophets did not exist? Who is to say that the Jewish faith is not truthful, or Muslim faith is not truthful, or Buddhism is not truthful, or Christianity is not truthful?

Plate does not put that thought out there for the sake of his own interests, which ultimately makes the work less well-rounded.

Religion and Film: Cinema and the Re-Creation of the World is nicely crafted, well-written, and interesting in concept. Plate does prove his thesis that religion and film do have similarities, and may truly be equal to each other. However, Plate does not prove his "critical religious film theory". For him to do that, he needs a much bigger forum, and more time and space, to fulfil that goal; he must recognize that although he may feel that myth plays a great role, that many of the world's population would disagree that religion is mythical in scope, and is instead unambiguously real. Once Plate recognizes this point or has the room to incorporate it, his "critical religious film theory" can become workable discourse.

Michael Tratner's book, *Crowd Scenes: Movies and Mass Politics*, is not similar in content to *Religion and Film*, but is similar in that it is both competently written and sometimes ineffectively written. Tratner's text speaks primarily about both the production of crowd scenes within films (from several different countries) as a way to incite a certain response from the audience, as well as how each respective audience is supposed to respond to the crowd-scenes according to the standards of three fundamental groups: filmmakers, governments, and censors. He writes: "There was a sense of great promise: movies were hailed as the universal language and mass participation in politics were hailed as the precursor to fabulous new social orders, dissolving class and national boundaries" (1). In Hollywood, for example, it is suggested by Tratner that one of the reasons why the Hays Code/Movie Production Code of 1930 came about was because of how important movies were becoming to the masses; that the masses were susceptible to experiencing anti-individualist emotions, and the powers of suggestion against morality were becoming more and more prominent, thus creating a type of crowd psychology that can be detrimental to the establishment, a "collective spectatorship" (12-15). Tratner, however, goes against the above argument by claiming that there is a distinct contradiction that needs to be recognized:

A contradiction permeates such criticism: the imaginary world of the movie is entirely structured by personal, familial, characterological structures, while the world which is said to have constructed the film is entirely institutional and impersonal. Hollywood movies are then illusionary in a way that puts them almost outside any debate about politics: all they are doing is covering up social issues, and the only reasonable political response must be to disrupt the vision they present. (23)

This contradiction is better explained later when Tratner restates his point by saying that it was thought that the emotion of the community helped individuals be individuals (31). This type of ideological standpoint is best exemplified, according to Tratner, in the films *Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*. It is here where Tratner is most effective. His prose is quite lucid, and he clearly states his thoughts throughout the text, especially when he uses the films as examples. Textual analysis is certainly his forte. In addition, his explanation and definition of "collective spectatorship" is very well-conceived of and very well-explained, showing first the history of how the theory came about (from the spectator theory coming out of 1970's and 1980's film studies), and, eventually, how it evolved into what it is today: a combination of spectator theory, psychoanalytic theory, and sociology. Inadvertently (or maybe overtly) Tratner also effectively shows the interdisciplinary nature of film studies and theory.

For a short time, his theories on "collective spectatorship" tie in well with his second chapter, entitled "Public Institutions and Private Sexuality". Tratner discusses the lack of freedom in the sexual sphere; that the films during the early days of Hollywood (when the Hays Code had to be enforced), and more specifically D.W. Griffith's films, show that there "can never be love, or freely chosen sexual desire" (36), and it was not until later that Hollywood got that it was more beneficial (or marketable) to show public signs of private desires (this thought stemming from his chapter entitled "The Passion of Mass Politics"). Naturally, sexuality leads into a talk on gender politics, a subject that is more recognizable in the films of Dziga Vertov, Sergei Eisenstein, and Leni Riefenstahl. This natural progression, however, is where Tratner's argument breaks down. There is a natural progression of thought here; however, it brings about arguments that may be too sizable to delve into. In other words, by taking Russian and German filmmaking into account brings about questions of how other countries film motion pictures; by branching out of Hollywood to prove the point that sometimes the crowd overtakes individualistic thought (Fascism, Communism, etc.) does not so much take us away from the argument, but draws us too far away from where he started. Also his textual analysis of the film—although fascinating—talks more about the filmmaking and how it relates to gender, as opposed to how it all fits with mass politics. An example of this comes about when he writes about the feminine and masculine attributes of the machines (as presented by Sergei Eisenstein) in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925); yes, there is a level of truth to his statements, but Tratner

goes a little too far into the subject, moving away from his theories on mass politics.

Tratner's last chapter on Fritz Lang is an attempt to tie everything together; to show how a director's philosophies can change when it comes to mass politics and how individualism can be, or may not be, affected by mass politics. By using films like *M, Metropolis, Fury,* and *You Only Live Once*, Tratner illustrates how Lang's first films focused "on the emergence of a kind of mass delusion, a social dream" where there is no "superman" that "shapes that dream," (110) while his later films focused on an individual Christ-like, animal-like victim "warped by unfair accusations" (111) from an unforgiving public. It is in this chapter where Tratner attempts to bridge the gap between American/Hollywood philosophies and German/Weimer philosophies. Again, Tratner does a great job in bridging the gap; but, should a gap exist to begin with? Also, Tratner fails to provide a sufficient conclusion; the text ends abruptly, leaving the reader dangling. How does everything tie together?

By the amount of citation used in this review, one could deduce that Tratner certainly is a competent writer; a clear, honest, pure writer, writing about a very compelling subject. And, at times, most especially in the beginning, *Crowd Scenes* is effective because of its discussion of specifics. Where it seems to unravel a bit is when he starts to incorporate sexuality and gender, its association with mass politics, and "foreign" cinema as a binary opposite to Hollywood cinema; it is here where Tratner's work in less effective.

Sexuality and gender also do play a major role in Louis Lo's *Male Jealousy: Literature and Film;* in fact, it is much more the primary focus of Lo's work than Tratner's. Lo describes his book as being "a theory-based study of male jealousy in Western culture, in order to unveil and discuss the existence of possessive assumptions in love relations" (3). He continues:

> The works include those by Cervantes, Shakespeare, Proust, Bunuel, Vidor and Almodovar, in which different forms of jealousy in different kinds of love relations are portrayed. By tracing the meanings of jealousy and the representation of jealous men (married or unmarried, heterosexual or homosexual), I argue that jealousy is promoted within patriarchy and logocentrism, where to love is the desire to be loved, and love cannot be guaranteed in any form of sexual relationship. (3)

Thus, Lo's "theory-based study" is very explicit in what it wants to accomplish: to look at jealousy as gender specific and sexually driven. The question becomes: If it is explicitly stated within the text that and that s is what Lo wants to accomplish, does that mean that this particular work is successful? Not necessarily. Understandably, a work of this theoretical magnitude will have high-tech language, psychological terminology, and a decent amount of confusing concepts; however, it is up to the writer to make the work easily

readable to the reader, consequently making it effective. Lo's work borders on elitist, using (arguably) obscure films and literary works while connecting them to equally obscure definitions and theories, ultimately making the work, for lack of a better word, obscure.

For example, his definition of jealousy is strategically placed throughout the text in cryptic teases. In his chapter on Proust's *Un Amour de Swann*, Lo ends his chapter by stating that jealousy is both excessive passion that cannot be controlled and it has no present tense:

> […] you are either jealous (envious) of the past (the mother), or jealous of the future (death, the other absolute, about which nothing can be said). The cure for jealousy might not be psychology but a certain form of psychoanalysis as its task is to provide another representation of the past for the patient who is fixated in the past (not what psychology gives: 'an unalterable notion of "identity"'). It is less important whether representation is 'faithful' or not. The cure of jealousy, or the cure performed by jealousy might be the disavowal of the fact that there is no past or present. Why is jealousy at stake? Perhaps because in single, knowable causes and effects are at stake if jealousy is the dream of fixing the mobility of signs, desires, and identity. (126-127)

Because of passages like this, we (as the readers) are meant to deduce what the overall concept of jealousy is; instead, we become more confused about what the term means and how the information can be beneficial to the reader.

Lo breaks the work up into different conceptual, psychological terms—paranoia, property, curiosity, envy, disappointment, belatedness, and revenge—and then performs textual analysis on a particular piece of literature or film as a way to support the argument—Freud's canon, Cervantes' *El Celoso Extremeno*, and *El Curioso Impertinente*, Shakespeare's *Othello*, Proust's *Un Amour de Swann* and *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, and Almodovar's *Carne Tremula*, respectively. This is, of course, standard procedure in both literary and film studies; in fact, textual analysis is used in *Crowd Scenes* and *Religion and Film*, both with more effect. Tratner and Plate deftly use well-known, classic, sometimes contemporary films to draw in the reader and to allow the reader to have a better understanding of the theories they put forth. Lo goes down a different path, which is of detriment to his agenda.

All of this is not a criticism of Lo's intellect, nor is it a criticism of his competent writing skills. There is no doubt that Lo has a real understanding of the concepts, theories, and texts he puts forth. He is certainly a capable scholar of such philosophical, cultural, psychoanalytical, theoretical icons as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Sigmund Freud, etc. He also has a great deal of knowledge about the texts he writes about (his work on Luis Bunuel is particularly fascinating). In addition, there is no doubt that he

knows how to write high-theory; Lo definitely understands the language of old-time cultural literary theory and is able to write it with the best of them.

But, that is also another big issue with *Male Jealousy*: it is old-time literary and film theory. Tratner and Plate talk about politics and religion, two topics of discussion that are current and vibrant. Lo, on the other hand, does not provide anything new or contemporary. The work feels like it should have been written in the heyday of cultural theory; a theory that is still important, and necessary to discuss, but still not in the way Lo presents it. If he were to have used contemporary films, contemporary literature, and clearer language, the reader would most likely have a better understanding of what is taking place in the work.

The back cover of *Male Jealousy* states (in a lengthy, but concise fashion):

> *Male Jealousy: Literature and Film* is a critical and cultural theory-based study of male jealousy in western culture and its connections with paranoia. By tracing the meanings of jealousy and the representation of jealous men (married and unmarried, heterosexual or homosexual), Lo argues that jealousy is promoted within patriarchy and within what Derrida characterizes as logocentrism, where to love is the desire to be loved, and where love cannot be guaranteed in any form of sexual relationship.

The back cover goes on to explain that "this book explores the economy of possession and its relationship to the body, and argues, controversially, that jealousy is an even more modern concept than envy." As one can see, the back cover is clearly written and precise as to what the goal is of this work; one wishes the same can be said for the entire text.

Earlier these reviews worked on the platform that like with English Composition, works written by professional writers need to be both competent and effective, and need to be criticized as such. Of course, one is not suggesting that Plate, Tratner, and Lo are very much like writers in freshman composition. Of course, they are not; each of these scholars is an amazing writer with distinct talent and a vast amount of knowledge. What I suggest is that an author should not only take into consideration competency, but also take into consideration all audiences, at all levels of education, and be complete in their studies, in their respective areas of study. If not, one's writing cannot be fully effective.

Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic City

By Mark Shiel

London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2006. ISBN: 1 – 904764 – 48 – 7. 142 pp. £12.99 (pbk).

A review by Tom Whittaker, Kingston University, UK

In his book, *Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic City,* Shiel explores the origins and evolution of neorealism through a particular emphasis on the portrayal of urban space. As a volume of Wallflower's ever-expanding series Short Cuts, the book aims to provide an introductory text to the field. In foregrounding the importance of urbanisation and architecture in neorealism, Shiel's study also responds to the burgeoning importance attributed to space and place in Film Studies.

The first chapter provides an overview of the origins of Italian neorealism. According to Shiel, the movement drew on other Italian and foreign influences and, as such, should not be considered in a vacuum. Soviet montage of the 1920s and French poetic realism of the 1930s, for instance, had a profound effect on neorealist directors, as did contemporary American film and literature, which provided a counterweight to the fascist propaganda of Italian official cinema. However, Shiel argues that while these cultural influences were important, "nothing influenced it more deeply than the social and political regime of fascism from which it emerged and against which it was formed" (20). A realist aesthetic, he argues, had to an extent already emerged under the official cinema of the regime. For instance, in opting for location shooting and non-professional actors, the fascist directors Alessandro Blasetti and Mario Camerini anticipated certain elements in the 1930s that would later be central to the visual language of neorealism. However, Shiel writes that theirs was a "conservative realism" which merely operated as an aesthetic surface, and places this in contrast with the "progressive realism" of the neorealists, for whom filmmaking was a force of social change. The emergence of neorealism, which Shiel dates back to the early 1940s, corresponds to a wider disenchantment with the regime and its bourgeois film industry. As the regime collapsed in 1943, signs of an impending cinematic rebirth became increasingly clear: the directors Rossellini, De Sica and Visconti all made early examples of neorealist films. After situating their work in this political context, the author goes on to give an overview of the early careers of Rossellini and De Sica. This first chapter undoubtedly demonstrates a good deal of research: crammed with historical, cultural and industrial context, it provides an interesting segue into the textual analyses of the films which follow. The chapter's greatest strength, however, is also its weakness. At times, Shiel's tightly packed observations need both further elaboration and space to breathe, which left this reader wondering

how the book's intended audience, undergraduate students, might fare with this dense chapter.

More accessible is the book's second chapter, "Neorealism's First Phase", which provides close textual analyses of three key films: *Ossessione* (Visconti, 1942), *Rome, Open City* (Rossellini, 1945) and *Bicycle Thieves* (De Sica, 1948). In all three cases, Shiel develops some sensitive and nuanced textual analysis, which predominantly explores how *mise-en-scène* and camerawork work together to create meaning in the films. In his discussion of *Ossessione*, he clearly illuminates the ways in which the dystopian representation of Italy's rural landscape points to Italy's impending social and political crisis. However, given that the focus of the book is urban space, it is less clear as to why the author has chosen to examine a film set predominantly in the rural Po Valley. His analysis of *Rome, Open City* and *Bicycle Thieves* however, sits more comfortably with the underlying thesis of the book. In his discussion of the former, Shiel provides a particularly interesting account of financial and technical setbacks that Rossellini encountered in the making of the film: these shortcomings, he suggests, in fact brought a "striking sense of immediacy and frugality" to the film, which worked to enhance its meaning (48). Shiel examines *Bicycle Thieves* through its representation of an impoverished and disorderly post-war Rome, which almost functions as the protagonist of the film. Just as the city is vulnerable, so too is the family: the loss of the bicycle, he argues, poses a threat to traditional Italian family structures.

Chapter three sets out to explore the key aim of this study: the relationship between neorealism and the city. Shiel claims that although there was a roughly even split between urban and rural settings in neorealist films, neorealism is a "primarily urban creature" (65). This is because "most rural neorealist films are inscribed with a sense of the encroaching city" (64). However, neorealism can be more clearly understood as depicting the *transition* from an agrarian to an urbanised Italy: just as the country was inscribed by the approaching city, so the city was transformed by the influx of rural migrants. As the author himself mentions a few pages later, Italy was not considered a fully urban nation until its "economic miracle" of the late 50s and 60s. The bias towards urbanisation means that other key neorealist rural films, such as Visconti's *La terra trema,* are excluded from the book – a shame, given that the book is intended to be an introduction to the field. Nevertheless, Shiel goes on to provide an interesting account of both fascist and neorealist forms of architecture. Of particular interest here are the ways in which neorealist architecture and its cinematic counterpart tended to mirror each other: both were underpinned by sense of moral and social responsibility, and both were kickstarted by the material conditions of hardship. Rich and insightful, Shiel's analysis of architecture in this chapter would perhaps benefit from greater elaboration, and is deserving of a whole book in itself.

The following chapter, "The Battle of Realism", picks up from where the first chapter ended. Like the opening chapter, it offers a very thorough account of the political and historical climate of neorealism, this time focussing on the period from 1945 to the late 1950s. Shiel shows how the production and reception of the films were deeply entangled with the dominant ideological positions of the day. As such, the shift in support from the left to the Christian Democrats in 1948 had far-reaching consequences for neorealism. It follows that politically and artistically challenging films were discouraged, thereby forcing neorealist directors to look for new aesthetic directions. The author indicates that this, in turn, gave rise to a rich film critical discourse, where the future of neorealism was endlessly debated in intellectual film journals. This then leads to an overview of two further filmmakers, De Sica and Visconti, whose work is considered within the context of the early 1950s.

Chapter five, "Neorealism's Second Phase", develops textual analyses of three later neorealist films: *Cronaca di un amore* (Antonioni, 1950), *Journey to Italy* (Rossellini, 1954) and *The Nights of Cabiria* (Fellini, 1957). As post-war austerity lifted and capitalism began to take root, so neorealist cinema shifted from documenting the material concerns of poverty to a more "interior neorealism" which explored the more subjective states of mental alienation and spiritual disquiet. Through a close dissection of the camerawork of Antonioni's film, the author shows persuasively how the characters are isolated from their environment – a world away from the social solidarity of the earlier *Rome, Open City.* In Rossellini's film, the romantic city of Naples provides a backdrop for the metaphysical doubts of an English couple, whose presence throws into relief the antagonistic relationship between tradition and modernity in 1950s Italy. In foregrounding how Fellini "pushed the boundaries of neorealism to their breaking point" (113), Shiel's final analysis of *The Nights of Cabiria* provides a neat way of addressing the demise of neorealist filmmaking. Shiel reveals the ways in which Fellini's distinctive authorial style (his emphasis on non-naturalistic performances, the fantastical and the carvnivalesque, for instance) worked to *shape* reality rather than merely reflect it. The self-reflexive visual language of the film, he evinces, is brought most into focus in its final scene where Cabiria (Guilietta Masina) smiles and looks straight at the camera. More than any other image, Shiel argues, "Cabiria's smile said goodbye to neorealism" (121).

The conclusion briefly charts the legacies of Italian neorealism. The author shows how the movement went on to influence the political cinema of Wajda, Satyajit Ray and Gutiérrez Alea, as well as the films of British social realism and the French *nouvelle vague.* However, it might have also been worthwhile here to explore how the second phase of neorealism, especially in the work of Antonioni, contributed to the modernist European art film of the 1960s. Shiel concludes by writing that contemporary Italian cinema, like most European cinemas, presently struggles to replicate the artistic excellence of neorealism. In a postmodern age of Hollywood high-concept extravaganzas, Shiel writes, now is the right time to

"reclaim the real for its radical potential" (127). However, the author here fails to mention the recent burgeoning trend of politically committed social realist cinema in France (Kassovitz, Zonca, Tavernier, Dumont) and Spain (León, Bollaín), which have grown as a response to the increasing flows and cultural anxieties generated in the wake of globalisation. Moreover, beyond Europe, for instance, the contemporary cinemas of Iran and Argentina have also internalised or built upon the aesthetic of neorealism.

Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic Cinema provides a very useful account of the movement's historical and industrial contexts, which successfully illuminate and reinforce the textual analyses of six key neorealist films under scrutiny here. Although fascinating, some of the material here sits awkwardly with the short and supposedly accessible format of the Wallflower Short Cuts series. Nevertheless, the book has many positive qualities to recommend it, and is useful not only for those interested in the areas of Italian cinema, and but in the relationship between cinema and space in general.

Independent Cinema (includes DVD of Paul Cronin's *Film as a Subversive Art: Amos Vogel and Cinema 16*)

By D.K. Holm

Harpenden: Kamera Books, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-904048-70-1. 14 illustrations, 158 pp. £9.99.

Declarations of Independence: American Cinema and the Partiality of Independent Production

By John Berra

Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-84150-185-7. 224 pp. £27.50.

A Review by Carl Wilson, Brunel University, UK

Holm's *Independent Cinema* is a slight book at 158 pages and so, whilst it may not cover the ground of a weighty tome such as Emanuel Levy's *Cinema of Outsiders* (New York: New York University, 1999), which in 600 pages attempts to cover twenty-one years of the rise of American independent cinema from at least twelve different social, cultural, political and ideological perspectives, Holms has stripped down his argument and has arranged his book around what he considers to be the four fundamental motivations for filmmakers to make independent films: 1) to create an alternative to commercial storytelling, 2) to use the film as a stepping stone to Hollywood, 3) to create a type of autobiography, and 4) to create something that is truly independent. Each of these themes are presented in individual chapters that take the format of a brief discussion focussed on one or two specific directors, followed and supported by examples drawn from their oeuvre, with some of the chapters including interviews with the case-study filmmakers themselves.

The four chapters are bookended by lengthier sections that discuss 'What is an independent film?' and 'The future of independent cinema', and at the end of the book there are interviews with Lance Weiler, producer, writer, and director of *The Last Broadcast* (Weiler, 1998), and *Head Trauma* (Weiler, 2006), and a brief selection of independent film resources. However, what separates this title from the myriad of other indie-centric titles is the inclusion of a DVD featuring a 54 minute documentary directed by Paul Cronin, entitled *Film as a Subversive Art: Amos Vogel and Cinema 16* (Cronin, 2003), an excellent documentary in which the founder of Cinema 16 and The New York Film festival shares his experiences of fleeing war-time Vienna, his socialist interests and how they tie into his appreciation of art, and the founding of the most significant film society in America for developing filmmakers that existed outside of the mainstream that also introduced foreign language art films that were deemed 'unethical' by an American censorship board that was trying to control the audience's consumption of the media in a post-Hayes Code democracy.

According to Holm, his "book attempts to define, or redefine if you will, independent film, by looking at how the phrase is used in relation to a small cadre of filmmakers" (34). This may appear to be a synecdochal method of examination, looking at a part of something to explain it's larger summation, but Holm opens his introduction with a brief explanation of the production methods employed within *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* (Lucas, 1999), and then demonstrates how Lucas's multi-million dollar beast potentially shares the same theoretical 'independent' ground as a YouTube user called Lonelygirl15, who is actually a hoax perpetrated by two male filmmakers. Holm concludes that with the looseness of definition "independent cinema is something of a myth, a bogus term, a false genre" (11).

Consequently Holm suggests that in being able to understand what independent cinema is, it is useful to also define Hollywood film in opposition, and to understand how technical and industrial 'advances' have shaped the indie world. However, after a brief analysis, Holm realises that "What we have come to call 'Independent Cinema' has evolved from experimental works by filmmakers free of corporate supervision to what amounts to a genre unto itself, but a dry, predictable, enervated genre, closely stage managed by corporations" (33). This remark is saturated in disappointment, and with it, Holm shifts the emphasis of his thesis from a potential overview of the development of an independent film industry and significant cultural battles that we see in book such as Levy's *Cinema of Outsiders* and Merritt's *Celluloid Mavericks* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2000) to a more intimate, almost melancholic, focus on the subjects' "careers as independent filmmakers, with sidelights into their thematic concerns" (35).

In his first self-explanatory chapter, 'Independent Cinema as Alternative to Commercial Storytelling: Jill and Karen Sprecher', Holm explains that the Sprechers' "films provide a checklist of core indie components [....] but with one major difference. Their films are good" (37-38), Holm goes further in saying that "Not only does the Sprechers' concentration on working life assure their films entry into the 'independent film' world, but also into a rising genre among indie films" (40). This genre is apparently "a whole new genre, or sub-genre, of the 'workaday' film, which for want of a better phrase, could be called 'heroic alienation'" (40). Holm compares the film *Clockwatchers* (Sprecher, 1997) to other indie films by directors such as Linklater, Solondz, Wes and PT Anderson, but what is interesting about Holm's assertions is that their films also "resemble the screenwriters and directors of the Warner Bros films of the 1930s" (40) and *Clockwatchers* in particular is like Billy Wilder's *The Apartment* (Wilder, 1960), a film that was "made more or less within the traditional Hollywood system" (41). Therefore Holm seems to be suggesting that one of the increasingly significant contemporary alternatives to commercial storytelling actually has a root in the classical Hollywood system that was also the progenitor of contemporary Hollywood film.

In the interview with Jill Sprecher that follows a respectful analysis of *Clockwatchers* and *Thirteen Conversations About One Thing* (Sprecher, 2001), the slightly nostalgic mode continues when Jill explains that the 1970s were her favourite period in American cinema because many "interesting stories" emerged "and even the blockbusters had a very personal feel to them" (53). Jill even goes so far as to say that even though she identifies with indie films she would "be happy to sell out, if we could find any takers" (52). For the Sprecher sisters, independent film isn't necessarily tied into the means of production, it is mainly about the story and how it is told. However, instead of underscoring the possibility of using independent filmmakers to reinvigorate commercial concepts, which coincidentally is the topic of the following chapter, Holm ends the interview with recourse to asking about academia, "Who is your favourite philosopher?"(65), and "what would you do if you received a MacArthur 'genius' grant"? (66) Holm is perhaps overreaching here to create an intellectual opposition to the mainstream, but ultimately, Jill exerts her belief that "sometimes the critical act gets in the way of creativity" (65). With this comment Jill demonstrates one of the potential fallacies of a book such as *Independent Cinema*, which is that independent films cannot be easily bracketed off into neat chapters because internal motivations, such as the highly personalised desire to make a certain type of film, perhaps only for the sheer enjoyment of it, are aesthetic/artistic decisions that can transcend what they are 'supposed' to be doing as *bona-fide* alternatives to commercial cinema.

The following chapter, 'Independent Cinema as Stepping Stone' also suffers slightly because of this brevity in considering the minutiae of variations under a single heading. At first, Holms does not really explain why directors wish to make 'Stepping Stone' films, but he cites Howard Hawks as an example of how a director within the system can make superior films in various modes whilst retaining "a thematic and stylistic consistency throughout" (73). Once more, Holms is drawing upon a nostalgic view of contemporary filmmaking, but in his exploration of James Mangold's films, Holms believes that "he has also managed to introduce facets of the indie world into his films" (73), and that in *Walk the Line* (Mangold, 2005), "in the best tradition of the indie spirit, Mangold managed to take an established genre and turn it into a personal enterprise [....] while officially making a big-budget film with popular star" (81).

Only at the end of the chapter do we begin to see why it is significant that members of the independent fraternity often chose to involve themselves with more commercial material. Holms is suggesting that an indie director makes films to 'step' up to Hollywood, only to subtly bring in elements that define them as independent and that is only through this transference of sensibilities, that "in his quest to conquer all of Hollywood's film genres, Mangold made one of the best examples of an otherwise degraded quasi-genre" (81).

In contrast to the chapter on Hollywood dependencies, the fourth chapter in *Independent Cinema* is concerned with the traditional precept of independent cinema as autobiography. Using Whit Stillman as his guide, Holm describes how independent film is couched in the 'quirky', and that Stillman's films exude this trait. "For Stillman, his characters are the last vestiges of true civilisation [....] He is a proponent of happy endings, and an advocate of a true conservative philosophy of social hierarchies" (84). However, apart from explaining that Whitman once lived in Barcelona, which is also the title and location of one of his films, Holm describes a consistent Stillman sensibility more than an autobiographical presence based on anecdotal evidence. *The Last Days of Disco* (Stillman, 1998) is an adaptation and Holm concludes his chapter by worrying that " The problem for Stillman is surely to find books that reflect his philosophy" (95). Whilst this may be a problem for Stillman, one cannot help but think that with the dependency on external texts, Holm could have chosen a better example of autobiographical filmmaking, such as Harmony Korine if he wanted to elaborate upon autobiography of life experience, or Jim Jarmusch if he wanted to draw upon the outmoded *auteur* theory.

The title of Holm's final chapter, 'Independent Cinema as Truly Independent', suggests that the rest of the book has been a preamble to his favourite filmmaker, Guy Maddin. Holm provides a miniature biography of the Canadian filmmaker, informing us that Maddin's "evolution has been singular" (97) and that "Maddin mostly financed his early films himself" (98). Maddin's work is considered independent, but Holm is also quick to point out that Maddin is not quite the *avant-garde* figure he may appear to be because, "Maddin was not so much 'experimenting' with film in the manner of Stan Brakhage, but learning how film worked by replicating, archly, the sort of old-fashioned films he loved" (98). In this analysis we can see why Holm's interest and constant referencing of classical Hollywood system films is important to his depiction of contemporary independent cinema. In explaining the narrative of Maddin's film*Archangel* (Maddin, 1990), Holm remarks:

> Maddin has been heralded for his faithfulness to the look and feel of films from the 1920s, but the simultaneous mockery of the film even as it unspools suggests ambivalent feelings about the imagery. It is possible, after all, to love the cinema, and resent it for enslaving you. (106)

Therefore, it would appear that there is no such thing as a 'truly independent' cinema. Every one of Holm's examples are situated in *Independent Cinema* through their relationship to the Hollywood mainstream, be it artistically or industrially, or toward different points in the history of the medium, and this inter-relatedness is driven home in his conclusion where he describes how the major studios have woken up to the potential for profit from this relationship and have systematically co-opted a significant portion of the indie market.

Whilst Holm's book concludes with an admission of the dominance of Hollywood, Berra's book, *Declarations of Independence: American Cinema and the Partiality of Independent Production* signals that they are bed-fellows from the start. Whilst Holm loosely analysed the industrial aspects of the films in situation with their artistic aims, Berra takes the antithetical approach by using statistics, pie-charts and graphs to explain how socio-economic terms such as 'mass production' and 'mode of cultural production' are crucial to an understanding of independent film.

In his first chapter, the concisely titled 'Genesis: Modern American Independent Cinema and its Position within an Industry of Mass Production', Berra juxtaposes dictionary definitions of the words 'independent' and 'cinema' to demonstrate how their very meanings are at odds. The first refutes support and control, whereas the latter has a secondary meaning that refers to the "art or *business* of making films" (9). Business is integrated into filmmaking but the term 'American independent cinema' has gathered a "romantic vision of filmic productivity, alluding to work that exists within a great narrative tradition, yet is presented within the context of a modern art form, and has been created autonomously, without the interference of other parties" (9). Berra refutes this supposition and centres his thesis around an attempt to disprove this popular misconception, examine whether "creative autonomy can actually exist within the system of mass production" (11), and "'rescue' the term from such lazily non-specific usage" (13) employed by journalism.

Whilst using numerical data to point towards the origins of contemporary American independent cinema, examining the vertical synergies of AOL – Time Warner and the supply and demand market, Berra also takes umbrage with other writers on the subject such as Peter Biskind and Eugene Levy. According to Berra, "On a superficial level, he [Biskind] offers some salacious stories and juicy gossip, but its author is too enamoured with his celebrity 'players'" to offer any indication of independent cinema's "social and political significance" (23). Berra's problem with Levy is that in distinguishing Hollywood as a system that is distinct to indie cinema, one infers that there are separate modes of production and separate markets in which they operate. Berra claims that this is not the case and in his second chapter he demonstrates how they are intertwined and share a common heritage rooted in New Hollywood cinema.

Using *Easy Rider* (Hopper, 1969) as a case study, Berra demonstrates how the cultural and industrial landscape of cinema in the 1960s and 70s facilitated a coming to prominence of independent cinema. Berra refers to the coming together of industry and filmmakers as a 'laboratory situation' in which "the end result effectively ushered in a change in the cultural landscape and a new mode of film-making practice" (31). This retrospective examination of the antecedents of contemporary film is a convincing study, as not only does Berra systematically analyse the creation of *Easy Rider* but he also discusses more 'niche' directors

such as George Romero and John Cassavetes, "perhaps the true pioneer of the American independent movement" (41), without the need to put an umbrella term over every emerging thread from the era.

If *Easy Rider* created a context in which independent cinema could profitably expand and profit, Berra uses chapter three to examine 'Hollywood feature film production since 1970'. Similar to Holm's stripped-down argument in his introduction that to define independent film we must also define Hollywood cinema, Berra deconstructs the 'Blockbuster' and its symbiotic relationship with the development of the commercial distribution process. Touching upon the three central aspects of genre, stardom, and marketing, Berra makes the case that "mainstream narratives are largely interchangeable" (57), that "star names are the most important component of mainstream movie-making because the entire project rest upon their availability and willingness to commit to a project" (61), but that it is "debatable as to how reliable star names are with regard to ensuring box office success" (61), and that "as the major studios spend at least as much, or more, on marketing, as they do on script development and production" (66), marketing is effectively "more important than good writing, acting, or direction when determining the success or failure of a feature film" (66).

With the current Hollywood system being anathematic to indie sensibilities, Berra labels his fourth chapter 'Oppositional Fantasies: The Economic Structure of American Independent Cinema and its Essential Lineaments'. If Hollywood is an industry of mass production, then American independent cinema is an industry of cultural production. Initially drawing upon Bourdieu observation that the "field of restricted population" is in direct opposition "to the field of large-scale production", Berra finds this supposition inadequate for independent film because it refuses to incorporate the ambiguities of the overlapping sectors. Consequently, Berra proposes that they are both a part of the same industry and serve each other symbiotically. Berra points towards the formulation of the "independent blockbuster" (75) and indie-wood cross-over sector as proof that the industries develop each other. Consequently, in chapter four, Berra takes up the themes of genre, stardom, and marketing that he examined in the previous chapter and demonstrates how "The marketing of independent cinema is somewhat subtler than that of its studio counterparts, but no less calculated" (87).

Berra views the term 'American independent cinema' as a method of cultural production rather than an artistic mode of self-expression. Using John Sayles, Abel Ferrara, Jim Jarmusch, and Spike Lee as case studies, Berra shows how four directors with differing thematic interests are able to create films that are 'independent', so as their cultural currency increases they are able to sustain a wider discursive field with their ability to produce output that the studios are unable to replicate.

As Jarmusch and Sayles are indicative of a strengthening of the independent ideology, the following chapter explores how indie films are often produced as a 'finishing school', that is, as a launch pad onto something else within the 'industry' such as television, music videos or advertising. In this discussion Berra draws forth conclusions from Levy, Biskind, and James Mottram and systematically criticises their failure to observe that "the production of 'independent' features within the studio system is an altogether more complex process" (111). Young filmmakers may choose to work for a larger company because it may mean a greater scale on which to work, an opportunity to reach a 'wider' demographic, a way of firmly embedding themselves within an industry, and, of course, a more substantial and stabilised form of income. The downside to this commercial acceptance is that "it is debatable as to whether the integrity of the 'independent graduates' can actually transcend corporate influence"(114). Pointing towards the fluctuating careers of Soderbergh, Singer, Liman, and O'Russell, Berra argues that the development of a sensibility within this section of cinema is a negotiation of expectations and actions as much as anything, but then this actually leads towards a hybrid field in which something new can emerge. For example:

> The working methods of David O. Russell belie an independent sensibility, in that he operates intuitively, constantly re-writing, encouraging improvisation, making last-minute changes, and sometimes scrapping whole sequences. Unfortunately, these are working methods that can rarely be adopted in the independent sector, where time is always of the essence, and strict budgets and schedules force the kind of creative compromises that Russell is unlikely to be willing to make. (126)

No discussion of independent film would be complete without reference to the Sundance Film Festival and Miramax Films. If the previous chapters discussed the filmmakers with cultural currency, Sundance and Miramax are the entities that traded them and altered their value to public perception. Berra charts the rise of Sundance as systematically as do Geoff King, Biskind, Mottram, *et al*, concluding that ″Hollywood has not so much changed Sundance, as changed independent film, which in turn has changed the festival" (159). Unlike previous chapters, there is nothing particularly contentious or new in Berra's analysis of the film festival and its Hollywood sublimation. The chapter on Miramax is equally lacking in spark, although this may be because all the good stories were used up Biskind and so Berra's chapter examines the rise of Miramax Films from a small office run from two brothers to an Oscar winning subsidiary of Disney, its use of innovative and forceful marketing strategies, and its 'creative relationships' with the filmmakers within its stable - as the Weinstein brothers famously shepherded directors into following their own creative vision so long as it was identical to the Weinstein's ideas for the film. Berra concludes by asserting that "Miramax's standards had slipped towards the end of the Weinsteins' ownership. Rather than focussing on the customer as an informed individual, the

company was aiming its product at the faceless mass" (176) and embracing the strategies of the Hollywood studios such as investing in star names and burying substantial amounts of their budget into equally substantial advertising campaigns, a risky gamble for a relatively small company that incurred heavy losses at times. It is perhaps indicative of the two opposing directions in which we can approach independent cinema that Holm ends his book interviewing a director, and Berra end his text considering "Who is the Audience for American Independent Feature Films?" (181) The audience has been neglected in contemporary studies on this area of film because cultural commentators have been quick to attach themselves to a loose concept of the *auteur* theory and run with it, arguing that it takes a certain sensibility or 'indie spirit' to create independent films, and as such it is easy to categorise discernable fields in which these pioneers have set out their wares. Holm's book follows this strategy by offering five key filmmakers and their films to exemplify his points. Berra has been more cautious in his approach, as he has used filmmakers to demonstrate his concept of a field of cultural production in which the sub-terms are a part of the same discourse. Where Berra concludes his thesis by examining how art house and 'standard' audiences respond to the films, inviting a final study to answer the questions "Why do Audiences 'Need' American Independent Cinema?" (195) and 'How has American cinema grown with its audience?", Holm asks Bilge Ebiri, director of *New Guy* (2003) and *Purse Snatcher* (2006), "At what point does one 'feel' like a real filmmaker?" (138), and "Do you think your movies would be 'better' if you had more money?" (134) Whilst certainly not facile, one feels that Holm's questions are what they would call in legal terms, 'leading the witness'. Reading the question, you almost know the typical indie director answer before you read it. And as a book that basically lays out the fundamentals of a sprawling concept, it succeeds. On the other hand, Berra's book, whilst certainly contemptuous in its treatment of previous insights, attempts to tackle questions that need to be answered if a theoretical understanding of the American independent film is to be developed. The field benefits significantly from his statistical and theoretical insights, even if in his final analysis he shrugs off any interest in understanding the motivations behind a director and what makes him "'feel' like a real filmmaker".

Seventies British Cinema

Edited by Robert Shail

London: BFI/Palgrave MacMillan, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-84457-274-8 (hbk), 978-1-84457-273-1 (pbk). 208 pp. £50.00 (hbk), £16.99 (pbk).

A review by Lawrence Webb, King's College, London

As Robert Shail argues in his introduction, British cinema of the seventies has until recently remained chronically underexplored, an 'unknown' period or 'lost continent' in marked contrast to the increasing abundance of scholarship on British film more generally. This collection is therefore a welcome contribution to the field, adding to a developing interest in the cultural output of the seventies that has emerged over the last few years. Indeed, this refocusing of academic attention on the period mirrors a recent proliferation of film and television with seventies settings – such as *Life on Mars* (BBC, 2006-7), *Red Riding* (Channel Four, 2009), *Frost/Nixon* (Ron Howard, 2008), *Zodiac* (David Fincher, 2007), and *The Baader-Meinhof Complex* (Uli Edel, 2008) – feeding the growing sensation that, as a decade marked by global recession, international terrorism and energy crises, the seventies have returned to haunt the present. As the varied contributions to this collection make clear, the 1970s present a compelling case study for how shifting economic and cultural circumstances shaped and remoulded the British film industry, generating new production strategies and the decline and rebirth of genre formats. As Shail outlines, British national cinema was in a state of economic crisis in the early years of the decade, trapped between the rapid withdrawal of Hollywood finance and a Conservative government unwilling to extend direct aid. British film production moved in two main strategic directions: on the one hand, a tendency towards formulaic, low-budget genre entertainment for domestic consumption; on the other, glossy, prestige productions aimed for the international market.

Shail argues in his introduction for a critical reappraisal of seventies cinema, implicitly recalibrating the balance away from auteur cinema towards popular film (Nic Roeg and Ken Russell are notable absences here, for example). This is particularly evident in the first of the book's three sections, 'Popular Genres'. The 'sexploitation' film is the focus for IQ Hunter's essay, which provides a typological overview of the genre, from naturist films and sex education documentaries to erotic horror. Hunter argues that films such as the "iconic" Robin Askwith sex comedy *Confessions of a Window Cleaner* (Val Guest, 1974) not only propped up the domestic market, but can also be seen as indicative of transitions in working-class sexual mores. Winston Wheeler Dixon and Ian Conrich both tackle the decline and reformulation of the British horror genre. Dixon's piece details the decline of Hammer from its heyday in the 1960s. Unable to compete with a new wave of graphic, contemporary horror from the United States, Hammer's increasingly cheap, formulaic fare lost its way with

audiences. Conrich expands this analysis to cover the horror film more generally, arguing that the decade was period of genre fragmentation and diversification, with hybrids such as kung-fu horror and sexploitation (or 'flesh films') carving out new niche markets.

Steve Gerrard's essay on the decline of another "great" British institution – the *Carry On* cycle (Gerald Thomas, 1958-1978) – makes the problematic assertion that the contemporary popularity of the *Carry On* films implies that they "embodied the standpoint of the common man, offering a proletarian, democratic version of what cinema might provide" (37). This statement sits uncomfortably with Gerrard's following observation that the producers ignored the films' hostile critical reception, "simply wanting to continue making a profit for the least possible outlay of expense" (37). Gerrard notes that the closest mainstream British cinema came to representing the trade union movement was *Carry on at Your Convenience* (Gerald Thomas, 1971), suggesting that the inherently conservative orientation of the genre format clashed with the values of its largely working-class audience. However, this flags up a problem with the volume as a whole: in their eagerness to reclaim the decade's forgotten or marginalized cinema for academic study, these essays are forced to sidestep an engagement with the ways in which seventies British cinema was marked by a number of failures that should not be celebrated or recuperated. Foremost among these were the failure to develop new models of funding and distribution to support an autonomous, artistically ambitious film industry, and further, the failure to develop a socially-engaged cinema equipped to deal with the exigencies of the historical moment (a telling indictment for a national cinema with a supposedly strong tradition of social realism). No amount of dispassionate critical objectivity can shield us from the fact that the majority of seventies British cinema will always compare unfavourably to the artistic renaissance of New Hollywood or the New German Cinema, for example.

Nevertheless, some new paths were explored, and against this narrative of decline, two chapters argue that other genres found more secure footing in the seventies. Ruth Barton's 'When the Chickens Came Home to Roost: British Thrillers of the 1970s' examines the success of the British thriller genre in both literary and cinematic forms, arguing that whilst the thriller *should* have been an ideal format to negotiate the shifting global terrain of the seventies – the end of empire, fragmenting national identity, incipient globalization – the British thriller mostly rejected the present for the more familiar territory of WWII as a stage on which to explore "cracks in the social fabric" (46). Most originally, Barton suggests that the tendency of European co-productions such as *The Odessa File* (Ronald Neame, 1974) and *Day of the Jackal* (Fred Zinnemann, 1973) to race between international settings reflected the demands of contractual obligations, as well as a "decentring of Britishness" (53) amplified by entry into the EEC in 1973. Lastly, James Chapman's 'From Amicus to Atlantis: The Lost Worlds of 1970s British Cinema' develops the metaphorical notion of British

cinema's "lost continents" (56), demarcating a brief but distinctive cycle of matinee adventures that drew on the literary tradition of the scientific romance.

The second section, 'Contexts and Styles', is more varied in its approach. Justin Smith's opening piece presents a range of industry figures on film funding and audiences, interrogating some of the standard assumptions about production during this period. Smith outlines three characteristic types of seventies production strategies – "'Glam', 'Spam', and 'Uncle Sam'" (67) – the first two referring to the commercial mining of popular music and television comedy respectively, and the latter to export films aimed at the American market. Claire Monk's essay attempts to plot out connections between punk and film, but is hamstrung by the paucity of material on offer. Inevitably, the author's analysis rests on Derek Jarman's *Jubilee* (1977); as she concedes, the DIY aesthetic of punk was largely incompatible with the logistics of feature film production. This focus on the quotidian realities of seventies Britain is continued by James Leggot, who contests the widely-held assumption that the seventies was a dead zone for realism on film, citing features such as *Nighthawks* (Ron Peck, 1978), *Scum* (Alan Clarke, 1979), and TV spinoff *The Likely Lads* (Michael Tuchner, 1976) as a continuation and redevelopment of the kitchen sink legacy. At the other end of the spectrum, the heritage film began to take its place as a major export format for British film. Sarah Street addresses this in her piece on the 'heritage crime' hybrid offered by seventies Agatha Christie adaptations such as *Murder on the Orient Express* (Sidney Lumet, 1974).

The third and final section, 'Films and Filmmakers', consists of a number of case studies that explore individual films and directors in greater depth. Paul Newman identifies 'folksploitation' as another seventies subcultural genre hybrid, invoking Bakhtin's chronotope to theorize the various functions of folk music in *The Wicker Man* (Robin Hardy, 1973); his tentative elaboration of the concept of a 'phonotope' or sound-space makes his piece one of the collection's more original in theoretical terms. Sheldon Hall elaborates on the rural theme with his chapter on *Straw Dogs* (Sam Peckinpah, 1971), repositioning the fairly familiar territory of the censorship debate surrounding Peckinpah's film with close textual analysis of the infamous double rape sequence. Through his re-reading of this scene, Hall attempts to bypass prejudicial misconceptions about the film's sexual politics, staking the contentious claim that it "has more to say about the oppression, marginalization and domination of women than has usually been supposed" (136). Robert Shail's chapter on the Bond franchise and stardom in the seventies is slightly less successful than his useful introductory piece. For Shail, the change in star personas from Connery to Moore is indicative of a shift from the 'aspirational to the escapist'; the playful self-awareness and intertextuality of the Moore films is argued to be an early marker of postmodernist tendencies in cinema. However, the piece devotes more space to (and is on surer footing with) Connery's Bond and the sixties than with the seventies as such. Lastly, Christophe Dupin presents a practical descriptive survey of the BFI Production

Board's output during the seventies. Despite low levels of funding, the Production Board funded early work by Bill Douglas and Terence Davies, the beginnings of black British film in Horace Ové's*Pressure* (1976), and a number of collective documentaries by groups such as Newsreel and the Berwick Street Collective.

In summary, this collection offers a varied set of contributions to historical research on the British film industry in the seventies, with particular strength in its approach to popular genres. However, its impact is arguably diminished by a lack of theoretical ambition and a disciplinary insularity present in several of the essays. As a result, a number of the authors are not entirely effective in delineating the relationships between the film histories they present and the wider social and historical context fluently presented by Shail in the introduction. Though undoubtedly well researched, a number of these essays are predominantly descriptive and suffer from some of the limitations of the 'historical turn' in film studies; in several cases, there is an underlying assumption that the presentation of facts somehow obviates the need for critical analysis or theoretically informed interpretation.

It is also worth noting that the re-appearance of seventies British film on the academic radar appears to coincide with the final disappearance of British film theory in its seventies guise. The seventies were, of course, the high-water mark of so-called '*Screen* theory' and what David Rodowick has described as its project of political modernism, yet except for a passing reference to Mulvey and Wollen's BFI-funded films, there is little indication if there was any interchange between theory and practice during this period. The heuristic value of the decade and/or the nation state as organizational categories also remains unchallenged, which is perhaps a limitation of the publishing format as much as it is of the authors. Finally, it is perhaps a mitigating factor that the writers are inevitably working within the constraints of the historical period itself; if, as Shail points out, this was foremost a 'time of endings' for British cinema, it must surely be less rewarding to investigate than one of beginnings.

Photography and Cinema (Exposures)

By David Campany

London: Reaktion Books, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-86189-351-2. 127 illustrations, 40 in colour. 160 pp, £15.95 (pbk).

Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography

Edited by Karen Beckenham and Jean Ma

Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8223-4155-0. 57 b&w illustrations, 328 pp, £17.99 (pbk), £73.00 (hbk).

A review by Tom Slevin, University for the Creative Arts, UK

David Campany's *Photography and Cinema* and Karen Beckman and Jean Ma's edited collection *Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photograph* explore the relationship between forms of still and moving image. Both books come at a moment of increasing academic attention to this subject, perhaps largely a response to claims surrounding film's obsolescence as an analogue medium in the age of digital (re)production. Both books consider film's different temporal regimes – such as the photograph, the film still, the 'still film', and film itself – whilst also considering issues of photography emerging from its treatment within cinematic narrative. Indeed, these two books function well when read together since one engages with the territory the other lacks. Campany's book is a valuable, if cursory, overview of the field whilst Beckman and Ma's collection lacks the same structural cohesion whilst providing a more sustained academic interrogation.

Whilst it is unfair to critique a work based upon shortcomings the author acknowledges – Campany admits it is a "small book about a large subject" (21) – its brevity is both its strength and weakness. The book is immensely readable; its clear, flowing prose and structure is enjoyable to read. However, one must heed the author's warning about its lack of depth. Instead, it provides what Campany terms "a framework for thinking" (21) rather than "an encyclopedia" (21) in its breadth and depth. In presenting his book thus, Campany dispenses with more rigorous examination for a pithy treatment of the subject's themes and historicity. Accordingly, photographic and filmic examples discussed are done so with utmost concision. Nevertheless, the book is successful as an attractively produced, well-written text intended as an introductory survey of the field.

Readers therefore should not expect to be enlightened through a detailed, developed interrogation of conceptual, historical, and ontological issues regarding the medium, its processes and its materiality. Instead, Campany offers an historical and thematic outline of its four areas: 'Stillness', 'Paper Cinema', 'Photography in Film' and 'Art and the Film Still'. The first chapter,

'Stillness', has the medium's temporality as its underlying theme. It provides a brief but fluid history beginning with Muybridge and Marey (of course!) before unfolding into a range of subjects from modernism and the city, film's late twentieth-century self-referential temporality, the freeze-frame within film's temporal development, and photography's relocation of itself as witness of the event's trace after the evacuation of the mass media with its obsession with immediacy. These themes are structured semi-coherently, but the text's brevity moves the reader along apace.

Chapter two, 'Paper Cinema', presents photography and film's relationship within printed design. Here, Campany proposes that photographs are rarely insular or singular, but are contextually bound to other images or text. Graphic page design here appropriates cinematic devices such as montage, sequence, narrative and the close-up. Campany handles the material well, although its concision nevertheless has an uncanny effect of both seducing and distancing the reader. One example is Campany's statement regarding the "photo-story format…[that] borrowed heavily from narrative cinema in the 1930s" (83); the historical how, who, and why that should accompany such assertion is lacking. Similarly, Campany makes problematic claims regarding the photo-story's adoption of the dissolve and cross-cut by assuming them to be 'cinematic devices'. In fact, a more considered interrogation would acknowledge that they are not, or at least not solely, attributable to cinema. (In addition, Timothy Corrigan's essay in *Still Moving* proposes other influences.) Therefore, although Campany's terse approach is largely successful, at times it wears so thin as to draw attention to historical and conceptual fissures.

Chapter three on 'Photography in Film' surveys narrative cinema's incorporation of photographs and photographers. Familiar themes of proof, identity, memory, and fantasy are highlighted in relation to a number of films. Campany's more extended discussion of Godard's *Letter to Jane* (1972) is most incisive. In comparison, the juxtapositions between Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire* (1987), August Sander, and *Countenance* (2002) by Fiona Tan exemplifies certain issues within the book, eliding consideration of historical, aesthetic, and contextual differences between cinema and gallery video installation. Again we return to the notion of the book's success as qualified upon its wider readability at the expense of its intellectual and historical rigour.

The fourth chapter reviews the photography of film production, artistic appropriation of the film still and the archive, and the photographic assimilation of the performance's ambiguity regarding acting, posing, and 'self' in the work of Cindy Sherman, Jeff Wall, and Gregory Crewdson. Campany's reading of Roland Barthes's idea 'The Third Meaning' is succinct and effectively joins the second two themes. Campany references Mitra Tabrizian's rephotography of Michael Curtiz's *Mildred Pierce* (1945) as the photographic staging of film editing, and Allan Sekula's *Untitled Slide Sequence* (1972) by virtue, seemingly, of its

theatrical 'frontality'. The flow between ideas here can be tentative, if nevertheless stimulating. Campany concludes by proposing that the photographic allows for the greater interrogation of film, particularly in the gallery space as a site of inspection whereby conceptual art becomes 'a dissecting table' for photography, film, and their relationship.

Still Moving is perhaps framed by its two most important essays: an opening polemic by Tom Gunning and a dense concluding article by Raymond Bellour on movement and the entwinement of photography and film. These essays raise the deeper issues largely absent in *Photography and Film*. However, Beckenham and Ma's introductory text to *Still Moving* describes itself using an academic rhetoric that Campany's text benefits from avoiding. Their quasi-Deleuzian explication verges on excessive rhetoric that is not always wholly convincing. It insists upon its own "radical assessment" of the field through interdisciplinary hybridity (2). The editors describe their project as without "clear theoretical paradigm" (2) whilst somehow promising "clarity to the messy intersections" (2) – and of "map[ping] out strategies for analysing and understanding" (5) – whilst not providing a 'map'. Even if the language threatens to undo itself, Beckman and Ma claim the collection's value is a response to mutations, recombinations and migrations across fields, mapping the "shifting contours" (9) and providing "lines of flight" (9). Fundamentally, however, their use of Deleuzian rhetoric does not fully recoup the weaker elements in the collection. When reading the collection, their repeated insistence on the word 'intersection' here feels somewhere between convenient and strained in describing how the essays actually function together. Nevertheless, the project deserves praise for its ambitious demarcation and engagement of the field. The book is outlined as a (modernist) interrogation of the filmic medium in its age of digital manipulation, addressing the problematic historicity and teleology assigned to medium, providing new historical readings, and the creation of "alternate models of film historical pedagogy" (11) with "new conceptions of the ontology of film and photography" (17). Particularly interesting is the notion of how film and photography eventually undo the notions of progress and obsolescence as positivistic mediums.

Gunning's 'What's the point of an index?' is a highly appropriate inaugural chapter given the editor's ambitions. Gunning questions the very concept of photographic indexicality in the context of film's referential status in its age of digital manipulation. Essentially, he defends the digital by comparing it to, and finding continuities with, analogue photography. Gunning provokes a number of engaging ideas. He insists that the 'only' difference between analogue and digital indexicality is the storage and materiality of the medium (although this perhaps is a crucial subject itself!). He questions their fundamental difference beyond improved ease, speed and quality of manipulation – which again perhaps deserves consideration elsewhere – but also regarding how photographs are made, who makes them, and how they are used. However, issues do still

remain, for example, regarding the importance in digitally altering something already *photographed*. Photography no longer is writing in light, but in numbers. At times, Gunning's insistence upon the difference he is attempting to recuperate does tend to fold back upon itself. However, this makes for no less of a stimulating essay.

Gunning's argument regarding the lack of significant difference between the indexicality of each to its referent develops into a rejection of film's prior indexical claims. He points out that although far less indexical than medical instrumentation, analogue photography was, and continues to be, highly manipulable. Importantly, Gunning argues that digital manipulation will never dominate photographic practice since its transformation depends upon drawing attention to the very fact of the referent's manipulation. Therefore alteration recoups photography's indexical relation to the referent at the moment of manipulation. He also convincingly tempers the 'hysteria' surrounding the reliability digital testimony by arguing that it is comparable to the prior photographic witness, and that is also 'disciplined' as an image by larger institutional frameworks. The digital image is therefore located within a wider set of discursive practices.

However, Gunning's defence of the digital's greater potential for deception is perhaps at best debatable, and at worst, ethically questionable. To begin with, Gunning locates digital manipulation within analogue photography's history of doctoring whilst relating digital photography to painting in its ability to create images. He suggests that photography is also capable of constructing images, from Julia Margaret Cameron's and Lewis Carroll's costume and theatricality, to Man Ray's visual puns, to modern advertising's play upon "truth claims" (32). At this point Gunning reiterates his point over image's loss of value if everything was manipulated and the 'counterfeit' lost its invisibility. However, Gunning's example of the cover-model's digitally manipulated perfection as a "playful push-pull" with accuracy given its "obvious distortion" (33) is an unsettling claim. In writing the "playful image…deconstructs itself before our eyes" (33), he neglects that such a whimsical attitude towards referentiality, of 'evidence' and 'play', has profoundly harmful effects upon culture. It is well documented that this 'playful' relation to the truth is an insidious practice that has quite terrible and destructive effects upon self-image and esteem. Digitally manipulating a cover-model is not the same as Gunning's previous example of grafting a beak on to Uncle Harry's nose. The apparent lacuna in Gunning's argument is that despite our knowledge of photography's status, it nevertheless retains a privileged status – part ontological, part historical – as a cultural document. Also, even if an observer is quite aware of the glamour industry's practice of manipulating bodies, the image still exerts its influence; it is projected from the magazine's glossy cover not as an index of the referent, but of 'perfection'. Gunning suggests that such a tyranically perfect visage actually provokes "delight" and

"provide[s] pleasure" (33). Readers, no doubt, might take exception to such an androcentric position.

The proceeding essays are less provocative. However, highlights include George Baker's essay 'Photography's Expanded Field' that quite literally maps out photography with reference to modernity and postmodernity. Although the concept of the diagram and its terms are problematic – perhaps even at odds with the Deleuzian approach the editors propose – Baker's essay nevertheless is an enlightening consideration of expanded photography. His basic premise is that although conceptual art is seen to 'expand' its boundaries, this actually reflects the context of the limitations imposed upon photography before the appeal of appropriation, pastiche, recontextualisation and intermediality. Photography therefore becomes expanded rather than deconstructed. Meanwhile, Zoe Beloff's compelling contribution considers the theatrical 'Cartesian' gestures of filmed psychiatric patients. She briefly comments upon long-exposure photography, film, and chronophotography in documenting mental illness, but her focus is largely upon the bleeding realities of cinema and therapy through melodramatic narrative. Beloff not only refers to Charcot, but also studies the films of psychologists Cornelius Wholey and L. Pierce Clark. She concludes that it is actually the patient that "becomes ultimately no more than a reflection of the doctor's own cinematic fantasies" (251). Jean Ma's 'Photography's Absent Times' is another valuable contribution, considering photography and the photogram's relation to history, death, memory and remembrance through the film *A City of Sadness* (Hou Hsiao-hsien, 1989). Via Barthes and Kracauer, Ma considers various issues regarding the image's role as an instrument of history, its cultural recuperation, and position within revisionist histories. For her, the 'freeze frame' lies at the tension between time and space, memory and history.

Elsewhere, a number of essays repeat ideas concerning strategies of appropriation, montage and reassembling photography and the archive. Rebecca Baron discusses her use of the still image in relation to history and memory through reconstructed narratives of fragmentary testimonies in found footage, the still, and its context. Rita Gonzalez's interesting piece shares a similar concern for reassemblage through her analysis of the filmmaker Jim Mendiola's use of found material and still imagery. Her concern is more directed towards (American-Mexican) cultural hybridity and new media that combines the dynamic between global and local culture through 1960s and 1970s Latin-American film, the Chicano film, and rock and pop. Reassembling archival material comes to mirror the formation of subjective identities through different cultural histories, memories and narratives in multiple claims upon the entangled image. In another essay, Louis Kaplan studies Wallace Berman's 'collage verité'. This neologism attempts to articulate photographic animation and filmic arrest whilst drawing upon a number of references and influences from Berman's

Semitism, Deleuzian theory, the influences of Brakhage and Warhol, Modernist references to Dada and Surrealism, and pop and underground American culture.

Other contributions includes Timothy Corrigan's study of the 'essay form' and its historical development between 1940 and 1958. He argues the photo-essay is derivative of the literary essay, a new essayist style that emerged from the context of the Second World War, the ideas of Hans Richter, André Malraux and Alexandre Astruc (including the *Cahiers du Cinema*), as well as technological change that enabled lighter film cameras in France and Germany. More specifically, Corrigan considers Chris Marker's *The Koreans* (1959) and *Letter from Siberia* (1958). Juan A. Suárez's 'Structural Film: Noise' provides a brief history, context and description of sound within 1960s Structural art, attempting to redress the concern over its opticality and materiality. Karen Beckman provides an interesting discussion of *Amores Perros* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2000) and photography, although some of her claims are problematic. She discusses the repeated reference to the photographic within the film and the influence of Nan Goldin before moving on to consider each narrative strand of the film and its relationship to the still and moving image. Her analysis of Valeria's relationship to the image is both concise and penetrating.

Still Moving and *Photography and Cinema* complement each other by virtue of their different responses to mutual concerns. Somehow appropriate, relative to the accessibility of each's ideas, *Photography and Cinema* is a very attractive, well-illustrated and produced book, whilst *Still Moving* has an obstructive vertical line in its page margins. This is frustrating to readers who like to make notes in response to evocative ideas it produces. Nevertheless, it is an interesting collection that is both penetrating and insightful but also loses focus and relevance at times. *Photography and Cinema* indeed works very well as a short, smart overview of the field, although its rapid succession of ideas often ends just as they begin. In a book concerned more with the photographic, it reads like a film with its onrush of narrative and dispensation of the details. It is quite reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's quotation of Georges Duhamel: "I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images" ('The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Illuminations.* London: Fontana, 1977). Instead, *Still Moving* positions the reader akin to photography within a gallery space and the demands upon the subject subsequently engendered.

Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians: Biography of an Image

By Harlow Robinson

Boston: Northeastern UP, 2007. ISBN: 1555536867. 28 illustrations, 297 pp. £26.50 (hbk).

How the Soviet Man was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin

By Lilya Kaganovsky

Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008. ISBN: 9780822959939. 18 illustrations, 226 pp. £22.33 (pbk).

Television, Power, and the Public in Russia

By Ellen Mickiewicz

Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008. ISBN: 9780521716758. 212 pp. £15.19 (pbk).

A review by Brian Faucette, University of Kansas, USA

With the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet system in 1991, scholars and citizens alike waited to see if perhaps it would be possible to finally piece together a more nuanced understanding of life in the USSR and how that life may have been similar or completely different from those setup within the Western capitalist model. Together these three books offer a fascinating portrait of the Soviet Union and its importance within the political and cultural imaginary of Hollywood, the Soviet system of government and the very people that it sought to control.

Harlow Robinson's *Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians* offers a wide ranging cultural, historical and pictorial analysis of Russia and its importance within Hollywood that should fascinate film scholars and perhaps engage the larger public to re-think how they have been acculturated to perceive Russians onscreen as either lusty, foreign lovers or violent and dogmatic individuals who only live to destroy everything and everyone who does not love dear Lenin. Robinson begins the book by acknowledging that his fascination with Russia first began in the 1960s when he saw David Lean's *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) with his parents in the United States, at a time when American and Soviet relations during the Cold War were in a period of thaw. The passion with which Robinson writes about these early experiences seeing the epic love story set against the backdrop of the Russian revolution set the stage for the rest of this valuable volume that charts the connections between Hollywood and Russia from the days of silent cinema to the present.

By focusing on the shifting landscape of the pictorial presentation of Russia and Russians in American film, Robinson reveals the prejudices and assumptions of the industry and the nation in regards to what was once known as the Bear of Europe. What separates this book from others, which have looked at Russians onscreen, is that Robinson also looks at the screen careers of Russian émigrés in Hollywood. It is this aspect of the book that makes Robinson's book both a delight and an extremely important contribution to film studies as he provides background on the character actors, directors, and musicians who populated the landscape of Hollywood in the classical period.

He discusses the experiences of Russian theatre greats such as Nemirovich-Danchenko, the partner of Stanislavsky, who was brought to America by producer Joseph Schenck in order to capitalize on the public's fascination with the Russian aristocracy and to help craft a new screenplay for John Barrymore. However, Danchenko's approach to screenwriting and filmmaking was perceived to be too realistic and artsy by both Schenck and Barrymore and deemed to be harmful to the Hollywood system of filmmaking that emphasized elements of fantasy and stardom. Thus for Hollywood Danchenko was useful to a purpose but eventually he found himself shuttled from one party to another and was never taken seriously as an artist and as a result he returned to Russia.

Robinson also discusses the various experiences of Russian directors such as Anatole Litvak who was able to find a way to work within the system versus Sergei Eisenstein who came to America at the request of Jesse Lasky the head of Paramount studios. However, like Danchenko Eisenstein found Hollywood to be a place more concerned with profits and celebrity than what he referred to as film art. Anatole Litvak found Hollywood to be a place where he could find the necessary freedoms to express himself but only within the confines of the system, a system, which Eisenstein could not accept, and thus he left Hollywood without having had any real lasting impression on the industry.

While the discussion of the directors, musicians and theatre professionals who were seduced by the lure of Hollywood is interesting, it is his analysis of the screen careers of character actors such as Akim Tamiroff, Mischa Auer, and Maria Ouspenskaya that stand out in the book. Robinson looks at how these actors off screen experiences influenced their onscreen ones and how the performances of these people influenced generations of American viewers perception of Russians.

Alongside a discussion of the experiences of Russians in Hollywood, Robinson provides a detailed analysis of how Hollywood has represented Russia and Russians onscreen in such films as *Ninotchka* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1939),*Tovarich* (Anatole Litvak, 1937), and *Comrade X* (King Vidor, 1940). Robinson uses these films to examine how Hollywood's fascination and misunderstanding of Russia in the 1930s would be key to the development of

pro-Russian films in the 1940s as the US and Russia fought together against the forces of Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito.

The screen and real politic partnership would be short lived and as Robinson brilliantly illustrates it was the level of misunderstanding between the two nations and its peoples that led to an intensification and eventual global détente between these two super nations. Through an analysis of Russians on film in the 1960s in films such as *The Russians are Coming, The Russians are Coming* (Norman Jewison, 1966) and the James Bond films Robinson illustrates how the once positive romantic qualities of Russia were transformed into decadent and violent portrayals of a people bent on destruction rather than life.

It is these two themes which anchor the book; that of Russia as a place of romance, beauty and intrigue connected with the period of the aristocracy and Russia as a land populated with super soldiers bent on world destruction that fascinate Hollywood and ultimately impact the ways in which Russia has been seen onscreen. Robinson's book is a vital re-thinking of Russia onscreen in Hollywood films. While his lengthy analysis of Russians in classical Hollywood films is to be commended, one is left wondering why he only uses a cursory examination of Russians onscreen in the 1980s in films such as *Red Dawn* (John Milius, 1984), *Rocky IV* (Sylvester Stallone, 1984), and *Rambo III* (Peter MacDonald, 1988). Despite these few qualms, Robinson's book serves as a good introduction to the necessary questions and issues that must be addressed when thinking about how Hollywood has been instrumental in crafting the image of US political adversaries, especially in light of the events of 9/11.

Lilya Kaganovsky's *How the Soviet Man was Unmade* illustrates that in fact there were cracks in the Iron Curtain and more importantly that the USSR struggled with many of the same questions of masculinity that the capital systems of the West were faced with in the 1940s and 1950s. She states that "blind or paralyzed, limping one-legged, or wearing prostheses—the world of the Stalinist novel and Stalinist film is filled with damaged male bodies" (3). This idea of the damaged or crippled male body is a topic which French theorist Kaja Silverman addresses in her book *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (London: Routledge, 1992) and it is clear that Silverman's work has influenced Kaganovsky's approach to looking at Soviet novels and films. Yet, what makes her study stand out is the combination of in-depth analyses of the films and novels with postmodern theoretical approaches (queer theory, body theory, post-structuralism) and cinematic ones (genre, national cinemas and questions of ideology).

With her focus on the damaged male bodies created with the approval of the Soviet government under Stalin, Kaganovsky is able to demonstrate how the government crafted a form of "dominant fiction" (7) that helped solidify the Stalinist view of masculinity as heroic and damaged. In fact, she argues that the extreme forms of physical disability displayed in the films and novels "reveal

what might be called an ideological and cultural fantasy of Stalinism: the radical dismemberment of its male subject" (3). It is this view of masculinity that frames Kaganovsky's study. She shows how even for the Soviet Union masculinity, as a category of gender marker was something that it struggled to construct and that its male comrades wrestled with as they tried to remain loyal to the party and be good men for the nation.

The ideal masculinity within the Stalinist model was one that celebrated virility and strength but at the cost of male bodies and their ability to challenge the state. Kaganovsky grounds her study in two camps; that of post-Soviet studies and psychoanalytic approaches in order to examine this paradox of Soviet masculinity which she identifies in the films and the novels. While the usage of a psychoanalytic model in film studies has been challenged over the last twenty years, Kaganovsky's utilization of it along with her close readings and historical contextualization of the films and novels provides a good model. More importantly for this study it would be nearly impossible to discuss the issues of masculinity that she addresses without using some element of the work of theorists such as Silverman, Slavoj Zizek, Lacan, Judith Butler, and Louis Althusser, theorists who each attempted to understand the connection between the mind, body and the state as a means of identification.

She begins the book by looking at early examples in literature of this type of Soviet man, which she labels the "unmade man" (22-23). By examining the new Soviet realist novels and their depiction of Soviet masculinity, Kaganovsky is able to show how the concerns and questions about the nature of masculinity were impacting men, the party, and the political landscape. These novels also served as early source materials for the later films that would be made by the Soviet government. In particular she looks at Nikolai Ostrovskii's serial novel *How the Steel was Tempered* which was first published serially from 1932 to 1934 in the journal *Molodaia gvardiia* and how this novel addressed the question of Soviet masculinity. In the novel the male protagonist sacrifices his body and self to the Soviet cause and in the process is blinded and paralyzed. However, unlike Western depictions of the disabled male body, Kaganovsky argues that in Soviet literature this willingness to destroy one's body is read as a marker of real devotion to the cause and thus the perfect form of masculinity. There is no shame, only heroism - after all as she constantly points out the male body is best used when it is in service of the state and the people rather than the greedy capitalist self.

The most interesting and revealing chapters of the book are those which look at how this idea of the Soviet "unmade man" was portrayed in film. Kaganovsky in her analysis of selected films also explains how the Russian film industry functioned under Stalin and how these ideal portraits of Communism in the films were often linked to questions of male activity for the party. Many of the films that she discusses such as *The Party Card* (Ivan Pyr'ev, 1936), *By the Blue*

Sea (Boris Barnet, 1935), *Two Soldiers* (Leonid Lukov, 1943), *The Pilots* (Yuli Raizman, 1935), and *The Fall of Berlin* (Mikhail Chiaureli, 1946) are films that are unknown generally by film scholars. In fact as she points out too often film scholars have attempted to explain Russian cinema by using the films of Tarkovsky as a model, yet his films, in Kaganovsky's reading are not representative of Soviet cinema. By exploring these lesser-known films to those outside the purview of Russian scholarship she illustrates the paradoxes and complexities that made up the Soviet film industry and the types of films it produced.

In chapter three she examines how the purity of the female Communist subject and possession of the party card were fetishisized onscreen. Using an analysis of the film *The Party Card* (Ivan Pyr'ev, 1936) in conjunction with the theories of Laura Mulvey, Kaganovsky argues that "the gender trouble at work in Pyr'ev's film makes it possible to read Stalinist masculinity as a series of reaction formations against the threat of (political) castration, on the one hand, and as the enjoyment of lack on the other" (66). Thus for Kaganovsky the fear manifested onscreen about being viewed as not loyal to the party and Stalin's ideals was akin to a man being castrated. These fears of castration, the body, and questions of sexuality direct the rest of her analyses of the aforementioned films.

Kaganovsky's book illustrates the duplicitous nature of Soviet masculinity. By crafting an image in literature and film of the ideal male body as damaged and self-sacrificing, she argues that these "unmade" bodies challenged the political rhetoric of Stalin, because in reality Stalin wanted to eradicate male bodies that were frail along with other bodies that could not serve the interests of the state. This fear of the body and its impact on the culture at large generally has been perceived to be a phenomenon of Western capitalist countries, yet as Kaganovsky so astutely and meticulously illustrates many of these same those in the USSR also felt concerns. If there is a drawback to her book it is that many of the films she discusses are not readily available. Still, this is an excellent combination of theory and close reading that provides an invaluable portrait of Soviet masculinity and can only serve to further discussions in film studies, in general, and in questions of screen masculinity.

Ellen Mickiewicz's book *Television, Power, and the Public in Russia* combines a reception studies approach with that of political economy and cultural studies in order to examine how contemporary Russian citizens make use of and interpret Russian news broadcasts. Drawing upon responses she received from four focus groups in the geographical regions of the Volgograd, Rostov, Nizhny Novgrod, and Moscow, she attempts to explain how viewers process Russian television, especially the newscasts.

This book does not possess a larger theoretical framework because of the nature of the study, but Mickiewicz wisely selects persons for the study from various

walks of life and economic conditions. In her explanation of these people and how they understand the workings of the Russian media landscape she uses the term "viewing power" to illustrate how the respondents engagement with the news was affected by their own biases and cultural background. The employment of this term allows her to make the argument that "Russian viewers have very different skills in 'reading' news than do Americans, for the former, especially in Soviet times, had to squeeze out of very meager information the cues that might affect their lives" (33). It seems that what Mickiewicz's is identifying as unique to the Russians is a means of oppositional reading and it is this idea, which frames the entirety of the book.

In chapter two, she looks at how the respondents made sense of the coverage of two national news stories; that of the spread of HIV/AIDS in Russia and the development of corruption at the national, state, local and private levels of the country. Mickiewicz employs these two topics in an effort to show how viewers combine knowledge of the operating practices employed by both the state run television stations and the private ones. This knowledge she argues then impacts the very ways in which the viewers interpret the news and also informs their expectations about how the state will cover a story versus the more independent minded private stations. The startling fact that she reveals is that even in a time when Russia is supposed to be a Democratic nation, there are still numerous examples of the Communist strategy whereby the state controls the flow of information both at the state and private level.

In chapter three she looks at how election coverage in Russia has aided in the creation of political identities, especially that of Vladmir Putin in the late 1990s and his election as President in 2000. The constant barrage of faces, news stories and slants on the events influence the respondents and in Mickiewicz's estimation illustrate the patterns involved in crafting the election process within Russian culture. In order to show how these patterns of rise, character assassination, complaint, and fall occur she uses television footage of a gubernatorial campaign in the mineral rich area of Yakutia. In drawing upon a more localized example of Russian politics she is able to demonstrate how the consolidation of Russian news to three channels has impacted the viewers opinions about democracy and the nature of their elected officials as either crooks or servants of the state.

In chapter four she looks at the idea of "tradeoffs" and how they along with media consolidation, and the creation of a cynical electorate have resulted in the formation of a Russian society that rewards the elites and penalizes those without the cultural capital necessary to interpret and understand the realities of the post-Soviet system. A tradeoff is a decision "among competing goals that cannot all be fully achieved" (97). In the case of the news story which she uses as her control for the respondents, the tradeoffs are the absences in the story about the economic development of a pipeline on the Black Sea. In each of the

televised versions of this event, what are highlighted are the benefits to the Russian state, and by far the benefits outweigh the dangers. However as she shows with the data from her focus groups, the viewers are aware of what is omitted in the story: questions of security, budget, the environment, etc.

In the following two chapters Mickwiewicz uses the responses of the four groups to theorize how the rapid removal of alternative television stations in Russia may impact the future of the nation and asks what the long-term effects might be for the people who must constantly make use of oppositional models of reading in order to survive.

On the surface this book seems to be interesting and could provide those without knowledge of the contemporary media landscape information about how it functions and to what end. While it is positive to see Mickiewicz rely on a reception model, her study gets bogged down in the minutiae of her detail. Still, this is an interesting insight to re-thinking how news functions and for what purpose.

These three books together illustrate the problems and possibilities with considerations of screen images, masculinities, and "viewing power" at the national and transnational level. Yet, each point toward future directions and questions that might be explored as we attempt to better understand the mediated experiences of living within a Soviet and post-Soviet environment.

A Companion to Spanish Cinema

By Bernard P.E. Bentley

Suffolk: Tamesis, 2008. ISBN: 9781855661769. xvii + 513 pp. £60 (hbk).

Gender and Spanish Cinema

Edited by Steven Marsh and Parvati Nair

Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004. ISBN: 185973791-9. x + 230. pp. £17.99 (pbk).

A Review by Abigail Keating, University College Cork, Ireland

While Spain's most celebrated filmmakers, Luis Buñuel and Pedro Almodóvar, are masters of the art in their own right and have attained a worthy level of global recognition, one need only barely scratch the surface to discover that this nation offers one of the most exciting and artistically rich cinemas in Europe. In *A Companion to Spanish Cinema*, Bernard P.E. Bentley states that there has been an increase in both foreign awareness and academic interest over the last two decades. While this change is welcomed by Bentley, he is critical of the lack of attention donated on an international level in the years prior: he suggests that this was due to various reasons, "which range from the very specificity of the narratives within their national context to ignorance or prejudice from outsiders" (xiv). At the same time, he disapproves of the exclusion of Spanish cinema from certain academic publications, as he states that it is still frequently ignored, and cites well-known academics as some of the guilty culprits (xiv). With the country's erratic political past, and perhaps having been overshadowed by the big guns of European cinema (most notably, Italy and France), there is indeed an apparent void in existing Anglophone scholarship. Nevertheless, Bentley's addition, along with the generous amount of other sources he recommends throughout, proves that Spanish cinema is, in fact, beginning to stake a substantial claim in the field of film studies.

A Companion to Spanish Cinema comprises: a brief introduction which outlines the valid reasons for and the aims of the book; ten sections, which have been ordered chronologically, and which range from 'The Silent Reels of the Photographers (1896 - 1918)' to 'New Departures (1989 - 1996)'; an account of more recent Spanish cinema, 'Coda: Into the Twenty-First Century'; and an extensive filmography and bibliography. Each of the book's eleven main sections provides in-depth descriptions of the social and cultural contexts in which the eras' films were produced, concerning the various political transitions the country experienced, the pressures and authority of Church and State, economic factors, and outside cinematic influences. Every chapter is divided neatly and appropriately into sub-sections that deal with the effects of the aforementioned external influences, the development of relevant genres, and the most notable

filmmakers of each epoch. At the end of every chapter, Bentley provides the reader with further primary and secondary sources (including internet-based) that would complement the section's discussion.

Rather than offering the readability of a more specific academic publication, Bentley's *A Companion to Spanish Cinema* proves to be an extensively reliable reference point that would be best appreciated when digested in small portions. It is loaded with facts, dates, figures, and names, and thus succeeds in providing a worthy outlet for anyone interested in Spanish cinema as an entity. Therefore, this book would be most valuable as a chief text in an undergraduate course dedicated to Spanish film, and it would supply a precious amount of information to anyone about to undertake a relevant research project. Furthermore, while it does encourage further reading of pertinent scholarly works, none of the sections are composed upon a theoretical backdrop; hence, Bentley's contribution is just as commendable as a non-academic resource. To appreciate the book to its full extent, I suggest that one utilise it simply as a worthy companion, taking advantage of its encyclopaedic value; or, that the reader benefit from each section in conjunction with some of Bentley's recommendations on further primary and secondary sources.

A Companion to Spanish Cinema is a significant addition to this increasingly popular area in our field. To say that it is written by an enthusiast of Spanish cinema is perhaps an understatement: with this, one would truly feel that purchasing the book is money well spent. At the beginning of the introduction, Bentley, in comparing the structuring of such a book to the making of a Spanish stew, states that "the hope is that the present *cocido* will leave most readers wanting to see more Spanish cinema" (xiii). Indeed, this is Bentley's most admirable achievement. More specifically, Bentley's equilibrium is grounded by the fact that he often devotes as much time to the big names of Spanish film (Almodóvar, Berlanga, Bardem, Saura) as he does to the lesser-known contributors (de Chomón, Perojo). As a "companion", the author's pedagogy and encouragement persist and, more importantly, triumph throughout.

Another recent, yet more specialised, publication concerning Spanish film is *Gender and Spanish Cinema*, edited by Steven Marsh and Parvati Nair. The collection comprises a detailed introduction and twelve subsequent chapters, covering a diverse range of films from several different epochs in the history of Spanish cinema, and orchestrated on the backdrop of a number of theoretical frameworks.

In the introduction, Marsh and Nair so rightly underline the distinct connections between the fields of gender studies and film studies. They site psychoanalytical theory as a link to which both fields share a "common indebtedness", accurately highlighting that "some of the foremost works on psychoanalysis as well as on feminism have themselves taken place in the context of film analysis" (2/3). Although the editors continue by adding that the collection owes a great debt to

works such as Susan Martin-Márquez's *Feminist Discourse in Spanish Cinema: Sight Unseen* (Oxford University Press, 1999), they state that no chapter is devoted exclusively to a female filmmaker: instead, they "have adopted a perspective that views gender through a varied prism, one that recognizes the complexities inherent in sexual difference", in a bid "to subject the notion of fixed identities to interrogation" (6/7). The editors are direct in outlining their aims, and as each essay unfolds, one finds that such an approach neither limits the relevancy, nor impedes the harmony of the collection as a whole.

Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla's 'Between the Phobic Object and the Dissident Subject: Abjection and Vampirism in Luis Buñuel's *Viridiana*' initiates, and provides a thought-provoking amalgamation of psychoanalytical perspective, filmic theory, and textual interpretation of Buñuel's controversial film (1961; banned under the Francoist regime). The inclusion of a brief description of artist Mona Hatoum's art installation, *Recollection* (1994), proves to be an interesting angle in offering a unique reading of the film's necrophiliac ritual. Along with this, any moment of incisive filmic engagement is compelling. Drawing heavily from Kristeva's theoretical concept of abjection, Gutierrez-Albilla's chapter, at times, drifts slightly away from the theme of gender in cinema, in favour of an in-depth (albeit admirable) discussion of critical theory. Nevertheless, it is an impressive and engaging piece of work that sets the standard high for the rest of the compilation. Later on, Eva Parrondo Coppel demonstrates a similarly commendable level of comfort with her chosen theory in 'A Psychoanalysis of *La mujer más fea del mundo* (1999)', while delving into Miguel Bardem's aforementioned science-fiction noir. Even more inspiring is the elegance of her textual analysis: repeatedly augmented by perceptive shot and scene deconstruction, this reader found it a pleasure to read throughout. A highly recommended chapter.

Prior to this, Jo Labanyi, in 'Costume, Identity and Spectator Pleasure in Historical Films of the Early Franco Period', engages with three films made between 1942 and 1950, and which cover a historical time span from the early eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. Labanyi, a prominent scholar in the area of Spanish identity and culture, offers original insights into the modern concept of fashion, the political importance of fashion, masquerade and spectacle, and spectator pleasure. Most importantly, Labanyi has contributed to an area that remains surprisingly under-represented within our field. Also concerned with films set in a historical period is Celia Martín Pérez's 'Madness, Queenship and Womanhood in Orduña's *Locura de amor* (1948) and Aranda's *Juana la loca* (2001). Martin Pérez examines two cinematic representations of Spanish Queen, Juana I of Castile (1479-1555), and the notion of womanhood within the contexts of the public and the private sphere. In investigating and contrasting two filmic treatments of a historical figure epitomised by her queenship and her madness, Martin Pérez offers a concise,

well structured analysis: the treatment of gender and film is grounded evenly, and relevance is always maintained thematically.

Yet another highlight of the book can be found in Steven Marsh's 'Masculinity, Monuments and Movement: Gender and the City of Madrid in Pedro Almodóvar's *Carne trémula* (1997)', where the focus turns to the twelfth feature of contemporary Spanish cinema's most famous son. Under the rubric of gender, *Carne trémula* marks a significant milestone in Almodóvar's body of work in that, firstly, the film deals predominantly with heterosexual masculinity, and thus breaks away from the ever-so familiar territory of *las mujeres de* Almodóvar; and secondly, as Marsh points out, "each of the film's male characters is more than simply imbued with history, each is constructed by it" (54). Marsh maintains that 'movement' within the city of Madrid in *Carne trémula* induces important links between place and gender, urban space and the human body, and the public and private sphere. Although scholarship on Almodóvar's cinema exists in abundance, particularly within the realm of gender and/or the cinematic city, one could argue that viewing the director's use of *mise-en-scène* is symbolic of the importance of his work within our field: look a little deeper and you will find something new. Marsh's chapter is a fitting example that such a rich oeuvre as Almodóvar's deserves continual academic (re)evaluation. While, in many respects, investigations of the director's (heterosexual) male figures remain scant, it is both the subject matter *and* the angle – from which Marsh approaches masculinity and the city in his cinema – that prove refreshingly novel.

Leaving Almodóvar's depiction of male heterosexuality aside, Alejandro Melero Salvador's chapter, entitled 'New Sexual Politics in the Cinema of the Transition to Democracy: de la Iglesia's *El diputado* (1978)', deals with the portrayal of male homosexuality. He initiates this by tracing the level of prejudice towards homosexuality in the years after the end of the Francoist regime. He notes that, coming up to and during the years of transition, homosexuality in Spanish cinema was often dealt with as a farce, purely for comedic value. He continues his analysis (albeit briefly) in an account of de la Iglesia's *El diputado*, using Foucault's theories on homophobia as a predominant backdrop. With this, Melero Salvador's chapter provides a pertinent account of cinematic representations of male homosexuality in a period of Spanish history marked by vast political, social and cultural change. This is complemented nicely, further on, by Chris Perriam's chapter, in which he offers a careful consideration of representations of homosexual male-heterosexual female relations on the backdrop of Stephen Maddison's concept of "heterosocial dissent" in his *Fags, Hags and Queer Sisters: Gender Dissent and Heterosocial Bonding in Gay Culture* (Macmillan, 2000).

Subsequently, representations of taboos serve as the foundation for Tatjana Pavlovic's chapter, as she discusses one of Spain's most controversial and least

celebrated (yet, rather prolific) filmmakers. Creatively active since 1957, Jesús Franco has achieved little success in his native country of Spain, and remains, to this day, most popular in Germany and the USA. Best known for his low-budget horrors, pornographic films, and muscle-man epics, "Jesús Franco appears as almost the inverted, ironic figure of his namesake ..." (146). Pavlovic's chapter, entitled 'Gender and Spanish Horror Film', offers a review of the work of Franco, discussing such aspects of the director's oeuvre as eroticism, female power, violence, and the "horror body". It also focuses briefly on Fernando Fernán Gómez's *El extraño viaje* (1964), in which Franco has an acting role. Although the chapter steers a little off course in terms of the book's chief area of inquiry, it provides an insightful account of a filmmaker who remains largely ignored within the context of Spanish film history, and thus proves to be a unique asset.

Later on, Rob Stone devotes his consistently thorough attention to one figure also, as he records the screen persona of actress, Victoria Abril in three intertwining strands (iconography, its subsequent effects within the film, and gender bias, both culturally and filmically), and in light of her role in Agustín Díaz Yanes's *Nadie hablará de nosotras cuando hayamos meurto* from 1995. This is immediately followed by Kathleen M. Vernon's evaluation of the success of*El último cuplé* (de Orduña, 1957), which is neatly constructed upon questions of female stardom, and an area of Spanish film studies with which she is already commendably associated: the use of melodrama.

Parvati Nair offers the collection's only analysis of gender under the rubric of immigration: a particularly new topic in the realm of Spanish film. Nair, in her chapter entitled 'Borderline Men: Gender, Place and Power in Representations of Moroccans in Recent Spanish Cinema', engages with two films – Soler's *Saíd* (1999) and Guerín's, documentary *En construcción* (2001) – in an analysis of the connections between place, ethnicity, and gender. Her central contention stems from representations of the male immigrant as non-European 'other', and considers the complex question, "what happens to gender in the context of migrancy?" (105). Nair combines theories of Third Cinema with a perceptive examination of the aesthetics of marginality, and depictions of urban space and cultural identity, in what proves to be, similar to that of her co-editor, a most fascinating high point of the collection. Furthermore, it is likely that Nair's account will retain its pertinence within our field, both in the domain of Spanish *and* European cinema, given that this is an increasingly prominent subject in the contemporary continent. Similarly, and drawing the book to its close, Eva Woods provides an assessment of areas that remain relevant to both Spanish and European culture and film, with an informative examination of the folkloric musical-comedy, *Torbellino* (Marquina) from 1941. Most impressively, she provides a fitting finale to the collection by infusing some of the most noteworthy aspects of Spain's past (and present), ranging from cultural and political contexts, to issues of high and low art, and questions of identity (and nationality).

Owing greatly to the fact that the collection is as energetic as many of the films on which it focuses, *Gender and Spanish Cinema* is a most welcome contribution to contemporary film studies. As it is both tremendously well-written and concise, its sheer readability also stands as one of its strongest achievements. The strategic order of the book is close to flawless, and it is successful in capturing some of the most compelling arguments and analyses of gender in Spanish cinema that exist to date. Given the nation's tempestuous past, along with the radical shifts in gender relations in the years under and after Franco, additional merit lies in both the interconnectedness and diversity of the editors' chapter selection. Furthermore, it is always inspiring to see a collection that combines writings from some of the most renowned names of the area, with remarkable contributions from early career scholars. Not only do these attributes highlight Bernard P.E. Bentley's contention that Spanish film is earning itself a significant (and long-overdue) status within our field, but they also promise that tomorrow's scholars are well equipped to ensure its continuation.

The Moguls and the Dictators: Hollywood and the Coming of World War II

By David Welky

Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8018-9044-4. 12 b/w illustrations, xi + 416 pp. £23.50 (hbk).

The Hidden Art of Hollywood: In Defense of the Studio Era Film

By John Fawell

Westport: Praeger, 2008. ISBN: 978-0313356926. xiii + 224 pp. £27.95 (hbk).

A Review by Hannah Durkin, University of Nottingham, UK

Concocted under factory-style production conditions, the cinematic outpourings of the Hollywood studio system, which reached the height of its powers in the 1930s and 1940s, are habitually read as superficial fantasies whose contents were heavily censored and packed with stock types and clichés. Yet two new books – in very different ways – poke beneath this shiny, uncomplicated exterior in their attempts to unearth the period's cultural significance. In so doing, they reposition the studio system era as a rich, multilayered chapter in film history shaped by the complex visions of a small group of commanding personalities.

David Welky's *The Moguls and the Dictators: Hollywood and the Coming of World War II* takes an inventive approach to studio era filmmaking by reading many of its movies as interwar propaganda. Specifically, this wide-ranging and impressively detailed study explores the major role played by Hollywood's eight studios in the emergence of an anti-fascist ideology on American cinema screens prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Tracing Hollywood's transition from "dream factory" to producer of gritty war dramas that provided increasingly open and glowing condemnation of European fascism, Welky analyses the complex negotiations of the studios' small but influential band of mainly Jewish producers. He reveals that many of these figures deplored Hitler but were nevertheless preoccupied with business interests, censorship and the perceived threat of an anti-Semitic backlash if their films dared to challenge European fascism.

Welky's main concern is to fill in historical gaps by tracing the negotiations, mediations and idiosyncracies of the studio bosses who spearheaded the Hollywood production line between the Depression era and the start of World War II. Seeking "to explain how and why Hollywood shifted from public apathy regarding fascism and the threat of war to publicly condemning the dictators and calling for the United States to oppose them" (2), Welky also emphasises Hollywood's importance in garnering public acceptance for warfare, arguing that,

"[a]lthough no pre-Pearl Harbor movie called openly for the United States to enter the Asian or European conflict, Hollywood actually played an integral role in preparing the country for war" (3).

The book culminates in an account of the ultimately fruitless September 1941 US Senate investigation into alleged Hollywood warmongering. While Welky downplays popular readings of this event as a cultural turning point that empowered studio bosses to present their political agendas on screen, he concludes that Hollywood entered World War II three months later as a confident player in international affairs.

To prove his point, Welky yokes together several broad discourses that reveal the complex and changing relationship between 1930s Hollywood and the outside world. These elements include Hollywood's close association with the federal government, its close attention to a financially vital – and increasingly unstable – international film market, and the growing and increasingly influential presence of antifascist voices within the film industry. Most important of all were the movies themselves, and Welky analyses scores of films that emerged during this period to show how they served to challenge – directly in the case of Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1939) and not quite so directly in*The Tales of Robin Hood* (1938) – the dictatorial regimes fronted by Hitler and Mussolini. These discourses are explored side-by-side in a book that is shaped chronologically rather than thematically, and Welky deserves tremendous credit for weaving together the different strands of his story into a rich and engaging whole.

In his study, Welky never challenges the notion that Hollywood's producers were anything other than business-like in their approach to filmmaking, and he is sensitive to their often conflicting attitudes toward movies and their functions as propaganda. Nevertheless, he presents a persuasive argument that shows how classical Hollywood's studio heads exploited their products to develop an increasingly powerful antifascist agenda, and he skilfully analyses the balancing acts that these figures were forced to play in appealing to the views of interventionists and noninterventionists alike.

Particularly illuminating are the rich and colourful anecdotes that Welky uses to describe the moguls. For example, we learn of the striking personality contrasts between siblings Harry and Jack Warner that helped to position the Warner Bros. business empire as the most liberal and politically daring of Hollywood's studios, and that the astonishing creative energy of Darryl F. Zanuck, head of production at Twentieth Century-Fox, was propelled by a highly regimented daily schedule that incorporated rigorous exercise and sexual activity.

In foregrounding the moguls' backgrounds and personalities in his study, Welky also reveals the ways in which their formative experiences of religious and racial prejudice – many of the figures were Jewish – might also have been responsible

for their frequent wariness in challenging fascism. He positions this cautiousness as a key failing by the moguls, noting that "Hollywood's most notable shortcoming in its domestication of combat and the military was its near-total failure to specifically associate World War II with anti-Semitism" (332). Yet he also notes that part of this failing was due to "the moguls' sense that raising the issue would arouse domestic anti-Semitism," and that "Hollywood's timidity reflected the Roosevelt administration's, which never made saving Europe's doomed Jews a military or a propaganda priority" (332-333). This is an interesting point, as it illuminates the limits of and restrictions on Hollywood's role as an anti-fascist propaganda device whilst also hinting at a significant undercurrent of American anti-Semitism during the 1930s that Welky's book ultimately fails to explore in detail.

Nevertheless, *The Moguls and the Dictators* is an abundantly detailed, highly informative book that serves both as a useful reference text and as an engaging story, and it is an original and valuable addition to interwar film scholarship. Moreover, its relevance to researchers is enhanced by exhaustive notes as well as an impressive 'Essay on Sources' section. Claiming not to provide a "comprehensive survey" (395) of primary and secondary sources, this essay nevertheless reveals a wide diversity of materials – which include studio memoirs and film censorship head Will Hays's extensive correspondences as well as biographies of key Hollywood and federal government figures – that will serve as an invaluable reference guide to students and scholars of this period.

The Moguls and the Dictators: Hollywood and the Coming of World War II thus facilitates readings of the studio era that transcend popular notions of classical Hollywood as a superficial, apolitical space, and which highlight its relevance to wider historical and social debates relating to America's interwar period. It is persuasive, comprehensive and accessible in equal measures and will be of tremendous interest to scholars of classical Hollywood and World War II history.

After reading Welky's socially conscious study of the studio era, it might seem hard to accept John Fawell's claim in *The Hidden Art of Hollywood: In Defense of the Studio Era Film* that, "[t]o defend classic Hollywood is, in many ways, to defend a cinema of pure form, the ideals of which are rhythm and structure, *not literary ideas or social content*" [emphasis added] (xiii). Aside from this oversimplified assertion, however, which overlooks the ways in which Hollywood bent to the demands of censorship whilst – as Welky shows – developing its own political ideology, John Fawell's book serves as an interesting counterpart to *The Moguls and the Dictators* in its attempt to highlight the cultural value of classical Hollywood.

In contrast to Welky, who sidelines the functions of directors and their crews in his effort to unearth the political agendas of Hollywood's studio heads, Fawell takes a stylistics based approach to 1930s and 1940s cinema. He contends that directors of this period had a great deal of independence and thus control over

their filmmaking, a major distinction from Welky's producer-led approach that is nevertheless convincingly argued. Focussing on the achievements of the studio era's most famous "auteurs", Fawell suggests that these directors created an extraordinary – but understated – cinematic style that contemporary audiences often fail to understand and appreciate.

In foregrounding form and style over social content, Fawell attempts to prove that "[t]he best of classical Hollywood filmmaking represents a high point in film history, a model of good filmmaking" (x). Addressing his book to "those who sit somewhat outside of the world of film criticism and who are perplexed as to why the classical Hollywood film is treated with the high-mindedness with which it is" (xii), as well as "to those closer to the world of film studies, who tend to underrate this cinema" (xii), Fawell sets out to rescue classical Hollywood from its tarnished reputation as outdated and unimaginative, and to highlight its universal relevance to scholars and filmmakers.

Describing his subjects as "films with technique so quiet and hidden that it easily goes unnoticed, a technique that does not call attention to itself or interfere with the drive and rhythm of the story" (x), Fawell interprets the formal qualities of classical Hollywood's most celebrated films as ideal harmonies of masterly direction, perfectly pitched and executed script-writing, and subtle visual and creative artistry. For Fawell, therefore, the best of studio era filmmaking represents an art of subtlety, a genius that is all the more profound for not calling attention to itself.

The Hidden Art of Hollywood assumes the task of identifying these understated virtues. Like Welky, Fawell adopts a thematic approach in his analysis of subjects and movies from this era, and surveys the styles and techniques employed in a wide range of films. He places particular emphasis on films by the most celebrated directors of the period, including Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, and John Ford, in order to interrogate their craftsmanship, and to demonstrate the emotional potency and stylistic depth of key films from this era. Significant aspects of filmmaking that Fawell considers include directors' and actors' use of understatement, as well as movies' rhythmic employment of sound and dialogue. Films such as *To Have and Have Not* (Howard Hawks, 1944) and *My Darling Clementine* (John Ford, 1946) are revealed to be key cases in which these formal aspects converge, and thus are positioned as exemplars of near perfection in dialogue, pacing and visual beauty.

Whilst Fawell prioritises the craftsmanship of classical Hollywood's most distinguished directors, he also recognises that their successes were part of a collaborative process, and that much of the graceful artistry of individual films depended upon pairings between the period's most visionary directors and its finest writers, cinematographers and actors. In celebrating MGM Greta Garbo vehicle *Inspiration* (Clarence Brown, 1931), for example, he argues that the film "is a fortuitous collection of actress, set design, costume design and

cinematography, with the director's greatest accomplishment being that of staying out of the way" (21).

Yet Fawell ultimately prioritises the work of directors, and one his biggest challenges is to show that leading figures such as John Ford and Alfred Hitchcock, who were reluctant to talk about their films' meanings and often denied that their works had any artistic merit, were in fact artists. His argument that "Hollywood filmmakers are not particularly analytical, themselves, but they are awfully good at creating films that engender analysis" (37) is not entirely convincing, but it nevertheless opens the book up to the carefully crafted approaches that these figures adopted in their work.

Perhaps *The Hidden Art of Hollywood*'s biggest shortcoming, however, is that, despite its concern with movies' rhythmic and visual qualities, it gives surprisingly little attention to Hollywood musicals. Fawell places great emphasis on the function of musicality and rhythmic timing in non-musical films, and argues that musicals themselves, when well orchestrated, are the best examples of the artistry of classical film form, as they "most approach that [Henry] Jamesian ideal of a work of sublime beauty that is about nothing" (183). Whilst he concludes that many musical films were artistic failures because "their structure is often too weak to hold up the edifice of the film" (183), a section on aspects of this commercially significant genre that could be identified as artistically successful would no doubt have added depth to Fawell's argument.

Fawell's work, then, is by no means a comprehensive study of classical cinema, nor are its claims always convincing. But it would be unjust to condemn *The Hidden Art of Hollywood*, which works hard to encompass a very large corpus of work, for its omissions. Overall, the book establishes itself very successfully as an introduction to the art of studio era filmmaking for students who are unaware of the cultural validity of a long-gone cinematic age, and its user-friendly, non-academic tone, which at times borders on the informal, will be welcomed by those new to academia as well as by non-scholars.

Ultimately, therefore, *The Hidden Art of Hollywood*, like *The Moguls and the Dictators*, is an engaging and accessible text, and a helpful introduction to scholars and non-scholars alike as to why the cinematic outpourings of the studio era should not be forgotten.

Neil Jordan

By Maria Pramaggiore

Urbana: University of Illinois, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-252-07530-8. x+200 pp. $19.95 (pbk), $50.00 (hbk).

The Cinema of Neil Jordan: Dark Carnival

By Carole Zucker

London: Wallflower, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-905674-41-1. xi+203 pp. £16.99 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk).

A Review by Steve Masters, Newcastle Royal Grammar School, UK

One of the symptoms of the success of art cinema as it flourished in the 1960s was the widespread recognition afforded to a canon of lauded filmmakers. On the one hand, this meant the identification of the foremost international – often European – filmmakers who deployed what Bordwell calls 'alternative modes of narration' to those of the predominant Hollywood cinema (see David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Routledge, 1985); on the other, it involved giving often overdue attention to those Hollywood directors whose work had distinctive styles and/or themes. Although there is an evident split between these different traditions or 'modes', it is also true to say that much of the auteurist criticism of the period tended to treat filmmakers of great expressive power, whatever their background, as transcendent of context, as great celluloid artists *per se*. Taking an issue of the British film journal *Movie* (issue 7, February 1963) at random, one can find an article referring to the 'unique talents' of Frank Tashlin followed a few pages later by a piece on Robert Bresson that alludes to his 'personal vision'. The exaltation of the director as the focus of film artistry was further cemented by a number of monographs on individual filmmakers, usually published in distinct series which proliferated in the late Sixties/early Seventies. *Movie* had its own imprint of paperbacks edited by Ian Cameron and published by Studio Vista (distributed in America by the University of California), whilst Penelope Houston oversaw the Cinema One series that the BFI produced in conjunction with Secker and Warburg and Indiana University. A further Anglo-American project, the International Film Guide series edited by Peter Cowie, and published by Zwemmer (UK) and Barnes (US), added to the burgeoning shelves of director studies. None of these book cycles dealt exclusively with directors, but many volumes had them as their subject. Film writing has had to move on from the early, often narrow, models of authorship that were prone to attribute erroneously the full intentionality of a film's effects to its director. It has become more common in the last two decades for the work of particular filmmakers to be located within their institutional and socio-cultural contexts, and for the collaborative network in which cinematic creativity flourishes to be recognised more fully. Arguments for the artistic exceptionalism

of particular filmmakers have become increasingly rare, with even as singular a director as Wong Kar-Wai, for example, commonly placed within the framework of contemporary Hong Kong film culture.

It is perhaps ironic, then, that the more diffuse film culture we enjoy today (if we choose to look beyond mainstream multiplex fare), should yield a new golden age of auteur studies, with fresh lines of books under the rubrics*Contemporary Film Directors* from the University of Illinois and *Directors' Cuts* from Wallflower, edited by James Naremore and Yoram Allon respectively. Indeed, the blurb reprinted in each volume of the former series states amongst its aims the desire to "illustrate the variety and vitality of contemporary cinema". Similarly, the BFI's *World Directors* purports to showcase "the work of leading directors from around the world … whose exciting work merits discussion in an increasingly globalised film culture". The earlier auteur monographs were heavily concentrated on a select group of filmmakers drawn from clearly apparent national cinema contexts – usually Hollywood, France, Germany, Italy, but today's choices are as likely to be drawn from Iran, Egypt and Taiwan as they are from the more traditional European auteur prototype (perpetuated nonetheless by the likes of Almodovar and Claire Denis). We can start to explain the modern auteur study, then, as exemplifications of or attempts to come to terms with the changing map of film culture, with its new centres of attention and seemingly more fluid borders. Thus, veterans like Nelson Pereira dos Santos and Manoel de Oliveira have received more sustained critical attention (in English, at least, including their own entries in the lllinois series) in the viewfinder of the new, less myopic century.

The appearance of titles in both the Wallflower and Illinois series on the Irish-born filmmaker Neil Jordan may rise a few eyebrows, not least amongst those of us who are generally sympathetic towards his talents but find his output maddeningly erratic and insubstantial at times. They join the earlier book-length study by Emer and Kevin Rockett - *Neil Jordan: Exploring Boundaries* (Liffey, 2003) (as incorrectly cited in Zucker's bibliography which also omits several secondary headings within book titles) – that contained a rigorous if orthodox film-by-film analysis within a context of contemporary Irish film and literature. Certainly, there has always been something thematically and stylistically arresting about Jordan's work, with tantalising similarities between his written fiction and movies, that prompts one to see him as a *bone fide* auteur filmmaker. The critic Alexander Walker, regrettably overlooked by both of the new studies, championed Jordan's early work with great perspicacity: "Like Kubrick, he has a strong literary element in his film-making – the language is non-naturalistic, but in a way that enhances naturalism not disrupts it – and, like Kubrick again, his camera-eye for images of disturbance yet beauty is potent." (*National Heroes: British Cinema in the Seventies and Eighties* Harrap, 1986, 260)

As different as they are in subject and setting, Jordan's first three films *Angel* (1982), *The Company of Wolves* (1984) and *Mona Lisa* (1986) offered a consistently rich vein of cinematic storytelling whose thematic concern with personal boundaries of attraction, desire and commitment I have addressed previously in *Identity and Desire in Three Films of Neil Jordan* (University of Newcastle, MA thesis, 1997). The problem with Jordan as a subject fit for subsequent auteur study has been the ever more disparate character of both his film subjects and their circumstances of production. The phrase with which Tom Shone greeted the near-simultaneous release of his novel *Sunrise with Sea Monster* (Bloomsbury, 1995) and the Warner Brothers mega-production of Anne Rice's *Interview with a Vampire* (1994) – "a curious double whammy of big-budget bombast and bookish sensitivity" (Tom Shone, 'Success becomes him', *Sunday Times*, 15 January 1995, 6) – could stand for the oscillations of scale and quality of his overall oeuvre, and Jordan scholars must acknowledge and account for this.

Pramaggiore and Zucker spend little time justifying Jordan as an artist worthy of study, despite the former's assertion that he "seems to resist categorization as an art-cinema auteur for whom cinema serves as a medium of personal expression" on account of his "eclecticism" (2). Both books find within his work a personal vision in any event, and they offer impressively thoroughgoing appreciations of both Jordan's 'literary element' and his 'camera-eye' in a series of thematic explorations.

Pramaggiore characterises Jordan's work as postmodern on the one hand – "familiar frameworks of identity such as nationality, gender, sexuality and race seem to be dissolving" (9) – and gothic on the other, perceptively illustrating how his supernatural sensibility is laced with sceptical irony in her analysis of his most obviously fantastical films, *The Company of Wolves* (1984) and *Interview with a Vampire* (1994) – although her extended discussion of an in-joke in that latter, Louis' reference to the 'vulgar fictions of a demented Irishman', rather labours the point. She convincingly extends the gothic context as she explores examples of haunting and possession (skilfully linking *High Spirits* (1988)and *Michael Collins* (1996)); the return of the past through the pop tunes that often haunt Jordan's characters; identity mutability and doubling; and remake and repetition. This amounts to a cogent and coherent analysis that credibly interconnects the range of films discussed. Pramaggiore even illuminates Jordan's radical reworking of Samuel Beckett's *Not I* (2001), although her claim that "given (Beckett's) love-hate relationship with the film medium, it may be surprising to learn that he committed 'Not I' to film" (140) is wholly insensitive to the playwright's considered engagement with *television*, of which the broadcast version of the play is an example. Although this study of Jordan is chiefly concerned with Jordan's 'postmodern gothic' aesthetic, it benefits from being grounded in a sense of national identity that the author began to explore in *Irish and African American Cinema: Identifying Others and*

Performing Identities, 1980-2000 (SUNY, 2007). In the earlier book, she talks of "a desire to move beyond the understanding of identity as a fixed essence and the difficulty of renouncing traditional, ontological notions of national, gender, and racial identity" (3), although like Zucker she tends to provide sketches of Jordan's social and cultural contexts rather than pursue a critical discourse on the films' socio-political representations. Given the focus and length of the work, this seems reasonable; more problematic – for Pramaggiore as well as Jordan – is the dangling question at the end of her analysis as to "whether an original vision can exist within a mass culture of imitation and simulation" (150). She may well have succeeded in making her readers consider the likes of *Interview with a Vampire* (1994) and *The End of the Affair* (1999) with fresh insight, setting them within their director's broader artistic temperament in traditional auteurist tradition, but it will be hard to shift the critical consensus on a number of the films, especially where the re-crafting of familiar genre material appears as hackneyed as it does at times in the serial killer thriller *In Dreams* (1999) and his last film, *The Brave One* (2007), with its well-worn revenge/vigilante theme. However, Pramaggiore puts forward plausible arguments for the originality of Jordan's treatment of established styles and conventions (remakes, adaptations and generic remodels) and her concluding interview with the director is impressive in the way it complements and dovetails with the preceding analysis. Ultimately, whatever value judgement we place on the individual films, she renders them as an intelligible whole, no mean feat when one considers David Thomson's judgement that "after a dozen films, Neil Jordan seems as unsettled as a beginner" (*The New Biographical Dictionary of Film*, Little, Brown 2002, 448).

Zucker's book also has the stamp of endorsement, in this case taking the form of a foreword by longstanding Jordan collaborator Stephen Rea, the analysis of whose work is often central in the author's study of performance. Indeed, within the two books the recognition here of Rea's contribution is part of a patchy acknowledgement of the wider creative environment in which Jordan operates. It has been said of auteurist criticism that it often imagines that the director produces, writes, edits, shoots and scores his movies in their entirety. There is little mention of possibly the single most significant other, namely the producer of all of Jordan's films up to *The Brave One* (2007), Stephen Woolley, but both writers do give credit to a smattering of directors of photography, set designers and one or two other crew members. Some omissions are baffling: Pramaggiore hails the role of cinematographer Chris Menges in her discussion of the painterly style and fragmented framing of *The Good Thief* (2002), but overlooks his crucial part in achieving the ghostly images of Dublin in *Michael Collins* (1996) that loom large in her otherwise stunning critique of that film.

Zucker made clear her approach to Jordan in a review of *The Good Thief* (2002) for this very journal, concluding her comments with the remarks "Jordan once again manifests his position as a postmodern Romantic, a poet of

the dark soul of humanity" (see the *Scope* film review archive, May 2004 here: http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/issue.php?issue=may2004&section=film_rev)

The bold tag of postmodern Romantic is something she picks up and explains in the introduction to her new book: "postmodern in that he destabilises boundaries, appropriates a variety of artistic referents and transfuses genres, romantic in his embrace of perception, intuition and sensation" (2). Zucker's attentiveness to the psychic level and sensual richness of the Jordan's work leads her to understand the preponderance of fairytale and supernatural motifs as symptomatic of the stream of Irish folklore that runs through his storytelling; this is a persuasive thread that connects his use of myth with Yeats' and makes the second chapter a highlight. Zucker's uncommonly broad interdisciplinary range encompasses plenty of exciting ideas, although the weight of critical theory again sits heavy at times on the shoulders of Jordan's lesser work. There are other shortcomings that make the book a less well realised achievement than Pramagggiore's: it is stymied somewhat by an index that includes an entry for 'wombles' but which fails to include any film titles.

Furthermore, it occasionally betrays the stitches of its development from a number of earlier essays, so that as late as page 144 Zucker redundantly begins a sentence "Jordan, who began his career as an award winning writer…" (144). She also makes the same point about Bakhtin's notion of the 'dark carnival' twice, supporting it with the same quotation in each case. The book has much to offer students of Jordan, but it is Pramaggiore who brings his body of work together with most insight and flair.

Between them, these studies reflect their times in their identification of Jordan's postmodern aspect. It is disappointing that neither lingers on the films' divergent production contexts, essential as they are to understanding his diverse career as a transnational filmmaker. Both books are in fact rather old-fashioned as they emphasise the personal and universal characteristics of the director's work ahead of the industrial and political. This is no bad thing given the director, but unlike most of the subjects of those earlier auteur studies, Jordan crosses filmmaking boundaries – he makes Hollywood studio pictures, intimate and independent Irish films and movies financed by British television, and his work alludes to European cinema as well as incorporating the clichés of American genre films – and his place in contemporary film culture would be better appreciated with greater reference to these circumstances.

Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, and Memory

By Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. ISBN-10: 0748634088, ISBN-13: 978-0748634088. 256 pp. £20.99 (ppk).

Review by Omar Kholeif, Royal College of Art, UK

Despite the swirling media attention surrounding the contentious Palestinian nation, it is arguable that there are few reliable sources that divulge genuine insight into Palestinian culture and society. Consequently, the authors of *Palestinian Cinema*, Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi have suggested that a study of this national cinema is worth serious attention. Indeed, not only is it fertile with explorations of daily Palestinian life, but also more interestingly, is how much of its output has been devoted to serving a national struggle (both explicitly and subversively).

Part of the 'Traditions in World Cinema Series', this new translation from the 2005 Hebrew edition, works towards the editors' aim of examining undervalued and under examined film movements. Certainly, after more than seven decades of Palestinian film, the area remains largely unexplored within the academy, which makes this work especially significant to the limited canon of serious writing surrounding Arab and Diaspora cinemas. But like the majority of literature on this matter, the authors' exploration is largely preoccupied with the political nature of the medium. Specifically, it paints a historical portrait of the Palestinian peoples' struggle for sovereignty, utilizing detailed filmmakers' representations of landscape, trauma and memory. The text subsequently breaks these examples down further, by delineating each discussion to one of four distinct artistic periods, each of which is defined by a major political event.

The opening quote, "History has forgotten our people", helps set the tone for the book. The researchers lay down their plan, which seems largely consumed with reconciling Palestinian narratives with historical continuity; for as Gertz and Khleifi reveal, Palestinian historical narrative has yet to be told fully in artistic expression. They attribute this largely to the difficulty of dealing with significant 'trauma'. Particularly, they argue that Palestinian trauma has been so severe that it remains unregistered by both personal and collective consciousness, existing instead as repressed memory.

Gertz and Khleifi go on to reveal how this is a primary tension of Palestinian cinema. For Palestinian cinema exists to invent, document and crystallize Palestinian history. As such, it must confront this 'trauma', and to construct a historical narrative. The authors suggest that the result has seen many filmmakers try to connect the past to the distressed present. Yet, because of

repressed trauma this expression tends to be manifested in a utopian, national future.

The authors come to this conclusion by expounding on the work of specific filmmakers, namely Michael Khleifi (who occupies much of their arguments), Elia Sulieman, Rashid Maharawi, and Ali Nassar to name just a few. Through these texts, they begin to divulge the nation's cinematic history. They start naturally, by informing us of the first period (1935-48), when the public was less interested in the visual medium, and more preoccupied with theatre. They then expound upon the second period (1948-67), which was characterized by an age of silence. Here, Palestinian filmmakers suffered from a sense of political and social disorder, as well as inadequate financial resources, which prevented them from forming a functioning film industry. However, by the third period (1967-82), Palestinian cinema had evolved, largely due to funding from the likes of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), who encouraged filmmakers to use the medium as a means to spur nationalistic pride, and to push forward the liberation movement. Off the back of this came the fourth period (1980-present), a unique set of films concerned with deconstructing the Palestinian identity.

The authors argue that during the latter two periods, Palestinian film started to crystallize its 'oneness', restoring geography, and attempting to preserve a homogenous nationality that was free from the trouble of the past, and frozen for the future. They reveal this discussion textually by revealing how in some films, the Palestinian setting was not shown on screen (or left abstract), because it was symbolically aspiring to the Palestinian space before the 1948 *Nakba*. As such, the authors here have analyzed the manipulation of time as well, explaining how the Palestinian people can only desire a future that is akin to the pre-trauma homeland. They anchor this notion by examining the films of fourth period filmmaker, Michael Khleifi. They detail how his pictures present an idyllic space, which invoke memories of pre-trauma Palestine. But at the same time, they note how Khleifi's movies use this very same 'space' to reveal everyday Palestinian life – utilizing personal narrative as a means to construct a larger Palestinian identity.

Overall, the most significant conclusion of the book seems to be that Palestinian cinema is still largely connected and consumed with the past, and is unwilling to confront its present, or to accept a divergent future. To many readers, this will seem like a disappointing conclusion. For one assumes that the liberal filmmaking collective would subvert traditional expectations. But rather, the researchers have proved that the narrative work of Palestine seems to echo the larger political stance of the Palestinian nation. Dually frustrating is the fact that the epilogue of this book suggests a newly energized Palestinian cinema, which might even contradict much of this analysis. In the final pages, the authors discuss how the most internationally significant Palestinian films, i.e. *Paradise*

Now (Hany Abu-Assad 2005), were released after the book's publication. In particular, *Paradise Now* was arguably the first film to confront the Palestinian 'present' by dealing directly with the issue of Palestinian suicide attacks, which would have invigorated the author's largely repetitive argument.

Nevertheless, the book is still a worthy starting point for scholars on the subject. It offers a thorough history of this national cinema, and manages to encapsulate some of the political identity behind it. All in all though, it is a shame that the collaboration between George Khleifi (a Palestinian) and Nurith Gertz (an Israeli), did not extend beyond the same political conclusion. After much expansive and detailed analysis, the authors continually seem to return to the same conclusions. Personally, as an avid follower of Arab and specifically, Palestinian cinema, I found this polemical, as it glosses over the qualities that make each of these director's unique. Debatably, I believe that a contradictory analysis could have been proposed using the very same sample of filmmakers. Whatever the case, Gertz and Khleifi have at the very least laid down some foundations for further debate and research.

The Cinema of Jan Švankmajer: Dark Alchemy (Directors' Cuts)

Edited by Peter Hames

London: Wallflower Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-905674-45-9 (pbk), ISBN: 978-1-905674-46-6 (hbk). 42 illustrations, vii + 247 pp. £16.99 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk).

Hungarian Cinema: From Coffee House to Multiplex

By John Cunningham

London: Wallflower Press, 2004. ISBN: 1-903364-79-5 (pbk), ISBN: 1-903364-80-9 (hbk). 37 illustrations, xii + 258 pp. £16.99 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk).

A Review by Jonathan Owen, University of Central Lancashire, UK

The cinemas of East Central Europe have, notoriously, long been marginalised and misinterpreted by film criticism and scholarship. While striking figures from these countries might occasionally make claims on the English-speaking world's attention, they generally enter its consciousness abstracted from the particular traditions, histories or environments that shape and explain their work. A crude, all-purpose contextualising in the shared realities, or memories, of state socialist oppression has only compounded the misunderstanding. Two recent publications from Wallflower, one a second edition of Peter Hames' critical anthology on the Czech Surrealist animator and filmmaker Jan Švankmajer and the other a new study of Hungarian cinema, are precisely concerned with establishing the specificity of their subjects and illuminating their neglected contexts. Both books are thus longer on explication than exegesis, and could be seen as providing the foundations for further studies of a more critical or polemical nature (there is, for instance, little application here of theoretical perspectives, though Hames's volume makes some cautious nods in this direction). Yet despite the apparent 'modesty' of the two books' aims, they can boast their share of original and important insights.

In his original 1995 introduction to *Dark Alchemy*, Hames explains how the book's contributors have sought "to explore some of those areas perennially confined to footnotes" (3); in other words, the native artistic traditions that Švankmajer's western critics have usually been at a loss to explore in depth or are simply uninterested in. Švankmajer's (relative) international fame is at odds with the rather recondite, outmoded and hermetic (literally so, in the case of his interest in alchemy) traditions that his films inscribe, a discrepancy that is apt when one considers the films' own mixture of introversion and extroversion, wilful obscurity and exuberant theatricality. Another peculiarity of Švankmajer's work is that this highly distinctive oeuvre is so heavily immersed in its regional and cultural background, and develops out of the tight-knit collectivity of the beleaguered avant-garde grouping. The contexts revealed here as being most

significant are the mordant, latterly isolated world of Czech Surrealism, the dense and delirious aesthetics of Mannerism and that half-mythical, half-historical environment of 'magic Prague', populated by alchemists, golems and the eccentric 16th century emperor Rudolf II; one particular influence is the fastidious trick portraiture of Arcimboldo, who, as Mannerism's best known exponent, 'Surrealist avant la lettre' and curator of Rudolf's 'cabinet of curiosities', connects all three worlds. Hames's book is generally rather less concerned with the familiar standby of political context, and while the contributors clearly reveal how provocative and unwelcome Švankmajer's work was in Communist Czechoslovakia, they also show that Švankmajer has always had his sights set on broader targets, namely a 'diseased' and 'decadently rational' civilisation.

Hames's own opening chapter comprises an overview of experimental tendencies in Czech and Slovak cinema, though this richly informative chapter could also serve as a much-needed general introduction to Czechoslovakia's twentieth century avant-garde. Upholding Švankmajer's view that his own, 'organically' Surrealist work is distinct from the quasi-avant-garde films of the Czech New Wave, Hames nonetheless implicitly shows to what extent Svankmajer's work fed or thrived on the rich Czechoslovak culture of the 1960s, with its revivified avant-gardism and subversive spirit. In the second chapter, Michael O'Pray explores the mixture of Surrealist and Mannerist influences in Švankmajer's work. O'Pray's attempt to designate some specific characteristics of each movement is certainly helpful, given the imprecision and confusion surrounding the terms themselves, yet he is right also to concede the difficulty of neatly dividing Svankmajer's oeuvre into 'Mannerist' and 'Surrealist' works. In addition, the concentration on these influences enables O'Pray to address such compelling Švankmajerian themes as tactility, alienation and the conflict between authority and chaos, imaginative freedom and material resistance. Chapter Three, authored by art historian Roger Cardinal and concerning the presence of objects, is perhaps the most flamboyant and felicitously written piece, and if Cardinal returns here to Mannerism and Arcimboldo (both covered already by O'Pray), the specificity of focus yields further insights: in particular Cardinal captures Švankmajer's teasing play with the legibility of objects, his films' straddling of symbolic meaning and self-evident materiality, the mingling of the urge to catalogue and the impulse to break systems apart. The inclusion of O'Pray and Cardinal, critics well versed in the visual arts as a whole, was an apt choice, and their pieces grant the book a breadth of artistic and cultural allusion often lacking in film-related studies.

Chapter Four, again by Hames, concerns Švankmajer's relationship with puppets and represents the major amendment to the second edition. Although losing focus a little towards the end, this chapter redresses the first edition's slight marginalisation of puppetry as a specific art form with its own history; the avant-garde automata of Meyerhold and Schlemmer (mentioned only in passing

in the first edition) offer precedents for the mystery and alterity of Švankmajer's puppets. Other amendments to the book include the updating of the articulate and erudite interview with Švankmajer that constitutes Chapter Five (the later features, such as that study of ingenious, interconnected onanisms*Conspirators of Pleasure* (*Spiklenci slasti*, Jan Švankmajer 1997) and the Sadeian *Lunacies* (*Šilení*, Jan Švankmajer 2005), are now covered), the inclusion of a self-penned 'decalogue' (Chapter Six) in which Švankmajer expounds his personal guidelines for artistic creation, and an afterword that pays tribute to Švankmajer's recently deceased wife and collaborator, the painter Eva Švankmajerová. Chapter Seven (also updated) is by the Czech Surrealist František Dryje, and the collage-like arrangement of texts (some by other authors) gives the chapter itself an appropriately Surrealist, and collective, quality. While this chapter is somewhat repetitive and occasionally obscure, it does help emphasise, partly by means of those very qualities, the earnestness and integrity of Švankmajer's Surrealist investigations (Dryje could, however, have said more about Czech Surrealism's cardinal principle of analogy, or the founding of poetic relations between non-identical things).

One approach this volume has not pursued is the forging of links between Švankmajer's work and that of other, equally or more well-known filmmakers and animators. Yet such connections as exist between Švankmajer and certain American filmmakers (Gilliam, Burton, the Brothers Quay) have already been copiously acknowledged, not least by the filmmakers themselves, and Hames's book is thus admirable for not retreading old ground (that said, it would be interesting to pursue the unexplored links between Švankmajer and Peter Greenaway, another filmmaker preoccupied by corporeality, bizarre taxonomies and Mannerist aesthetics). The avoidance of an easy but empty populism – there is hardly a mention of a contemporary western filmmaker – underlines Švankmajer's separateness; in this as in other respects, the book takes him more or less at his own self-definition. The concern is with situating Švankmajer, as well as illuminating his surprisingly coherent and forcefully articulated world-view. The authors are generally more interested in the aesthetic and thematic consistency of the work than in its discrepancies and discontinuities, and there are few value judgements favouring particular films or periods (while there *is* an unusual consistency of technique and ideas, the feature films represent something of a loss of energy and finesse). The book succeeds very well in its stated aims, although it might have emphasised further the continuity between Švankmajer's films and his work in other media (which includes tactile sculptures and outrageous pseudo-encyclopaedic collages); some illustrations of the artwork would have been welcome in any case.

If Hungarian cinema has seldom produced anything quite as bizarre or inscrutable as Švankmajer's work, that nation's convoluted history and the complex, under-researched machinery of Eastern bloc film production has offered mystery enough. Introducing his study, John Cunningham mentions the

necessity of writing "the history of an industry and its place within a particular society and culture and all that this involves"(3). This approach differs markedly from that of Graham Petrie's *History Must Answer to Man* (Budapest: Corvina, 1978), one of the very few other book-length studies of Hungarian cinema. Petrie's book was unashamedly auteurist, concerning itself with the themes and aesthetics of key directors at the expense of the films' institutional, cultural or political background. Unsurprisingly, Petrie was particularly enamoured of the challenging and formally extreme, indeed balletic, cinema of Miklós Jancsó, whose profile occupied disproportionate space in Petrie's study. Cunningham, by contrast, is rigorously even-handed with his major directors, and allots perhaps as much space to the more conventional and journeyman-like Zoltán Fábri as to Jancsó. Far from being in awe of Jancsó, Cunningham is not afraid to describe the celebrated *Red Psalm* (*Még kér a nép*, Miklós Jancsó 1971) as a "dated" example of leftist "agit-prop" (123) (though doesn't this film also accurately depict the doomed situation of 1960s leftist idealism in both East and West, that dubious 'inspirational' ending notwithstanding?)

The greater part of the book is structured chronologically, and maps the development of Hungarian cinema against the nation's political vicissitudes and the attendant cultural fallout of scarce resources, governmental scrutiny and the periodic mass emigration of talent. Beginning with the political and cultural ferment of the early twentieth century (which witnesses the end of the Hapsburg empire and a short-lived socialist Republic of Councils), Cunningham proceeds to discuss the prevalence of formulaic 'entertainment' cinema under the conservative (and collaborationist) regime of Admiral Horthy. If the immediate post-war period and the 1950s are marked by Rákosi's harsh Stalinism and the brutal suppression of the 1956 Uprising, the 1960s, under the conciliatory leadership of János Kádár, comprise the glory years of the stylistically adventurous Hungarian 'New Wave' (there is less than universal consensus that such a thing existed, yet I think Cunningham is right to use the term). The 1970s and '80s bring further achievements, but also the reorganisations, uncertainties and instabilities that will culminate in the political upheavals of 1989 and the familiar problems of Hollywood domination and inadequate subsidy (admirably, Cunningham's in some ways dispiriting assessment of the present state of Hungarian film does not topple into excessive gloom). The historical survey is complemented by three short thematic chapters covering, respectively, the field of documentary, avant-garde and animated cinema, the representation of Jews and gypsies, and the sub-genre of football films. Apparently idiosyncratic and arbitrary, this last chapter highlights the concern with preserving values of 'nationhood' and 'community', and illuminates a 'wackiness' not traditionally associated with Hungarian cinema.

As this summary might suggest, Cunningham gives most space to tracing institutional and historical-political context, and on these fronts the book is scrupulously researched (providing statistics of audience attendance, market

share etc.) as well as engagingly and wittily narrated. There is less discussion of cultural background, and, leaving aside specific adaptations, the canonical György Lukács and the multi-talented Béla Balázs, relatively little concerning the relationship between film and Hungarian literature (compare Hames' book on the Czechoslovak New Wave, where such figures as Kafka and Hrabal loom large). Yet this may reflect the relative lack of synchronicity between film and literature in Hungary. Cunningham makes it clear, for instance, that filmmakers were barely involved in the political and cultural debates being conducted in the journals of the mid-1950s and had little to do with the literary world. As regards the relationship with other national cinemas, Cunningham interestingly suggests how István Szöts's *People of the Mountains* (*Emberek a havason*, István Szöts 1942) may have provided a 'nudge' to the creators of the Italian Neorealist movement, and how Hungarian films were utilised by young French critics for the auteurist revolution; Cunningham is careful, however, not to overstate such links.

That Cunningham does not, on the other hand, seem unduly pressed to define the distinctive characteristics of a Hungarian 'national cinema' makes a change from the sometimes over-totalising approach of previous studies of East European film. The identity of Hungarian cinema, Cunningham points out, is certainly not to be found in the veiled reflection of political iniquities: the book explicitly reproves, as *Dark Alchemy* does implicitly, the reduction of complex works to 'Aesopian' totalitarian allegories. While Cunningham acknowledges Hungarian cinema's widespread concern with history from the 1960s onwards, he also reveals a surprising thematic variety. Refreshingly, he takes to task that somewhat fetishised assumption of the weight of history for its dodging questions of responsibility: the return to supposedly inexorable historical traumas evokes rather a sense of passive, perpetual victimhood. The book thereby problematises the standard, even hackneyed assertion that the Hungarian films of the 'Thaw' years (like their Czechoslovak counterparts) were heroically engaged with 'dispelling myths'.

Heroically or not, Cunningham himself dispels a few myths or distortions. A glimpse behind the scenes of Fábri's *Storm* (*Vihar*, Zoltan Fábri 1951) reveals a relationship of compromise and give-and-take between filmmakers and authorities and thus defies the cliché of top-down centralism. Indeed Cunningham shows how the notion of the 'Stalinist', 'totalitarian' Communist state is too generalising, both geographically and temporally (the infamous toil-and-tractor 'aesthetics' of Socialist Realism are revealed to have reigned a mere four or five years). To refuse the familiar insistence on repression and censorship is not only to indicate that Hungary was the most liberal Eastern bloc state (at least after the backlash over 1956 had subsided): the assertion that the Communists' intensive film subsidies brought real benefits, and the more general observation that state power can enable as well as disable, liberate as well as constrain, are valuable and still necessary in themselves.

In his conclusion Cunningham advances an interesting theory that helps elucidate some of the peculiarities of Hungarian film covered throughout the book. Cinema, Cunningham suggests, was identified in Hungary with the forces of modernity, and this sat uneasily with a feudal, aristocratic mentality that prevailed well into the twentieth century. Horthy's regime resented and distrusted film precisely in its 'modernist' guise, which meant that Hungary's interwar auditoriums became a place for safe, apolitical froth rather than strident manifestoes of modernity. This is a convincing, if rather sketchily advanced, explanation of why the Hungarian cinema of the 1920s and '30s never saw such conjunctions between cinema and avant-garde artistic currents as then existed in abundance in Czechoslovakia. Hungarian cinematic modernism was, it seems, almost entirely a product of Communist modernisation (better known for its fratricidal hostility towards the former). One might even suggest that the lack of firm avant-garde precedents during cinema's early years is one reason why Hungarian cinema has never produced as towering a cinematic practitioner of ludic experimentation as Švankmajer (animation was also somewhat under-represented prior to 1945). While the brevity of the coverage of avant-garde and animated production may reflect the marginality or relative paucity of these genres within Hungarian cinema, I would still have preferred more detail on the precise qualities of such little-known films: as it stands their inclusion feels slightly tokenistic. Despite this and other, pettier complaints (an index of film titles would have been helpful), Cunningham's book deserves high praise: he has written a generally well-balanced and immensely informed overview that should help redress the short-sighted and stereotyped ways in which Communist-era Hungarian films are frequently considered. As with most of the contributions to *Dark Alchemy*, *Hungarian Cinema* is also impressive for rendering its Central European historical arcana in such a widely accessible manner.

Movie Greats: A Critical Study of Classic Cinema

By Philip Gillett

Oxford and New York: Berg, 2008. ISBN: 97818445206536 (pbk). ISBN: 9781845206529 (hbk). ix + 228 pp. £16.99 (pbk), £55.00 (hbk).

Inventing Film Studies

Edited by Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008. ISBN: 9780822343073 (pbk). ISBN: 9780822342892 (hbk). xxxii + 446 pp. £15.99 (pbk), £63.00 (hbk).

A Review by Steven Rybin, Georgia Gwinnett College, USA

The history of film studies itself has increasingly become the focus of critical investigation and reevaluation, a trend continued in two new volumes. Philip Gillett's book, although centered on a discussion of fourteen films, is driven by an interest in making the processes by which films become part of the canon more transparent. Although not strictly a history of film studies, given the author's consideration of film criticism beyond the academy, the book is concerned with the mechanisms that have produced the canon and the means by which we might reevaluate that body of films.

While Gillett's volume is subtitled *A Critical Study of Classic Cinema*, he is also concerned with the processes by which films become "classic". For Gillett, film culture is characterized by a tradition wherein new students are called upon to show reverence to the same set of films as a kind of initiation rite: "How do films achieve eminence? The question has troubled me ever since a friend admitted that he found *Citizen Kane* boring. My guilty secret was that I shared his feelings. This was sufficient reason for reappraising the film canon" (1). Here the author reveals his preference for "a canon which is polemical rather than based on consensus, and which communicates the passion and intensity of individual experience … what ultimately matters is the response of audiences" (22). To explain how subjective experience might serve to reevaluate film canons, Gillett leans heavily on philosopher Jenefer Robinson. Building on Robinson's insights, he argues that emotional engagement is followed by cognitive appraisal (reflection), drawing on rational thought processes. The viewer gains an emotional education from the experience. Crucially, the emotional response is a form of understanding in itself, however difficult to articulate, and a source of data for interpreting the work. In short, it colours the rational appraisal" (11). Gillett thus rejects the "dichotomy between high and popular art" (12) that often serves to favor dispassionate analysis instead of emotional engagement.

Eschewing distanced analysis, Gillett argues that good films are those "absorbing enough to suspend time," they "offer a fresh way of looking at the familiar," they

"linger in the memory" so as to "enrich and disturb," and they suggest that a "work has to be experienced in the gut as well as the mind" (23). As this language suggests, for Gillett any canonical film ultimately must be reconfirmed through the subjective experience of each new generation of film viewers. The author stresses that taste is not a rigid formation, for the author "might discover [that] films … no longer have the same impact. As my feelings change, so does the meaning the films hold for me" (24). Turning his eye to the sociology of film criticism, he acknowledges the power journalistic film critics have in shaping the tastes of audiences. He suspiciously regards them as "a coterie of opinion-formers whose influence is already pernicious, with the result that some films are approached with reverence rather than any expectation of pleasure" (25).

In establishing a foundation for subjective, open-ended re-evaluation of the canon, Gillett discusses three central concepts: sublimity, ambiguity, and myth. Sublimity, in "contrast to the formality and regularity of beauty … elicits strong emotions, making it unpredictable and unforgettable. It draws on the world of the senses rather than formal analysis" (7). If sublime films provide an ongoing experiential frame for new viewings that shed old values, ambiguity creates open textual space for the play of new interpretations, resulting in a "work which never completely yields its secrets [and] can be endlessly reinterpreted and remains an object of fascination" (8). Finally, the concept of myth grants to subjective experience a wider cultural and historical footing, although one that is ultimately free to value those works that fly in the face of traditional norms and values (8).

However, Gillett remains mostly uninterested in reflecting on how his own championing of sublimity, ambiguity, and myth is implicated in the asymmetrical power structures that create a reverential canon in the first place. The "public" to which he refers throughout may or may not be equipped with the conceptual armature offered for revivified aesthetic experience and canon evaluation. The author states that "what ultimately matters is the response of audiences" (22), but his privileging of rarefied concepts such as sublimity, ambiguity, and myth situates his own book firmly within the purview of academic theory (as well as the author's own cultural capital), rendering his interest in collective, popular experience (or the "public") on rather shaky ground. How is his own book, in other words, *not* a part of that "coterie of opinion-formers" with their access, for example, to academic and trade presses? This is a question *Movie Greats*never quite confronts.

After introducing these debates in his opening chapters, Gillett then shifts to a close look at the reception of fourteen canonical films. Here his book becomes a conventional reception study. He analyzes the critical reception of accepted masterpieces, showing a surprising amount of debate over films such as *The Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925), *Modern Times* (Charlie Chaplin, 1936), *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941), *Lawrence of Arabia* (David Lean,

1962), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968), and *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972). (Their reception, hardly unanimously positive, introduces an intriguing, although unnoted, contradiction to the book: if debate already existed in relation to these films, is the canon as static as Gillett presumes?) The chapters on the individual films follow a set pattern: the author begins with a plot synopsis, provides cultural context, offers his own subjective impression of the film, and then concludes with an extended analysis that places his own reactions in relation to the film's earlier reception. Any of these chapters would be useful on their own as additions to courses on particular films and filmmakers, for they are still readable outside of the context Gillett develops in the first two chapters of the book.

Despite the use value of these chapters, often the cultural context of each film, although outlined admirably by Gillett, simply becomes an obstacle to ascertaining a film's aesthetic value, as in Gillett's discussion of *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993). He writes that:

> Campion invests Ada with a modern sensibility while setting the film in the past, an ambiguity which allows a range of feminist interpretations to be applied … Ada is perceived as a victim of gender politics. A weakness of this approach is that historical context is ignored: a single mother in the nineteenth century had few options. (138)

One could argue that in displacing cultural context as a criterion for judgment, the author is successfully achieving his aim of valuing subjective experience. Yet one wonders why this move is even necessary; certainly cultural context can inform subjective evaluation. For example, relative to Gillett's opening chapters, which prize ambiguity as a component of good art, his suggestion that the film's appeal to feminism (a politics, it is obvious enough to note, rooted in subjective experience) obscures the film's value and the film's lack of historical authenticity is rather puzzling. *The Piano* appealed to many audiences precisely because it was subjectively powerful (to a certain portion of the public). It affected them in the "gut", not relinquishing contemporary relevance in favor of historical minutiae (which Gillett would seem to ask us to do in re-evaluating the canon in the first place).

Ultimately, such comments show the limitations of Gillett's own approach. Gillett places subjective re-evaluation of canonical works firmly in the hands of the individual, collective approaches being dismissed at the outset, even as Gillett champions that abstract entity called the "public". The canon is challenged by the author's approach, yet it is ultimately the individual tastemaker's own sensibility that is performing the re-evaluation. It could be argued that this is one of the book's advantages: Gillett's covers the reception of the films in a thorough manner, and the chapters on the films at least function to provoke responses and further evaluation. This is what makes *Movie Greats*, despite these hesitations, useful.

In their edited anthology, meanwhile, Lee Grieveon and Haidee Wasson have taken a different approach to re-engaging with film history. The authors in *Inventing Film Studies* interrogate the use value of film study's history as the discipline heads into the future. Their objects of study are the power structures, discursive formations, and paradigm shifts that functioned to establish the discipline as we know it today. The anthology, although framed by its editors as one primarily invested in the question of social control in discipline formation, ultimately puts into motion an intriguingly varied set of methodologies, agendas, and case studies that achieve a wide range of inquiry. Such broad focus serves to make *Inventing Film Studies* the most useful history of the discipline yet published.

The book is divided into four sections. In the first, 'Making Cinema Knowable', the early foundations of cinema study are examined. Here, the editors reveal that the taking of film as an object of study was "less about aesthetic innovation and medium specificity and more about influence – both on the mind and, inevitably, the social body" (xviii). As Grieveson insightfully reveals in his own essay in this section, film was perceived as a socially dangerous object, in part because of its uncertain relationship to modernity. Showing how Rudolf Arnheim's early theoretical work on the relationship between the mind and the cinema in fact reflected a much wider concern with film's impact on "impressionable" minds, Grieveson tells us of the fear for the undisciplined mind's susceptibility "to imitative acts and corporeal 'motor' responses that were potentially psychically and socially destructive" (5). But while early anxiety about the impact film technology would have on society was a frequent trope of early film study, Grieveson shows how this concern was turned on its head in the later work of the Frankfurt School and film theory in the 1970s, wherein cinema was seen "as *leading to* social control rather than, as others had stated previously, contributing to the breakdown of social control and order" (23). This observation is the first of several rich connections throughout the book between the early study of film and its later manifestation as an academic discipline.

The rest of the essays in this first section perform variations on the themes Grieveson introduces. Mark Lynn Anderson shows how "the media expert", a prototype of the film professor, developed, in part, through the formation of the Payne Fund Studies. "While the PFS yielded inconclusive evidence on questions of media influence," Anderson writes, "they successfully produced the professional distinctions necessary for the media expert's authority, and they determined the ways in which knowledge of the cinema would become part of university research and academic study" (42). As Anderson reveals, the Payne Fund endeavored to show how film and film expertise dynamically interacted with various sites of exhibition. As Anderson writes:

> Social science was seeking to reproduce the lived experiences of those it studied; and those lived experiences, in passing from the immediate

> orientation of the subjects under investigation to the meditative attention of the social scientists, became, by virtue of this change of possession, scientific knowledge of social processes. (52)

Too often the contingent position of the social scientists themselves was effaced in the production of this knowledge, resulting in universalized "corrective discourse that claimed access to those very experiences through sympathetic identification while simultaneously claiming an external unifying authority over them" (54). Two additional essays in this opening section, by Zoë Druick and Dana Polan (in an excerpted chapter from his own valuable book on the epistemological history of the discipline), also make important contributions to the discussion of early formations of cinema study. Druick focuses primarily on the institutionalization of the documentary as an instrument of nation building, while Polan focuses on the first scattered attempts to introduce film pedagogy to the modern university.

The second section, 'Making Cinema Educational', keeps one eye on these themes of social control and power while at the same time moving beyond them. Haidee Wasson studies the introduction of film into the Museum of Modern Art in New York. She shows not only how MOMA encouraged viewers to consider films as something more than disposable commercial products, but also how "viewing such films should be augmented by informed research materials, placing film in pertinent sociological, historical, political, and aesthetic dialogue", a tradition that continues today in both museums and the institutions of film studies itself (124). The other authors in this section, Charles R. Acland and Michael Zryd, illustrate how the use of film by intellectuals and educators in the years leading up to the formation of film studies as an academic discipline is a crucial area of research. Acland shows how The Film Council of America, a film education organization, served to "put in place a technological infrastructure for nontheatrical films", and also "did the work of establishing and circulating discourses about film" (150). Zryd's concern, meanwhile, is with the importance of experimental and avant-garde film study in the formation of the academy, demonstrating that such films offered to the discipline a way to define itself against Hollywood, providing to students an alternative form of filmmaking and study.

The third section of the book, 'Making Cinema Legible', provides a look at the recent history of professional film publications. In addition to Philip Rosen's enlightening overview of *Screen* theory and the interesting history of the feminist journal *Camera Obscura* offered by the collective editorship of that journal, this section is graced with two particularly revealing entries that look back to less well-known publications in the history of film studies. Haden Guest explores three American film journals – *Films in Review*, *Cinemages*, and *Film Culture* – that were developed in the 1950s. Lacking institutionalized criteria and strategies for publication, these journals were in many ways marked by the

same spirit of experimentation and innovation that Zryd studies in the rise of experimental film study. Most importantly, Guest establishes continuities between the historical work in these journals and later film study, showing how these journals inspired a kind of "avant-garde film scholarship … that simultaneously looks back at the history of the medium as a way of challenging the assumptions of its present and future" (257).

Mark Betz, meanwhile, turns his attention to another neglected body of early film scholarship he calls "little books." Frequently focused on topics such as auteurs, film genres, and national cinemas, little books, Betz shows, were crucial to the early formation of film studies despite their modesty. These volumes are identified by Betz not only by their relatively small size but also by their "mode of address," exuding a more expansive sense of film culture … different from academic work. In this sense, the word 'little' here loosely designates not only a physical quality but also a disposition, a relationship to the formal constraints of university-based scholarship that is circumscribed by clear ideas and practices of disciplinarity" (319-320).

Betz shows that the tradition of the little book is not only alive and well (he points to Wallflower Press as one contemporary publisher of "little books") but might still grant the discipline "a more active role in [a] complex film cultural network", allowing it to "reconnect with the impulses and pleasures, the enthusiasm and excitement, that were functional in breathing life into it in the first place, and may equally revivify it now" (341), an idea that is in accord with the recent re-evaluation of cinephilia in the field. There is some irony in Betz's essay on little books appearing in a *very big* book published by a formidable university press, yet that is perhaps where his intervention is most needed. Through his case study of the little book, Betz shows how the validity of scholarship has no inherent connection to its physical size or university imprimatur; indeed, such size and professional strictures in general can serve to close down and insulate the potentially expansive nature of film culture and study.

The book closes with a section, 'Making and Remaking Cinema Studies', that offers two essays oriented towards the future of the discipline. Alison Trope, echoing Betz's interest in possible ways film knowledge might expand beyond the academy's purview, confronts the challenge posed to film studies by extratextual materials included on DVDs as supplements. While Trope shows that supplements, such as those offered in the Criterion Collection, go some way towards providing the viewer with film knowledge, such offerings (particularly those released by the major studios) are also colored by industrial motives less concerned with pedagogy and more with profit. Trope argues that the motives and use value of extra materials can only be ascertained on a case-by-case basis, arguing that the "educational value of these products … results in assessing how commercial and cultural interests intertwine in individual

examples at the level of production and consumption" (359). D.N. Rodowick closes the anthology with an essay arguing for the use value of classical and early contemporary film theory as a body of conceptual knowledge, even as cinema itself undergoes change. The essay, previously published as a chapter in Rodowick's illuminating book *The Virtual Life of Film* (Harvard University Press, 2007), illustrates – like the uniformly fine essays in this indispensable volume – the ongoing importance of the various pasts of film and film studies to the development of the field in the future.