

Book Reviews – October 2011

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History by Hollywood**By Robert Brent Toplin**

Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-252-07689-3. 280 pp. £16.14

Cinema Wars: Hollywood Film and Politics in the Bush-Cheney Era**By Douglas Kellner**

Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. ISBN: 978-1-4051-9824-0. 20 illustrations, 279 pp. £18.99

Cinematic Geopolitics**By Michael J. Shapiro**

London: Routledge, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-415-77636-3. 37 illustrations, 177 pp. £23.74

A Review by Brian Faucette, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, USA

Within film studies as a discipline and a field perhaps no two methods of analysis are more contested than using that of the role of history and theory in analyzing films. In fact, David Bordwell, in his book *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema* (Harvard University Press, 1989), argues that a more productive method of filmic analysis and interpretation would be to employ "a historical turn" thereby allowing scholars to analyze the genre of a film, its production history, the make-up of the audience, and the historical framework surrounding the release of the film (265). Bordwell argues for a more grounded analysis of cinema that focuses on the form rather than the content or cultural institutions involved in the production and reception of a film. While a grounded analysis is useful, it limits researchers abilities to fully comprehend the meaning of a film. Lee Grieveson notes in the introduction to his volume, *Inventing Film Studies* (Duke University Press, 2008) not only the importance of history as a methodological approach but also its value to the discipline coupled with theory. He writes that, "the study of cinema was born in the early twentieth century as a political problem in conjunction with the social turbulence of the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s" (xvi). Grieveson's reading of the history of the discipline and its connection to political change as well as technological change courses throughout the history of the medium, the discipline, and in the three books under review for this essay.

In his book *History by Hollywood*, historian Robert Brent Toplin points out that, "films that portray real people and actual events from American history often excite lively debates" (1). Unlike previous works that have considered how Hollywood transforms the events and lives of real people on screen, Toplin argues that scholars must consider how the films are produced, what the context of the important political and social events of the time of release were, and how the filmmakers respond to actual historical evidence while also trying to tell a "good" story (2). These questions, along with his four approaches of exercising artistic license - communicating through fact and fiction; drawing lessons: making the past relevant to the present; opening debate: revealing current controversy in portrayals of the past; and accenting heroism: celebrating the "great person" in a documentary style - structure the book and his argument.

Toplin divides the book into four parts that correspond with his four methodological approaches. In each part, he provides case studies that examine how his selected films correspond with his approaches to the study of the connection between film and history. He analyzes a total of eight films to illustrate his larger point about how Hollywood has struggled with its desires to tell marketable stories and in the process represent history accurately.

In Part One he looks at two controversial films that retell the history of America's chaotic cultural and political progress during the 1960s. In his discussion of *Mississippi Burning* (Alan Parker, 1988) in Chapter One, Toplin shows how the needs of the studio and the filmmakers to ensure the film would appeal to white audiences manifested themselves by making the white agents from the F.B.I. the heroes. In fact Lyndon Johnson ordered J. Edgar Hoover to send agents in to help quell the violence in Mississippi in the summer of 1964, an action that Hoover did not support wholeheartedly. As Toplin points out, the movie angered many critics and African American viewers because of its glossing over of the contributions of African American activists in the state at the time. He notes that, "ultimately *Mississippi Burning* represents a lost opportunity" because the people involved in the production and marketing of the film "lost sight of the message" about the terror imposed on many African Americans in the South from the days of slavery through the era of Civil Rights (44).

In Chapter Two he looks at Oliver Stone's successful and controversial film *JFK* (1991). He argues that, "few movies have made as great an impact on public affairs as *JFK* did" (47). The film ignited a firestorm of controversy along with renewed interest in the facts of Kennedy's assassination in November of 1963. Yet, as Toplin notes, much of the controversy over the film was a result of its liberal creator, Oliver Stone, who decided to focus his story on the possibility of a conspiracy and the efforts of Jim Garrison to use his office to prove to America that Oswald

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had not acted alone. Despite the scholars, historians, and government officials who claimed Garrison's view of the events inaccurate or impossible, Stone based his entire film around Garrison's crusade and the bizarre events he uncovered. Toplin acknowledges that this strategy makes for an exciting film but from a historical angle hinders the film's effectiveness "to win broader applause for finding imaginative ways to stimulate the public's thinking about the past" (78).

The study of how past events depicted in film speak to the present is the subject of Chapters Three and Four where Toplin looks at *Sergeant York* (Howard Hawks, 1941) and *Missing* (Constantin Costa-Gravas, 1982). Both of these films, Toplin suggests, were valuable tools of propaganda. *Sergeant York* he shows served to drum up American support for the need of U.S. military might during World War II even as some within the film industry and the country spoke out against the production of war films. However, where *Sergeant York* depicted American military might in a positive light, Toplin illustrates that the effects of America's military morphed into something extremely negative and dangerous for average American citizens and other nations when he looks at how *Missing* was produced and later received in the United States during Ronald Reagan's first term in office.

By far the strongest section of the book is Part Three: 'Opening Debate', which looks at *Bonnie and Clyde* (Arthur Penn, 1967) and *Patton* (Franklin J. Schaffner, 1970). *Bonnie and Clyde*, now recognized according to Toplin as a landmark film in the development of a "New Hollywood" attuned to the interests of young liberal audiences in the 1960s, was successful during the 1960s because of how the film from its inception was designed to capture the spirit and angst of the 1960s, including the increasing disdain for authority figures and the common place usage of violence (128-129). For Toplin, even more important than these elements within the film are its associations with the public's growing fear of violent crime that was on the rise during the 1960s. Some audiences, he argues, were alarmed that the popularity of the film could spark a crime wave, as young people could be tempted to copy the actions and behaviors displayed in the film. In fact, it was these fears which, he argues, ultimately harmed the film's chance to be taken serious as a new form of artistic endeavor. However, what makes the film so important for film scholars and audiences, claims Toplin, is the way in which a film set in the 1930s elicited wide spread discussion about the nature of the American dream, crime, and youthful anxiety in the 1960s.

Toplin argues that *Patton*, unlike *Bonnie and Clyde*, resonated with conservative audiences and politicians like Richard Nixon, because it depicted American military might as benevolent and resolute at a time when questions over America's involvement in Vietnam dominated the social and political landscape. The importance of the military to the films

production and reception are discussed by Toplin when he documents how Daryl Zanuck and 20th-Century Fox elicited the financial and advisory support of the U.S. military, a strategy that at first was resisted by the military and Patton's family for fear that both would be depicted in a negative light. Yet, with the publication of a new biography of the general that was in-depth and sympathetic, Toplin shows how 20th-Century Fox found the necessary story material and support for the film that in turn helped secure the film's financial success. The combination of these elements, along with the support of President Nixon and the winning of Best Picture for 1970, Toplin argues, perfectly demonstrate how a film that portrays past events and people could be used by critics and audiences alike to debate present day concerns.

The last two chapters of the book deconstruct the most common usage of history in Hollywood, namely the idea of the great man in history. Toplin examines how the popular 1970s conspiracy-thriller *All the President's Men* (Alan J. Pakula, 1976) used elements of genre to create an image of Woodward and Bernstein on screen that made them seem heroic and dynamic, despite the historical facts that they were not the only investigative reporters working on the Watergate story and its impact on American government. Despite these shortcomings, Toplin labels the film as "one of Hollywood's better examples of cinematic history" (201). In Chapter Eight, he examines how second wave feminism impacted Hollywood's representation of women on film, especially as agents of change in the film *Norma Rae* (Martin Ritt, 1979). He explains that, "*Norma Rae* was marketed to the American public as a story about a female *Rocky*" and that it was this strategy that ultimately undermined the film's attempt to highlight the struggles of workers in a changing American economy (223).

Toplin's book does provide some useful methodological approaches, which can be used in the teaching of the connection between cinema and history. However, its weakness is that it relies too much on the words and deeds of the producers and financiers and does not spend as much time looking at the role culture played in the formation of scripts and overall marketing. Still, it is a good text designed for classroom use, but it does not challenge or provide new theoretical approaches to the consideration of how history is situated within film studies.

Douglas Kellner's book *Cinema Wars: Hollywood Film and Politics in the Bush-Cheney Era* is representative of Toplin's idea that contemporary films can be utilized to discuss political and historical currents within a given period of time. Kellner states that the goal of his study is "to show that the turbulence of the era is reproduced in the Hollywood films of the 2000s" (1). In order to make this claim, he uses the method of "transcode" to read the films (2), a technique which, he notes, allows him "to describe how specific political discourses like Reaganism or liberalism

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are translated or encoded into media texts" (2). For him this strategy of analysis enables him to see how what he terms "cinema wars" have been intensely fought over by mainstream filmmaking, filmmakers, politicians and audiences, especially during the 2000s as a result of the "war on terror" and increasing efforts to transform the United States into a police state (12).

Underlining the entirety of Kellner's book is a negative reaction to the policies of the Bush administration and a belief that the public's awareness or lack thereof to the real nature of those policies can be located within the films of the period. In Chapter One, entitled 'Confronting the Horrors of the Bush-Cheney Era', Kellner examines how the rise in popularity and production of documentary films was a direct result of the mainstream media's inability or apathy to investigate what was occurring in government and within large multi-national corporations like Walmart. Kellner reads Robert Greenwald's film *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price* (2005) as an example of how the Bush tax cuts for corporations and millionaires enabled companies like Walmart to increase their profit margins by producing cheap goods in China, which in turn were sold in America. This strategy allowed the company to expand, according to Kellner's reading, and ensured that American workers would continue to see declining wages and buying power (63). Therefore Greenwald's documentary provides a service for American and global audiences that was lacking in news organizations.

In Chapter Two, 'Hollywood's 9/11 and Spectacles of Terror', he examines how Hollywood dealt with the catastrophic events of 9/11. He analyzes films like *United 93* (Paul Greengrass, 2006) and *World Trade Center* (Oliver Stone, 2006) along with the development of television series like *24* (Fox, 2001–2010) and how they attempted to capture the zeitgeist of American fears of the Muslim "Other" and terrorism on the American landscape. Kellner's analysis of these films' narrative and filmic style illustrate the conflicting impressions of the "war on terror" in Hollywood and with filmmakers who struggled to capture "the truth" of the events while also trying to tell marketable stories. In the case of *United 93* and *World Trade Center*, Kellner illustrates why these films failed to attract an audience but genre films like *War of the Worlds* (Stephen Spielberg, 2005) and *Cloverfield* (Matt Reeves, 2008) engaged with the larger issues of terrorism and fear in a format that was identifiable and at the same time enjoyable for audiences.

Kellner's third chapter, 'Michael Moore's Provocations', examines how Moore became the face of opposition to the Bush-Cheney era with his films *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) and *Sicko* (2007). He closely examines Moore's usage of the documentary and a new form of aesthetics to show how he transformed himself into one of America's leading partisan and radical filmmakers (133). Kellner places

Moore in the context of the leftist tradition in making documentaries and then illustrates how his strategies of personal witnessing, exploratory and confrontational quest dramas, and partisan political interventions in conjunction with his persona as a "man of the people" made Moore a leader in American documentary form.

In Chapter Four, 'Hollywood Political Critiques of the Bush-Cheney Regime From Thrillers to Fantasy and Satire', Kellner explores how Hollywood filmmakers used the form of genre to directly or indirectly criticize the administration and its view of American power. Through an examination of such diverse films as *The Manchurian Candidate* (Jonathan Demme, 2004), the *Bourne Trilogy* (Doug Liman, 2002, Paul Greengrass, 2004 & 2007), *Syriana* (Stephen Gaghan, 2005), *Pirates of the Caribbean 3: At Worlds End* (Gore Verbinski, 2007) and *Transformers* (Michael Bay, 2007), Kellner shows how Hollywood incorporated positive and negative discussions of Bush policies like warrantless wiretapping, suspension of *habeas corpus* for suspected terrorists and the creation of a society based on fear.

The fifth chapter, which looks at the depiction of the Iraq war and "the war on terror" in documentary films like *The Dreams of Sparrows* (Hayder Daffar, 2005), *Control Room* (Jehane Noujaim, 2004), *Taxi to the Dark Side* (Alex Gibney, 2007), and fiction films such as *Home of the Brave* (Irwin Winkler, 2006), *Redacted* (Brian De Palma, 2007) *In the Valley of Elah* (Paul Haggis, 2007), and *Stop Loss* (Kimberly Peirce, 2008) is by far the strongest part of the book. Like other film scholars who have discussed why Hollywood was willing to portray the war on screen as it was occurring, Kellner notes that audiences were not interested in viewing these films. However, as he argues, what makes these films of interest historically and to film scholars is the way in which they illustrate the rapidly shifting nature of film and the exchange of information through blogs, video, and the Internet. The ability to document the war and share its effects, Kellner argues has impacted American audience's feelings about the reasons for war and the way in which it has been conducted. Feelings that he notes have in turn influenced audience's perceptions of their world and the government and resulted in the development of a more cynical and media-savvy citizen.

Kellner's book offers some interesting and controversial readings of Hollywood, its connection to the Bush-Cheney administration and discussion of the changing dynamics of American culture as a result of Bush's election in 2000 and the events of 9/11/01. He not only connects his readings of the films to the politics and culture of the 2000s but also to how "New Media" and the Internet shifted the nature of American political discourse from the mainstream into more "niche" markets. The book is clearly the product of a left-leaning academic whose political and cultural views impact his interpretations of the films he has chosen to

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analyze, which may harm the book's overall impact. Also, the book lacks a coherent theoretical framework and instead relies too often on close readings of a select group of films that implicitly support Kellner's overall argument that the Bush-Cheney era and its policies were either embraced or critiqued in Hollywood filmmaking. Still, this is an important study for film scholars that attempts to provide a cohesive narrative about American film and politics during a decade of fragmentation.

Michael J. Shapiro's book *Cinematic Geopolitics* offers an engaging theoretical, political and historical discussion of how film is enabling a "re-mapping of the world" through the body and technology. Shapiro draws upon the work of Michel Foucault with his usage of the idea of the "cinematic heterotopia" and Gilles Deleuze to show how spaces of violence, change, and coercion have been mapped into filmmaking in an attempt to preclude audiences from challenging the status quo of Western neo-liberal democracy.

Shapiro's reliance on a theoretical framework in conjunction with a deep reading of filmic aesthetics allows him to show the changing nature of the world as a result of the "war on terror" and rapid exchange of information is changing human perception. For example in his discussion of "violent cartography" he looks at how photographer Tomas Munita's "photo of a soldier" taken in Afghanistan recalls the camera positioning of John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) (19). In looking at the camera angles used and the play of light and shadow, Shapiro argues that both the film and the photograph visually represent the United States' brutal history of racial genocide and conquest. Thus the photo becomes more than an indication of the American fight on terrorism; it is emblematic of America's imperial history and racial injustice now perpetuated on a global stage.

In Chapter Two, Shapiro looks at how the cinematic representation of "space" influences filmmakers and audiences understanding of the geopolitics on a day-to-day basis. To illustrate this point, Shapiro closely examines Oliver Stone's controversial film *Salvador* (1986) and looks at how it disrupted American audiences' faith in U.S. foreign affairs, especially as conducted by the Reagan administration. The film, which looks at how the U.S. covertly supported "regime changes" during the 1980s, can be read as indications of the horrors enacted in the name of "democracy"(49).

In Chapter Four, he examines how Hollywood and global filmmakers have attempted to address the dark underbelly of consumer capitalism: the buying and selling of people and body parts. This chapter is the strongest in the book, and his reading of *Dirty Pretty Things* (Stephen Frears, 2002) looks at how the expansion of consumer capitalism into the third world, and the creation of an entire underclass of people, has benefited those with the money to exploit them as sexual and medical objects. Shapiro

connects the themes of the film to the larger question about the ethics of the "war on terror" and its constant brutalizing of the body politic to ensure security. He argues that, "if we recognize that the tensions between persons as human and persons as citizens are not easily resolved within a state-centric political imaginary" then it is possible to accept the realities of the inequitable nature of humanity in the 21st century (112). Throughout the rest of the book Shapiro explores the reality of these tensions and how they are manifest in cultural items like films, which makes his book out of the three reviewed here one of the most interesting and offers us future models to consider when analyzing contemporary cinema and television.

These three books illustrate the shifting nature of the relationship between history as a methodological approach and theory. Where Toplin and Kellner rely on a historical approach in combination with formalism, Shapiro focuses his efforts on looking at cinema as more than historical, political, or entertaining. He views cinema as a representation of the changing nature of the human body in relation to geography, technology, and perception, changes which he argues may lead to the ability of audiences to be more aware of the horrors enacted in the name of democracy.

What Cinema Is!**By Dudley Andrew**

Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. ISBN: 978-1-4051-0759-4. 184 pp. £17.00 (pbk)

The Personal Camera: Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film**By Laura Rascaroli**

London: Wallflower, 2009. ISBN: 978-1-906660-12-3. 224 pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A Review by Daniele Rugo, Goldsmiths, University of London, UK

As the title provocatively announces Dudley Andrew's book *What Cinema is!* engages in the complex task of responding to André Bazin's attempt to identify the core of the cinematographic creation. At the outset of Andrew's work lie the questions (and answers) posed by the French critic in a number of essays written between the 1940s and 1960s. What motivates the argument is the possibility to gather Bazin's at times ambiguous positions into a solid and coherent 'idea of cinema'. Around this Andrew develops an inspired and insightful, if perhaps nostalgic, roadmap delineating how cinema should proceed to remain faithful to its origins (or to Bazin's original ideas). Andrew associates the foundation of a discourse on cinema and the development of a proper film theory with the French school, a lineage that goes from Bazin to Truffaut and Rohmer and from Daney to Frodon. In more than one way such focus echoes Jean-Luc Godard's remarks in the *Histoire(s) du Cinema* (Gallimard, 1998) at the point where the director develops his own genealogy of art history, a direct line that runs from Diderot to Truffaut: "only the French have written history, they have doubted they were part of a history, they have wanted to know what kind of history it was, their own history within History, History within their own" (Godard, 1998, 42). In the introductory pages of his volume, Andrew calls this grounding collection of thoughts "the Cahiers Axiom" (4): a normative paradigm that separates one conception of cinema from another. The Cahiers line identifies a cinema that successfully embodies the 'idea of cinema', as opposed to audiovisual entertainment. The expression 'Cahiers Axiom' was coined by Serge Daney to express the fact that "cinema has a fundamental rapport with reality and that the real is not what is represented" (5). While Daney used it in the 1980s against the emerging 'Cinema du Look' (Luc Besson, Jean-Jacques Beneix, Jacques Annaud), Andrew uses this basic distinction against the invasion of computer-generated images and an overconfident digital aesthetics. The target of Andrew's brilliant critique though is not simply the digital, but a general lassitude of contemporary cinema, combined with obsessive pre-planning, an attitude exemplified by films

like Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Le Fabuleux Destin d' Amélie Poulain* (2001). Lassitude and obsession for detail seem to go hand in hand with Andrew's argument. On one hand, a film like *Amélie* is organized for the spectator's convenience - "*Amélie* is there to flatter us", claims Andrew (18). Based, as it is, on the enjoyable visual aspect (first and foremost the hackneyed version of the Parisian landscape) and self-confirming presentation, the charming *Amélie* generates full satisfaction, never asking the viewer to position himself regarding the reality at stake in the film. The spectator is, since the beginning, tuned in with the familiar and can at any time be comforted by the repetition of the obvious (which often takes the form of a dreamlike representation of the everyday). This kind of reassurance can be achieved because the streets have obsessively been pre-empted and tidied up; the fantasy is engineered so to produce the smallest degree of friction. When this cannot be achieved during filming, then it is taken care of in post-production. As a result, in the film, every mystery can be unveiled and the process of truth-making proper to cinema, which takes the spectator through an always duplicitous and ambivalent development, is surpassed at once by dazzling presences, constellations where everything is always in the right place. This erasure of the quest at the heart of the cinematic adventure is for Andrew exactly the opposite of what Bazin had envisaged: "Bazin's idea is to ever keep the subject of the film in view, even as it resists being represented by the image. Fascination comes not through dazzling presence, but through haunting absence, as recorded traces of a subject lead us in search of it" (25). It is clear then that Andrew follows an aesthetic of discovery, one in which authors and spectators engage in a similar exercise. On one hand, cinema triggers a tortuous struggle for recognition: films engender something of a Levinasian substitution (Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Duquesne University Press, 2006), where the author looks for himself and always finds the Other, while the spectator looking at others undergoes an inner experience. In most cases, such a circle is successful when it is mutilated, namely when the author doesn't completely overwhelm the Other, while the spectator doesn't fully complete the process of identification. On the other hand, the world comes to the fore for both author and spectator in its irreducible and not entirely accountable evidence. The world constantly imposes its conditions of visibility, merging fiction and fact, making it impossible to see everything and at the same time offering the unremarkable and the uneventful in unsuspected splendor. According to Andrew digital creations dismiss and overthrow these very processes, which make up for the genuine cinematic experiences. The aesthetic of new media reworks the world "until it conforms not only to our conditions of viewing but to our convenience and pleasure. The 'cinema effect' aims straight at the spectator's neurological make-up, whereas Bazin's line of thought goes toward a world beyond the screen" (42).

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Andrew illustrates his argument with a plethora of examples, drawing on both those filmmakers who directly inspired the writings of Bazin, and contemporary sources. Within the first group Andrew stresses the crucial role played by Rossellini and Bresson. Committed to elaborate a notion of cinematographic realism that could exist independently from literary forms, Rossellini was to develop new narrative structures – elliptical forms within which Bazin individuated the possibility to liberate the idiosyncratic attributes proper to cinema. With *Voyage to Italy* (1954), defined by the Cahiers crew as the first fully modern film, Rossellini had created a cinema of 'facts', passing onto the next generation an ethos that moved from the demand to work beyond the plot and the characters, in order to 'get to things'. Bresson was similarly recognized as a founding figure by Bazin and his colleagues for his ability to create films that "looked back at you, as animals do, from their otherness" (45). Kiarostami, Assayas, Von Trier, Jia Zhangke, and Mungiu are names most frequently cited among contemporary authors still working within and promoting the cinema of discovery. These filmmakers, regardless of whether or not they espouse new technologies and in particular the digital medium, aim at keeping alive the gospel of cinema according to the Cahiers. In a series of concise and effective comparative studies Andrew resolves that films like Mungiu's *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (2007) and Jia's *Still Life* (2006) manage to convey an idea of cinema as friction between reality and artistic design, "under this flickering illumination, the audience develops the subject that appears before them in suggestive fragments" (61). Enemies of all effects played out for mere entertainment or for virtuoso display, these filmmakers produce unpredictable effects between the seen and the unseen.

Despite being pervaded by a sense of longing for a time when debates around 'what cinema is' were not just more common, but more vigorous, Andrew's volume is a necessary tool for anybody interested in tracing Bazin's project and assessing its legacy. The book has the merit of being agile and easy to read, but at the same time it somehow falls short of its promise, never pushing Bazin's conceptual framework enough to provoke contemporary spectators. The argument against the cinema of manipulation constructed around digitally produced images, constantly retouched to achieve pre-planned effects, is as intelligent and consistent as timely. However, it fails to highlight the importance of digital technologies in advancing the very cinema Bazin had envisaged. Andrew concludes "cinema, essentially nothing in itself, is all about adaptation [...] those of us who care enough to take Bazin's charge must be vigilant in our quest for cinema, for it appears in ever new guises, changing only in itself" (141). Among these new guises one can certainly include the essay film, a form that, while respecting the demand for a frictional cinema, benefits greatly from digital technologies.

Laura Rascaroli's *The Personal Camera. Subjective Cinema and the Essay Film* is a thorough analysis of a form that has been rapidly changing the horizon of both fictional and documentary filmmaking. Although the models, devices and structures discussed by Rascaroli belong to a long tradition, the first conceptualizations of this form are relatively recent. Under the wider category of subjective cinema, Rascaroli lists a number of diverse forms of cinematographic expressions, which could be traced back sometimes to Vertov and sometimes to the early Buñuel. The volume operates a fourfold distinction: essay film, diary film, notebook film and self-portrait film. The study is committed precisely to shedding some light on a rich and complex set of outputs that sit between documentary filmmaking and experimental or avant-garde exercises. The aim of the volume is thus that of "on the one hand, describing the history of subjective cinema, tracing its theoretical roots, defining its workings, and exploring some of its principal issues and problems, and, on the other hand, respecting its heretical nature" (17). As the author herself repeats throughout the work, the difficulty in identifying the outline of such a miscellaneous group and the problems any definition comes up against constitute for the scholar equally a burden and a resource. Subjective cinema draws its force precisely from the shifts in focus and the oscillations of its results. It is against this itinerant ground that Rascaroli invokes the notion of heresy to describe the essay film. Alike its literary equivalent, essay films make of transgression a constitutive trait, they are necessarily fluctuating and open, since they must establish the conditions of their own existence. Despite this general ambiguity, two features can be identified as specific to this form: the essay film is reflective and subjective. From historically charged films like Chris Marker's *Le Tombeau d'Alexandre* (1993) to Harun Farocki's [Workers Leaving the Factory](#) (1995), all the way to the philosophical musings of Godard's *Notre Musique* (2004), the essay film constantly triggers a negotiation between the authorial or performative component (mainly through the use of voiceover) and the memory of the image, which often seems to comment on itself. This brings Rascaroli to deduce that "the essay film is particularly inclined to explore the relationship between film and document, between audiovisual record and historical event" (64). The diary form, which occupies the second section of the analysis, presents an exacerbation of both above-mentioned categories, by adding to the general reflectiveness of the essay film a component of self-scrutiny and to the subjective one a properly autobiographical dimension. This form of personal filmmaking that prospered mainly in the independent and avant-garde circles of the 1960s and 1970s places the author's voice (and often his life) at the center of every communication, so much so that these works become almost private/home movies. Rascaroli writes that "the author often becomes the true hero of the text, and its focal point; everything is overtly filtered through his or her sensibility and point of view, to the extent that, at times, the film compellingly approximate the

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confessional style" (106). The authors brought as examples – Mekas, Pasolini, Sokurov, Antonioni – engage in an explicit "rhetoric of the self" (152). It is the relationship to the spectator though that separates the most the essay film from the diary form. While in the first case the spectator is constantly kept vigilant because called to complete, as it were, the symbolic texture of the film, in the personal film, the author is addressing primarily herself. However, while confessing to the camera, the author must have already implied an audience and is asking therefore for some sort of identification. This paradox brings Rascaroli to conclude that both forms share a third decisive attribute: plurality (189). Plurality is a key term here, since it points to a constant interpellation of the meaning of the cinematographic image and of its ontology. Plurality brings into focus the question of authorship and cinema's ambivalent positioning between the real and its presentation. The plural nature of essayistic cinema keeps open the demand placed by Bazin on everyone interested in film-making: not to respond once and for all to the question of what cinema is, but to keep asking it for the sake of cinema itself. As Rascaroli notes, a great number of authors involved in this kind of forms make broad use of digital technologies for filming (DV and HD cameras), editing (non-linear or non-destructive editing software) and distribution (databases and video-streaming). Works like those of Marker (*Level Five*, 1997) and Mekas (*365 Day Project*, 2007) emphasize how, while CGI and 3D dominate the market with products destined for quick consumption, digital technologies can also help to serve an idea of cinema based on discovery, responsiveness and engagement. Rascaroli's analysis of essayistic cinema shows that there is still room for a cinema of "thought, of investigation, of intellectual searching and of self-reflection" (189) in which the spectator can play a part, not "as an empty, abstract position, as a general audience to be persuaded or entertained, but as an embodied subject who goes to the cinema to establish a relationship with a text and to enter into communication and negotiation with another embodied subject" (191).

Rascaroli's text is one of impressive intellectual rigor and of utter importance to the study of an ever-changing form – subjective cinema – and of filmmaking at large.

All about Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema

Edited by Brad Epps and Despina Kakoudaki

Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8166-4961-7. 57 b/w illustrations, 491 pp. \$24.95 (pbk)

Stephen King on the Big Screen

By Mark Browning

Bristol and Chicago: Intellect Books, 2009. ISBN: 978-1-84150-245-8. 256 pp. £14.95 (pbk)

A Review by Edmund P. Cueva, University of Houston-Downtown, USA

Mark Browning's *Stephen King on the Big Screen* and *All about Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema* by Brad Epps and Despina Kakoudaki offer two different approaches to the works of two very influential directors. The back cover of *Stephen King on the Big Screen* notes that this text is the first work by a film specialist "to consider every Stephen King film given a theatrical release". Moreover, the "style, whilst critically rigorous, is designed to be accessible to discerning readers of King and fans of films based on his work". In addition, Mark Browning writes that this is the first academic work to cover all of the literature-to-screen adaptations (22). The author includes in his analysis the following movies in eight chapters. Chapter One – 'Mind Over Matter: Telekinesis' – analyses *Carrie* (Brian De Palma, 1976), *The Rage: Carrie II* (Katt Shea, 1999), *The Dead Zone* (David Cronenberg, 1983), *Firestarter* (Mark L. Lester, 1984). Chapter Two – 'Tales from the Darkside: The Portmanteau film' – considers *Creepshow* (George A. Romero, 1982), *Creepshow II* (Michael Gornick, 1987), *Cat's Eye* (Lewis Teague, 1985), *Tales from the Darkside: The Movie* (John Harrison, 1990). Chapter Three – 'Sometimes Dead is Better: The Body Under the Sheet' – includes analyses of *Silver Bullet* (Daniel Attias, 1985), *Pet Sematary* (Mary Lambert, 1989), *Pet Sematary II* (Mary Lambert, 1992), *Sleepwalkers* (Mick Garris, 1992). Chapter Four – 'Boys to Men: Rites-of-Passage' – considers *Stand by Me* (Rob Reiner, 1986), *Apt Pupil* (Bryan Singer, 1998), *Hearts in Atlantis* (Scott Hicks, 2001). Chapter Five – 'The Rise of the Machines: 1950s Science-Fiction B-Movie' – talks about *Christine* (John Carpenter, 1983), *Maximum Overdrive* (Stephen King, 1986), *Graveyard Shift* (Ralph S. Singleton, 1990), *The Lawnmower Man* (Brett Leonard, 1992), *Dreamcatcher* (Lawrence Kasdan, 2003). Chapter Six – 'The Great Escape: Prison Drama' – scrutinizes *The Shawshank Redemption* (Frank Darabont, 1994), *The Green Mile* (Frank Darabont, 1999), *The Running Man* (Paul Michael Glaser, 1987). Chapter Seven – 'Books of Blood: The Writer' – investigates *Misery* (Rob Reiner, 1990), *The Dark Half* (George

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A. Romero, 1993), *Secret Window* (David Koepp, 2004). Chapter Eight – 'The Terror of Everyday Life and Final Girls' - talks about *Cujo* (Lewis Teague, 1983), *Dolores Claiborne* (Taylor Hackford, 1995), *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980), *The Shining* (ABC, 1997), *1408* (Mikael Håfström, 2007). The book also includes an introduction, concluding chapter, and references.

It is somewhat difficult to write a review of Browning's *Stephen King on the Big Screen* without coming to two conclusions. First of all, Browning is very conversant with film and its associated genres. There is no doubt that the author can find connections and parallels in every type of textual permutation that he enumerates in his introduction: intertextual, metatextual, paratextual, architextual, and hypertextual (10) - especially the intertextual. Indeed, the enormous amount of correlations and equivalencies that Browning includes in his narrative is clear evidence of his erudition. Secondly, and somewhat disappointing to this reviewer, is the tendency towards harshness in some of the statements made regarding Stephen King and his work or the films adapted from King's works. Browning suggests that the film adaptations of the King's work should perhaps be studied, intertextually, in their own right as a "unique body of work" (9) and in terms of the genre(s) to which they belong. He posits that his book will examine King's work on basis that the genre develops from "interwoven parasitical processes of borrowing, plagiarism, pastiche - in short, the business of intertextuality" (12).

Intrinsic to this study is the relationship, expected or not, that forms between the audience and the genre. In other words, the audience expects certain things from a genre. If the genre (or film adaptation) fails to deliver on the generic promises, the audience will not receive well the adaptation. When one thinks of King and his oeuvre, one thinks, it is imagined, of the "horror" genre. The question is whether or not the motion picture versions deliver what the audience would associate with "horror". Browning argues that the majority of the adaptations do not meet generic expectations: "it is a contention of this book that some films are judged to be weaker because they fail on generic grounds to offer the kinds of pleasures that audiences expect" (17).

Browning tends to be somewhat confused regarding myths and traditional narratives. He writes: "Since horror is a genre where many sub-genres deal in myths, rather than directly referencing the everyday world in which we live, films often refer in their first instance to other, previous narratives of the genre" (86). Myth, by nature, directly reflects our everyday experiences and is not limited to a static text that needs to be imitated or reflected upon in order for the myth to function. In fact, if a myth becomes tied to one text or medium it will quickly cease to be effective. Perhaps, the author meant clichés, common themes, or expected generic elements.

Browning's purpose is praiseworthy because it does fill in an obvious gap in the research done on King and his literary texts and their filmic adaptations. As mentioned, the author is able to make connections (most of them are valid and work out) with a variety of texts and films. This is not to say that all of the parallels or intertexts that Browning puts forward work. In his discussion of *Carrie* (Brian De Palma, 1976), the author states that there exists a less-widely noted cinematic parallel: "Dario Argento's *Suspria* [1977], released around the same time as *Carrie*, also features surreal, nightmarish dream sequences, fluid camerawork, operatic violence, dark gothic houses and flying knives as a method of dispatching stalked and tortured heroines. Furthermore, Argento uses a school setting [a ballet centre rather than a high school], all-female changing room scenes, a focus on the paranormal [witchcraft rather than telekinesis]; an ending in which a house is destroyed by fire due to unspecified supernatural means; and Argento's whole set, especially corridors, are bathed in blood-red light [from the outset, not just the climax as in De Palma's film]" (42-43). It is not clear to this reviewer why the parallel was drawn since it does not fit the argument that Browning is making. Nor is it clear if one film borrowed from the other, if the genre demands these elements, if it is pure serendipity that both films and directors chose to include these elements, and what, if anything, Browning's observation has to do with the work of King or the film adaptations of his texts.

It should be noted that Browning is correct in pointing out that any work such as his *Stephen King on the Big Screen* cannot be the final word on someone who is still alive, writing, and participating (in one way or another) in the adaptation of his literary work to the silver screen. The 'almost built-in-obsolescence' of *Stephen King on the Big Screen* and the overly critical opinions expressed by Browning take away from the important contribution that this book makes to understanding the relationship that develops when a literary text is transferred to another medium. If the reader can avoid becoming part of the anti-King sentiment that permeates the text, the reader will find an in-depth and mostly balanced analysis. The word 'mostly' is used because, unfortunately, the author ends his text with fourteen reasons for why Kings' texts resist adaptation.

All about Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema, edited by Brad Epps and Despina Kakoudaki, is a wonderful book on the movies of the Spanish director. It is full of interesting and thought provoking essays, but, as often happens in most collections, there exists some unevenness in the work. The text includes an Introduction - 'Approaching Almodóvar: Thirty Years of Reinvention' - written by the editors, a Conclusion - 'Volver: A Filmmaker's Diary' - which is written by Pedro Almodóvar, a list of contributors, index, and four chapters that include sixteen essays in total. The broad variety of themes and topics contained in this volume are

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indicative of the many areas that the work of Almodóvar has touched. The shared goal of these essays, according to the editors, is to "explore Almodóvar's artistic and cinematic accomplishments in ways that attend to the wide range of styles and subjects that the director has employed, as well as the wide range of spectatorial, critical, and theoretical questions that his films present for our consideration" (2-3).

An enormous contribution that this collection makes is to place Almodóvar into a historical setting and context. This is not to say that the editors and authors rehash the correspondence between the rise of Almodóvar as author and director with the end of Francoism and the genesis of the *Movida*, but rather some of the articles place Almodóvar into a framework constructed by the oeuvre of such cinematographic, literary, and artistic talents as Warhol, Cocteau, Lacan, and Hitchcock (this list is not an exhaustive one).

It is true that some authors do focus on the evitable Francoism/*Movida*/Almodóvar combination, but this well-trod approach is not the dominant theme of the collection as a whole. Rather, the compilation examines difference and diversity in Almodóvar's opera as detailed by his inclusion of "strung-out nuns, sadomasochistic lesbians, queer terrorists, pill-popping housewives, incestuous dry cleaners, garrulous Argentinean psychoanalysts, impotent detectives, sassy pre-ops, troubled porn stars, paraplegic ex-cops, murderous ex-matadors, and erstwhile telephone repairmen" (11) among the other unique, troubled, and distressed individuals that populate Almodóvar's films. Yet, the question remains for why there should be another work on someone who is already the subject of numerous "commentaries, overviews, and approaches" (15). The editors suggest that the scholarly critique aimed at Almodóvar, like his work, should perhaps be taken as an "ongoing experiment" (29) to which the essays in *All about Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema* will contribute.

As mentioned above, it often occurs that collections may be uneven in their presentations. However, it would be best not to focus on the essays that, for one reason or another, do not rise to the top of the list of those that are most appealing and worthy of discussion. That any one essay is not mentioned in the brief commentary that follows should not be interpreted to mean that it is not a "good" essay, rather the lack of time and space for a detailed discussion on each and every essay in this collection do not exist. In fact, this eclectic collection by Epps and Kakoudaki is a good one and has much to contribute to our understanding of Almodóvar. Moreover, this is a volume that should be read by all those who are attracted to Almodóvar and his work. I shall briefly discuss the two essays that I found most interesting.

Marsha Kinder's 'All about the Brothers: Retroseriality in Almodóvar's Cinema' clearly demonstrates that one need not focus solely on the Almodóvar's country of origin and his cultural/historical background in order to appreciate and understand his films. There are numerous approaches that can be taken in considering the director's work: Kinder chooses retroseriality as her mechanism. Kinder defines retroseriality as Almodóvar's increasing "evocation of earlier works (both his own and intertexts of others) that leads us to read them as ongoing saga and to regroup them into network clusters [...] his films remind us that new works influence old works just as old works influence new ones, for variations lead us to reread older works in new ways" (269). Kinder focuses on *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (1984), *Law of Desire* (1987), and *Bad Education* (2004).

Linda Williams's 'Melancholy Melodrama: Almodovarian Grief and Lost Homosexual Attachments' is the strongest of all of the articles. Williams offers the reader a thorough and detailed theoretical analysis of *Talk to Her* (2002) and *High Heels* (1991) using the research of Adrienne Rich and Judith Butler. Modalities of desire that are considered clearly heterosexual in melodramatic films are outlined. These modalities are changed by Almodóvar in his films.

Stephen King on the Big Screen and *All about Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema* take two very different approaches in their discussions of the directors. The former tends to be overly critical and unjustifiably harsh at times. The latter to some extent tends to be too flattering of Almodóvar (perhaps too reverential). However, *All about Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema* must be considered by all who want to get a glimpse into the mind of Almodóvar.

Crisis and Capitalism in Contemporary Argentine Cinema

By Joanna Page

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8223-4472-8. 39 illustrations, xii+233pp. £14.99(pbk)

Writing National Cinema: Film Journals and Film Culture in Peru

By Jeffrey Middents

Hanover and London: Dartmouth College Press/University Press of New England, 2009. ISBN: 978-1-58465-776-7. 20 illustrations, viii+276pp. £44.50(hbk)

Latsploitation, Exploitation Cinemas, and Latin America

Edited by Victoria Ruétalo and Dolores Tierney

New York and London: Routledge, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-415-99386-9. 22 illustrations, xiii+328pp. £90.00(hbk)

A Review by Rowena Santos Aquino, Independent Researcher

The urgency of attending to transnational film cultures, circuits, and fandom in response to globalisation produces the caveat of overlooking, or even dismissing, the study of national cinemas in the strictest sense. But, of course, underlining this urgency are the very national film cultures, circuits, and fandom that constitute such global, transnational frameworks in the first place. Ultimately, underwriting such binaries of the national/transnational, or local/global, is the question of the social role of film in culture and society. Its various guises operate according to not just local or national, but also intra-national and regional levels of film production, dissemination, and consumption.

Art house cinemas, print film journals, and exploitation cinemas are the range of such guises that constitute these three recent works on Latin American cinemas. These three works present the undeniable depth of recent Latin American cinemas and film historiographies. Individually and collectively, they take on the issues of the establishment, history, and re/imagining of a national cinema; transnational connections and influences that negotiate the national, which in turn also challenge transnational film studies; and different modes of cinephilia that enable the dynamic tension between the transnational and the national. One situates film both as creative mirroring and critical analysis of the socioeconomic state of the country. Another uses and examines alternative film texts, in this case, the film journal, for a historical inquiry and critical re/imagining of a national cinema. Yet another challenges the

general understanding of what constitutes a national cinema, national themes, and national subjects through a look at exploitation films. Taken together, they generate a productive, dynamic dialogue that illuminates the current state of Latin American film studies in the English language. At the same time, the order in which I examine these works individually indicate the measure in which I consider them to stretch the parameters of writing about the tension between the transnational and the national and provide pleasurable and erudite scholarship on not only Latin American film studies in particular, but film studies in general.

In *Crisis and Capitalism in Contemporary Argentine Cinema*, Joanna Page examines contemporary Argentine films, filmmakers, modes of filmmaking, themes, and their direct, complex relationship to the socioeconomic state of the Argentine society. It is a work that, firstly, responds to the resurgence of national film production that significantly coincided with the severe economic crisis that hit Argentina in 2001. As such, Page's overall argument is that contemporary Argentine cinema engages with and registers various perspective and positionalities, theoretical and physical, related to the crisis. Such argument makes these films significant for Latin American scholarship, and film studies in particular, emphasizing the national and these films' role in negotiating the nation's meaning both domestically and internationally. Page writes, "What unites all of the films examined [...] is their attention to shifts in subjectivity and representation provoked by specific political or economic structures and events", precisely because cinema constitutes "part of the economic system, the social relations, and the cultural milieu it might be supposed to depict" (4).

Secondly, Page's work is a critical reassertion of the invocation of the nation, against the climate of global culture and transnational film studies. She rightly finds constraints to transnational film studies, which can overlook, or consciously ignore, the uneven global capital development in film industries in particular, and the nation in general. She contends with and resists the neoliberal discourse of inevitability that impacts and is overdetermining the constitution of critical film studies and objects of study. But where Page departs from simply reiterating the national vs. transnational debate is through the specificity of this critical reassertion. Argentina's severe economic crisis of 2001 was a period in which "rearticulation of the national became a contestatory exercise, both denouncing the failure of the state and resisting the rhetoric of globalization" (6). These "crisis" films thus form a part of the "radical critique of neoliberalism" that "involves a reassertion of the nation as a strategy of resistance" (6). Page seeks to persuade the reader how much new Argentine cinema "is as much about the renewal of a cinematic language as it is about a response to shifting social realities" (63), where the crime genre, for instance, is a significant lens through which to gauge

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Argentina's precarious, liminal position between Third World socioeconomic crises and First World genealogy and aspirations.

Though the aforementioned crime chapter is one of her less effective chapters, Page's work is generally engaging. She systematically asserts that contemporary Argentine cinema operates as a reflection and articulation of post-crisis subjectivities and a sociological tool and framework with which to examine post-crisis society. As such, she addresses issues of migration, labour, and memory and history. Aside from presenting films that are little known outside of the art house and film festival circuits, Page's critical readings are also generally illuminating and instructional as tools with which to understand subjectivities and representations vis-à-vis the crisis. Her analyses are most effective and interesting when she pairs her critical readings with the material, social details of production, as in Chapter Three, where she looks at the films of Lisandro Alonso and Martín Rejtman and the way they present insights on the circulation of labour, bodies, objects, and capital. In such analyses, she affirms clearly how contemporary Argentine cinema is materially engaging with the country's socioeconomic residual, emergent, and dominant states, to borrow Raymond Williams's terms (*Marxism and Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1977). Page's significant critical intervention is thus to politicize new Argentine cinema in a way that challenges claims to its ahistoricity. The way Page positions Argentine cinema raises questions of the nation and national cinema that has surged in Argentina during and after the crisis.

Page's study of contemporary Argentine cinema, distinct from previous generations of national film output, is ultimately a luxury. That is, in stating "Argentine cinema", there is an assurance of an established film history and historiography in the country, and actual, material films to which "national cinema" refers, however contested. Other Latin American national industries and histories, as Jeffrey Middents demonstrates in *Writing National Cinema*, do not have such a history of filmmaking and scholarship to firmly constitute the "national". In the case of Peruvian film history and cinema, though domestic film production occurred as early as the 1930s, an actual filmmaking industry – or semblance of one – emerged only in the 1950s. Even then, however, film output was rather low, such that to speak of a self-sustaining national film industry would be an exaggeration: before 1940 and 1960, Middents shares, only seven narrative feature films were made.

But the aforementioned dearth does not mean that film-going was equally intermittent. Alternative ways to examine national film culture exist, aside from close readings of film texts. In the absence of a substantial body of work on which to base an examination of film culture, Middents taps into popular, public history, in short, the material of film journals. He examines Peruvian cultural production and a history of film through the

major film journals that appeared beginning in the mid- to late 1960s. In doing so, he opens up different routes of historical inquiry, especially the "community-building roles and connections of cinematic written discourse" (48). Middents argues creatively and persuasively that film culture, in the form of journals and cine-clubs in the capital city of Lima, was active, collaborative, contestatory, and prolific, however short-lived. In a word, beginning in the mid-1960s, *limeño* film culture – along with a few other key cities – was rather dynamic and expressed itself beyond the page to constitute a different kind of film output. Where Argentine cinema was made and necessarily written about for Page, for Middents Peruvian cinema is not just about the resulting films but also the process of articulating how one imagined Peruvian cinema to be, which can then speak to and shape actual filmmaking practices and subsequent productions.

That is, Middents's work on Peruvian film journals elaborates the "historical trajectory of a developing cinema and the influence" (2) of the journals/writers on the processes of filmmaking, film-going, and film criticism. He positions such processes as active socio-cultural/political practices in a country where film output has been limited. Middents thus also looks at the conditions of the emergence of active critical film writing and the founding of film journals in Peru, which brings the rather isolated space, practice, and consumption of filmmaking in Peru into contact with an international network of other critical film making/writing cultures, writers, and filmmakers. Unsurprisingly, the French journal *Cahiers du cinéma* was a major source of inspiration for Peruvian film writers. But such inspiration was directed less towards international productions as objects of study than the elaboration of Peruvian national cinema: what it has been, what it could be, and what it will be. But perhaps surprisingly, unlike *Cahiers du cinéma* critics who eventually became filmmakers in their own right, the founders and writers of the main journal that Middents examines, *Hablemos de cine*, did not feel the need to transition from writing to filmmaking (which would have been a difficult financial transition). Yet the absence of this transition positions the founders and writers of *Hablemos de cine* as film auteurs in their own way, who followed a kind of apprenticeship as would a filmmaker, with film critics and film professors of older generations as mentors. They may not have produced films themselves, but as "arbiters of taste" (69), they cultivated a sense of what should be (national) cinema, which they then instilled in their readers. In turn, their readers literally acted upon such a critical influence through their cinephilia.

On this note, Middents's most important critical contribution to his reading of the national that is absent in Page's work is his "tracing of the role of cinephilia in film criticism" (12). He mobilizes cinephilia as a crucial social and material act that exercises a theoretical power. Such theoretical power can translate directly into economic and social power of the writers,

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readers, and filmmakers to hold sway over a specific notion of a national cinema.

If Middents's book directly addressed cinephilic criticism in Peru, he did so within the context of high culture, influenced as *Hablemos de cine* was by continental European film criticism and dominated by aesthetic concerns. Victoria Ruétalo and Dolores Tierney's anthology, *Latsploitation, Exploitation Cinemas, and Latin America* also explicitly addresses cinephilia and film criticism. But their anthology breaks the low culture stigma of exploitation cinemas and their consumption being shoved under the national table, as it were. The anthology deals with exploitation cinemas in Latin America, or "latsploitation," a term and practice that negotiates the national and transnational in its own way through what Linda Williams ('Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess', *Film Quarterly*, 1991) terms "body genres," but often overlooked precisely for their popular, low-brow, even vulgar characteristics. Rather than debate aspirational notions of the national, the seventeen essays that constitute this anthology do not want their objects of study to aspire to anything else than what they are, and as such, articulate more strongly than Page's own work her prescription of transnational film studies overlooking other aspects of national cultural production.

The key term "latsploitation", however, goes beyond specifying the distinct national exploitation cinemas of Latin America. The anthology proposes and mobilizes this term to invest it with a sociopolitical charge specific to the geopolitical context of Latin America in its distinct countries and as a whole. The term also draws out elements of such cinemas that signify reassertions of the national, even as it delineates their deep sense and transgression of "geospatial boundaries" (6) at the same time. Though Ruétalo and Tierney are careful about not making latsploitation films automatically subversive, as demonstrated by several contributions on the reactionary politics in the cinemas of José Mojia Marins (Tierney) and León Limovsky (Andrew Willis), on the whole, they situate latsploitation films as challenges to standard conceptions of the national, while affirming a different dynamic of what constitutes the national to begin with. In fact, all of Ruétalo and Tierney's essay selections navigate through the thematic of exploitation cinemas as always already transnational and global, which I group together through the following three reasons. One: the migrating, cross-media platforms and circuits in which they often circulate. Two: the layers of borrowings and re-borrowings between national exploitation cinemas that constitute the local foundation, international transformation, and global perpetuation of their content. Gerard Dapena's essay on Argentine filmmaker Emilio Vieyra's work and their permutations that reach Spanish language-speaking communities in New York wonderfully articulates this point. Three: the migratory bodies that work behind and before the cameras. Jeffrey Middents's contribution, on Hollywood producer Roger Corman's co-

productions with Peru; the above-mentioned contributions on the works of Marins and Klimosky; and Sergio de la Mora's examination of Isela Vega's transnational body and body of work all extend this specific discussion.

This anthology thus attributes to latsploitation great movement, mobility, and migration. Another example of this kind of movement is intra-national, as in the case of Ecuadorian docufiction, pirated films of recent violent events, which have found incredible local audiences. As Gabriela Alemán argues, such low-budget, gore fare and its local piracy can operate as weapons against the "coloniality of knowledge" (263), not to mention as modes of everyday meaning-making of contemporary crises and one's position within them for local persons who see themselves in such works. Yet another example of the different forms of movement found in latsploitation is very specific and pertinent in talking about Latin American cinemas, exploitation or otherwise: *cine fronterizo*, or Mexican border cinema, to which two essays are devoted. Catherine L. Benamou's contribution is of interest in looking at the gendering of border cinema through the serial character of Lola the truck driver. Unfortunately, she bogs down her essay in such convoluted, nearly run-on sentences that her argument and points are all but drowned. In contrast, Adán Avalos's own contribution on the *naco* (a pejorative term for Mexican border cinema) is moving and revealing. The social actuality and immediacy of such mobile cinemas emerges from Avalos' mixing of theoretical and personal perspectives, which account for his own spectatorial experiences of border cinema as a member of the migrant audiences that have become so taken with such films. For these films target Mexican migrant communities as their principal audience and, in turn, speak directly to the migrants' current lives and experiences. Avalos thus takes *naco* out of its negative context to propose an empowered border cinema he calls *naco* cinema, a "transnational cinema that reflects and creates the identity of recent Latino immigrants into the United States" (187).

Despite the term's unpleasant sound, latsploitation is a powerful signifier and practice, whose ever shifting coordinates attest to the breadth and depth of Latin American exploitation cinemas and their study. In turn, these three books altogether convincingly attest to the breadth and depth of Latin American cinemas and the current state of Latin American film studies.

Film Theory and Contemporary Hollywood Movies

Edited by Warren Buckland

New York & London: Routledge, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-415-96262-9. £21.99 (pbk), £80.00 (hbk)

Post-Classical Hollywood: Film Industry, Style and Ideology Since 1945

By Barry Langford

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-7486-3858-1. 13 b/w illustrations. 256 pp. £19.99 (pbk), £70.00 (hbk).

Hollywood Blockbusters: The Anthropology of Popular Movies

By David Sutton and Peter Wogan

Oxford & New York: Berg, 2009. ISBN: 978-1-847. 8 b/w illustrations. 192 pp. £17.99 (pbk), £50.00 (hbk).

A Review by Steen Christiansen, Aalborg University, Denmark

Theory and Hollywood may in many ways seem an ill match; the lofty abstractions of theory stepping out of its ivory tower to be sullied by the sensationalist money machine churning out bland products. Hollywood has always been theorized but it could be argued that it is now more relevant than ever to do so, considering new developments in Hollywood and its increasing relevance in our visual cultures. At the same time, however, in the field of film and cinema studies, theory now holds a precarious and problematic position.

As we know, theory has been criticized from many different angles and for many different reasons, including its abstract nature, dogmatic stance, jargonistic use of obscure terminology and, perhaps most controversially, its explicit politicization. All of these concerns and more are addressed by Warren Buckland in his Introduction to *Film Theory and Contemporary Hollywood Movies*. Buckland's point in editing the volume is precisely to show that theory, and film theory specifically, has a lot to offer film studies in general. Firstly, Buckland's Introduction neatly argues why film theory is neither missing nor unnecessary. As he points out:

Film theory, then, is a system of interrelated hypotheses, or tentative assumptions, about the unobservable nature of reality (a reality assumed to be a regular, economical, cohesive structure

underlying chaotic, heterogeneous observable phenomena). It unveils the scope and limits of human reasoning and, done well, can encourage us to question our collectively held values (6)

While some might take issue with the validity to consider tentative assumptions and notions of unobservable reality, instead to deal with tangible facts, there is no evidence to support the claim that film theory is going anywhere any time soon – and the publication of the three volumes under review here, stands testament to the power of film theory. The breadth and depth of these three studies show that there is still need to question our collective convictions about Hollywood that will only be challenged if we form tentative hypothesis in order to explore them.

If we start with Buckland's theoretical anthology, we find that it gathers different film theorists of many different persuasions and perspectives. That in itself makes the volume significant as well as interesting, because it does not attempt to unify film theory into a coherent whole, but allows each writer to express their perspectives. Organized in three different parts: Part One. 'New Practices, New Aesthetics'; Part Two. 'Feminism, Philosophy, and Queer Theory'; and Part Three, 'Rethinking Affects, Narration, Fantasy, and Realism', it is evident that many different topics are broached and dealt with.

The opening essay of Part One – Thomas Schatz's 'New Hollywood, New Millennium' – is most in line with Bordwell-style analysis over abstract theoretical musings. What Schatz does is turn his special kind of media industry analysis on the Hollywood franchise of the new millennium, and in doing so he extracts several solid and significant points about the aesthetics and stylistics of new Hollywood films. He claims, for example, that "regardless of its original form, the narrative source should provide not only a story property but also a piece of intellectual property whose copyright can be owned and controlled by the studio (or its parent company)" (32). He provides twenty such positions, which range from the well-known and almost banal, such as "the protagonist should be male" (32), to the insightful, like "the hero should in some way mirror the antagonist(s) – perhaps via an alter-ego or an assumed identity – and thus he should confront both an external struggle against evil and also an internal struggle against his own 'darker side'" (33).

Such a list of film parameters, though obviously reductionist and simplistic as Schatz also points out, shows what good film theory can do for us; it articulates a set of guidelines by which we may further our understanding of films – both new and old – and increase our awareness of how, in the case of Hollywood, industry and style are inseparable. Schatz's emphasis is thus on the informed movement between a macro and micro-level, revealing how a double focus can provide us with new insights.

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One of the more controversial pieces in the collection is the closing article of Part Two. David Martin-Jones' 'Demystifying Deleuze: French Philosophy Meets Contemporary US Cinema' draws on one of the most abstract theorists in current circulation: Giles Deleuze. Martin-Jones specifically argues that Deleuze's film philosophy is useful "for analyzing contemporary US cinema, both in its mainstream and alternative, independent forms" (214). Part explication and part analysis, then, Martin-Jones' piece goes on to unravel some of the denser parts of Deleuze's concepts of time-image and movement-image, while also arguing that *Fifty First Dates* (Peter Segal, 2004) alternates between these two otherwise distinct categories. Proceeding from this, Martin-Jones goes on to articulate an interesting concept of "minor cinema" which presents a category for politically subversive films, not just from "third cinemas" but also from the US independent circuit. In this way, a significant undercurrent is brought to the fore, precisely through a theoretically informed reading, something which might have been lost in more classical close analyses of style and narrative.

Shifting away from emphasis on film and industry, Martin Barker's 'Fantasy Audiences Versus Fantasy Audiences', from Part Three, chooses to do empirical audience research within the fantasy genre film. First, however, Barker must clear the playing field and takes issue with the previous work on fantasy done in both film and literary studies, including that of psychoanalysis. Here Barker criticizes the tendency to blur concepts such as desire, the Law and the Real, thereby dismissing Lacanian understandings of fantasy for his purposes. Instead, he adheres to a genre definition of fantasy, the sibling field to science fiction and horror. Barker's conceptualization is thus theoretical in its outset precisely to escape obscurity and dogmatism. From here, Barker goes on to chart the reception of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (Peter Jackson 2001, 2002, 2003) among fantasy fans. His research reveals how complex the processes of distribution of meaning are, thus going far beyond what we might learn from formal analyses. Rather than trying to draw any final conclusion from the different audience responses, Barker shows that precisely because fantasy films have had a marginal status, audiences have had rich opportunity to generate strong reactions which is one of the very advantages these films have had.

Too rich to summarize its entirety, Buckland's volume helps show that film theory is far from a monolithic structure interested in reducing, simplifying or neglecting the close study of individual films. Rather, film theory is shown to be a vibrant and diverse field which develops significant and detailed analyses of films in order to provide insights that were previously obscure for us. As a broad palette of film theory, this collection may assist both researchers and students. To find a form of conceptual unity alongside a bold theoretical and disciplinary move, we can turn to David Sutton's and Peter Wogan's *Hollywood Blockbusters:*

The Anthropology of Popular Movies. Not film scholars by education, Sutton and Wogan are both anthropologists who have turned their love to films in order to "show that these anthropological approaches can provide fresh angles on familiar Hollywood movies, and, more generally, on American society and cultural processes" (2).

While one might question what anthropologists can bring to the close reading of films - Sutton and Wogan are doing textual analyses rather than audience research - this proves to be a worthwhile endeavour. There is certainly nothing new in doing cultural readings of films, Hollywood or otherwise, as there are volumes written on that topic. However, many of these previous cultural studies oriented volumes have focused either on dominant ideology or gender, postcolonial or otherwise marginalized subjects. As such, the emphasis has either been on a culture industry point of view, where the scholar attempts to dismantle the workings of specific films or studios or the workings of third cinemas, gay and lesbian cinema and other alternatives to dominant modes of production.

Moving away from these concerns, Sutton and Wogan take a broader look at the society surrounding the popular films and instead of trying to criticize or praise, they take the anthropologist's typical view of the majority over the minority and so choose to emphasize what Hollywood blockbusters mean and do for most Americans, arguing that Hollywood films are "tantamount to the myths and sacred narratives that anthropologists routinely study" (1). What Sutton and Wogan propose to do - and I believe succeed in doing - is to say something about both Hollywood films and about American society. This should interest us as film scholars because we get a rare chance to see how myths are not just simple, one-sided ideological constructions but are more often hugely complex webs, filled with anxieties and doubts which popular films help interrogate.

Often starting their discussions around what at first appears to be trivial details, Sutton and Wogan go on to show that much is to be learned from paying attention to such details, such as when they unpack the full complexity of *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola 1972) in the line "Leave the gun, take the cannoli". Not because the line neatly divides the world of violence and food, male and female but instead because the line reveals that these two worlds do in fact mix. Because of this mixing, not only do Sutton and Wogan tentatively suggest that this is precisely why the line is so iconic and popular, but also that the line "further toys with American tensions over the split between the public and private sphere, suggesting that they don't have to be so rigidly separated" (35).

This reading is part of a much larger argument about work ethics in *The Godfather* and gives a good indication of Sutton's and Wogan's book: they manage to provide in-depth and interesting analyses of hugely popular

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films which have already been covered from many different aspects and yet come up with something new and fresh. Furthermore, they also manage to shed new light on why some of these films have remained popular in a world saturated with newer, glitzier films: these films are popular because they interrogate cultural and social concerns without ever addressing them directly. If these concerns had been resolved, there would be no need to revisit and rewatch the films, yet we constantly do.

With a study of this kind, the selection of films inevitably becomes a point of contention, something Sutton and Wogan admit to very openly. Focusing exclusively on *Field of Dreams* (Phil Alden Robinson 1989), *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg 1975), *The Big Lebowski* (Joel and Ethan Coen 1998), *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola 1972) and *The Village* (M. Night Shyamalan 2004), one might wonder why these films instead of others? The criterion has been nothing more than simply having something interesting to say about the films, which seems like a good enough reason, even if it would have been interesting to have more of a discussion about what other films could also have gone into the study and a broader view of which films work well for this particular kind of analysis. The term 'blockbuster' is itself too fraught with complexities to be a criterion and the lack of discussion of the Oscars as a way of finding the most pertinent films is a sad, if a minor, oversight. As a different yet informative approach to films, Sutton's and Wogan's study is excellent and could easily find its place as a textbook in many cultural and media studies classrooms.

A more overview-oriented work is Barry Langford's *Post-Classical Hollywood: Film Industry, Style and Ideology Since 1945*. In its title alone, we find a tension and response to David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson's massive *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (Columbia University Press 1985). Although evidently interested in the same subject matter, if in a different time period, Langford opposes the view of *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* that ethico-social-political norms must be bracketed, arguing instead that Hollywood films are:

profoundly influenced by, and responsive to, both concrete historical issues and events (such as anti-communism or the Vietnam War and its aftermath) as well as the ideological currents that circulate around and through such events and supply the terms on which they are available to be understood (xv)

Here, we return to Schatz's position on how the industry and style are inseparable. Langford makes much the same argument, if only with greater detail and greater breadth, because he covers sixty years of cinema rather than a decade. However, one of the interesting decisions made by Langford is to choose Columbus, Ohio as the central location for many of his historical points. By choosing a specific city, Langford is able

to provide a wealth of detail, which is concrete in terms of showing the historical development of film exhibition and audience consumer patterns.

Methodologically, Langford chooses two films for each chapter as the prime vehicles for analysis in his three parts: Part One. 'Hollywood in Transition 1945-65'; Part Two. 'Crisis and Renaissance 1966-81'; and Part Three, 'New Hollywood'. These two films are always the highest grossing film of the year and the film which won the most Oscars in the same year. The reasoning for this is that the highest grossing film represents the most popular film, while the film which won the most Oscars represents Hollywood's self-image at any given moment. This provides Langford with a good sample to work with, even when it is the same film. As far as periodization goes, Langford is not trying to make any revolutionary claims but is instead trying to remain orthodox in his divisions, even as he attempts to clarify terminology somewhat, considering that New Hollywood has been used both for the Hollywood Renaissance and the franchise-oriented Hollywood of the 1980s onward. Langford clearly chooses post-classical as his preferred terminology, which is both a polemical choice with its deliberate overtones of *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* but also the emerging consensus. Langford's study is both comprehensive and detailed, always keeping the different levels of analysis distinct, while allowing them to inform each other and broaden our understanding of the permutations of Hollywood after 1945.

What all three books share is a commitment to broaden conceptualization which will help us see things in a new light; the specific emphases are different yet valuable. If that tells us anything, it is that film theory is certainly not in any danger of becoming obsolete or irrelevant. Instead, further commitment to rethinking film theory's function and its dialogue with close film analysis only extends our appreciation for the cinematic field.

The British Cinema Book**Edited by Robert Murphy**

London: BFI Publications, 2009. ISBN: 978 1 84457 275 5. Over 100 b/w illustrations. xi + 450 pp. £18.99 (pbk) and £60 (hbk)

A Short History of Film**By Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster**

London: I.B. Tauris, 2008. ISBN: 978 1 84511 801 3. 24 colour and b/w photographs. xxxiv + 430 pp. £14.99 (pbk) and £42 (hbk)

A Review by Paul Quinn, Independent Scholar

Both books have, at least at first sight, much in common: both are reasonably priced; both are bulky, very similar in length and contain a significant amount of detail; both contain an impressively large number of illustrations; both have been produced with care by their respective publishers. Although it might appear that both books would have only limited appeal, with texts too generalist for the specialist reader and too specialist for the general reader, sales of previous editions do not bear this out. *The British Cinema Book* is now in its third edition and *A Short History of Film* now on its fifth reprinting – both have, clearly, already proved big sellers. If in each case, their respective titles imply more than can be delivered – consider by way of comparison Rachael Low's magisterial *The History of the British Film* (Routledge, 1997), which runs to seven volumes and only takes the reader to 1939 – but readers now no doubt accept that a single volume can only contain a certain amount of information. Each of these volumes is none the poorer by attempting so much in one book. On closer study, however, there are significant differences between the two books.

For those who have not read the first or second editions of *The British Cinema Book*, this new edition has much to commend it. Under Murphy's editorship, the third edition now includes a number of new sections: British silent films at the end of the 1920s; films of the late 1960s; the representation of women in 1950s cinema; gay men in mainstream British films; British Asian cinema and consideration of new British filmmakers. In addition, some twenty-one new case studies on individual films have been included. The new volume compares well, and can provide a useful companion piece to, the best of current publications on British cinema and is superior to many. It includes contributions from almost all of the leading academics of British cinema, including Tom Ryall, Raymond Durnat, Vincent Porter, Robert Murphy (in addition to his role as editor), Charles Barr and Marcia Landy. Murphy has gone some way to impose an overall style and consistency of purpose in each of his contributors

although this could have gone further; for instance, Andrew Moor's contribution, 'No Place like Home: Powell, Pressburger Utopia', suffers by trying to squeeze rather too much into six pages. Conversely, Charles Barr's nine pages, 'Before Blackmail: Silent British Cinema' appears dated, a criticism accepted by Barr who in a brief postscript dated ten years after the submission refers to his piece as "altogether too slick and schematic" (153). These are small criticisms and any reader who wants an expert summary of the various debates and a consideration of British cinema from the earliest years will find this a rewarding book.

In addition to the new case studies, the book contains a comprehensive introduction to the history of cinema, key debates about each significant genre in British cinema, from 1895 to the present. Individual articles are grouped in historical and thematic sections, each complemented by a wealth of images. Some minor quibbles and for those familiar with the second edition, this new volume will produce some disappointments. Whereas the previous edition was broken down into seven sections, each based on a specific period in British cinema, the new edition changes this to five, presumably to accommodate the new entries. This is fair enough except that the previous contributions are now, confusingly, rearranged: Linda Wood's essay, 'Low-budget British films in the 1930s' moves from 'Early British Cinema: Genres and Traditions' to Part Three: 'British Cinema 1895-1939'; Charles Barr's contribution 'Before *Blackmail*: Silent British Cinema' moves from 'Early British Cinema: Assessments' to Part Three, 'British Cinema 1895-1939'. There are a number of similar changes but these two indicate the slight confusion that the rearrangements can produce. The other new sections are: Part One: 'Debates and Controversies'; Part Two: 'Industry, Genre, Representation'; Part Four: 'British Cinema From the Second World War to the 70s' and Part Five 'Contemporary British Cinema.

Wheeler Winston Dixon and Gwendolyn Audrey Foster's *A Short History of Film*, while perhaps lacking the same rigorous academic approach as *The British Cinema Book*, also has much to commend it. Their knowledge of film history is impressive and the authors set out to cover, and generally succeed in covering, the whole range of the history of the film industry from the invention of the kinetoscope, through the introduction of sound and the early growth of the film industry in Europe, the use of colour between the two world wars, the dominance of the Hollywood studio system in the 1930s and 1940s, the French New Wave of the 1960s, right up to the newest trends in international moviemaking, including new technologies leading to the computer generated imagery of the present day. Wheeler and Foster never lack confidence in their depth and reach and have a vast knowledge of film production, and are certainly never afraid to attempt coverage of every aspect of film-making including traditionally marginalized figures in film history. Their descriptions of many aspects of cinema history should at the very least encourage

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readers to seek out more specialised histories that can cover in more depth the areas that can only be briefly considered in one volume. Here is just one example of many succinct paragraphs in the introduction to their section on international cinema at the beginning of World War Two:

Sound motion pictures had now been introduced throughout Europe and much of the world, and unlike England, which more or less followed the Hollywood model of genre-driven narratives, France, Germany, India and Japan would all take highly individualized approaches to the sound film, reflecting their respective cultures. Filmmakers in France were especially adventurous. But as the shadow of world conflict fell over Europe and Asia these artists were forced to make many painful choices (137)

One of the most detailed and indeed moving sections of the book deals with the efforts of small independent filmmakers in developing nations and the work of often bold and courageous men and women to skirt the stifling repressions imposed. In relation, for instance, to Iran's revolutionary cinema, Dixon and Foster refer to "The new [post-1979] government's strict censorship which drove many filmmakers into exile or out of the country ..." (345). Similarly in China, a little leeway is allowed to filmmakers, but only if "coupled with a strict adherence to the Communist Party line in which some criticism is tolerated, but only if placed in an abstract allegory" (338/9). Although difficult to track down the films from these countries, the descriptions of the best of these might well encourage readers to try to seek them out. It must be questioned, however, whether the fact that American filmmaker Michael Moore, so often critical of the US government and institutions, receives only a single, and almost passing, reference (376/7) does represent a form of self-censorship.

The book does contain a number of apparent oddities. Sometimes films are referred to as 'English', sometimes as 'British' without any apparent attempt to explain or differentiate; it is not easy to find any particular author in the bibliography, which is grouped initially under 'directors', then switches to 'genre' and finally to 'regional'. Some twenty-five pages are included under the heading 'Timeline', so we learn, for instance, that 1978 was notable for "the first test-tube baby", "mass suicide in Guyana", "a new pope" and "Mork and Mindy were introduced to television". Despite these small criticisms, the well-reproduced stills nearly always help illustrate the points being made and the amount of detail included in the, necessarily, brief coverage of the history of film and cinema. Dixon and Foster can nevertheless sum up a feeling for a period and time in a few well-chosen sentences.

These are two different books, albeit with somewhat similar aims and intentions, and potential readers may have to make their purchasing

decision by looking at the areas where views overlap or converge. Both take a similar line on British cinema. In *The British Cinema Book*, the contribution by the one non-academic, Nick James, under the heading 'British Cinema's US Surrender – a View from 2001' illustrates a matter of concern:

A sanctioned derision towards British cinema now exists that only partly derives from the failure of so many Lottery-funded films. It comes as much from a widespread recognition that psychologically the British film industry already 'leaves it to the Americans' and has done so since the collapse of the Goldcrest company in the late 1980s (21).

The fact that this is a view that James has been consistently putting forward in *Sight & Sound*, of which he is editor, makes the message no less relevant, or depressing. The view offered by Dixon and Foster is very similar where they comment:

Channel Four films, a commercial British broadcasting company, commissioned a large schedule of 16 mm television features in an attempt to jumpstart the moribund English film industry, which had fallen a long way from its glory days of the 1960s as an international commercial force. Rising costs, stricter unionization, and the increasing stranglehold of Hollywood on the international box office combined to bring about a crisis in the industry that only aggressive government subsidies and strategic low-budget production campaigns could hope to counteract. (318).

However, some differing approaches, too, become clear in considering British films. For instance, in relation to the St. Trinian's films of the 1950s, *The British Cinema Book* refers to "terrifying carnivalesque schoolgirls" (294), while for *A Short History of Film*, they "entranced the British public with images of feminine rapture ..." (220). It is in relation to some of the most significant British films of the post-war period, however, that the differing approaches are the clearest. In relation to Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's two important films of this period – *Black Narcissus* (1947) and *The Red Shoes* (1949) – *The British Cinema Book* gives each ten separate references. *A Short History of Film* refers briefly to the former as featuring "a group of sexually repressed nuns" (225) and the latter as a film "which suggested that it was entirely worthwhile to sacrifice one's life to artistic endeavor" (225). *The British Cinema Book* nearly always avoids such glib references or crude imagery. *A Short History of Film* does not mention *It Always Rains on Sunday* (Robert Hamer, 1947); *The British Cinema Book* gives the film ten separate references. *A Short History of Film*, to its credit, devotes a full page (223/4) to 1950s British director and Cannes award winner Wendy Toye; she gets no mention in *The British Cinema Book*. These brief references

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can provide, however, little more than an indication of the style of each book.

Finally a word on cover pictures: *A Short History of Film* may purport to be dealing with world cinema but the cover is a composite of four Hollywood films, plus one British and one German (the Spanish version features six Hollywood films). Wheeler and Foster have perhaps indicated the worldwide dominance of the Hollywood film in a way that they may not have entirely intended. The first and second editions of *The British Cinema Book* feature the beautiful Julie Christie (early and middle periods, respectively). The new edition features the decidedly unbeautiful 'Shaun' (Thomas Turgoose) in *This is England* (Shane Meadows, 2007) who is pictured firing something nasty from his catapult into the middle distance. Whatever the missile, it is unlikely to reach Hollywood.

100 Film Noirs (BFI Screen Guides)**By Jim Hillier and Alastair Phillips**

London: British Film Institute, 2009. ISBN: 978-184457-216-8. 34 illustrations.viii+282pp. £12.99 (pbk).

Film Noir: Hard-Boiled Modernity and the Cultures of Globalization**By Jennifer Fay and Justus Nieland**

New York: Routledge, 2010. ISBN: 0-415-45813-7. 39 illustrations.xvi+285pp. \$26.95 (pbk).

Rethinking the Femme Fatale in Film Noir: Ready for Her Close-up**By Julie Grossman**

Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-230-23328-7.24 illustrations. xi+176pp. £52.00 (hbk).

A Review by Keith James Hamel, Indiana University, USA

Given the number of voluminous anthologies available on the subject, from Robert Ottoson's *A Reference Guide to the American Film Noir, 1940-1958* (Scarecrow Press, 1981) to Alain Silver et al's *The Film Noir Encyclopedia* (Overlook Press, 2010), and the growing number of websites dedicated to endlessly cataloging these films (e.g. AMC's "Filmsite" <www.filmsite.org/filmnoir.html>), it is hard to imagine that Jim Hillier and Alastair's Phillips's *100 Film Noirs* will find an audience. However, given its finite, yet diverse, scope and mix of production history and film criticism, academics seeking to programme a course on noir and cinephiles looking to debate noir rankings will find this guide extremely useful.

The book's short introduction provides a succinct and mostly chronological look at film noir's critical development. Beginning with noir criticism's French roots, the introduction highlights the issues to be examined in the book's entries such as noir's narrative (hard-boiled tradition) and visual style (framing, composition, and lighting), its themes and interests (fatalism and violence), its international influences (German émigrés in Hollywood), and its contemporary topics (gender and race). The introduction's concluding paragraphs indicate some of the rationale behind the authors' selections (interestingly, they hope that "this volume will encourage distributors to make some of these titles available" [9]), noting that their choices should not be seen as representing their opinion

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of the 100 "best" film noirs (9). Recognizing their limited number of titles, the authors provide a second list at the end of their book for readers to consider called "Another 100 Film Noirs," that includes directors, countries and dates of release (267-269).

Hillier and Phillips present their film choices in alphabetical order; yet, after finishing the book and seeing similar themes raised in different entries, they might have considered a topical order (or at least provided an index for one) cataloging noir's many subgenres (B-cycle, revisionist, police procedurals, art-noir, etc.). Most entries are cross-referenced to other titles in the book (although page numbers are not provided) or, in several cases, related to films outside the present volume. The entries are standard in length (typically four to five paragraphs) and generally follow a formulaic pattern: part production history, part plot summary, and part noir criticism (with great use of secondary sources). Because the authors are trying to pack so much information in such short entries, some readers might find their writing cumbersome, particularly during plot summaries – consider *I Married a Communist* (Robert Stevenson, 1949) [126-127] – but in most cases, the writing is both economical and interesting. Each entry ends with a mini filmography listing the film's director, producer, screenwriter, director of photography, editor, composer, and main cast. The book also contains excellent publicity stills and frame enlargements, most of which are representative of a theme raised in the entries, such as "local vernacular detail in *Brighton Rock* (John Boulting, 1947) [39].

As for the individual selections, nearly all of what would be considered canonical noir films are covered (i.e. *The Maltese Falcon* [John Huston, 1941], *Double Indemnity* [Billy Wilder, 1944], *Murder, My Sweet* [Edward Dmytryk, 1944], *Laura* [Otto Preminger, 1944], *Out of the Past* [Jacques Tourneur, 1947], *Kiss Me Deadly* [Robert Aldrich, 1955], *Touch of Evil* [Orson Welles, 1958], *Chinatown* [Roman Polanski, 1974], etc.). The one notable exception is Fritz Lang's *The Woman in the Window* (Fritz Lang, 1944), as it was one of the original five films to which Nino Frank referred when he was among the first to use the term "film noir" in 1946 (but it is included in the book's "Another 100 Film Noirs" list). There are also a number of relatively unknown or somewhat forgotten selections. One particularly interesting choice is *Blast of Silence* (Allen Baron, 1961). Described as an American independent noir of the post-classical period (shot "on a minimal budget with borrowed equipment, hustled film stock, nonprofessional actors, improvised camera movement, and without shooting permits" 29-30), its mobster plot, voiceover narration, and bleak tone make it a worthy candidate for the book. Other appealing titles of this type included are *Born to Kill* (Robert Wise, 1947), *The Chase* (Arthur D. Ripley, 1946), *The Crooked Way* (Robert Florey, 1949), *Fear in the Night* (Maxwell Shane, 1947), *He Walked by Night* (Alfred Werker, 1948), *I Wake Up Screaming* (H. Bruce Humberstone, 1942), *Journey Into Fear*

(Norman Foster/Orson Welles, 1942), and *Side Street* (Anthony Mann, 1950).

Of course, not everyone will agree with their selections, but in a few cases the authors seem to doubt their own picks. For example, in their entry for *Odd Man Out* (Carol Reed, 1947), they note that its status as a British film noir is surpassed by *The Third Man* (Reed, 1949), which is conspicuously missing from their list. Similarly, when writing about David Goodis's source novel for *Shoot the Pianist* (François Truffaut, 1960), they describe his previously adapted work *Nightfall* (Jacques Tourneur, 1957) as a "vastly underrated late classical noir" (233), but it, too, is omitted. Perhaps the most troubling entries of the 100 are *Foreign Land* (Walter Salles, Daniela Thomas, 1996) ("not conventionally noir in appearance" and with "a sort of enigmatic femme fatale," 100-101) and *High and Low* (Akira Kurosawa, 1963) (which "refuses any conclusive reading as a film noir," 118). Both these titles are non-American films, and the authors acknowledge that one quarter of their picks are non-American in origin to reflect the complex inheritance on which noir depends and its influence on a broad range of national cultures. While one can appreciate this international approach in light of more narrowly focused anthologies, for instance, Andrew Spicer's *European Film Noir* (Manchester University Press, 2007), trying to include every film culture in their list (such as South Korea and Norway) comes across as a bit forced, given the critical approach to noir presented in the book's introduction.

Several of the non-American titles on Hillier and Phillips' list are also discussed in Jennifer Fay and Justus Nieland's *Film Noir: Hard-Boiled Modernity and the Cultures of Globalization* (such as *The American Friend* [Wim Wenders, 1977], *La Bête Humaine* [Jean Renoir, 1938], and *C.I.D.* [Raj Khosla, 1956]). However, these films and a handful of other non-US noirs are not raised to seemingly fulfill a quota but rather to defend the book's thesis, which is "that film noir is best appreciated as an always international phenomenon concerned with the local effects of globalization and the threats to national urban culture it seems to herald" (ix). Their argument, which is both novel and stimulating, also gets readers to rethink well-known Hollywood titles by demonstrating how "noir's artistic translations and appropriations extend across the Atlantic in both directions" with "similar instances of mutual influence across the Pacific" (xi).

Chapter One, 'Film noir and the culture of internationalism' (which is nearly half of the book's length), provides a chronological overview of "noir's relationship to the idea of national culture" (1), beginning with the local adaptations of James M. Cain's 1934 novel *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (e.g. *Ossessione* [Luchino Visconti, 1943]) and ending with globalization's usurping of local traditions and values as evidenced in *Chungking Express* (Wong Kar-Wai, 1995). In each case, the authors

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show how particular noir films reflect political ambiguity by critiquing the merits of Western democracy and capitalism (i.e. modernity), while at the same time not offering a more attractive alternative (thus making these films available to the politics of both the Left and the Right). Luis Buñuel's *Los Olvidados* (1950) is an excellent example of their theory. A blend of documentary and Hollywood melodrama, Mexican "cine de arrabal" and Italian neorealism, this film dramatizes the paradox of progress by asking, "If modern progress breeds poverty and crime as well as wealth, why would more progress eventually eliminate these ills?" (80-81). This chapter also highlights aspects of local history germane to the films under discussion. For example, in detailing Juan Antonio Bardem's *Death of a Cyclist* (1955), the authors point out how Spain's fascist leader General Francisco Franco, spurned by his country's exclusion from the Marshall Plan, censored noirs with liberal images/themes and forced those Spanish filmmakers wishing to make a noir do so under the cover of satire or melodrama, as in the case of *Cyclist* which criticizes bourgeois lavishness (90-97).

The book's next chapter, 'Critical debates: Genre, gender, race', begins with a discussion of noir's critical origins and would be an exceptional first reading assignment for an undergraduate class on noir. After explaining the discursive nature of noir, the authors chart the course of noir scholarship, from the early French writers who debated noir's signature traits (Frank, Chartier, Borde and Chaumeton) to a contemporary researcher who shares their interest in the relationship between noir and the concept of modernity (Edward Dimendberg). Along the way, they stop to address some of noir's "inconsistencies and internal contradictions" (128), such as noir's indebtedness to German expressionism (only fifteen of sixty-two directors who made noirs in the 1940s have German origins, 129) and periodizing efforts (complicated because modernity, the crises of which noir arguably addresses, developed unevenly across the globe, 140). The second half of this chapter, while interesting in its own right (consider the section illustrating the parallels between Waldo Lydecker and the title character in *Laura*, 151-154), only tangentially conforms to the overall argument of the book. That is, while Fay and Nieland continue their historical approach to noir as it relates to gender, queer characters and race, the connection between these topics and modernity/globalization is not as strong as it is elsewhere in the book.

This criticism continues in the first half of Chapter Three, 'Film noir style and the arts of dying'. Looking at the 'Technologies of Noir Style' (184-196), the authors seem to forget their thesis and concentrate almost exclusively on classical Hollywood noirs. Still, with their excellent use of secondary sources to paint a picture of "noir style as history" (184), Fay and Nieland reveal subtopics surrounding noir that some readers might not have considered. For example, they do a fine job demonstrating

noir's link to "the material and social conditions of America at war" (185), and their comparison between noir's penchant for voiceover narration and nostalgia for radio's technical past is praiseworthy (especially when they use *Sunset Boulevard* [Billy Wilder, 1950] to demonstrate this point, 194-195). The authors return to the book's roots with bravura in the second half of this chapter, 'Styles of Noir Cinephilia'. Looking to emulate surrealist criticism, they propose a game to conclude their study: "to write a micro-history of noir style that begins through the sheer suggestiveness of one man's cinephilia, and that reanimates – for him and us – an eloquent series of loved moments in the history of film noir, creating a different noir history in the process" (198-199). Taking a cue from Jim Jarmusch's "personally thanks" list at the end of his film *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999), they reveal a stylistic noir thread that weaves its way from Jean-Pierre Melville's performance in *Breathless* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1959), through his own *Le Samourai* (1967), looping around Masahiro Shinoda's *Pale Flower* (1964) and Seijun Suzuki's *Branded to Kill* (1967), doubling back at John Woo's *The Killer* (1989), and ending at Jarmusch's work. And the meaning of this circuitous trek? Film noir, as it crosses national boundaries and takes on local flavors, continually demonstrates a reference for and a love of cinema (198). The book concludes with a twenty-four page time line recapping the four areas discussed in Chapter 1: global history, local culture, film history, and noir culture. It also offers a useful appendix – complete with six topic areas related to the book's thesis (e.g. 'The Borders of Film Noir'), suggested films and secondary readings for that topic, and three to four discussion questions for students to ponder – for an instructor teaching a film noir class to undergraduates.

While the above text could easily find a home in the college classroom, Julie Grossman's *Rethinking the Femme Fatale in Film Noir* is chiefly for film and feminist scholars/researchers based on its narrowly focused subject and its complex (and occasionally tedious) prose. Her thesis is that noir critics have become fixated on the femme fatale without closely examining the filmic conditions (narrative, mise-en-scene, and "lived" experiences), not to mention the gender politics and social psychology, that give rise to that figure in the first place. As she argues in the first three chapters of her book, critics have overstated the existence of the femme fatale by categorizing every noir woman into a binary opposition as either an "angel or whore" (29), and by focusing on the male protagonist's projections (desires and fears) for the woman or on her own rebellion and anger as a sign of psychosis or madness. Her proposed alternative model is to read the traditional fatale figure as either a "femme modernes" or hard-boiled woman (25), and to understand this female in terms of her unconventionality (instead of her sexuality) and her aggressive responses in terms of the societal roles that demean her value. Grossman details a number of films to support her theory but, excluding the 1946 version of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Tay

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Garnett) and *Gun Crazy* (Joseph H. Lewis, 1950), her case studies in the first part of her book lack the iconic appeal readers might expect from a book on femme fatales. For example, she uses Otto Preminger's *Whirlpool* (1949) during her chapter on noir females' personality disorders; but some might take issue with this selection, which Grossman herself labels "marginal noir" (11), as an impactful illustration of her point. Her argument would have carried more weight had she applied it to more traditional femme fatales such as Phyllis Dietrichson (*Double Indemnity*) or Kathie Moffett (*Out of the Past*), who only appear as asides in her book. Granted, Grossman tries to defend against this exact criticism early on in her first chapter (22), but given their lofty position in noir criticism, these quintessential femme fatales deserve more attention. (With the number of times she cites *Chinatown* in these first three chapters, it is surprising that Grossman did not take a closer look at Evelyn Mulwray in terms of her theory of the femme fatale.)

The second part of the book, comprising two chapters, moves the discussion of the femme fatale into new and interesting areas. Chapter Four, 'Looking Back – *Victorinoir*: Modern Women and the Fatal(e) Progeny of Victorian Representations', show how the Victorian narrative can serve as a context for film noir and help critics better understand the dual projections of the femme fatale. These narratives introduced society to a New Woman who theoretically played into male fears about the rise of female independence (97), and Grossman details how dominant culture at that time tried to reduce this liberating figure into a number of pejorative stereotypes. Her argument becomes a bit problematic when she uses *Gilda* (Charles Vidor, 1946) to set up her point on the New Woman's rebellion (is the New Woman supposedly the precursor of the femme fatale?), but overall this is an insightful chapter for the way it fleshes out the literary origins of one of noir's prominent themes – gender anxiety. Grossman also includes an excellent section on silent cinema's "vamp" figure as an evolutionary link between the New Woman and the femme fatale. Her final chapter, 'Looking Forward: Deconstructing the "Femme Fatale"', uses David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* [2001] (along with Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*) to examine some of "the problems with representations of female agency [she's] addressed throughout this study" (132). By both presenting an iconic figure and deconstructing the idea of her, Lynch's film critiques the femme fatale "as a means of understanding the vexed relationship between vital female agency and the limits placed on female desire and ambition by the patriarchal ideology that inhabits social institutions" (134-135). One such institution is Hollywood, which is representative here of the larger "American Dream," and readers should be well aware of how Hollywood treated Norma Desmond. In the end, this chapter completes Grossman's agenda by showing how, "The invocation of the 'femme fatale,' in the context of a film that offers an alternative way of thinking about gender and sex roles as unfixed, becomes a tool for understanding the brutality of the cultural

traps set for women who are caught up in the extreme categorization that reifies their experience" (139).

Fame**By Mark Rowlands**

Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008. ISBN 978-1-84465-157-3. 128 pp. £10.99 (pbk)

American Idolatry: Celebrity, Commodity and Reality Television**By Christopher E. Bell**

Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010. ISBN 978-0-7864-4824-1.xi+219 pp.£31.50 (pbk)

Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship, and Celebrity**By Brenda R. Weber**

Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0-8223-4568-8. 24 illustrations, 344 pp. £15.99 (pbk), £64.00 (hbk)

A Review by Melanie Kennedy, University of East Anglia, UK

The last ten to fifteen years have seen a boom in both reality television programming and celebrity-based media texts, which has been matched by an increase in academic attention to both areas. Mark Rowlands, Christopher E. Bell and Brenda R. Weber all contribute to this still expanding area of television, stardom and celebrity studies, where defining terminology and methodology continues to be debated. As the recent addition of Routledge's *Celebrity Studies* journal suggests, a subject which has often taken television series *Big Brother* (C4 2000-2010) and *Heat* magazine as primary texts for analysis, the study of the culturally 'low-brow' genre of reality television and celebrities (often 'ordinary' celebrities, and those appearing regularly in tabloid or 'trash' media outlets) are academically legitimate subjects in which to explore a wide range of contemporary issues – from new media technologies to gender ideologies. However, as the negative press coverage of *Celebrity Studies'* launch reveals, reality television and celebrities are still very much relegated to the lower end of cultural value hierarchies.

Whereas Bell and Weber come from media studies and cultural studies in their approaches, Rowlands offers an exploration of fame from the field of philosophy. *Fame* has come out of The Art of Living series by Acumen, which includes short books aimed at a wider audience on topics as varied as *Science* (Steve Fuller, 2010), *Money* (Eric Lonergan, 2009), and *Death* (Todd May, 2009). Unfortunately, and perhaps due to its aims at a wider and more popular readership, Rowlands supports the very cultural hierarchy stated above that this academic subject tries to defend itself against; the first line of the book reinforces the cultural assumption that

the study of fame is of little value: "The things I do in the name of research" (1). In the introduction, Rowlands expresses his view of *Big Brother* as the epitome of the television texts he is examining:

And no, as a matter of fact, you don't watch it because it is an interesting psychological experiment, no matter how much you insist on telling yourself and others this; you watch it because you are a sad loser who has become addicted to the spectacle of human failure and broken dreams every Friday night. (4)

I waited for some irony after this statement, which never appeared; instead, Rowlands distances himself from his subject matter as being legitimate of academic study.

Rowlands gives a rather lengthy introduction which comprises roughly a quarter of the book, putting forward his reasoning behind the project (many of us want to be famous and are obsessed with those who are famous) and setting out his research questions (why that happens). He then moves on to the middle section of his book, which covers the philosophical framework within which he presents his argument, then reigns it in again to apply this theory to a discussion of contemporary examples of famous people who are symptomatic with what he terms "vfame", or "new variant fame" (20).

Rowlands believes that "fame is not at all what it used to be. *Fame has gone wild*" (5, emphasis in original), with an increase in fascination with fame in the twenty-first century. Although this ignores the history of stardom, I agree that this is the case with *celebrity*. Fame has become universal and available to everyone, regardless of birthright or talent. I also agree that fame has become democratic and is more easily accessible to the masses, yet Rowlands states this seemingly with an investment in "distinction" as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (*Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Routledge, 2004). "Traditional" fame (which is never defined, and thus remains in a mythic bygone era) was associated with deserved respect, but with "new" fame, this correlation has broken down, and so this new sort of fame is "undeserved" (14), and "driven largely by boredom" (15): "This is vfame: fame unconnected with any notable form of excellence or achievement." (23)

Rowlands puts forth the notion that "vfame is a symptom of a form of cultural degeneration" (27), whereby Western society has an "inability to distinguish *quality* from *bullshit*." (28, emphasis in original). Again, there is no irony in this statement. The West is built on objectivism, which can degenerate into fundamentalism which haunts it; the West is built on individualism, too, which can degenerate into relativism (whereby all forms of life are equally valuable), which means that according to

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Rowlands, the West can be a fractured and confusing place to be in, as are its products. It is out of this tension between individualism and objectivism, and their respective degenerate forms, that v fame has risen. This imbalance creates "a life unduly dominated by lightness, where the role of values that are objective and independent of the person who chooses and acts has been lost", and it is here where one can locate the "trappings" of v fame (85) with celebrities like Paris Hilton. At the other extreme of this imbalance is "The life [...] unduly weighed down by the presence of constitutive attachments to the world around it" (89), an example of which is Osama bin Laden. Rowlands argues that these two figures are mirror images of each other, and their extreme versions of forms of self-understanding can be found in each of us. We have become unable and uninterested in recognising quality, leading us to make poor choices, which marks the decline of Enlightenment. It is our "ridiculous fascination" (114) with figures such as Paris Hilton that epitomises this "worrying" (114) decline.

Rowlands' use of anecdotes and journalistic language ensure that the book is easy to read, and large concepts of philosophy are broken down and made accessible. However, his regular use of sarcasm gives the book an overall judgmental tone. He states in his introduction, "I am not trying to sound judgmental; still less misogynistic. I have no moral problem with girls who have gone wild. I come not to judge but to understand." (2) However, he distances himself from expressing any form of pleasure or appreciation towards the texts he is dealing with, making claims to higher forms of taste. His journalistic style means that sweeping generalisations lack academic support. Furthermore, his focus on female examples of the vfamous misses an opportunity to examine the gendered nature of the representation of such personalities or celebrities (terms he does not use himself), and the gendered treatment of such people in various discourses. The male examples he draws upon are sports stars and politicians, and one might question whether such figures can be examined within the same frameworks of fame. The book lacks references to other academic works, and the bibliography is surprisingly short. At times, Rowlands seems to rely on press coverage of the texts he is looking at, and many of his arguments could have been supported with material such as that of Richard Dyer (*Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, Routledge, 2004), whose position he shares when expressing that "stars [...] are just like us" (86-7). Instead, he presents his argument as opinion, based on a few "ghastly" and "garish" (3) programmes he has watched. Rather than critiquing today's 'tabloid culture', he, in fact, perpetuates it.

Christopher E. Bell, a recent PhD graduate, offers his own thoroughly researched and in-depth definition and analysis of celebrity and fame in *American Idolatry*, which as stated on the blurb, "are not the same thing" (back cover). Drawing upon a wealth of material from cultural studies, stardom and celebrity studies, and television studies, Bell clearly states

his intervention in the existing field, noting that most studies have so far dealt with *celebrity* (Bell's emphasis) in relation to something else. Positioning himself in the existing debates, he makes a distinction: "there is the Celebrity (the human being upon whom has been conferred status) and there is *celebrity*, either as defined as said status or as the system by which that status is socially manifest" (5-6, emphasis in original).

The premise of the book comes from Bell's observation – which he shares with Rowlands – that "if fame was formerly the recognition of achievement, then modern *celebrity* (the recognition of 'well-knownness'), in contrast, must be based on something other than achievement" (1). From the outset, Bell challenges the low status that many popular culture texts hold, noting how a programme such as *American Idol* (Fox 2002-) can tell us a great deal about the history of Western society, and brushing off potential derogatory reactions to such a study. He states, "The people who shout the loudest about the state of popular culture are often the people who have the least practical exposure to it" (21).

Bell's aim, which I believe he successfully achieves, is to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of the term *celebrity*, focusing on the third of Chris Rojek's three types of *celebrity* status (*Celebrity*, Reaktion Books, 2001) – that of "the *celebrity* of achievement", a "mysterious gray area which lies between fame and *celebrity*" (2, emphasis in original) – and suggests a fourth type of *celebrity*, "which is neither wholly achieved nor wholly attributed but an amalgamation of both" (8). Out of this, Bell sets his research question for the study: "by what mechanisms does DIY *celebrity* cross over into authentic *celebrity*?" (11). In order to answer this, he firstly defines his terms and carries out an extensive literature review of key cultural studies and academic texts on stardom and *celebrity* studies. He then moves on to theorise how *celebrity* and Celebrities function within popular culture. The second half of the book is an in-depth analysis of *celebrity* and Celebrities of *American Idol*, applying the theories and debates that Bell had clearly and thoroughly set up in the first half of the book. He then concludes by reflecting on the mutual dependency of *celebrity* and Celebrity, and reveals the illusory participatory democracy presented by *American Idol*.

The thorough literature review provided to define what Bell means by such taken-for-granted terms as "popular culture" and to give a context for the existence of *celebrity* and Celebrities, synthesises a large number of cultural theory texts (including those of Antonio Gramsci and Pierre Bourdieu) in an extremely lucid manner. Bell unpacks these large concepts and complex theories, demonstrating that a tremendous amount of research has gone into the book. Whilst this section of the book, defining popular culture, consumers, commodities, and political economy is lengthy, it seems necessary to cover this ground in order to set up the later close textual analysis of *American Idol*. Bell draws upon theoretical

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frameworks of celebrity and stardom, including those from P. David Marshall, Su Holmes and Richard Dyer, to define the use of his terms, *celebrity* and *Celebrity*, and navigates through the existing theory confidently and clearly. Yet, one might ask whether a distinction needs to be made between 'star' and 'celebrity', simultaneously something Bell does not discuss, although he draws upon definitions of both terms. Due to the sheer amount of literature that Bell examines, it is sometimes difficult to hear his own voice. Furthermore, one might ask whether we can look at television celebrities within the same framework as that of famous people in film.

Celebrity is "the modern prism through which all mainstream measures of success have been filtered" (49), and "[c]elebrity and Celebrities exist as a commodity, in the classic, Marxist sense of the term", to be consumed (53, emphasis in original); "[c]elebrity is not innate; it is created, primarily through media production" (61). A key argument in the book is: "It is this performative aspect of *celebrity* that distinguishes it from fame. With fame, one's deeds stand heroically for themselves. With *celebrity*, one's deeds must be actively advertised" (61). He adds, "*Celebrity* is, at its core, an act of persuasion" (65).

Applying this theoretical framework to seven series of *American Idol* (demonstrating an impressive knowledge and criticism of the show), Bell argues that "*celebrity* is presented as a status level that is earned rather than constructed, and the commodity nature of *celebrity* is masked" (101-2). A categorical type of individuality is created for each of the contestants, through a character construction process and reinvention. Bell reveals *American Idol's* tenuous relationship with authenticity. *American Idol* contestants go through a fairy tale evolution from private citizen to *Celebrity* commodity, and to engage in conspicuous consumption, and become living embodiments of the success myth. He closes his book touching upon the sexism of *American Idol*, a topic which is opened up for further debate; whilst the book successfully achieves its aims without addressing the issue of gender in and gendering of this particular text, Bell correctly notes that this is an area which needs further discussion. This is also the case with the issue of class, which would be a central aspect to address when discussing the British format (yet in this case, Bell only deals with the American version). Approaching *American Idol* as both an academic and an enthusiastic fan, Bell's book is accessible and engaging.

Brenda R. Weber writes within the field of gender studies, and has published on masculinity, femininity and the makeover television genre. *Makeover TV* comes out of the Console-ing Passions series by Duke, which includes *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition* (edited by Lynn Spigel and Jan Osson, 2004) and *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (edited by

Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, 2007). Using theoretical frameworks of neoliberalism, postfeminism, and celebrity, and analysis of over 2,500 hours of makeover television programmes, including *The Swan* (Fox, 2004-2005), *Extreme Makeover* (ABC, 2002-2007) and *Pimp My Ride* (MTV, 2004-2007), Weber discusses television's treatment of the transition from what she calls the "Before-body" to the "After-body" in terms of selfhood, empowerment, gender, and celebrity. She demonstrates how the makeover deploys a logic of neoliberalism and the American Dream. She then textually analyses the makeover's visible shaming of the Before-body and the welcoming gaze of the After-body. Weber devotes two separate chapters to the treatment of femininity and masculinity, reminding us that the makeover does not deal with women alone. Finally, and perhaps in one of the most significant chapters of *Makeover TV*, Weber analyses the fairytale narrative of the makeover, and the celebrification of the After-body.

In the makeover, we are presented with a "message of salvation through submission" (6), where the body is "the gateway to the self" and selfhood is linked to images connoting "upward mobility, heterosexuality, consumer-orientation, conventional attractiveness, ethnic anonymity, and confidence." (5) The makeover claims to reveal rather than construct selfhood, and that self is stable and locatable, "marked by normative signs of sexuality, race, class, and ethnicity" (9). Belonging to the umbrella genre of reality TV, the makeover presents the illusion of authenticity. Weber defines the makeover as "employ[ing] narratives that work through an architecture of renovation and rejuvenation" (29); drawing upon the beliefs of surveillance, shame and normalisation; and including the 'big reveal'. While Weber introduces a dense set of ideas and aims, the language and structure of the book allow for a coherent unpacking of these concepts, and therefore clarity in the reader's understanding.

Weber analyses the texts that make up what she terms "Makeover Nation", an imagined territory of citizenship "where the neoliberal mandate for care of the self in service of the market fuses with values of a mythic, egalitarian America" (38). She wonders whether the goals of the makeover are to "construct the model citizen and articulate aspects of Americanness" (39). How is citizenship filtered through neoliberal goals, and how do normative ideologies mark this citizenship? Makeover Nation is primarily dominated by "anxious and aging feminised white people" concerned with attaining a position in a "competitive romantic and professional marketplace" (42). The makeover is presented as a rite of passage.

Weber reads *American Idol* convincingly as a makeover show, noting its American Dream ideologies, as does Bell. Successful self-construction is dependent on correct consumption, and ensures necessary and

celebratory visibility, becoming media products in the After-body state. Weber addresses makeovers with subjects who both needed it through their own fault of self-neglect and not caring enough, and those who deserved it through caring for others, yet one might ask whether these two different types of makeover contestants can be discussed within the same framework. Across makeover shows, difference is replaced through the transitional process with sameness. The makeover's solution process is based on "whitened and Westernized value" (76). Makeovers both idealise and restrict citizenship. To gain entrance, Before-bodies must submit to humiliation and shame. The resulting citizenship of the After-body guarantees glamour and celebrity, although the continual threat of the Before-body towards the After remains. The programme acts as "mediating therapeutic agents" (108) in this transformation from Before to After. The After-body is taught how to both attract the gaze, and to gaze at themselves. Weber notes the possible *Schadenfreude* offered to the audience during the emotional suffering that the makeover subjects must go through, something which I believe opens up questions for further development.

Weber carries out a thorough analysis of the treatment of femininity and heterosexuality, positioning her readings within a framework of postfeminism. The makeover insists on "heteronormativity and compulsory heterosexuality" (129), and ultimately refutes "academic theories of gender performance" (Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, 1990) (129). Whilst Weber notes the importance of class to American makeover programmes, this is even more relevant to British makeover programming, something which could be looked at in a further study. Makeovers belong to the wider landscape of postfeminist popular culture, with "makeover outcomes [that] create an unattainable fantasy of selfhood where beauty, confidence, womanhood, and personal empowerment all come together in an After-body unmarked by excessive ethnic, racial, or classed signs" (150). Thus, much like Bell's analysis of the *American Idol* contestants' achievement of celebrity status, it is just a representation, an illusion. Weber argues that many After-bodies are so heavily made up that they could be mistaken for female impersonators, required to be drag queens. Whilst I was unconvinced that these women are in fact taking on roles of drag queens, Weber is correct in her analysis of gender performativity, and the alignment of gender/sex binaries.

For Weber, "This masculinist trope situates the makeover as the hero to the Before-body's damsel-in-distress" (171). Male subjects must submit to this feminising process; this is overcome by emphasising male self-determination. Like with the female subjects, masculinity is not created but accentuated. As with celebrity, as analysed by Bell, the makeover is a gendered space, which reinforces stereotypes of passive women and active men. The made-over subject approximates a celebrity, in that they

constitute "the greatest expression of Americanness" (215), as similarly discussed by Bell; the makeover's goal is to bring out the subject's "inner-star", and "selfhood [is] made intelligible through fame" (216). Like Bell's reading of *American Idol*, the makeover is invested in authenticity and earned achievement. Makeover narratives encourage consumerism, as Bell states of the *American Idol* contestants.

Weber's reading of makeover television is timely, and transferable to the makeover in wider postfeminist popular culture, with self-help guides and films contributing to this vast landscape, and new makeover programming continuing to appear on television. Weber expresses her pleasure of watching makeover programming, and negotiating her position as both a feminist academic and a fan of these shows. The book is thorough in its theory and analyses, yet Weber's personal investment in makeover programming makes the book accessible and enjoyable.

Second Takes: Critical Approaches to the Film Sequel

Edited by Carolyn Jess-Cooke and Constantine Verevis

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-4384-3030-0.x + 251 pp. £57 (hbk)

Film Sequels: Theory and Practice from Hollywood to Bollywood

By Carolyn Jess-Cooke

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0-7486-2603-8.Viii +166 pp. £65 (hbk)

A Review by Stuart Henderson, University of Warwick, UK

Given its long history both in Hollywood and elsewhere, it is surprising that such a prevalent and central presence in commercial cinema as the sequel has been so perpetually overlooked. This is not to say that the films themselves have been ignored – as the voluminous material on *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986), *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (James Cameron, 1991), *The Matrix* (Andy and Lana Wachowski, 1999-2003), and *The Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001-2003) trilogies attests – but the bulk of this criticism takes little interest in their status as sequels, choosing instead to focus on their place within a director's body of work, their representations of gender, and so on. In the 1990s, the sequel became more visible in relation to debates around what constituted the 'new' or 'post-classical' Hollywood, with scholars such as Thomas Schatz ('The New Hollywood' in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, Routledge, 1993) and Timothy Corrigan (*A Cinema Without Walls*, Rutgers University Press, 1991) invoking the form as symptomatic of shifts within that industry. In this respect, the academy has been in step with popular criticism of the sequel, which has been widespread and persistent since the late 1970s and has manifested itself in writings by Vincent Canby (1977), Stephen M. Silverman (1978), James Monaco (1979), Janet Maslin (1983), Peter Rainer (1983), Richard Corliss (1990, 1992) and J. Hoberman, whose oft-quoted review of Hollywood from 1975 to 1985 decried the bout of 'sequelitis' (1985: 38) that had apparently afflicted that decade.

Peter Krämer (*The New Hollywood*, Wallflower, 2005: 92), Steve Neale (*Genre and Hollywood*, Routledge, 2000: 247-248) and, more recently, Neale and Sheldon Hall (*Epics, Spectacles and Blockbusters*, Wayne State University Press, 2010) have made efforts to correct such ahistorical assumptions about sequelisation, but these are brief comments within studies whose objects of study are broader than the sequel itself. Assumptions about the contemporaneous nature of the sequel have thus

persisted in subsequent criticism, whether it be in the general historical thrust of writing by Justin Wyatt (*High Concept*, University of Texas Press, 1994) or Wheeler Winston Dixon (*Film Genre 2000*, State University of New York Press, 2000: 7-8), who stress Hollywood's increased reliance on 'pre-sold' properties, or in specific references to the sequel by Kristin Thompson (*Storytelling in Film and Television*, Harvard University Press, 2003: 75, 105) and Michael Allen (*Contemporary U.S. Cinema*, Longman, 2003: 183).

With few exceptions, then, the sequel has hitherto been almost completely passed over both in terms of its formal particularities and its place within film history. So, it is welcome to see the publication of *Film Sequels* by Carolyn Jess-Cooke, and *Second Takes: Critical Approaches to the Film Sequel*, a collection edited by Jess-Cooke and Constantine Verevis. Whilst they make for quite distinct reading experiences, both publications engage with the sequel in a wide range of national and historical contexts, whilst simultaneously revealing the pitfalls of attempting to cover a previously underwritten subject in such breadth.

Although it is the work of a single author, *Film Sequels* has something of the air of an edited collection, given the extent to which it explores the outer limits of its object of study, and the rather variable results yielded by such a scattershot approach. This course is signaled by the introductory chapter, which covers much theoretical ground with impressive concision, but which glosses over the crucial task of providing a working, and workable, definition of the sequel form. What Jess-Cooke offers in this regard arguably mystifies more than it clarifies. While stating that she wishes to make her "chief distinction between three fairly similar categories [the series, serial and sequel] crystal clear", the distinction which follows is rather opaque: "whereas seriality and series defy change, the sequel champions difference, progress and excess" (5). Supporting this claim *vis-à-vis* the lack of change in the series and serial, she quotes examples such as *James Bond* and *The Perils of Pauline* (1914) in which "the protagonists never age, never (re)marry, never switch jobs" (5), adding that "genre-driven series" such as those established with *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) and *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (Robert Wise, 1979) are "strictly devoted to the playing out of a 'narrative scheme that remains constant'" (5). These statements, in tandem with these examples, do little but muddy the semantic water. The series in cinema (as typified by the numerous detective-led films of the 1930s and 1940s) might well be described as defying change, but can we really apply the same logic to the silent-era serial? Yes, *The Perils of Pauline* may have presented a series of very similar narrative situations, but it did evince some episode-to-episode development, and concluded with the marriage of its titular heroine. One can also hardly compare *Pauline*, which unfolded weekly over the course of a few months in 1914, with *Bond*, whose installments have appeared at least 12 months apart for several decades.

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Conversely, even if we might agree that certain sequels trade in "difference, progress and excess", can we really say that this is the form's central distinguishing feature? Lastly, if the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* sequels are in *some* respects committed to reiterating a particular narrative scheme, in what sense do they shirk their responsibility to move either the story or their characters forward? I dwell on these specifics in order to indicate the extent to which Cooke flattens the distinction between the serial and the series, presumably to heighten the purported distinctiveness of the sequel – only then to skirt the implications and problems this definition throws up.

Equally problematic is the final chapter, which offers an analysis of Steven Spielberg's *Artificial Intelligence: A.I.* (2001) framed under the heading 'Sequelisation and Secondary Memory'. Here, Jess-Cooke's deployment of the terms "sequel" and "sequelisation" disregards even her own vague introductory definition, opting instead for an associational approach which positions the character of David (Haley Joel Osment) "as a 'sequel' to that of a human predecessor" (132). As those scare quotes around the 'sequel' suggest, Jess-Cooke is not suggesting that we understand David as a sequel on the same terms as we would understand, say *Aliens* or *The Son of the Sheik* (George Fitzmaurice, 1926), nor indeed that *A.I.* is "a film sequel in the strictest sense of the term" (131). In this case, one might reasonably ask, what place does it have in a book entitled *Film Sequels*? Granted, *A.I.* is an intriguing film worthy of analysis, but given how little academic attention has hitherto been paid to the sequel as a cinematic form, it seems inappropriate to include an entire chapter in which 'sequel' becomes merely a suggestive metaphor for something that follows something else, another multipurpose accessory in the critic's hermeneutic toolbox, rather than a textual category with its own rich history and distinct formal characteristics

Despite these drawbacks, there is much of value in the intervening chapters. Jess-Cooke's 'Brief History of the Film Sequel' is too brief to do the subject the justice it deserves, with Hollywood's output of the 1930s through to the 1950s covered in just one paragraph, but, given the near-complete absence of any such historical account in earlier studies, it makes for a valuable starting point. Although it strays beyond the boundaries of film, Chapter 3 explores the relationship between user-generated content and sequelisation, utilising the "first online video blog serial" (75), *lonelygirl15* and its sequel *Kate Modern*, as a case study to raise interesting questions about the 'why' of sequelisation; specifically, why it is that we as consumers find the form so compelling? Most illuminating is 'Signifying Hollywood: Sequels in the Global Economy', which moves beyond the US-centric focus of earlier discussions in order to address questions of commercial imperatives and narrative continuation in popular contemporary Indian cinema. What it lacks in focus, then, *Film Sequels* somewhat compensates for in eclecticism, identifying a broad

range of national and historical contexts in which the process of sequelisation might take place, and successfully opening up a debate about the nature of this enduringly popular form of storytelling.

In many ways picking up where *Film Sequels* left off, *Second Takes* broadens the range of discussion, without entirely circumnavigating the problem areas which weakened the explanatory power of the former. While it is encouraging to read Jess-Cooke and Verevis' claim in the introductory chapter that their collection "unpacks the cynicism and misinformed definitions surrounding sequelization"(5), this is somewhat undermined by the framing of this discussion, which asks "why is sequel production increasing?" (2) without pausing to acknowledge just how prevalent it was in Hollywood's 'Golden Age'. Crucially, too, as with *Film Sequels*, some of the contributions to *Second Takes* seem more engaged with utilising the sequel as a means to create associative or metaphorical links with those areas that truly interest them

In 'From Remake to Sequel: *Ocean's Eleven* and *Ocean's Twelve*', for example, Joyce Goggin positions sequelisation as a metaphor for the seriality of the financial system, and the manner in which "gambling – like the remake and sequel – serializes leisure time as the gambler engages in a continuum of wagers, over and over again" (116). In 'Sequelizing the Superhero: Postmillennial Anxiety and Cultural "Need"', meanwhile, Simon McEnteggart, shows considerably more interest in the ongoing superhero movie cycle as a whole than the sequels which are among its most recent entries. Whether or not one agrees with McEnteggart's argument that one of the primary functions of such films is that "national identity crises are addressed and catered for" (176), there is little here to indicate that this is the result of sequel-specific enquiry, rather than deriving from a broader interest in the ideological implications of the superhero figure in contemporary cinema. Claire Perkins' 'Sequelizing Hollywood: The American "Smart" Film', draws fascinating parallels between these late 1990s and early 2000s films and the products of that earlier flourishing of American auteurism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, often called New Hollywood. But to suggest that the films of Wes Anderson, Noah Baumbach *et al* are sequels to works by Francis Ford Coppola, Robert Altman and their contemporaries, simply because they evidence certain shared thematic and aesthetic concerns, stretches the meaning of the term 'sequel' beyond usefulness, and so undermines what would, in another context, be an insightful comparative study of two separate but similar film-making moments. While much of this material is highly suggestive, giving a sense of the myriad ways in which we might consider the nature of continuation and sequelisation beyond the borders of the cinematic frame, it feels inappropriate in a volume whose subtitle leads us to expect a collection of 'Critical Approaches to the Film Sequel'. These caveats aside, *Second Takes* represents a valuable contribution to film

studies' belated engagement with the sequel, and is a testament to the potential richness of this underexplored field.

As with Jess-Cooke's account of *lonelygirl15*, in 'Decent Burial or Miraculous Resurrection: *Serenity*, Mourning, and Sequels to Dead Television Shows', Ina Rae Hark emphasises the role of the viewer in the process of narrative continuation, offering as a case study the cancelled television series *Firefly* (Joss Whedon, 2002-3) and its cinematic sequel, *Serenity* (Joss Whedon, 2005), which explores the intermingling of serial forms across cinema and television. R. Barton Palmer's 'Before and After, Before Before and After: *Godfather I, II, and III*', meanwhile, engages with Francis Ford Coppola's epic Mafia trilogy (1972, 1974, 1990), questioning the extent to which we can truly consider them as a coherent whole, rather than a "succession consisting of a foundational text plus two sequels" (69). Despite the *ad hoc* fashion in which the trilogy has been produced, Palmer suggests, the very existence of the two sequels contributes to an overall sense of thematic coherence, whereby Michael Corleone's on-going quest to extricate himself from his past and his family in the two sequels creates "a perfect marriage of the essentially unfinished qualities of a transtextual suite and the gloomy view of human nature and striving characteristically adopted in the films of the Hollywood Renaissance" (77).

In 'Sequel-Ready Fiction: After Austen's Happily Ever After', Thomas Leitch's delineation of the various forms which the sequel has taken is more attentive to modulations within literature than film, and his assumption that the format of a "series that immerses a continuing cast of characters in a new but generically similar adventure" derives primarily from television, and clearly ignores the numerous family-orientated film series of the 1930s and 1940s. These are perhaps best exemplified by the 'Andy Hardy' films but also include those series centring on *Blondie*, *Maisie* and *Henry Aldrich*. Still, his essay on 'Sequel-Ready Fiction' builds to an illuminating comparison between Jane Austen's fictional heroines and their contemporary equivalent in film and literature, Helen Fielding's Bridget Jones. As with Palmer's account of the Corleone family, Leitch finds in *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001) and *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (Beeban Kidron, 2004) a corollary between characterisation and continuation, making clear the connection between Bridget's neuroses, specifically her resistance to emotional 'closure', and the ease with which Fielding and her film-making counterparts have been able to sequelise her adventures (58-63).

The highlight of the collection, however, comes from Verevis himself, who provides an excellent case study of director George A. Romero's forty year-long engagement with the zombie as both a figure of horror and a symbol of contemporary societal malaise, in films such as *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978). Verevis might have

more clearly acknowledged that the case of Romero is unusual, given that there have been relatively few instances (Coppola and *The Godfather* trilogy being one other) of a director being consistently involved in both the originary film and each of its sequels, particularly over such a lengthy time period. For the most part, however, Verevis expertly balances analyses of the individual films and their respective production histories, making good on his initial promise to interrogate the sequel "as a complex situation: a function of a *network* of commercial interests, textual strategies, critical vocabularies, and historical contexts" (12).

Given the academy's virtual silence on the sequel to date, it would be unrealistic to expect any initial study to address all of the issues which surround and intersect with this fascinating subject. *Film Sequels* and *Second Takes* inevitably leave much unanswered, and at times seem to have rushed past many of the more fundamental historical and theoretical issues, preferring instead to deal with notions of sequelisation at a more abstract level. Taken together, however, they represent a vital opening chapter in film studies' engagement with the sequel form, presenting us with numerous paths for further critical enquiry, and laying the foundations for multiple future installments.

Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thrillers: The Aesthetic Paradox of Pleasurable Fear

By Julian Hanich

New York and London: Routledge, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-415-87139-6 (hbk). xi + 301 pp. £85.00 (hbk)

Tim Burton: The Monster and the Crowd: A Post-Jungian Perspective

By Helena Bassil-Morozow

London and New York: Routledge, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-415-48971-3(pbk). xiii + 200 pp. £19.99 (pbk)

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

In the last few decades, horror films have established themselves at a global level as one of the most successful cinematic genres, which can be analyzed from different viewpoints. In his *Cinematic Emotion in Horror Films and Thrillers*, Julian Hanich addresses *fear*, that is to say the basic 'emotion' aroused by horror films, to show that it can be *pleasurable* and that "the oft-derided and condemned but hugely popular cinema of fear surely yields beneficial pleasures" (256). The book is divided into three parts. Along with the Introduction, Part One includes two chapters. In the first chapter, titled 'How to Describe Cinematic Fear, or Why Phenomenology?', Hanich outlines the phenomenological method he employs to investigate the emotion of fear, which "describes phenomena that are actually experienced – phenomena that we have at least a certain awareness of while living through them" (15). Since the 'lived experience' of each individual, as Hanich rightly points out, is something taking place in a specific spatial and temporal context, the second chapter – 'Multiplexperiences: Individualized Immersion and Collective Feelings' – considers "the contemporary American multiplex" (17), that is to say the social space in which the viewer is more likely to experience horror films and thrillers.

In Part Two, Hanich investigates five different versions of "cinematic fear": direct horror, suggested horror, cinematic shock, cinematic dread, and cinematic terror. Fear is the singular emotion addressed in the book. Hanich says "the word *fear* functions as an umbrella term in my account", because "it encompasses a number of emotional states that are sufficiently close to *each other* as well as to *prototypical fear in everyday life* in order to deserve this single name" (17). In Part Three, the last part of the book, the results of the previous investigation are discussed in the

light of theories of (advanced) modernity as elaborated, among others, by Norbert Elias and Zygmunt Bauman, in order to highlight the problematic aspects of contemporary culture addressed by horror films and thrillers.

The individuation and definition of the five types of cinematic fear occupy the largest part of the book. The first three types of fear have in common an immediate reference to the present moment. So, direct horror "presents the threatening violent event or monstrous object in full vision and thus as directly as possible" (82), while suggested horror "relies on *intimidating imaginations* of violence and/or a monster evoked through verbal descriptions, sound effects or partial, blocked and withheld vision" (109). Cinematic shock, on the other hand, "responds to a threatening object or event that ruptures the situation suddenly and unexpectedly" (127), and unlike other types of fear "it is an extremely brief, highly compressed response to a sudden, unexpected, rupturing threat" (128). As for the remaining two types, dread can be defined as "an intense, but quiet anticipatory type of cinematic fear in which we both feel *for the endangered character* and fearfully expect a threatening outcome that promises to be shocking and/or horrifying to *us*", which is most likely to occur in a kind of "alone-in-the-dark scenario" (156). In contrast to dread, cinematic terror presents "a vulnerable, extremely frightened character escaping from a threatening monster or killer gradually coming closer" – a "chase-and-escape scenario" (203).

However, the most interesting, if debatable, assumption of Hanich's book is that the pleasure(s) cinematic fear can offer the viewer cannot be investigated with reference to the notion of catharsis, against which the author argues at length. Hanich makes an interesting comparison with pornography to make his claim. The most important function of pornography is "to arouse", although "it is not the film itself that can cleanse us from our desire: it can only become a *means* to this end"; in the case of porn, "emotions, passions, affects are often not erased but enhanced", and "the same goes for frightening movies" (11), thus leading to the opposite effect of a catharsis.

Hanich seems to give a sort of 'collectivistic' reading of the experience of seeing a horror film with co-viewers within the context of the American multiplex, as if it were able to restore some sense of social and political community. Now, although this is certainly a consistent conclusion, it does not represent the whole truth, so to speak, because it does not adequately take into account the fact that circumstances and lived experiences of individual viewers may differ. In this sense, the reference to a phenomenological *notion* of 'lived experience', according to which it might be assumed to be tendentially one and the same for all individuals, raises problems. They become evident as soon as we begin to analyze horror films from a more individualistic-oriented perspective. Hanich, too, appears to suggest the need for this kind of a perspective when he links

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the genre to the gothic novel, which he describes as "the first type of literature geared to the pleasure of fear", in which "a shift occurred from the social utility of earlier didactic forms of literature to the more 'gratuitous' indulgences in fantasies of fear" (231).

The notion of "the Gothic" as an individualistic source of "pleasurable fear" seems to be the central concern of most of Tim Burton's films analyzed in Helena Bassil-Morozow's *Tim Burton: The Monster and the Crowd*. According to the author, "Burton's perception of fictional freaks and mutants lies far from the official, mainstream reaction to 'horrible' things as it can be; in fact, it dangerously borders on the dramatic, maximalist introversion of a troubled teenage Goth", for whom "monsters are not the scary 'other' – on the contrary, they appear to him less alien than 'normal people'" (37). Considered from the post-Jungian perspective adopted in the book, Burton's films can be read with reference to different 'archetypes', among which one "is especially important for understanding the psychology of the Burtonian male hero – the archetype of the self" (27). According to Jung, such an archetype is linked with "the wonder-infant motif, which is present in so many fairy tales and myths", because "the child is a future hero, and many mythological saviours are, in fact, child gods" (33).

What is characteristic of Burton's 'children' is that they never become 'adult heroes', and this implies that they refuse to conform to the prevailing image of the world and to its assumed 'rules'. This seems to be true of most of Burton's films, as far as male protagonists are concerned – from *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005), as well as the two Batman-films (*Batman*, 1989; *Batman Returns*, 1992) and *Ed Wood* (1994). An interesting implication of the choice not to become (fully) adults, and to remain strictly connected to a "Gothic imagery" more typical of childhood, is the ability to see the world differently. It also allows them the opportunity to question the cultural, social and political stereotypes of what is perceived as 'different', including the various categories of beings that most cultures label as 'monsters'. It is true, as Bassil-Morozow states, that while "from the point of view of the community, the 'different' perception of the environment is a sign of madness; from the point of view of the individual, it is a chance to exercise one's independent thinking", with the result that "individualism in Burton's films equals (often self-inflicted) loneliness" (29). But the positive side of such loneliness of the 'different individual' is the ability to see a different world besides and beyond the one that is culturally, socially and politically given. In this sense, Burton's 'children' are a kind of 'rebels', who can provide the viewer(s) with an alternative model of the relationship between the individual and the 'community', through gothic and otherwise 'fearful' images.

This is the reason why Hanich's statement seems only partially applicable here. According to him, "frightening films help to reconcile [...] the *loosening of social bonds* as a result of individualization (requiring new forms of collectivity if a sense of isolation and loneliness to be prevented)" (25). On the contrary, the impossibility of reconciliation seems to be an outcome of the Jungian "individuation process", which "implies, to some extent, a conflict with society, because, in becoming an individual, one may start questioning collective norms and tradition" (Bassil-Morozow, 28). Therefore, it does not seem surprising that the conflict between "the monster" and "the crowd", that is to say between the individual and society, is also at the core of Burton's films. Even from a Jungian perspective, the relevance of 'archetypes' and the images through which symbols manifest themselves is related to their ambiguity, in the sense that "symbols unite people by the very fact of their indeterminability because they contain unlimited space for interpretation and amplification" (25), thus leaving room for individual 'subversive' interpretations.

Of course, it is possible for individuals to interpret shared symbols and archetypes differently. But there are some individuals, usually the ones labeled as 'deviant' and/or otherwise 'different' from 'normal', for whom such a possibility becomes a necessity in order to cope with their self-perceived 'difference'. This idea emerges in the four chapters in Basil-Morozow's book that are explicitly devoted to the various figures in which the Burtonian male protagonists present themselves: the monster, the superhero, the genius, and the maniac, which are all "different guises of the image of the 'dark child'" (2). For such individuals, the conflict with society is unavoidable, because they are not able to accept the prevailing 'normal' interpretation of the world, and at the same time represent a threat to 'normality' and its rules. This relegates them to the realm of the 'horrible' and the 'terrifying'. For them, society cannot be defined as a 'community'. Bassil-Morozow focuses on what she describes as "monstrous society" in the last chapter of her book, particularly considering the vision of society and the kind of "social criticism" Burton offers in *Mars Attacks!* (1996) and *Planet of the Apes* (2001).

Jointly considered, and for all their differences in approaches and results, Hanich and Bassil-Morozow's books both seem to arrive at some shared conclusions, at least those concerning the relevance of "frightening films" for contemporary societies. At the end of her book, Bassil-Morozow states that "Tim Burton's popularity as a director and visionary, which comes despite his films being marginal, overtly Gothic and otherwise nonconformist, is not surprising", because

his depiction of the individual as a fragile creature whose integrity is being threatened by the unthinking collectivity, and the decisions of those few who have the power to influence the direction of mass

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thinking, is acutely relevant in the contemporary post-industrial, globalised capitalist world. (177)

In fact, Burton's films are able to highlight

the psychological dangers of a whole cluster of issues that come with modernity and postmodernity: an excessively materialist and utilitarian view of the world and physical processes; efficiency and technology at the expense of humanity; the rationalisation and professionalisation of private life; and even – ironically, given the general individualistic stance of Burton's *oeuvre* – loss of communal and familial ties. (177-178)

The difficulties of (re)building a 'community' from individual differences in contemporary societies seem to be a common concern of the two authors. They also share the assumption that films in general, and 'frightening films' in particular, do address, and attempt to suggest a solution to, the eternal conflict between individual and society. However, there is a difference. Hanich seems to rely on a more 'ontological' position in suggesting that the basic universality of human emotions (in this case, 'fear'), especially when they are collectively experienced – as in the case of co-viewing scary films in a shared spatial and temporal context – could be a means through which the 'malaises' of modernity can be perceived. Bassil-Mozorow's account of Burton's films offers a more nuanced picture. The perspective here is of the individual who is not able, or refuses, to accept any limitations to her interpretative possibilities in re-imagining the world, as she urges us, as viewers, to remain aware there cannot be a community that can assemble the infinite individual interpretations of an assumed 'common world'.