Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film

By James Chapman
London: I. B. Tauris, 2005. ISBN 1-85043-808-0 (pbk), ISBN 1-85043-807-2 (hbk). 22 illustrations, xvi + 385pp. £15.99 (pbk), £49.50 (hbk)

A review by Jack Newsinger, University of Nottingham, UK

One obvious concern when reading a book by someone as prolific as James Chapman is that it may be light in the way of research. Happily this is not the case with *Past and Present*. What Chapman offers is a richly detailed and informed history that strikes an excellent balance between accessibility and sophistication. As well as providing a thorough analysis of some of the key films of the genre the book will be of use to anyone interested in an overview of the historical dynamics of British film production and consumption.

The historical film, defined as a genre that takes as its subject matter real events in British history, has been particularly ubiquitous in the history of British film production, having a direct relationship with some of the key markers of British national identity -- the monarchy, British national 'heroes', famous wartime exploits, and so on -- and being at the forefront of attempts to open up the American market for British films. Chapman's stated aim is to test the hypothesis that these films are as much about the period in which they were made as they are about the events they depict. As he notes:

> While this is far from being a new idea, it has tended, hitherto, to be taken as a self-evident truth. However, we must always be alert to the danger of reading films simply to prove our own preconceived theories or of making film-makers agents in a historical process of which they themselves were completely unaware. Only by close, empirically based investigation of the historical contexts of production and reception is it possible to establish what were the intentions of film-makers and the extent to which the meanings in the films that may now seem obvious to us were identified by contemporaries. (319)

With this in mind the book is divided into thirteen chapters spanning seventy years of British cinema: from *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (Alexander Korda, 1933) to *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998). Each chapter is a case study of a specific film (except Chapter Three, which takes two closely related films as its subject) and follows a uniform structure, beginning with an account of the institutional and economic contexts prevalent in the British film industry of the period. Chapman then proceeds to examine the films' production histories. Key here is to establish the relative degree of creative agency of those involved in the film's production. This is followed by an analysis of the film's critical and -- where evidence exists -- popular reception. It is only once these contexts of production and reception have been established that he offers his own analysis.

This structure and method allows for a wonderfully nuanced account of the processes that work to create what Chapman calls the films' "narrative ideologies": "the attitudes, assumptions and beliefs that inform the filmic narratives." (12) It is in the tensions between the objectives of the filmmakers and the meanings attached to their films by critics and the public that the strengths of Chapman's insistence on grounded empirical research is most productive. In this he demonstrates that the historical film is a particularly flexible genre for the articulation of a variety of social and political concerns, as well as being a site for debates about national culture in the public sphere.

A particularly good example comes in Chapter Twelve which explores the much discussed Hugh Hudson film *Chariots of Fire* (1981). Despite its American financial backing the film was hailed for its uncompromising Britishness in theme and temperament. In one of many nice anecdotal tit-bits we learn that Columbia Pictures turned down the script on the grounds that it had "no viability at all in the American marketplace because of style and tone as well as subject matter." (Quoted 273) Of course, *Chariots of Fire* was massively successful, going on to win Best Film at the Academy Awards in 1982 which prompted Screenwriter Colin Welland to famously announce a -- short-lived, as it turned out -- British invasion of Hollywood. Chapman analyses the film's peculiar status as a vehicle for a left-leaning critique of class privilege as well as being received as a pro-Thatcherite text, endorsing personal ambition and meritocracy in a wave of patriotic sentiment whipped up during the Falklands War. His account of the film's production reveals how the final text came to embody a "complex and at times contradictory set of narrative ideologies relating to themes of nationhood, ethnicity and class" (288) that allowed the Conservative government to use the film's success as a platform for nationalist pro-Thatcherite rhetoric. This was to the chagrin of Hudson, Welland and Producer David Puttnam, all Labour Party supporters that actually intended a sharp critique of the establishment.

At other times the historical film was used as a vehicle for more coherent and straightforwardly propagandist messages. For example Chapman discusses *Henry V* (Laurence Olivier, 1944) in terms of an officially sanctioned wartime propagandist film culture promoted by the Ministry of Information, to the extent that the idea for the film came directly from them to Olivier. In order to make the play conform to official propaganda directives over a third of the text was expunged. The result is that the film emphasises a national unity that did not exist in Shakespeare's day, more in touch with the idea of the 'people's war': "in adversity, the English/British find common purpose and a common bond." (135) At all times Chapman is judicious in balancing the available historical evidence.

In common with other books on the historical film (for example Claire Monk and Amy Sargeant's *British Historical Cinema*, Routledge, 2002) the significance of all this for Chapman extends beyond setting the record straight:

> The historical film raises questions such as whose history is being represented, by whom and for whom? ... The historical film is not merely offering a representation of the past; in most instances it is offering a representation of a specifically national past. National histories are fiercely protected and contested. (6)

The book, then, is distinctly un-interested in the contemporary drive to disavow the nation as a critical category in film studies in favour of the theoretical model of the transnational. Rather, as in other relatively recent, excellent histories of British cinema (for example Sarah

Street's *Transatlantic Crossings: British Feature Films in the USA*, Continuum, 2002) the book demonstrates the historical significance of the international dimensions to British film production (the ever-present figure of the émigré director and the singular importance of American capital and the American market, etc.) while affirming the significance of the ideological function of Britishness in production strategies and reception discourses.

While *Past and Present* is perhaps not as "ground breaking" as the publishers claim on the back cover, film historians could do a lot worse as a model for historical research.

Convergence Culture: When Old and New Media Collide

By Henry Jenkins
London: New York University Press, 2006. ISBN 978-0-8147-4281-5 (hbk). 11 illustrations, xi+308 pp. £15.29 (hbk)
Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture By Henry Jenkins

Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture

By Henry Jenkins

London: New York University Press, 2006. ISBN 978-0-8147-4285-3 (pbk). vi+279 pp. £12.95 (pbk), £42.95 (hbk)

A review by Jonathan Gray, Fordham University, US

A deserving winner of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies' Katherine Singer Kovacs Book Award, *Convergence Culture: When Old and New Media Collide* maps the proliferation of both media and affective involvement with said media, particularly within synergistic clusters -- *The Matrix* as films, computer game, anime, cosplay and comic book, for instance, or *Harry Potter* as books, films and inspiration for fan fiction and community-building. The book is pre-eminently about our current transitional era of media history, for while Jenkins points to many of the era's success stories, he is also careful to show the scars they carry, the battle zones that surround them and the multiple forces at play in determining exactly where the media of yesterday and today will be tomorrow. Jenkins writes with a sense of urgency, not merely gesturing towards changes gleefully, but imploring his readers -- subtly at times, explicitly at others -- to care about where media is going, how it is being used and what is at stake. The book is a truly remarkable achievement; its attractive cover, wonderfully accessible writing style and familiarity with all things new, young and cool might convince the reader that this will be a fun and simple read, and yet while fun, it is anything but simple. A refreshingly astute, up-to-date and insightful book, it poses (and answers) vital questions for twenty-first century media studies.

Jenkins refers to the book as a 'sequel' of sorts to his earlier *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (Routledge, 1992), and as with any sequel set years later, it is particularly interesting to see what has happened to our characters since last we met. Fourteen years on, fandom and participatory culture have changed. The advent of the Internet has ushered fandom online, making participation easier, and welcoming 'lurking' and participation by non-fans. The proliferation of television channels and media platforms has led to a fragmentation of the audience, and hence media producers' need for and forced love

of fans. A spate of new leisure devices and gadgets, from iPods to mobile phones to DVDs, have opened up new revenue streams for producers, encouraging them to welcome some forms of participation. Hence, where last we saw fans and participatory culture operating in the margins of media culture, at fan cons and circulating zines, now fandom has gone mainstream, and new technologies make both fandom and participatory culture commonplace. To use Jenkins's language of sequels, *Convergence Culture* offers us a *Return of the Jedi*-like open, with fans and participatory culture, like Luke Skywalker, now the trained Jedi.

Jenkins was criticised for being too celebratory of fans in *Textual Poachers*, but here he writes of production and industry playing a major role in participatory culture. *Convergence Culture* offers a more sophisticated account of how consumers and producers bounce off each other at one point in time, yet work alongside each other at another. For instance, noting the industry's gradual embrace of 'affective economics', and their turn to fandom, Jenkins notes the paradox inherent in evaluating such a move:

> to be desired by networks is to have your tastes commodified. On the one hand, to be commodified expands a group's cultural visibility. Those groups that have no recognised economic value get ignored. That said, commodification is also a form of exploitation. Those groups that are commodified find themselves targeted more aggressively by marketers and often feel they have lost control over their own culture, since it is mass produced and mass marketed. (62-3)

This tension between creating culture and having it co-opted forms a running theme of the book, and is also indicative of Jenkins's fascination with how audiences and producers themselves converge. Of particular interest, here, is his treatment of the legalities of participatory culture: rather than see the issue as being solely one of fans demanding ownership and producers refusing to grant it, Jenkins is careful to examine liminal cases, where creators such as *The Sims*' Will Wright have succeeded precisely by yielding control and by sharing authority and ownership with consumers. Jenkins points to the immense profitability of many Japanese anime companies, who have openly allowed and encouraged many forms of participatory culture where their American counterparts would litigate, and he suggests that the viability and power of the media industries in a convergence age will rely upon them yielding control. Hence, while in any given situation, fans and producers may well characterise themselves as opponents of sorts, Jenkins argues persuasively that it is the cessation of such hostilities that will allow both to thrive. Greater affective involvement *and* greater profits lie in convergence.

Certainly, the book offers an acute, in-the-trenches examination of producers and of how they are struggling with convergence. As Jenkins notes, some accounts of corporate synergy make it sound ever so easy, but he shows how rocky a path it is. Through chapter-long case studies of notable successes, *Survivor*, *American Idol*, *The Matrix*, *Star Wars* and *Harry Potter*, and through smaller case studies in sidebars, Jenkins paints a vivid picture of the swirling and chaotic vortex into which each of these texts steps.

Convergence Culture is also impressive for its intricate mapping of how textuality, meaning, and affect are produced when constructed across multiple media. Drawing on the work of James Paul Gee (*Language, Learning and Gaming: A Critique of Traditional Schooling*, Routledge, 2005) with regards to education and 'affinity spaces,' he offers a nice image of the

transmedia text as space for play and exploration. Jenkins's other key theoretical touchstone is Pierre Lévy's notion of 'collective knowledge' (*Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*, Perseus, 1997), and he writes eloquently of audiences' fascination with textuality and with the pursuit of meaning. Here lies one of his book's greatest offerings -- while Jenkins never strays from talking of texts and media as play, fun and pleasurable, he argues that *through* such play, the consumer is often searching for meaning at a more profound, epistemological level.

Towards the end of the book, indeed, Jenkins offers provocative commentary on the very nature of knowledge and of education. He argues that we might learn from the 'knowledge communities' of convergence culture, and see how they pattern an increasingly prevalent form of knowledge acquisition. Versus the logic of the still-dominant paradigm in education, which sees individuals as acquiring information individually, Jenkins suggests that convergence culture places the collective at the center, and that ultimately the collective's knowledge is more important. While the book's first chapter lays the groundwork for such ideas with its examination of *Survivor* spoilers, in his final chapter and conclusion, he asks how citizenship and political engagement might change in an era of convergence and knowledge communities. Thus, whereas to many readers the spoiler activity that he describes in Chapter One (such as using satellites to locate 'hidden' *Survivor* filming locations) may seem foreign, even "excessive", sly rhetorician that Jenkins is, in closing the book, he shows how all this "serious fun" (207) might be modeling modes of engaging with not only the media but also the political world around us, in ways that activate our citizenship. In Chapter One, he asks us to "Imagine the kinds of information these fans could collect if they sought to spoil the government rather than the networks" (29), then in the closing chapter he elaborates on instances of civic participatory culture. Therefore, his conclusion also energises his discussion in Chapter Five of the attacks on *Harry Potter* fan activity by both Time Warner and Christian conservatives, as he suggests that what is at stake in the rights to read and to write culture as participants is a grander issue of what rights we have to accumulate, seek and share both knowledge and creative expression. Jenkins's trump card is to reveal not that his book was not 'really' about media, stories and play, and instead about knowledge and personal expression -- rather, he demands that media, stories and play are themselves about knowledge, meaning and personal expression.

By nature of being about techno-literate consumption, *Convergence Culture* is about youth in particular. For instance, the penultimate paragraph argues that "We need to rethink the goals of media education so that young people can come to think of themselves as cultural producers and participants and not simply as consumers, critical or otherwise" (259). As a book about media and youth, it is all too rare in seeing young people as anything other than the world's greatest monads. Jenkins is highly respected in fan communities because his work has proven that he listens to fans, and here too he actually listens to consumers. Thus, while on the book's cover, Howard Rheingold declares Jenkins to be the new Marshall McLuhan, I disagree. McLuhan factored out both the audience and the industry, trusting that the technology itself would explain media culture, whereas *Convergence Culture* argues compellingly that technology only tells us so much. Even when not wearing his audience researcher hat, Jenkins is one of the more gifted scholars in our field at listening to audiences, just as he has his ear closer to the industrial ground than do most of us. Thus *Convergence Culture* succeeds where McLuhan failed, at capturing the very messy realities of modern day media, and at finding sense and meaning in the maelstrom of convergence culture. Jenkins calls on us to critically engage with the future of the media, up close and in the moment, not

from afar, and while at times he is unclear what form this engagement could take, it is not all up to Jenkins to tell us: this is, after all, participatory culture.

If *Convergence Culture* is the 'sequel' to *Textual Poachers*, then *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* represents this sequel's 'bonus materials.' A collection of previously published work, complete with 'director's commentary'-like introductions to each chapter, the book sub-divides into respective sections on the three titular groups.

The book opens with an interview/dialogue between Jenkins and Matt Hills, with the two eking out important nuances in fan practices and the study of fans. The chapter's placement announces Jenkins's intentions to offer a more dialogic book, and furthers his interests from *Convergence Culture* in listening to other voices. Many of the subsequent articles represent Jenkins's response to public dialogues -- whether about love online, children and violence, or video games -- or Jenkins involving other voices in his scholarship. This dialogism builds up to the final chapter, an interview with his son, Henry Jenkins IV, based around their reactions to several episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. While the inclusion of such a chapter might to some ring of Jenkins proudly pulling a photo of his kid out of his wallet, in fact it neatly underlines his continuing points about the need to listen to youth that prove so central to the Gamers section, and about academia's need to listen to and acknowledge various levels of expertise that figure heavily in the Fans section. Given the confusion that results from reading a discussion between Henry Jenkins and Henry Jenkins, I often found myself forgetting who was speaking -- the undergrad or the renowned scholar, and this perhaps is the point, since Henry 4.0 offers cogent and highly intelligent commentary on *Buffy*, media and youth -- living evidence of what can be learned from listening. Much of the Gamers section shows Henry 3.0's frustrations at trying to get first American Congress, then American talk shows, to move beyond their painfully simplistic notions of youth and violence, and Henry 3.0 shares with us his feelings of having perhaps failed at doing so, yet the closing father-son dialogue offers a glimpse into how helpful such a process of listening to youth could be in revising blanket, fearful assumptions.

While the Gamers section therefore proves the more narratively engaging and unified section of the book, given its ongoing narrative of Henry III vs. the censors, and given its family drama, viewed as bonus materials for *Convergence Culture*, the Bloggers section is immensely rewarding too in that it maps Jenkins's shift from a De Certeauian vocabulary to his current Lévy-inspired vocabulary. To readers who have not read these chapters elsewhere, they are exciting foregroundings of *Convergence Culture*, while to those who have, they are interesting historical documents, allowing us to chart the development of an idea, much as bonus materials on a DVD might. In particular, 'Interactive Audiences? The "Collective Intelligence" of Media Fans' serves as Jenkins's Darwin on the Galapagos Islands moment, where the language and practices of fandom are first writ large onto media culture more generally.

On the whole, as with many collections of previously published materials, and particularly when lying in the formidable shadow of *Convergence Culture*, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers* is somewhat relegated to the status of secondary material. But its essays and articles helpfully make sense of debates over youth and violence, over academic authority and over the nature of participatory culture. Make no mistake, though, that *Convergence Culture* is the magnum opus, an excellent, provocative and enjoyable book. When discussing some of its arguments in a classroom recently, I was struck by how very excitedly the students responded to his

ideas, and by how many asked me after class where they could buy it: an extremely rare occurrence for me. Let's listen to them -- Jenkins is certainly onto something here, having characterised and described our media moment in both recognizable and revelatory ways.

Babes in Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Making of the American Child, 1930-1960

By Nicholas Sammond
London: Duke University Press, 2005. ISBN: 0-8223-3451-8 (pbk), 0-8223-3463-1 (hbk). 36 b&w illustrations, 488pp. £16.95 (pbk), £67.00 (hbk)

A review by Janice Kelly, Marymount Manhattan College, US

If the name Disney has become a symbol of middle American culture, Nicholas Sammond makes it clear it is not simply a matter of mass marketing, Mickey Mouse, and family vacations. The association between the Mickey Mouse Club, Dr. Spock, and the consumerism made possible by television should probably be no surprise to anyone familiar with American culture. The legend has much deeper roots. Sammond vividly traces Disney's influence on cultural notions of childhood from the time Mickey and his animated friends made their debut in the midst of the Great Depression, long before the first Mouseketeer appeared on the small screen.

At the helm of a fledgling animation studio, the visionary Walt Disney recognised that Disney cartoons offered a wholesome alternative to images like Bugs Bunny in drag, not to mention the ubiquitous violence of Warner Brothers cartoons. These were not technically "children's fare" (118). Sammond observes that most of the criticism of Disney productions emanates from a view of the company "as a media enterprise cleverly manipulating the intense affect that surrounds childhood for its own gain" (356). While shareholders rejoice, culture critics denounce the Disney Empire for enveloping children (and their parents) in a 'fantasyland' as unrealistic as the theme parks bearing the Disney name. To many of its critics, Disney is guilty of "conservative ideological programming." The irony is not lost on Sammond that the latest wave of condemnation does not come from liberals but takes the form of "right-ring critiques of Disney products as delivering encoded pro-homosexual, pedophile, and anti-Christian messages to American children" (357). To Sammond, the arguments on both sides underestimate the complex and multifaceted nature of mainstream culture and underestimate the capability of its members to act independent of media influence. The one thing they do not underestimate is how firmly ingrained Disney is in popular culture.

Even years after his death, the Disney name still invokes the image of its founder. From the onset, Walt Disney was a nurturing father figure -- a sharp contrast to Henry Ford or John D. Rockefeller, he embodied the image of a man who led a family company. Despite the fact that Disney was not much older than his employees, "he was regularly depicted as a compassionate and wise father and his workers as playful and imaginative children for whom he wanted only the best" (118). Disney was a perfectionist; animation is a uniquely demanding art form and the studio eagerly touted its meticulousness. This not only showed

off the company's scientific innovation and dedication to quality but it also worked to distinguish it from movie studios populated by "immigrants, petulant Europeans, and working-class hedonists" (117). Clearly, Mae West was not the appropriate influence for impressionable American children. Mickey Mouse conveyed loftier ideals.

Disney seemed to regard his employees with a blend of professionalism and paternalism. As portrayed by Sammond, Disney took as great care in publicising his fatherly approach to management as he did in producing excellent animation. Sammond notes that on the surface, it might seem "a bit odd" that a company bent on making its name synonymous with positive children's entertainment should have "showcased its industrial techniques and employee relations" (117). It was actually a brilliant marketing ploy. What other business could boast of being a model of industrial efficiency and of an ideal American family simultaneously? Visitors to the Disney studio (or the legions of viewers who saw it on film) were greeted by Disney's 'son' -- Mickey Mouse -- at the entranceway. The studio even had the two-car garage to which upwardly mobile families aspired; only this garage was scaled-down with two tiny cars belonging to Mickey and Minnie Mouse. Down to the last visible detail, the Disney studio aligned itself with its family audience.

One of the most fascinating excerpts of the books is Sammond's deconstruction of The Sorcerer's Apprentice as a parable of the dangers of applying the principles of scientific management to raising a child. *Fantasia* (1940) is known for introducing generations of children to classical music, and The Sorcerer's Apprentice, with a hapless Mickey Mouse besieged by a relentless army of buckets and mops, is its most familiar piece. In Sammond's account, it illustrates the juxtaposition of scientific management and parental humanism that Disney embodied. The powerful sorcerer is named "Yen Sid" -- Disney spelled backwards. The ambitious but naïve apprentice "dreams that he has control over the machinery of the universe but awakes to discover that what he has set in motion is a juggernaut of automation" (177). Overwhelmed by the mechanical forces, he flails at them violently but only makes things worse as the mindless mops and buckets just keep replicating, flooding the workshop, and transforming Mickey's management fantasy into a nightmare of powerlessness. Yen Sid, the "compassionate and wise father" figure to his "playful and imaginative" child finally comes to his rescue. The apprentice must relinquish his dream of power. In Sammond's eloquent prose, "The upstart returns to the master his tools, and the punishment is firm, but forgiving. Order is restored, but it is a humanized order" (177).

The fact was that in the early 20th century, theories of scientific management made inroads into family life. The virtually untenable idea was losing favour by the 1930s, but it was still causing apprehension with parents who wondered (realistically) how they could raise a child according to principles that regulated a shop floor. The Sorcerer's Apprentice made it vividly clear that scientific management without human understanding would create automatons at best. Yen Sid controlled his apprentice through expertise laced with compassion just as Disney did with his employees. By following the Disney formula, parents might be able to do the same with their children. The Magic in The Sorcerer's Apprentice was not incidental. The 'Disney Magic' took some of the apprehension out of raising a child.

Parents in a society dedicated to democratic ideals are faced with a perennial dilemma: how to balance the child's need for control with the child's need for freedom? When Mickey was born in the 1930s, developmental theorists were beginning to acknowledge that children were not objects that could be constructed to fit standardised norms, but individuals with unique growth capabilities. Over the next two decades it would be reinforced by political forces as

much as by advances in child development. In the 1940s, the Hitler Youth served as a warning that subject to rigid control, children could be turned into "soulless automatons" (191). The strict child-rearing practices that shaped previous generations could inadvertently have that effect. In the 1950s, the image of Soviet children trained by the state to be 'godless communists' provoked even more anxiety.

By then, parents did not have to worry about being excessively strict -- they had Dr. Spock to guide them on how to produce a happy, adjusted child. They had Margaret Mead to inform them of the interaction of family and culture. And they had Disney studios, producing movies with nature themes to show that healthy child development takes place in a natural environment. As a cartoon character, Mickey Mouse had fallen out of favour but he was reborn through the medium of television. His disciples were a group of lively children called the Mouseketeers (Mouse ears and all). By 1955, Yen Sid had his Magic Kingdom in the form of Disneyland. Empowered by Dr. Spock, children demanded that their parents buy them the plethora of toys and artefacts unleashed by Disneyland the television program and Disneyland the place. Eager to ensure that their children were healthy and well-adjusted, parents complied. Disney stockholders cheered. With Disney in charge, consumerism could easily beat communism.

Sammond never leaves the perspective that Walt Disney and all his cultural artefacts are finely tuned mechanisms for the socialisation of children. At the same time, he recognises that Disney did not impose his influence on a gullible public. Like human development, the interaction between Disney and his audience is a complex phenomenon.

Film Noir: From Berlin to Sin City (Short Cuts Series)

By Mark Bould
London: Wallflower Press, 2005. ISBN 1-90476450-9. 144pp. £12.99 (pbk)
Dames in the Driver's Seat: Rereading Film Noir By Jans B. Wager

Dames in the Driver's Seat: Rereading Film Noir

By Jans B. Wager

Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005. ISBN 0-292-709668-8. 208pp. £14.95 (pbk).

A review by Alison Peirse, Institute for Cultural Research, Lancaster University, UK

As a new addition to Wallflower Press's *Short Cuts* series, I have certain anticipations of *Film Noir: From Berlin to Sin City*. It should act as a simple and cogent approach to the genre. It should be accessible to the degree that both student and academic can refer to it for relevant information and suggestions for further reading. Above all, it should be clear and well written. Unfortunately, Mark Bould's book fails to achieve the majority of the above expectations.

Throughout the book the language used is unnervingly complex. While Bould's points do make sense, his dense and difficult writing style is off-putting and hard to read. The book begins with 'A Note on Terminology' and a lengthy and dense explanation of what 'determinism' is, advising that "in the non-linear dynamics of complex systems, there is no necessary correspondence of magnitude between a microscopic fluctuation in a system and the macroscopic divergences it can produce in that system" (no pg. no). Where this high theory fits into film noir is hard to see, and is particularly disheartening for the film student, taking place as it does on the very first page. Bould even notes at the end of the terminology that "the point of all this will become clear" (no pg. no). In fact it never does, and this forced critical theory reading onto film noir is an irrevocable blight on this book.

The introduction deals with the tremulous beast that is defining film noir. Bould comments that "when we approach film noir, we are faced with neither an objectively-existing object out there in the world nor some ideal to which particularly films more or less conform" (2). He argues for certain similarities across film noir narrative and visual styles, but usefully notes that "despite the importance of visual style to film noirs, the claim made by several critics that film noir is a style rather than a genre seems ass untenable as the claims made for a specific narrative (or thematic) structure. Rather, film noirs emerge from (discussions about) the interactions of style, narrative and theme" (12). Therefore, Bould usefully suggests

that there is no single solution to the problem of defining film noir. Rather, the genre should be interrogated from several multiple and overlapping approaches. This is an entirely sensible approach, and is possibly the most useful idea to be drawn from this book.

Chapter One focuses predominantly on Francophone and Anglophone criticism that identified film noir prior to its uptake in the academy in the 70s. Throughout this chapter the writing continues to be dull, but is far less turgid than in the introduction. Chapter Two studies the origins of film noir. It suggests that the genre emerges from the intersections of Weimar Cinema, French poetic realism, American hard-boiled fiction and American crime films. Bould goes beyond the traditional attribution of film noir to German Expressionism and argues that in fact the genre is influenced more broadly by inter-war German cinema as a whole, making particular reference to the *Strassenfilm* (street film). After a brief account of Fritz Lang's German films, the critical theory woefully returns. Bould reads Lang's German work as determinist, resembling "both Expressionism's critique of industrial rationalisation and the image of capitalist modernity developed by the Frankfurt School" (29). Having created a suitable segueway, the chapter then moves to a study of the Frankfurt School, class consciousness and the rationalisation of social life. This is related to the mise en scene of *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927), before returning with what is obvious relief for the author, to a discussion of Adorno and Horkheimer.

The study of 1930s Hollywood crime films continues in this vein, for Bould's approach is to 'read' critical theories onto the texts themselves. The opening paragraph on *Little Caesar* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1931) announces that the two central characteristics of the American crime films are "capitalist modernity as figured by the city" (41) and the "idea of consumption as utopian goal" (41). The dynamic and exciting films of this period, which also include *The Public Enemy* (William A. Wellman, 1931) and *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932) are each reduced to a small paragraph discussing plot. Where is the film analysis? The remainder of the chapter is a standard account of crucial films, players and stylistic techniques in film noir. It often feels little more than a list of films and brief narrative descriptions. Simply, there is no passion for the filmic material; in fact this account lacks passion for film in any capacity.

Chapter Three on the main cycle of film noir does nothing to lighten my mood. The opening sentence runs as follows: "If one accepts that film noir, like any other genre, is in an ongoing process of ultimately irresolvable discursive formation, then any generalisation one makes about it will founder not only on multiple exceptions but also on other versions of the genre formulated by other discursive agents" (50). It's enough to make you put the book down there and then. This chapter suggests that the classic cycle of film noir should be examined through two themes, that of 'entrapment' and 'investigation'. Such entrapments included "innocent men are framed, imprisoned for crimes they did not commit or caught up unwittingly in conspiracies and plots" (51) and "female identities and masculine fantasies thereof, were at the centre of a film noir cycle about wives who find themselves isolated, in danger or victims of husband's plots" (51). These two thematics are indeed central to classic film noir, and are useful tools for the future study of the genre.

While I have complained so far that the actual filmic analysis is distinctly lacking, through the trope of 'Investigation' some proper textual readings are attempted. Bould studies *Murder My Sweet* (Edward Dmytyk, 1944) closely, and within the analysis there is some detailed study of the visual coding including lighting and point of view. In addition, Bould studies *While the City Sleeps* (Fritz Lang, 1956) -- which he describes as containing "a sense of multiple-interpellating determinants" (84) -- devoting time to scrutinising the editing pattern

of a sequence when a serial killer is watching a television news report about the murders he has committed. Accordingly, we do get a sense of how the film is constructed, even if this chapter insists on negotiating the reading through Louis Althusser and interpellation.

Chapter Four on neo-noir is a little easier on the reader as it is not as crammed with quotes and critical theory as earlier chapters. There is a discernible sense that the author is now on more comfortable territory and is beginning to relax. Bould links classic film noir with more modern films, outlining noir's impact on a variety of national cinemas and genres. He suggests that British crime films such as *Brighton Rock* (John Boulting, 1947) and *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1949) developed a 'noirish sensibility' (93) while noir's impact in France can be seen in *Touchez pas au Grisbi* (Jacques Becker, 1945) and *Les Diaboliques* (Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1954) among others. Moving forward to postclassical Hollywood cinema, Bould argues that "there is a clear sense in the late 1960s and early-1970s that, as film noir emerged as a recognised and recognisable genre, it represented a pre-sold concept to be repackaged and resold" (95). Usefully, he picks up key varieties of the noir story such as the femme fatale in *Bound* (Andy and Larry Wachowski, 1996), couples-on the run in *True Romance* (Tony Scott, 1993) and rural and small town neo-noirs such as *Fargo* (Joel Coen, 1996).

Following on from this he makes an interesting argument for the importance of fantasy in neo-noir. He claims that in neo-noir "fantasy becomes a central noir element, materialising many of those things that film noir has only been able to suggest" (98), citing *Blue Velvet* (David Lynch, 1986) and *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999) as two such examples. Surprisingly though, Bould makes the sudden leap to Lacanian psychoanalysis for his study of *Fight Club* where he claims that the narrator (Edward Norton) "only enters the symbolic realm when he begins to speak as Tyler would, but this increasing over-identification with his father must be brought to a traumatic conclusion" (99). The sudden recourse to psychoanalysis so late in the book is unusual, and again, much like the critical theory that is forced upon filmic readings, gives the impression that the films themselves do not contain enough interesting information to entice the reader. This simply reinforces my suggestion that this book does not emanate a love of film. Bould's readings do not make me want to go out and review either the classics or the neo-noirs. This book is unnecessarily complex and lacks the required detailed textual analysis to tease out the detailed meanings of the filmic texts. Aside from the useful bibliographic information and the film chronology, *Fillm Noir From Berlin to Sin City* lacks everything required to make this an exciting or interesting book

Thankfully for the reader, wearied by Bould's style, Jans B. Wager writes on film noir with an exciting and engaging manner, combining illuminating analysis with an obvious enthusiasm for her subject area. *Dames in the Driver's Seat* examines how race, gender and class are constructed across a range of classic film noirs and late 1990s films with a noir sensibility. The latter films she describes as 'postclassic noir' which are then divided further into 'retro-noir' and 'neo-noir'. Retro noirs are "made in the present but set in the classic noir period, the 1940s or '50s" (3) and include *LA Confidential* (Curtis Hanson, 1997) and *Mulholland Falls* (Lee Tamahori, 1996); while neo-noirs which are "made and set in the present but referring to classic noir narratively or stylistically" (3) and include *Fargo* and *Jackie Brown* (Quentin Tarantino, 1997). Furthermore, distinct differences are read between retro- and neo-noirs, suggesting that retro noirs are reactionary and concerned with a dominant white male aesthetic coupled with passive females, while neo-noirs are more revisionary, however "for class and especially race, the issue is less black-and-white" (3).

After clearly laying out her noir definitions, Wager turns specifically to gender in noir. The femme fatale is described as a female character implicated in the downfall of the male protagonist but *also* the term "implies her own inevitable demise", for "the femme fatale almost always causes her own destruction or, at the very least, containment within prison walls or marriage" (19). In addition to the femme fatale, Wagner introduces the *femme attrapée*, the female character imprisoned at home in patriarchal and domestic space. The point of having these two terms, Wagner argues, is to focus on the female character of noir, "on her survival through acquiescence in the requirements of patriarchy, or on her destruction through resistance" (20). This, she claims, will remove the male character from the focus of film noir analysis. Interestingly though, Wager argues that masculinity also functions in through these terms, suggesting that the *home fatal* and *home attrapé* can be found in many noirs, where the "*homme fatal* wants more than he should, more money and often a dangerous dame as well", (4) while the "*homme atrrapé* does not resist society's demands, and usually he survives the noir narrative" (4).

Chapters One to Three function as a rather fractured literature review, focussing on the various approaches to defining gender, class and race in film noir. These chapters lose the engaging style of the introduction and become repetitious: he said, she said, I think. Wager flexes her theoretical muscles suitably, but these chapters lack flow. They function merely as a series of propositions around gender (and race and class to a lesser degree) and film noir to be worked through. Wager's own ideas are perceptive and original, but they are drowning her documentation of other peoples, at times far less interesting, assertions.

After the interesting approach in the introduction, and the theoretical literature review, alarm bells begin to ring. Wagner announces that the first three chapters are "scholarly" and after that "we go off to the movies" (7). The theoretical framework set up so well in the opening chapters is clearly not meant to mesh with later chapters with filmic case studies, for "my academic colleagues who regularly utilize film in the classroom have not read Laura Mulvey" and "I invite both film aficionados and film scholars into this discussion by moving obliquely away from scholarly discourse and toward more personal and popular responses, especially in the later chapters" (7). With trepidation, I move forward to the film analysis.

Part II on classic film noir compromise of chapter-length case studies on *The Killers* (Robert Siodmak, 1946), *Kiss Me Deadly* (Robert Aldrich, 1955) and *Out of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, 1947). Despite my earlier misgivings, Wager realises complex and insightful readings from these noir classics that illuminate them in a new and original manner. Her analysis of *The Killers* is the highpoint of the book, offering a perceptive analysis of the film in terms of domestic space, mise en scene, patriarchal relations, narrative agency and costume. Of particular interest is the study of Kitty Collins (Ava Gardner). Wager argues that Kitty grows increasingly deglamorized throughout the film, "she appears in various seedy motel rooms, first in a fitted sweater and skirt; then visibly tired, without makeup, in a checked shirt; and, finally, as a character in her own flashback of her eventual betrayal of Swede, in a wrinkled shirt and skirt" (43). By the film's close, nine years after the introductory flashback, Kitty is dressed as a middle-class housewife, a true *femme attrapée*.

Interestingly, Wager seems to *write* about gender, while an entirely separate *visual* narrative about race is played out in the accompanying film images. While Wager does discuss race at times, it is rarely central in her written analysis and instead the 'story' of race in film noir is played out in the filmic images that take up the top of many of the pages. Wager points out that classic film noir does offer a representation of black culture as cool, especially in

nightclubs which are often populated with black characters, for "the white male protagonist's familiarity with and acceptance into black culture often indicates his hipness" (31). In her analysis of *Out of the Past* the top third of the pages are taken up with images from the text showing inside the jazz club where of the five people on screen, four are black -- and two of which are obviously sophisticated and well-off suggesting "a glimpse of vibrant black culture separate form the white film noir narrative" is shown (57). Wager points out that this is also the case in *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941), in which a stylish black couple can be seen talking at the bus station as Sam Spade (Humphrey Bogart) hurries by. Wager suggests that "film noir's forays into nightclubs do serve to suggest, as does the couple in the bus station…that a vibrant black culture exists just offscreen" (34). Thus, while race is referred to, its analysis is predominantly constructed through the visual images accompanying the text. Race is explicated in *Dames in the Driver's Seat* through showing, while gender is deconstructed through writing.

The remainder of the book deals with close filmic case studies of retro- and neo-noirs. After her initial damning of retro-noir in the introduction, Wager further condemns the subgenre as "retro-noir presents white masculinity as rightfully dominant, white femininity as passively peripheral, an idealised middle class, and the racial other as an unimportant backdrop." (89) While she provides evidence for such ideas through readings of films including *LA Confidential*, this section signals the beginning of a disappointing downward spiral in the quality of book. The film analysis which was so bright in classic noir becomes entirely dreary when engaging with modern texts. The chapters on retro-noir *Mullholland Falls* and neo-noir *Fargo* (and I remain unconvinced for Fargo's full noir status) are little more than recounting of the plot. The analyses offer no analysis of the film grammar that was so insightful in *The Killers* and *Out of the Past* and the studies of gender and class are both uninspiring and obvious.

Chapter Nine is literally an exercise in *Fight Club* bashing. For Wager, *Fight Club* is an "orgy of male violence and racism, male homosocial and erotic couplings, and misogyny" (113). Not only do I disagree with her negative reading, I'm also unconvinced of her argument that *Fight Club* can be read within the film noir genre. Although visually *Fight Club* occasionally references film noir -- predominantly through the construction and styling of the femme fatale figure Marla Singer (Helena Bonham Carter) -- this is very much a surface stylisation and doesn't lend itself to deeper analysis. Throughout the chapter Wager's genre taxonomy grows increasingly confused, and she has to bend it out of shape to read *Fight Club* as a retro-noir. She claims that it is a modern film with classic noir associations -- white male protagonist, erotic triangle, female object of desire, and dangerous male antagonist -- but has a contemporaneous setting. This, according to her earlier definitions, would class it as neo-noir, but as she reads neo-noir as progressive and retro-noir as regressive, she forces the film into the ideologically dubious retro-noir subgenre. This, Wager announces is because the film "only masquerades as neo-noir", and ideologically it is "retro-noir'" (102). The film "comes down firmly and overwhelmingly on the side of white male prowess and the reestablishment of a most pernicious white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (102). While I do agree this film is violent -- indeed, the violent spectacle of the bare knuckle fights is a crucial element of the text -- I disagree that it is misogynistic. Wager claims that women are peripheral to the text and that the narrative is homosocial. Again, while this in itself is true, it is being read wrongly. Women are peripheral in this text as they *are not* the focus of this film. *Fight Club* focuses on intense and brutal relations between the Narrator and Tyler Durder (Brad Pitt), where the spectacle of the ruined *male* body is paramount. This focus on male bodies and relations does not make the film misogynist. Furthermore, Wager's

claim that the film upholds white capitalist patriarchy is surely undermined by the destruction of the credit card buildings by Project Mayhem. The dissolution of the financial buildings wipes out debt and allows everyone -- regardless of race, class or gender -- to start afresh with a clean slate. The real problem with this chapter then, is that *Fight Club* is truly not derivative of film noir in any true sense, and Wager is forced to make increasingly absurd propositions to make the film 'work' within a book that focuses on this very genre.

Thankfully, Chapter Twelve on Tanantino's neo-noir *Jackie Brown* is a return to form. Wager reads the shopping mall where Jackie Brown (Pam Griers) spends much of her time as a place where Jackie can leave behind her poor lifestyle: "Jackie seeks transit to a real space of financial security, and she uses the well-lit benignancy of the mall to mask her activities, even doing a bit of shopping as she pulls off her plan" (152). Importantly, Wager suggests that neo-noirs such as *Jackie Brown* open up a space for the femme fatale to get away with it, for "although these female characters do not function as feminist paradigms, *Jackie Brown* does allow an intelligent, attractive, and duplicitous black woman to get the better of a number of white and black men while exhibiting some female solidarity" (150).

In addition to the generally poor analysis of contemporary films, there are other quibbles with this book, some of the criticisms of which should be levelled with the publisher. The images from the films are reprinted in fairly low quality and are often fuzzy and indistinct around the edges. This is a shame, as the low resolution definition gives the book an air of cheapness that it does not deserve. Furthermore, the book is composed of a plethora of often very short chapters which gives it a fractured feel, and many of the later chapters such as on the film *Twilight* (Robert Benton, 1998) feel 'standalone' and do not work within the wider theoretical aims of the book. It would have made more sense to run several of the chapters together, which would provide the opportunity to discuss race, gender and class in more depth through comparative film analysis, drawing out further similarities or discrepancies across the texts.

Both *Film Noir: From Berlin to Sin City* and *Dames in the Driver's Seat: Rereading Film Noir* contribute to the ever-growing field of film noir study. Major problems have occurred in both cases when reading film noir qualities onto more modern cinema, and offer a note of warning for the gun-ho film scholar ready to read noir in every contemporary crime film. While the two books have their faults, particularly in their readings of *Fight Club* and *Fargo*, both are worth looking up, the former for the excellent research material in the bibliography, and the latter for Wagner's delightful and incisive analysis of classical Hollywood cinema.

Signs of Life: Medicine and Cinema

By Graeme Harper and Andrew Moore (eds.)
London: Wallflower, 2005. ISBN 1-904764-16-9 (pbk). 10 figures, 165 pp. £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Pramod K. Nayar, University of Hyderabad, India

Medical discourses have permeated the language of everyday life. We speak of a 'healthy' economy, a 'sick' political culture, or 'cures' for social alienation. Cultural representations of illness and medical treatment have figured in many genres: cinema, television serials, newspaper columns, do-it-yourself diet manuals, 'home remedies' books. The list is endless. Images of sickness, accidents, hospital life, and death have been the subject of 'popular' cinema, public health documentaries and medical biopics. It may be safely assumed that disease and medicine have become 'subjects' of cultural representation, as Sander Gilman's work (*Disease and Representation*, Cornell University Press,1988) has demonstrated. In *Signs of Life* Graeme Harper and Andrew Moore have compiled a collection of essays that address aspects of such cultural representations in varied genres of cinema.

In the short introduction Harper and Moore point to a crucial feature of cinematic narratives of illness. Most representations tend to work only with binaries: healthy/sick, alive/dead/able/disabled, even though illness or disability is often a continuum, with shades of both health and sickness.

Cinematic narratives of illness often cast the doctor in heroic roles, discovering or devising cures for patients who are 'doomed' to die of particular diseases. With an analysis of *The Doctor* (Randa Haines, 1991) and *Dark Victory* (Edmund Goulding, 1939) Brian Glasser concludes that these films depict sickness-that-ends-in-death as transformative in a positive way: the patient practically re-invents her/him-self in the face of imminent and 'premature' death. Chronic sickness films, on the other hand, constitute only a small sub-genre. Glasser suggests that this is because there is little chance of showing a chronically sick patient undergoing a major character transformation, whereas such a process seems more possibly with a disease leading to imminent death. Glasser suggests that sickness narratives have a universal interest, carry strong emotional potential, and involve non-violent life-and- death situations that are credible.

The 'gynaecological gothic' of *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968) is the subject of Lucy Fischer's essay. Building on the circulation of numerous horror films that code birthing and reproduction (both human and alien), Fischer argues that such films are rooted in cultural anxieties. Turning to tales and cultural myths about midwives and witches, Fischer sees Polanski's film, with its dual themes of parturition and witchcraft, as retrieving representations of a woman's experience of pregnancy and parturition. The horror and mystery around female reproduction is central to the film, suggests Fischer.

AIDS narratives of the 1990s, Kenneth MacKannon shows, have their origins in the theme of victimization of the male body in 1980s horror-sickness films. He proposes that much horror

reduces the self to the body (his examples include films such as *The Fly,* David Cronenberg, 1986, *The Beast Within,* Philippe Mora, 1982, and *Alien*, Ridley Scott, 1979), while linking, most importantly, sex and death. Sexual adventurousness, 'high' lifestyles and disease come together in pre-AIDS films like Cronenberg's *Shivers* (1975) and Brian de Palma's *Dressed to Kill* (1980), argues MacKannon. Images of sanitation, hygiene and pollution are linked to sexuality, morality and social contexts in these films -- themes, MacKannon points out, that will concretise in the AIDS narratives of the 1990s.

The documentary film, often a State-funded and produced genre, seeks to address issues of public health (it is also a genre that, incidentally, is to be found the world over). Timothy Boon's analysis of public health documentaries in early 20th century Britain underscores one prominent point: that such films invariably function as 'moral tales'. Medical authority -- central to all public health documentaries -- in such narratives is used to make pronouncements that have a cultural and social message regarding morality, sexual mores, and health. Boon also explores an unusual trajectory of such films: the commercial uses that industry discovered in health documentaries. The gas industry in Britain often represented itself as a 'socially conscious modern industry' through films about food and health in the 1930s. Others like the pre-war *Health for the Nation* were narratives about citizenship and national identity itself, addressing a *mass* audience while often using a series of *individual* doctor-patient encounters to deliver the message.

A related essay by Andrew Moor looks at the 1940s and 1950s biopics (on Florence Nightingale, for example) and fiction films (such as *The Citadel*, King Vidor, 1938 and *Mandy*, Alexander Macendrick, 1952) as medical films that encode themes of public health, ethics and modernity. They also chronicle, Moor proposes, social changes -- from ignorance to wisdom in matters of health, and from danger to safety in terms of medical facilities. Moor argues that nurses, doctors and patients are cast in new roles, and often as beneficiaries or instruments of a new medical modernity, which is itself linked to Britain's discourses about public health and nationality, and (the then) Labour government policies.

Tom Shakespeare turns to two controversial films that have redefined the sickness narrative: the story of Bob Flanagan (*Sick*, Kirby Dick, 1997) and the automobile-accident-driven-sex narrative (*Crash*, David Cronenberg, 1996). *Sick*, suggests Shakespeare, rejects the prevalent cultural notion that disabled people have no sexual interests. Both films also underscore the linkage between sex and death, with *Crash* taking it one step further to locate sex *in* death. These films, celebrating the culturally unimagined (and perhaps unacceptable) autonomy of the disabled are "ethnographies of deviant sexual subcultures" (62). They show individuals with varying disabilities as agents, especially sexually active ones.

The bioethics represented in medical themes in cinema is the subject of Roy Jobson and van Bogaert's study of *Lorenzo's Oil* (George Miller, 1992). Their analysis focuses on the fictionalising of the relations between doctors and patients, the 'notion' of a miracle cure (a theme that runs through much contemporary debate on AIDS and cancer) and the role of organizations.

While *Lorenzo's Oil* was a serious look at medical ethics, screwball comedies from the 1940s have cashed in on popular images of insanity, the psychiatric profession, sexuality and medical science. Graeme Harper's reading of the genre suggests that such comedies depict medical authority and the psychiatrist as 'certainties'. Building on 'Psychic Release Theory'

and other theories about comedy, Harper argues that both comedy and the medical film work at the interface of institutions and individuals, the personal and the public.

Julia Hallam genders the debate by turning to representations of female nurses in post-World War II films. Nursing, often depicted as hard and demanding 'work', was the subject of recruitment documentaries made as part of the war effort. Later the nurse-as-angel and the nurse-as-battleaxe (where the nurse is now a hardened matron) images thrive on melodramatic themes in nursing films. After the 1950s a touch of glamour creeps in, with a clear articulation between fashion and femininity in the image of the nurse (Hallam's key film here is *The Feminine Touch*, Pat Jackson, 1956).

The medical biopic, the subject of Bruce Babington's analysis, is always a medical *researcher's* biopic. The doctor-researcher is always the person striving for innovation against institutional, financial, and social obstacles. The documentary is driven, argues Babington, by the image of the doctor-researcher as humanitarian.

C.A. Morgan III's essay deals with the controversial combat fatigue films: Lt. John Huston's *Let There Be Light* (1945) which was withdrawn by the US Army and *Shades of Grey* (1947) the official version of the 'events'. Morgan III's key point is that the latter film depicts combat fatigue illness as rooted in an individual's psychological make up rather than in war stress. Morgan III also locates the 'alteration' in official interpretations of combat fatigue in the context of the making of the Neuropsychiatric Institute Act of 1946, a process which saw psychiatrists, military officials and others articulating particular notions of mental illness.

Jackie Stacey addresses the theme of the new century: genetic engineering. Genetics has altered prevalent notions of disease, and films like *Gattaca* (Andrew Niccol, 1997) thematise cultural concerns about genetic determinism and genetic racism. Stacey links such films to projects such as the Human Genome Project. Building on Evelyn Fox Keller's path-breaking reading of genetics (*Refiguring Life*, Columbia University Press, 1995), Stacey suggests that *Gattaca* is a film about individual agency. Science and culture both work to restrict the individual, argues Stacey.

Signs of Life is a useful introduction to the study of medical cinema. The range of films covered -- 'docu-dramas' to horror, biopics to public health documentaries -- makes the volume eclectic and interesting to a wide variety of readers. At first glance there does not seem to be much continuity in the volume. However, this proves, eventually, to be its real strength, for the reader (at least this one!) is able to discern similar medico-cultural and political subtexts in multiple genres. Thus discourses of contagion (studied brilliantly in a recent volume, the Alison Bashford and Claire Hooker edited *Contagion: Historical and Cultural Studies*, Routledge, 2001), sanitation, the 'sick role', sanity and femininity are central to almost every genre. The politics of public health, genetic engineering and the medical profession come in for close attention in almost every essay here, and that is surely the highlight of an engaging volume.

The French New Wave: An Artistic School

By Michel Marie (translated by Richard Neupert)
Oxford: Blackwell, 2002. ISBN 0-631-22658-3 (pbk). vii + 172pp. £18.99 (pbk)

A review by Mark Bould, University of the West of England, UK

It is one of the curiosities of Film Studies that the French New Wave, arguably the most recognised movement in film history, and one of the most influential, has been so infrequently written about at length. (The bibliography Neupert appends to this volume is fairly comprehensive on both French and English titles, but is still rather short; and many of its entries are either about individual filmmakers or offer broader perspectives on postwar French cinema.) And so an admirable translation -- by the author of *A History of the French New Wave* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2002) -- of Marie's book, originally published in France in 1997, is a welcome addition. But in some ways, that is all it is: an addition.

Let me explain. In the introduction, Marie makes explicit his intention to "privilege ... an analysis organized around the economic and technical trends surrounding the appearance of these films ... in order to anchor more fully aesthetic observations in their generating conditions" (2-3). This approach is an extremely valuable corrective to the more auteurist, thematic and stylistic approaches which have characterised work on the New Wave (see, for example, James Monaco's *The New Wave* [Oxford University Press, 1976]). However, in this instance, and perhaps as a consequence of the brevity of Marie's text, which is less than 60,000 words long, this approach has produced an analysis with a missing centre. Although references to New Wave films are plentiful, there are no prolonged engagements with any of them. So while this is an undoubtedly useful volume, it is more useful to those already familiar with the New Wave; I cannot imagine it working unsupplemented as a set text for teaching.

Chapter One explores the origins of the term 'nouvelle vague' in *L'Express* magazine in 1957 as a way of describing a new generation of French youth. Marie traces how this term came to be applied to directors like Jean-Luc Godard and Francois Truffaut in journalistic, critical and other cultural discourses and venues in the late 1950s. Marie also dates the New Wave as beginning with the release of Claude Chabrol's *Le Beau Serge* and *Les Cousins* in February and March 1959, with Truffaut's *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and Alain Resnais's *Hiroshima Mon Amour* released a few months later; and as ending four years later, at the end of 1962, by which point at least 160 filmmakers had made their first features. This chapter also sketches in the economic conditions which enabled this flourishing of new talent to occur.

Chapter Two argues that the New Wave should be understand as an artistic school because its participants shared, to varying degrees, a critical doctrine and aesthetic practice; issued manifestos and made films accordingly; constituted an ensemble, with promotional strategies and a dominant theoretician (André Bazin); and found, or made, adversaries. This chapter also offers some detailed discussion of New Wave writing by Alexandre Astruc and Truffaut.

Chapter Three returns to questions of economics, focusing specifically on the production and distribution of New Wave films. An account of several small-budget films is followed by a discussion of the role played by three producers, arguing that without the efforts of Pierre Braunberger, Anatole Dauman and Georges de Beauregard it is likely the New Wave would have been a stillborn phenomenon. The chapter ends with a fascinating comparison between the first run attendance figures between 1959 and 1963 for the most and least successful films made by ten young directors (Phillipe de Broca, Chabrol, Jacques Demy, Godard, Pierre Kast, Louis Malle, Jean-Pierre Mocky, Resnais, Truffaut and Agnès Varda) and by ten older filmmakers, mostly of the sort the New Wave routinely denounced (Yves Allégret, Claude Autant-Lara, Jacques Becker, Robert Bresson, Marcel Carné, Christian-Jacque, Henri-Georges Clouzot, Jean Delannoy and Julien Duvivier). Honours come out not-quite even, with the older generation selling nearly 10 million tickets and the younger generation selling just over 7 million, an average of 16,000 tickets less per film than their elders. But if one considers the relatively unspectacular, at-least-superficially anti-bourgeois and intellectual nature of most of the younger directors' films, their commercial success remains impressive.

Chapter Four outlines the New Wave aesthetic principles: the director is also the scenarist; s/he does not follow a pre-established shooting script; s/he priviliges location shooting over sets; s/he uses a small crew; s/he uses sound recorded while shooting the film rather than post-synchronised sound; where possible s/he uses natural light or minimal artificial lighting and, consequently, very fast film stock; where possible, s/he uses non-professional actors, and if s/he uses professional actors, s/he casts ones who are relatively inexperienced. Marie outlines the extent to which various films were made according to these principles, and draws attention to the work of several screenwriters, cinematographers and camera operators, as well as to the pervasive influence of Jean Rouch.

Chapter Five is an impressionistic overview of the careers of the actors central to the New Wave, while Chapter Six identifies Polish, Swedish, Spanish, British, US and Japanese precursors of the French New Wave and suggests its influence on Polish, Czechoslovakian, Hungarian, Brazilian, Italian, US and French Canadian cinemas, several of which also had discernible, and subsequent, new waves of their own.

It is in these closing chapters that the structuring absence alluded to above becomes increasingly detrimental. Performers' personas are discussed without sufficient attention to the films in which they were at least partially forged; patterns of influence between precursor and subsequent new waves lack specifics. Which is a great pity. Such omissions prevent a worthwhile volume from becoming *the* indispensable text on the New Wave. It is recommended, but not on its own.

New Korean Cinema

By Chi-Yun Shin & Julian Stringer (eds.)
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005. ISBN 0-7486-1851-1 (hbk), 0-7486-1852-X (pbk). 27 illustrations, x+234pp. £45.00 (hbk), £16.99 (pbk)

A review by Daniel Martin, University of East Anglia, UK

South Korean cinema is currently enjoying unprecedented success, both in international reputation and domestic popularity. Korean films have found acclaim all over the world, from cult horror/thrillers like *Oldboy* (Park Chan-wook, 2003) and *A Tale of Two Sisters* (Kim Jee-woon, 2003) to genuine arthouse hits like *Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter…and Spring* (Kim Ki-duk, 2003) and *Untold Scandal* (E J-yong, 2003). Korean cinema's increased international profile has led to a surge in academic and critical interest.

English-language study of South Korean film is still a relatively new field, however. *New Korean Cinema*, edited by Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer, represents a major advancement in this area. It is one of only three collections of academic essays on the subject, and arguably the most valuable to non-Korean scholars. While *Im Kwon-Taek: The Making of a Korean National Cinema* (Edited by David E. James & Kyung Hyun Kim, Wayne State University Press, 2002) and *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama: Gender, Genre, and National Cinema* (Edited by Kathleen McHugh & Nancy Abelmann, Wayne State University Press, 2005) are excellent, neither of them deal exclusively with contemporary Korean cinema; given the difficulty of seeing any Korean film more than a decade old with English subtitles, *New Korean Cinema* is likely to serve a wider readership than either other book.

'New' Korean Cinema, as defined by this book, signifies filmmaking in an era marked by several key events: the institution of South Korea's first civilian government in 1992, the overhaul in the system of film financing, and the unexpected success of films like *Sopyonje* (Im Kwon-taek, 1993) and *Shiri* (Kang Je-gyu, 1999), that proved the commercial viability of Korean film. Though Korean cinema has only found large-scale international attention in the last few years, its film industry has been fundamentally different from ever before for over a decade, and continues to change. As noted in the Introduction, "the key word in all these regards is *change*. *New Korean Cinema* … explores different aspects of a film industry in constant flux." (7) Indeed, a book on contemporary Korean cinema written just five years ago would have little in common with this one; just as many of the industry's trends have already changed since the publication of this volume.

Offering a varied history of this period of change, *New Korean Cinema*'s first section of essays fall under the banner title 'Forging a New Cinema'. Michael Robinson provides a straightforward and insightful account of Korea's 20th century history, with an emphasis on cultural impact. The fact that the essay says little about film production specifically is not a weakness. South Korean cinema has consistently been strongly shaped by historical and political events, from the decades of military dictatorship to the 1997 financial crisis. This chapter offers a near-essential report of the key events and cultural turning-points that continue to influence South Korean cinema.

Darcy Paquet's essay, 'The Korean Film Industry: 1992 to the Present' is a highly readable, detailed and informative account of the economic changes the industry has gone through. Paquet (who will be known to non-academic Korean film fans as the founder of the utterly essential *Koreanfilm.org* website) narrates the specific changes in law, finance and distribution that led the industry from the brink of collapse in the early 1990s to its strongest ever position today. Given the focus of this book, Paquet's knowledgeable and well-researched essay is essential. Jeeyoung Shin's equally informative 'Globalisation and New Korean Cinema' offers a history of the same period covered by Paquet's essay, but with a focus on the international promotion of Korean cinema.

'*Chunhyang*: Marketing an Old Tradition in New Korean Cinema' by Hyangjin Lee examines the work of Korean Cinema's longest-serving director, Im Kwon-taek. Director of 99 films (with his one-hundredth soon to be released), Im has been making films since the 1960s. Lee's fascinating essay focuses on *Chunhyang* (2000), addressing the contradictions of the film's international film festival acclaim and the indifference it faced from the domestic market. Lee examines the film's 'Korean-ness', an attribute that home audiences were, in this case, more interested in exporting than consuming themselves. Soyoung Kim's essay '"Cine-Mania" or Cinephilia: Film Festivals and the Identity Question' looks at the recent rise in film festivals in South Korea. Soyoung Kim is herself an acclaimed documentary filmmaker, best known for the *Women's History Trilogy* (2000-2004), so her perspective is unique and her insight valuable.

Part II of the book, 'Generic Transformations', begins with Julian Stringer's excellent essay 'Putting Korean Cinema in its Place: Genre Classifications and the Contexts of Reception'. Stringer's essay details the effects of the increasing international scrutiny on Korean film; he observes the ways in which genre is the primary tool in marketing Korean films abroad, as well as the key attribute by which non-Korean critics understand and discuss Korean cinema from assumed positions of authority. The essay also considers the anxiety among domestic film critics over the Westernisation of Korean cinema, as the domestic success of melodramas (the essential genre and narrative mode of Korean film) is increasingly marginal compared to the recent rise in comedy. Stringer's piece raises many questions and could easily be the starting point for much more expansive discussion on this important topic.

Kyu Hyun Kim continues discussion of genre with his analysis of two horror films (neither of which were marketed as such). 'Horror as Critique in *Tell Me Something* and *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance*' offers a convincing textual analysis of these two widely-seen films (both films have received limited theatrical releases in the UK as part of Tartan Film's annual 'Asia Extreme' touring film festival). Kim's approach to these films is original: he analyses *Tell Me Something* (Jang Yoon-hyeon, 1999) in relation to the theories of Western academics (particularly Laura Mulvey), and discusses *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* (Park Chan-wook, 2002) in light of the response to the film from domestic critics. Kim's essay is especially relevant, given the problematic association (particularly in Britain) of Korean film with violent horror, a perception created by the fact that the majority of Korean films seen here are promoted under the aforementioned 'Asia Extreme' banner.

Chi-Yun Shin's 'Two of a Kind: Gender and Friendship in *Friend* and *Take Care of My Cat*' offers a lively and insightful analysis of two recent 'buddy' films, alike in theme but different in reception. Shin provides an analysis of the gender issues in the male-themed *Friend* (Kwak Kyun-taek, 2001) and the female-focused *Take Care of My Cat* (Jeong Jae-eun, 2001). Both films are historically significant; the former became one of the highest-grossing movies in

Korean box-office history, while the latter was largely ignored on its initial release, but later found international acclaim and a strong cult following. Shin's excellent, valuable essay combines textual analysis and contextual background, and her analysis of *Friend*'s depiction of Korean masculinity foreshadows later essays in this collection which address a similar theme.

Nancy Abelmann and Jung-ah Choi's '"Just Because": Comedy, Melodrama and Youth Violence in *Attack the Gas Station*' tries to make sense of the discordant tone of the popular film, which mixes genres and manages to be funny, violent and emotionally resonant. Abelmann and Choi's enjoyable essay also references films and topics covered by other essays in this volume, and serves to draw together many different analytical strands.

Chris Berry's essay is unique among those in this collection; 'All at Sea? National History and Historiology in *Soul's Protest* and *Phantom, the Submarine*' offers a rare insight by comparing a South Korean film to a similarly-themed North Korean film. Berry's essay is an excellent contribution to the book; his analysis of the films is precise and convincing. Berry discusses the specific historical and cultural anxieties of both sides of a divided nation by examining films which express the fears and desires of division and unification.

The book's final section, 'Social Change and Civil Society', turns to discussion of the work of some of South Korea's most celebrated arthouse *auteurs*. Acclaimed director Lee Chang-dong is the topic of the section's first essay, offering a detailed textual analysis of *Peppermint Candy* (2000), with a particular emphasis on the film's reverse-narrative temporal structure. Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park analyses the film's engagement with history, explaining the points of reference and the historical events themselves. Kyung Hyun Kim's essay functions as a companion piece, analysing festival-favourite Hong Sang-soo's film *On the Occasion of Remembering the Turning Gate* (2002, title often shortened to simply *The Turning Gate*). Both Lee's and Hong's films centre around emotionally damaged, self-destructive male protagonists; while Lee goes to great lengths to demonstrate that *Peppermint Candy*'s protagonist is the product of a traumatised nation, Hong offers no such explanation. Kyung Hyun Kim's essay is an intelligent, insightful mix of synopsis and analysis, paying specific attention to the shortcomings of the main character, a persistent figure in New Korean cinema.

Queer Korean cinema is the topic of Andrews Grossman and Jooran Lee's essay '*Memento Mori* and Other Ghostly Sexualities'. Following their argument that "South Korea has yet widely to disseminate queerly contentious media, let alone foster something like a Westernised queer film movement" (180), the writers here turn their attention to two mainstream supernatural melodramas which represent homosexuality as a ghostly 'other', rather than focus on an explicitly gay-themed, commercially marginal film like *Road Movie* (Kim In-sik, 2002). Although *A Bungee Jump of Their Own* (Kim Dae-sung, 2001) may be little seen outside Korea, *Memento Mori* (Kim Tae-dong & Min Kyu-dong, 1999) was recently released on DVD in the UK (again, under the misrepresentative 'Asia Extreme' label), making this essay one of the few in this volume to discuss in detail a film easily available to British readers. This excellent essay is also noteworthy for its depth of research: the writers secured interviews with the directors of *Memento Mori*, whose comments offer valuable insight, as well as motivating further interrogation of the film.

Finally, Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient offer a detailed analysis of a Korean-Japanese co-production, *Asako in Ruby Shoes* (E J-yong, 2000). Of all the New Korean

auteurs, E J-yong is perhaps the most original and unconventional. It is easy to see him as the most 'international' Korean director of his generation, at least in terms of his approach to filmmaking. E is best known in the West for *Untold Scandal*, his witty, European-influenced adaptation of *Les Liaisons dangereuses*. His most recent film, the garish musical sex-comedy *Dasepo Naughty Girls* (2006), like *Asako in Ruby Shoes*, combined Korean and Japanese influences to great effect.

New Korean Cinema offers an invaluable collection of essays, with a well-chosen balance of topics and approaches. This volume is likely to be the first stop for anyone interested in academic writing on this subject, and the range of essays here provides an excellent introduction to the topic. South Korean cinema is currently thriving, producing an astonishing number of outstanding and challenging works; no single book on this subject could be totally comprehensive. However, the essays in Part I of the book offer a complete and detailed picture of the history of recent Korean cinema; it is unlikely that the information will need to be repeated in any future books on the subject. The films and directors chosen for analysis represent a good cross-section of those prominent in New Korean cinema. Though there are many important figures whose work is not discussed, it would be redundant to complain about their absence; one volume can only do so much. *New Korean Cinema* is a timely and essential contribution to this most important field of study.

Pop Fiction: The Song in Cinema

By Steve Lannin and Mathew Caley (eds.)
Bristol: Intellect, 2005. ISBN 1-8415-0078-X (pbk). 173 pages £14.95 (pbk)

A review by Louise O'Riordan

Study of popular film music marks a deviation on two accounts; firstly musicology has traditionally been concerned with Western Art music, and secondly, the pop-scored film was in itself viewed as an internal attack on the classical model of music composed especially for a particular picture. This reaction to popular music increasing use within cinema was mirrored culturally by influential figures such as Theodor Adorno, whom Steve Lannin and Mathew Caley quote in their introduction to *Pop Fiction*.

Despite Adorno's best efforts popular music study is flourishing. Lannin and Caley suggest that this was initiated by Simon Frith and highlight the interdisciplinary nature of the studies in this field, with its converging interests of aesthetics and economics, citing Morris Holbrook and Elizabeth Hirschmann's work *The Semiotics of Consumption* (Mouton de Gruyter, 1993) as an example of this. The introduction then suggests that Lannin and Caley intend an integrated study of popular music within the medium of film. The practice of editing a number of essays written by different theorists from different backgrounds could easily result in a fragmented study, lacking in any common insight or structure. Lannin and Caley however have deliberately selected a diverse group of writers in order to reflect the range of theoretical possibilities embodied within the popular song in cinema.

So while the academic backgrounds of those writing range from as diverse as composer and poet to professor in marketing and lecturer in sociology, all writing on different films with the focus on different songs, the result is a rounded study which exposes the potential of the song and emphasises the absolute necessity of an integrated analysis of the different operations which are in play when a popular song is placed in a cinematic context. This kind of analysis is needed in the case of the popular soundtrack as attempting to use classical scores as analytical models upon which to work with pop music only encourages the musicological discrediting of a genre. The popular song is too different to that of the classical mould to use a similar methodology of analysis. Studies in the popular song soundtrack also help develop the much needed critical methodologies and nomenclature which will help discourse to grow in this area, and to perhaps dampen comments such as Raskin's, "this business of having rock and pop in everything is just absolutely absurd" (Kathryn Kalinak, *Settling the Score: Music and the Classical Hollywood Film*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1992). The status and attention given to the pop soundtrack can only be increased by the combined analysis style of this text.

While classical models of analysis of the film score have only needed to address the film 'score' and the cinematic 'image' this does not recognise social and economic factors and previous pairings with images which would be affiliated with the popular song before it ever appears in the film. However rather than avoiding this classical score analysis the methodology has been integrated in a weighted manner, its controlled presence in the book an

indication of the careful balance being struck. This is illustrated to best effect in Miguel Mera's chapter in which he analyses the contextual and intratextual layers of Lou Reed's *Perfect Day* (1973) when heard in Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* (1996). In one of the most integrated analyses of the book Mera expertly combines traditional musicological analysis with an awareness of the social context of the song, its composer's reputation, reception theory (the media's reaction to the film and its potential 'aural glorification' of drug use) and the interpretations of editing established by the interplay of image, dialogue and song lyrics. Mera suggests that "aside from the harmonic, timbral and lyrical content of *Perfect Day*, and its synergetic relationship with the images, there are a number of extramusical factors" which would have established the particular song as fit for the scene (88). The balance of consideration that Mera attributes to the various factors interacting within the scene could perhaps provide an example of the type of science of analysis that Lannin and Caley suggest in their introduction, allowing for calibrated amounts of different influences to yield a more complex and 'more' true result than an experiment with only one type of analysis would produce.

Lannin and Caley also suggest that the combining of different discourses would highlight "differences and similarities between contrasting fields of study and their ways of thinking) in a unique manner" (13). I would suggest that this approach will also expose the limitations of different fields and so perhaps could help alleviate some of the obstructing elitist prejudices in both film and music theory which have in the past hampered development on interdisciplinary studies. Nomenclature as an element which was also always felt to be an obstacle to film music theory's growth would seem to flourish in this environment, as exemplified by Morris Holbrook's chapter on 'ambi-diegesis' with reference to *My Funny Valentine* (1937), *The Fabulous Baker Boys* (Steve Kloves, 1989) and *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Anthony Minghella, 1999) and Caley's essay on *Apocalypse Now Redux* (Francis Ford Copolla, 1979/2001), *The Doors* (Oliver Stone 1991) and *The End* (1967) and the construction of the 'ideogram' through their combination.

Holbrook's work on 'ambi-diegesis' then, while already coined in a previous work of his, creates a new 'termed' space for consideration within the realm of popular music soundtrack for when "a character actually performs a tune or song on camera (within the image) in a way … that elaborates on thematic aspects of the plot, or that advances relevant symbolic identifications so as to enrich the meaning of the scene" (48). This type of creation emerges directly from the work of the French theorist Michel Chion who Holbrook mentions, along with Anahid Kassabian, and signals a further development and movement forward in the growth of a specialised language for the Image /Text/ Sound Studies that Lannin and Caley suggest popular music should be a part of. Caley's conceptual formation of the 'ideogram' is highly significant as it emphasises the essential overlapping of sound, image and text in multi-media environments while inherently implicating the interdisciplinary nature of his research and writing as the source of this formation (the term itself has a Chinese background and was used by Ezra Pound).

Indeed the overtly interdisciplinary nature of the book does much to free the popular song from the criticisms of being 'low-brow' or superficial. Philip Powrie's complex essay on abjection and its relationship to *Reservoir Dogs* (Quentin Tarantino, 1993) draws on areas of psychoanalysis and critical theory that have previously been embraced by film theory and musicology, so compounding the importance of integrating these areas while emphasising the popular soundtrack's place in analysis of this type.

The inclusion of John Roberts' article on Chet Baker's voice brings a study of performativity and the nature of the voice itself to the text. These are essential aspects of the study of popular song and it is positive to note that inherent elements of the discourse surrounding popular song *before* it appears in a cinematic context are still prevailing in a work centred on the filmic soundtrack. This is a concern theorised by Robynn Stilwell in her chapter on the changing cultural affiliations of Phil Collins' song *In the Air Tonight* (1981) in which she examines the lack of a possibility of a song free from pre-constructed readings, a *clean* song.

Her eventual conclusion is enlightening both for her own particular study but also for the discursive thrust of the collection of essays itself. Stilwell points out that ultimately "*contamination can also be enrichment, perhaps a clean reading is a sterile one*" (152). This inclusionary principle motivates the book as a whole and has clearly yielded greater potential for collusion in this area of research. Rather than creating a textbook methodology for a popular soundtrack analysis Lannin and Caley have enlarged the space of possibilities for engagement with multiple disciplines and styles, demarcating a direction for a unified academic work on the area.

Screening Québec: Québécois Moving Images, National Identity and the Public Sphere

By Scott MacKenzie
Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004. ISBN 0-7190-6396-5 (hbk). 224 pp. £45.00 (hbk)

A review by Josh Anchors, Southern Maine Community College, US

In *Screening Québec*, Scott MacKenzie recounts how, in 1962, Québécois cinéastes Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault went to l'Île-aux-Coudres, in the Saint Lawrence River, to make a documentary about the tradition of whale hunting for which the island was known. The inhabitants, however, no longer remembered how to hunt whales since the tradition had fallen out of practice roughly three decades earlier. At the request of Perrault and Brault, the inhabitants reconstructed their knowledge of the hunt from childhood memories and from the stories of community elders, and ultimately catch a whale that they end up not eating, but rather selling to an Aquarium in New York City for $500.

The film *Pour la suite du monde* (1963), from which this amusing anecdote derives, was one of the first feature films made by the French-Canadian *équipe française*, and provides a useful glimpse into the heart of this text's principle thesis. Namely, MacKenzie argues that new discursive spaces have momentarily emerged in Quebec since the early 1900's as a result of French-Canadian and Québécois cinemas, and that "such spaces allow the viewers to re-imagine themselves and their culture" (2). *Pour la suite du monde*, filmed several years after the dawning of Quebec's *Révolution Tranquille*, a period characterised by a provincial desire for political, social, and economic reforms, poignantly illustrates the concept of a 'public sphere' in which viewers are able to "re-imagine themselves and their culture." By offering viewers a collection of images and cultural references from a distant, yet retrievable past, the audience recognises that it has in fact shared a collective cultural past and thereby engages, often subconsciously, in what MacKenzie calls an 'alternative public sphere.' This space not only serves as a starting point in the discovery of one's own culture, but also aids viewers in retrieving the cultural experiences of their past, and thus reinforces a sense of national identity through the images of a reconstructed tradition.

The issue of national identity is a driving force behind Québécois cinema, and MacKenzie contends that like many other national cinema movements, "Québécois film has been preoccupied, in part, with the analysis and representation of the culture from which it originates" (1). *Pour la suite du monde* is exemplary of this inclination to search the traditional past for identity, but MacKenzie also points out how a host of other films (produced both before and after *Pour la suite du monde*) were intent upon questioning, analyzing, and debating the traditions of the past. Films like *La petite Aurore, l'enfant martyre* (Jean-Yves Bigras, 1952) and *Tit-coq* (Rene Delacroix and Gratien Gelinas, 1953)

both call into question the Catholic Church, a dominant feature in the French-Canadian national identity until the *Révolution Tranquille*, and serve as the impetus for the emergence of new 'discursive spaces' in which the public examines their past, present, and future identities.

The relationship between cinema and the Catholic Church is particularly well articulated in *Screening Québec*. MacKenzie acknowledges that cinema was only one of many factors that led to the ultimate crisis in Catholic faith in Québec, and traces how the Church itself used cinema to counter the influence of films that seemed intent on exorcising Catholicism from the Québécois landscape. This clearly displays the Church's recognition of the cinema's potential as an alternative public sphere, as a means of re-shaping community, and as a means of resistance. MacKenzie is hesitant to state that the cinema 'allowed' individuals to come together and debate Catholicism, social reform, or national identity on an egalitarian basis, but he does write that the cinema "held *the promise* of this possibility, and that this promise often motivated social intervention in the real world, be it in relation to Church, State, poverty, sexuality, or identity" (183). This promise, in a society so often marginalised by the dominant public spheres of Church and State, was a radical reconfiguration of the social fabric of Québec, and led many Québécois cinéastes to use their films as direct outlets for encouraging social and cultural change.

One of MacKenzie's most compelling insights into the future of Québécois cinema grows from a discussion about the paradoxical nature of how this cinema continues to survive in the vast, dizzying sea of anglophone film production. While Québécois cinema appears to be on the margins of world film culture, seemingly concerned only with localised issues of French-Canadian identity, it has nonetheless had considerable influence on documentary filmmaking in North America (particularly *cinéma direct*), and now occupies a place within the world of international art-cinema. However, as Québécois feature films secure an international public, they lose the possibility of playing as critical a role in the public sphere. MacKenzie explores the interplay between local and international narratives in an extended discussion of *Le confessionnal*, by Robert LePage (1995), and asks what effects the 'internationalisation' has on the history of Québécois cinema and the concerns of national identity that have traditionally constituted its centre.

The aptitude with which MacKenzie analyzes films such as *Le confessionnal*, *Pour la suite du monde* and several others, will most certainly make readers of this text wish for more direct film analysis to help elucidate the many passages of theory. Readers may also be curious to hear MacKenzie's insights into films such as *Kamouraska* (Claude Jutra, 1973), or Pierre Falardeau's classic parody, *Elvis Gratton* (1981). While there are a few curious omissions from the 'Filmography', MacKenzie does provide an extensive and theoretically rich sweep through the informal cannon of Québécois cinema, from Léo-Ernest Ouimet to Denys Arcand.

Despite the recent international successes of Québécois cinema (*Les Invasions barbares,* Dennis Arcand, 2003, *La Grande séduction,* Jean-Francois Pouliot, 2003, *C.R.A.Z.Y.* Jean-Marc Vallee, 2005) national identity is still a fragile, unsettled issue in Québec. *Screening Québec* provides a superb overview of the changing role cinema plays in Québécois culture over a seventy-year period, and highlights those moments when image-making played a defining role in political culture. Although MacKenzie concludes that Québécois cinema ultimately failed in its attempt "to create the kinds of communities, collectivities, and dialogues originally imagined as central to the new cultural and political landscape of an

independent Québec" (14), he nonetheless confirms that there are many valuable lessons within this failure, and no shortage of films worth viewing.

Stray Dog of Anime: The Films of Mamoru Oshii

By Brian Ruh
New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004. ISBN 1-4039-6334-7 (pbk), ISBN 1-4039-6329-0 (hbk). 23 illustrations, x+230pp. £14.95 (pbk), £45.00 (hbk)
A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film Isolde Standish

A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film

By Isolde Standish

New York: Continuum, 2005. ISBN 0-8264-1790-6 (pbk), ISBN 0-8264-1709-4 (hbk). 18 illustrations, 414pp. £15.99 (pbk), £29.99 (hbk)

A review by Timothy Iles, University of Victoria, Canada

History is the context in which we operate as rational beings; it is the principle which informs culture and provides justification for traditions, whether in their observance or not. History is also the stuff which our lives weave together in their myriad contributions to local, national, and international affairs -- thus it is quite fitting to read these two works of critical, historical contextualisation together, for in their complementary approaches to the historical situation of Japanese cinema, on the one hand, and the national/international situation of a single director, on the other, they provide a convenient yet detailed glimpse into the interrelated workings of both the personal and the national in creating a shared world history. Isolde Standish's *A New History of Japanese Cinema* provides a rich overview of its subject, from its earliest beginnings to recent works by Kitano Takeshi, among others, while Brian Ruh's *Stray Dog of Anime* brings a historian's fascination with detail to the study of this director, responsible in no small part for creating a profound, philosophically dense tradition within the world of Japanese animation, or *anime,* as it is more widely known. The differences of these two works point out their greater similarities, while also pointing out the tremendous breadth of work which the cinema of Japan has produced over its 120 years of history.

Isolde Standish of course is not new to the field of Japanese cinema studies, having published in 2000 her important work, *Myth and Masculinity in the Japanese Cinema: Towards a Political Reading of the Tragic Hero* (Curzon, 2000), itself concerned with the historical situation of the male hero in predominantly pre-war film. This new volume, however, is more ambitious, aiming to understand "the historical development of Japanese cinema as a nexus, a point where a multiplicity of, at times, competing and merging forces from the traditional arts, sociopolitical trends and Western technology came to be adopted, adapted, and altered to produce cinematic tradition" (14). The book is arranged roughly chronologically in six

chapters, but within each chapter Standish treats a range of thematic issues -- to borrow her own phrasing of the material she seeks to address, "some of the dominant historical discourses of the last century -- modernism, nationalism, imperialism, transgression, and gender -- and cinema's role as a mechanism of mediation that is both constitutive of, and constituted by, these same sociopolitical discourses" (14). These six chapters are informed by insights gleaned from roughly 1,500 films, Standish claims, and are guided by "following the principles of popularity and availability, … [thus reflecting] cinema history as it is understood by general Japanese audiences who have maintained an interest in their cinematic traditions" (26). By the very nature of the material she seeks to treat, Standish's book is virtually doomed to failure -- it is to her enormous credit as a scholar and film historian that her book most assuredly does *not* fail.

That she is a remarkably erudite scholar of Japan's film history is apparent from the outset, for she is able succinctly and with very readable flair to capture some of the limitations of the studies which have preceded her's and to dissect those limitations not pedantically but quite constructively. This begs mention of the implied audience for Standish's work -- an issue centrally important for the work itself, for her presentational style, while fluid and accessible, assumes considerable familiarity on the part of the reader with film terminology, theory, and history in general. Her discussion of the function of the "Renaissance project that attempted to reproduce reality through mimesis" (19) as a determinant of which lens focal length would be developed as most appropriate for the 'look' of cinema, drawing heavily on the work of Jean-Louis Comolli, is a case in point. This, while quite interesting, is quite technical -- but it does allow Standish to discuss the innately *Western* aspect of early non-Western cinemas. Standish's book also assumes considerable familiarity with early-modern and modern Japanese history, something not at all unreasonable, but which may be optimistic on Standish's part. For example, early on she writes that

The linguistic distinction made in Japanese between the Chinese ideogram (*kanji*) derived concept for 'modernism' associated with the term *kindaishugi* and the *katakana* neologism *modanizumu* illustrates a clear division of meaning in terms of the intellectual/academic and a more general 'structure of feeling' that accompanied the social changes brought about by Japan's embrace of industrial capitalism (32).

This is certainly quite true but is presented as a matter of fact already accessible or even known to the reader, something potentially unsettling to the film student who may be approaching Japan or Japanese cinema for the first time.

Nonetheless Standish's work has otherwise much to offer to that student, as well as to film scholars in general. Her chapters dealing with pre- and immediately post-war cinema find her on familiar ground, for these deal at least tangentially with issues she had raised in her earlier book, and specifically with the time period covered there.

Of course this is not the first volume devoted to the history of Japanese cinema, and so naturally its merits must stand in comparison with preceding studies. Of the rather large handful of work devoted to this subject, Donald Richie's *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film* (Kodansha, 2004) comes most readily to mind as a directly analogous book -- and Donald Richie himself as the author of a large portion of that handful has set the tone for a particular type of introductory volume that this present one ultimately comes to surpass. As Paul Schrader notes in his foreword to Richie's newly-revised *A Hundred Years,* Richie is something like "the Commodore Perry of Japanese film history" (8), referring to the

American Naval officer who, in 1854, 'opened' Japan to the West. But this label implies something about Richie -- that his efforts to extend knowledge of Japanese film in the non-Japanese world have been akin to a military campaign of appropriation or forced cooperation. In some ways, this may be correct, for Richie, through his association with the US Occupational forces overseeing the administration of Japan in the postwar period, was in a rather unique position to present his views of Japanese cinema to the non-Japanese community, and so his work has become a standard against which scholars must now write; in other ways, however, it is slightly unjust, for it detracts from the legitimately respectful contributions to the field of Japanese film studies his work has made. Nonetheless Richie's work is marked by a particular academic mode of thinking -- his work, as Schrader also points out, emphasises "reporting over theory" (8), and is concerned with the *process* of filmmaking rather than with its historical/critical/social contextualisation. This is a different type of film history from what Standish brings in her work; valuable and worthwhile, to be sure, and accessible. But while Standish aims for an understanding of "cinema as a social practice … proposing a politics of cinema" (27), Richie describes film history as "a search for a way through which narrative can be presented more efficiently" (10). The subject of that narrative tends towards what Standish has characterized as "a catalogue of, at the least, empirical facts (dates, names and places) and, at worst, an endless stream of plot summaries" (24), in a manner which occasionally borders on the culturally essentialist. A case in point is Richie's discussion of the director, Ozu Yasujiro's, relationship to cinema and modernism in the early 1930s:

> Ozu looked at modernism and identified with what he saw there … Many other Japanese at the time also related well to modernism. For most, however, modernism merely meant being up-to-date. All periods are 'modern,' though not all of them so label themselves. For traditionally-minded Japanese, modernism was a way of working with what they already knew. In the West, modernism questioned temporality, reevaluated it, opposed it, and thus defined itself against tradition. This was very difficult for Japanese, including Ozu, to comprehend. In any event, modernism in Japan was not the polemical affair it was in the West. It was merely one of a plurality of styles, though one which somehow reaffirmed traditional notions [and] reinforced earlier methods of construction (55-56).

Here we see both the strengths and limitations of Richie's style: his clear and 'efficient' narrative of historical setting, on the one hand, and his reductive, essentialising gloss of discourse on the other. Standish, in contrast, in her discussions of Ozu's work of the same period, is far more demonstratively analytical, focussing her energies on situating Ozu within an emergent problematisation of Japan's increasingly urban, and thus 'modern', landscape:

> Tokyo … in other films of the 1930s … is presented as a dystopic space in which characters find themselves simultaneously lost in scenes of family disunity and emergent contractual social relations. In many of the films directed by Ozu Yasujiro during this period, Tokyo becomes the *mise-en-scène* of modernity in all its negative aspects. [The *mise-en-scène*] locates the action in the urban wasteland of suburban development sites … where garbage treatment plants and gas storage tanks loom large … Within these films the portrayal of depressing urban landscapes is political in that it sets up a counterimage to the idealised, but not depicted, image of the *furusato,* the rural country home (42-43).

Where Richie writes for the general though informed audience, Standish writes for the scholar with a deep interest in the function of cinema in the construction of modern Japan and its ideologies -- Richie's work is not 'lesser' than Standish's, and neither is Standish's (comparatively) small body of work till now inferior in terms of its importance to Richie's pioneering studies. They address different audiences and bring to those audiences a different set of issues clustered around the same subject matter. For the student of Japanese history, cinema, and history of cinema familiar with Richie's work, this new volume by Isolde Standish offers a theoretically informed, erudite, illustrative, and quite stimulating approach to this material. For the student of cinema *not* familiar with Richie's work, Standish offers a particularly challenging, succinct though fascinatingly rich examination of the history of Japanese film in a style which is as assured as it is provocative, as readable as it is erudite.

While the history of a nation or national cinema forms a fascinating object of study, that history is something always made by individuals, operating separately or collectively -- indeed, even *auteur* studies of great directors must admit of those directors' inevitable need to collaborate with directors of photography, musicians, composers, producers, screen writers, and, of course, actors. While 'history' as a subject emphasises the developmental, large scale trends of entire societies, history is also always concerned with the smaller developments of people's lives. This history, the personal, is particularly fascinating when it follows the very public products of the private, personal individual -- the artist, the writer, the film maker. In Brian Ruh's *Stray Dog of Anime: The Films of Mamoru Oshii,* we have an example of biography and criticism's potential to collaborate as history, focussing on one of Japan's most innovative animators, Oshii Mamoru. While this work succeeds in introducing an important director to the English speaking community, it does so in a very different way than Standish's *History*. The scholarly rigour which Standish brings to Japan's national cinema is something lacking here; instead, we have a very personal approach to the films of Oshii, presented in the form of nine chapters which deal with six films.

That the approach is truly *personal* is clear from the outset, where Ruh describes the circumstances under which he first encountered Oshii's *Kôkaku kidôtai* (*Ghost in the Shell,* 1995) and his initial dissatisfaction with the film. Ruh narrates here not only Oshii's development as a director, but through this, his own development as a *viewer* of *anime* and as a scholar of this style of film production. But here we as scholars of film encounter our own first dissatisfaction with the work, for Ruh's comments make it apparent that he does not understand the Japanese language. Now, this is not necessarily a fatal detriment in and of itself -- it is not after all necessary for scholars of world film to speak *every* language present in every film they appreciate and study, but it does always raise the issue of cultural sensitivity, on the one hand, and -- more seriously -- interpretive stability on the other. Film interpretation, reading a film through its visual and aural components, is by nature subjective -- adding in to this mix the issue of language introduces the potential for the critic to be excluded from the deepest interpretive potentialities of the work under question. Ruh's advice to the non-Japanese speaker to watch, as a matter of preference, a subtitled print of Oshii's work rather than a dubbed one, is quite good -- for the average viewer. But for the analytical, critical viewer seeking to introduce these works to a community of viewers probably unfamiliar with them, some degree of linguistic fluency with the works' original language is an obvious requirement. This is true in general, but it's especially true in the case of Oshii Mamoru, whose films deal with subtle issues of, as Ruh has it, "the subjectivity inherent in the concepts of reality" (p. x) and present these issues in carefully layered, philosophically informed language. Ruh himself is very aware of the important role language plays in Oshii's

work; in discussing Oshii's second feature-length film, *Urusei yatsura: byûtifuru dorîma* (*Urusei Yatsura: Beautiful Dreamer,* 1984), he mentions Oshii's evolving

> unmistakable visual style [which utilises] … quiet, contemplative shots, often coupled with long monologues or dialogues. With this film, the main action and conflict in Oshii's works begins to be driven more by what the characters say than by the images on screen. This is not to imply that the images are unimportant; they are obviously carefully crafted, but they provide supplemental meaning to what is being spoken (39).

With dialogue taking on such significance, a critic *cannot* rely on a translator to assist him or her in the approach to interpretation -- that Ruh does so is ultimately his greatest shortcoming. However, that Ruh's work is still able, fundamentally, to contribute much to scholarship on *anime* in general and Oshii in particular says a great deal about Ruh's strengths as a scholar and the overall care he has brought to this project.

The book's nine chapters themselves are helpfully structured to facilitate the reader unfamiliar with Oshii's work to *become* familiar in as smooth a fashion as possible. To this end, Ruh begins each section's discussion with some preliminary remarks, moving quickly on to a descriptive list of the characters of the film which the chapter treats. This descriptive list is relatively detailed and insightful, preparing the way to situate each character within the interpretation of the work. A summary of the film follows, highlighting key plot points and narrative digressions. Ruh then embarks on his interpretive thematic analysis of the film, locating it within the developmental progression of Oshii as a director and innovator within the world of anime. This aspect is a definite strength of Ruh's work -- it is a very good handbook for the reader whose exposure to Oshii's work has been limited by availability, for example, but it also represents one of the problematic issues with the book. Ruh devotes a relatively large amount of space to this type of introductory or preparatory effort, at the expense of historical, generic, or interpretive endeavour. That is to say, while the descriptions of characters and plot are necessary and helpful, they detract from Ruh's opportunity to engage Oshii's films critically and analytically.

The nature of Ruh's engagement with both Oshii's history and his films, too, is potentially problematic, for his presentational style tends towards the simplistic -- for what may be his 'ideal' audience, the interested though not necessarily conversant viewer exploring this director for the first time, this may not be a detriment. However, for another reader, the one looking for a detailed and careful consideration of the influences which have formed Oshii, Ruh's style has the potential to disappoint because of its occasionally superficial condensation of periods in Oshii's life from which those influences may have come. For example, in discussing Oshii's involvement with his first television series, *Urusei Yatsura,* which ran from 1981 to 1986, we read this:

> The *Urusei Yatsura* television series and films that followed served as a proving ground for Oshii's skills and conceptual forms. It is through his involvement with *Urusei Yatsura* that he gained the early knowledge and experience to mature as a director (13).

Now, this statement in and of itself is true, but it can be said without alteration of virtually any director that his first projects served as a 'proving ground' and an opportunity to mature.

This is typical of Ruh's style, that his writing tends to overlook potentially fertile opportunities to discuss diverse issues and delve into worthwhile areas of research.

> From the first pages, however, Ruh himself is quick to point out the introductory nature of his project, something which goes far to mitigate the issue of potentially missed opportunities in the study. As Ruh writes, in a disarmingly candid fashion:
>
> This book is not the final authority on Oshii's works. I have provided my own interpretations to serve as a guide while viewing the films, but in the end it is up to the viewers to determine their nature. This is what Oshii's films ultimately are about -- the subjectivity inherent in the concepts of reality (x).

This humility is genuine, as is the obvious passion Ruh has for Oshii's films -- in providing the non-Japanese scholarly community with an introductory guide to the diverse issues and thematic concerns of a director who has produced a philosophically rich and visually stunning set of films, Ruh has also created an opportunity for the reader to be inspired by that passion, and to appreciate the enthusiasm which Ruh has for these films, as well as for *anime* in general. This enthusiasm is infectious -- it does inspire the reader with a desire to engage Oshii's work, and so the book achieves its goal of providing an introduction for Oshii to many new viewers. That this goal is simply to constitute the starting point of scholarship on Oshii that will find many worthwhile veins to mine is certainly not a detraction from its merit.

It is true that Ruh's work is less encompassingly ambitious than Standish's *History,* but it is not ultimately less important -- the audience for this work, the scholar of Japanese film, in general, and *anime* in particular who may be unfamiliar with Oshii or with the Japanese language, or who may be relatively new to the subject, or limited in access to animated films, will appreciate Ruh's thorough encapsulation of the characters plots, and settings of the films he describes, and will gain much from Ruh's discussions and analyses of those works. There is, however, much more to be done with Oshii Mamoru's films; my hope is that Brian Ruh will come back to these films in time to deepen his discussion of them, and that his readers will take inspiration from his work to pursue their own studies of the truly captivating worlds Oshii has created in these carefully crafted, thoroughly engrossing films.

These two studies demonstrate that good, important, and contributive writing on Japanese film is still very much an active enterprise -- they also demonstrate the potential for this field, for neither work here represents the 'definitive' exploration of their respective subjects. With so many truly worthwhile, artistically innovative and thematically challenging films being produced each year -- not to mention all the purely commercial works which nonetheless contain provocative and rich manifestations of ideology within a mass-cultural medium -- Japanese cinema is a vibrant and evolving area of study. There is still so much work to do in this area, of both a fundamental and more advanced nature. I look forward to Isolde Standish's and Brian Ruh's next books, as well as the many other books that still need to be written.

The Politics of Contemporary European Cinema. Histories, Borders, Diasporas

By Mike Wayne
Bristol: Intellect Books, 2002. ISBN 1-84150-059-3, ix + 146 pp. £ 16.99 (pbk)
Dickens and the Dream of Cinema By Grahame Smith

Dickens and the Dream of Cinema

By Grahame Smith

Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-7190-5563-6 (pbk), ISBN 0-7190-5562-8 (hbk), x + 206 pp., £ 14.99(pbk), £ 45.00 (hbk)

A review by Thorsten Carstensen, Freiburg University, Germany

According to conventional scholarship, European cinema is to be understood in terms of distinct national cinemas. Numerous studies focus, for instance, on the characteristics of Italian Neo-Realism, French New Wave cinema, or New German cinema. It is only during the last decade that approaches exploring the transnational aspects of European film have gained currency. Given the fact that political and cultural borders have become more and more permeable, this academic shift of perspective is highly warranted.

In his study *The Politics of Contemporary European Cinema*, Mike Wayne successfully describes contemporary European cinema's concern with "the transitional, improvisational and shifting nature of identity, national or otherwise" (viii). According to Wayne, the contemporary European film market is shaped by various national cinemas which are concerned with negotiating between their individual cultural myths and an international audience. Wayne situates his analysis against the backdrop of several historical narratives which he constructs in order to explain the complex alterations of the political European landscape since the late 1980s: the tremendously increasing pace of globalization, the binding forces of European integration, the failure of Communism and, finally, what he terms the "post-colonial legacy of migration" (141). A cogent point, to which the author returns periodically, is that although European nations have become increasingly interwoven on the economic and political levels, the myth of the nation as an 'imagined community', to borrow Benedict Anderson's often-quoted phrase, is still persistent on the screen.

In the first chapter of his book, Wayne sets out to discuss the industrial, institutional and cultural context in which European movies have been operating since 1945. Drawing on theories by Fredric Jameson and Pierre Bourdieu, he outlines an image of European cinema that has sometimes been attacked for its concern with issues like poverty and unemployment

instead of presenting a more hopeful portrait of society. For instance, films such as *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (Stephen Frears, 1987) and *The Last of England* (Derek Jarman, 1987) were criticized by the British political Right for creating too blunt a picture of the suffering of the less privileged social groups during Thatcherism. While European cinema's tendency to tell 'smaller stories' should by all means be appreciated from a postmodern point of view that celebrates the particular and questions larger, generalising approaches, there is also the danger of losing sight of "weaving into stories the grand themes of modernism," as Wayne puts it. As a matter of fact, the meta-narratives of freedom, progress, and struggle can easily be traced in 'big picture' Hollywood productions like *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998) or any Spielberg movie, whereas they tend to arouse the suspicion of contemporary European filmmakers.

In chapter two, Wayne lays the proper theoretical groundwork for the following discussions by classifying contemporary European movies into four categories. While *embedded films*, such as the French comedy *Les Visiteurs* (Jean-Marie Poiré, 1993), are designed primarily for the national audience, *disembedded* films operate on a much larger budget and are therefore expected to capture the international market. As an example of this latter trend, Wayne cites *Bean: The Ultimate Disaster Movie* (Mel Smith, 1997), which cost $15 million and went on to gross $235 million worldwide. The films of the third category, the *cross-border films*, revolve around travel narratives that make clear how unstable national identities have become. This "Pan-European Cinema," which Wayne examines in chapter three, exhibits a new sense of "Europeanness" and transcends the confinements of national cinema. At the same time it seeks an intercultural dialogue with the American film industry by emulating, translating or rejecting Hollywood style and principles.

Particularly illuminating are Wayne's elaborations on the fourth category, the *anti-national national cinema*. These movies are shaped by an openly critical stance towards national identities based on the myth of community. With their deconstructive impetus, these films aim at laying bare the tensions and divisions within a society instead of promoting a picture of utter harmony. As an example of national cinema that seeks to debunk mythological perceptions of the past, the author discusses the French production *La Reine Margot* (Patrice Chéreau, 1994) that relates the events surrounding the St Bartholomew's Day massacre when thousands of Protestants were killed by the Catholic forces of the French King Charles IX. "In examining a mass slaughter," Wayne writes, "the French national past is opened up and questioned, rather than affirmed." By challenging mythologized views of the past, Wayne asserts, a film such as *La Reine Margot* sets out to criticize the contemporary world and could therefore be regarded as "a Benjaminian *constellation* between the past and the present" (60). In *La Reine Margot*, the past -- the ideologically inspired massacre -- evokes a present haunted by twentieth-century genocide.

Having laid out the theoretical background, Wayne proceeds to apply his framework to the cinema of specific regions. In chapter four, he is concerned with the cinema of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) that displays an awareness of "the historical, political and, above all, socio-economic dynamics in play across Europe" (93). In films such as *Ulysses' Gaze* (Theodoros Angelopoulos, 1995), where a filmmaker's labyrinthine journey through the civil-war torn Balkan is narrated, cross-border travel and displacement constitute central issues. In CEE cinema, the promise of Western consumerism is frequently coupled with a nightmarish vision of this new world order. The characters in these movies are exposed to a gritty world of violence and exploitation (98). In his analysis of *Ulysses' Gaze*, Wayne polishes his political approach with a valuable analysis of the film's aesthetic features, such as the

frequent use of long shots by which the film aspires to adopt objective distance. Here the author makes clear how a certain cinematic technique can be employed in service of the film's ideology.

The British Asian cinema mapped out in chapter five is characteristic for a postmodern cultural difference that ignores traditional national identities while being devoted to a constant blurring of boundaries. In recent years, Wayne argues, "the notion of mixing, of hybridity, has undergone a substantial re-evaluation" (119). He goes on to illustrate his point by referring to *Bhaji On the Beach* (Gurinder Chadha, 1993) which shows an Asian family on their seaside holiday trip to Blackpool, a place "where a nostalgic and mythical Englishness comes into contact with an assortment of exoticised Others" (131). Another aspect of cross-cultural influence is explored in *Wild West* (David Attwood, 1992), a movie about three Muslim brothers and their Sikh friend in London who have formed a country-and-western band. In this postmodern story concerned with the appropriation of a foreign culture, the music and imagery of the American West serve as symbols of potential emancipation and self-fulfilment. As Wayne puts it, "the transnational diasporan sensibility" of movies such as *Bhaji on the Beach* and *Wild West* "radically calls into question temporal continuity, cultural cohesion and fixed pure identities" (141). However, what these films fail to accomplish, according to the author, is the fruitful conjunction of their transcultural awareness with a more explicit political stance.

Without question, Wayne's knowledgeable book constitutes a welcome expansion of the analytical horizon. Unfortunately, the author charts the political terrain of contemporary European cinema without arriving at a convincing conclusion. The book's greatest merit is at the same time its most palpable downside: By addressing an extremely diverse scope of movies from manifold cultural backgrounds, Wayne creates an ambitious panorama of European cinema -- and thus runs the risk of neglecting coherence. This implicates that his book is eventually prone to raise far more questions than it could ever answer.

And there is yet another, even more fundamental dilemma one encounters when reading Wayne's deliberately materialistic interpretations of movies. Primarily concentrating on the political implications of cinema, his approach tends to ignore the interplay of content and form, of ethics and aesthetics. This flaw becomes quite obvious in his discussion of politics in *The Name of the Rose* (Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1986). Wayne approaches this movie from a theoretical perspective that turns out to be too isolated to appreciate this movie's playful postmodern attitude. Hence, it appears more appropriate to combine the undoubtedly important analysis of political and historical aspects in *The Name of the Rose* with an additional emphasis on the level of narrative technique. Applying Linda Hutcheon's term of *historiographic metafiction* would allow one to arrive at an interpretation which takes into account both the movie's subversive approach towards history as well as its self-reflexive narrative mode.

As a whole, Wayne seems to be too easily content with adopting the movies for his own particular frame of reference instead of acknowledging their often multi-faceted nature. Thus, he fails to appreciate the broad realm of possible interpretations that are not consistent with his approach. Wayne does a fine job informing his readers about recent political trends in European cinema; what his study lacks, however, is the important insight into the visual qualities that are inseparably bound to the politics of the movies.

Even though Grahame Smith is primarily concerned with the written word, it is the exploration of cinematic qualities, neglected in Wayne's approach, that lies at the heart of his highly instructive volume *Dickens and the Dream of Cinema*. Smith sets out "to trace what might be called proto-filmic elements" in Dickens's writing. Here he builds on the essay "Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today" by the Russian filmmaker Eisenstein who attributes a form of "cinematic laconism" (8) to Dickens while showing how this nineteenth century English writer employed a technique later to be known as "parallel montage." In the same vein, Dickens's alternation between different narrative situations, characters, and emotional focuses could be described as a sophisticated anticipation of modern cinema's editing.

Arguably the most fervently adapted writer in the history of literature, Dickens embodies the development of film from a narrative technique shaped by "characteristic visual inventiveness" (9). Even in his lifetime, his novels were performed in theatres, turned into slides for magic lantern shows and appeared in the early versions of panoramas and dioramas. One of the reasons for this striking "saturation in a variety of media" (7) is undoubtedly the dramatic quality of Dickens's prose. As Smith posits, "Dickens was not simply a reflector of the theatrical scene, but occupied a position of reciprocity in which he contributed almost as much as he took from the form that he loved" (102).

Smith presents the reader with "a story about Dickens's role in the emergence of film, a narrative of consciousness across different media and across time" (13). Albeit tricky -- after all, it means "bringing together fields of research that are divided by time as well as form" (45) -- this approach proves to be extremely insightful in a number of different ways. Smith provides an appropriate introduction to his topic by giving a summary account of the emergence of cinema and its predecessor, photography. Quoting from various works by Dickens, he shows how the writer constantly refers to the experience of the new media. According to Smith, the "panoramic concept" can be regarded "as a governing metaphor in the structure of Dickens's major fictions." His late novels *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend*, Smith argues, may therefore be read as "panoramic representations of Victorian society" (34). This point is also advanced by Robert Alter who, in his excellent study, *Imagined Cities. Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel* (2005), draws attention to the associations between Dickens's "troubled panoramic vision of human existence in the new metropolis" and clearly apocalyptic images. Alter goes on to argue that Dickens's narrative mode, albeit devoted to faithful representations of reality, is frequently destabilized by his explicit use of metaphor and symbolic language.

The central aspect of Smith's account is related to Dickens's outstanding ability to take photographic images while wandering through the streets of London, absorbing all the aspects of the newly emerging urban environment. Dickens's cinematic vision resides in his capability to create visual images through his perfectly nuanced handling of words. This quality is particularly striking in the descriptions of his characters who are to a great extent built around objects, gestures or clothes. As for example in the movies of Orson Welles, it is not only the dialogue that shapes the viewer's understanding of a character, but rather its embeddedness in the visual features of a scene.

Smith interprets Dickens's writings in the context of urban changes during the nineteenth century that finally led to the emergence of the modern metropolis. By 1850, cities like Paris and London had been transformed, a complex network of small hidden alleys had been replaced by wide boulevards on which the modern crowds were to stroll and window-shop. On these boulevards, the "increased speed of movement" (13) that was to become the

signature of modernity could already be sensed. As Smith maintains, it was actually the diverse stimuli to which urban life exposed Dickens day by day that proved to be his primary source of inspiration: "The pulse that beats through his language is the roar of crowded thoroughfares, of street lights shimmering on wet pavements, of fogs that render the external world invisible, obscene contrasts of unparalleled luxury and degradation, raucous delight in theatre and circus, the isolation of lonely individuals slipping unobserved through the press of an indifferent humanity" (159).

For Dickens, Paris and London are more than just observable places; they "take on mythic status, an almost Expressionist drama of heightened contrasts, distorted settings" (27). Whereas the Romanticists perceived tumultuous nature as being sublime, Dickens creates visual landscapes of the "urban sublime" (156). The artist's love for and creative need of the metropolis is vividly expressed in a letter from the provincial city of Lausanne, dating from 1846, where Dickens complains how difficult it is for him to work on his novel *Dombey and Son* given the "absence of streets" in his Swiss refuge. The urban environment provides the author with "an immense play of shadows, a huge spectacle in which every possible kind of contrast -- luxurious mansions and rotting slums, bodies clothed in high fashion or disintegrating rags, appetites sated on the richest of foods or barely satisfied by the meanest of scraps -- are projected onto the screen of his imagination." Consequently, *Dombey and Son* turns out to be a novel less concerned with modern urban experience as such than with a moral drama that takes place in interior spaces.

In his 1846 travel book *Pictures from Italy*, Dickens creates images whose function seems to be to pamper the reader's imagination. Smith terms the book a "cinematic travelogue" (88), shaped by "the continuous overlapping of impressions that invade Dickens's consciousness" (89). In this text, Dickens repeatedly makes use of the cinematic device of the dissolve, merging contrasting images, places and situations. This impression is facilitated by a sentence structure that turns the text into "a seemingly ceaseless flow" (90). But not only is the visualization of the outside world subjugated to cinematic principles; the same is true of his characters' unconscious. More specifically, it is Dickens's frequent relating of actual events on the surface to moods below this surface that, according to Smith, constitutes what Benjamin calls the "unconscious optics" of cinema.

From today's vantage point, it seems reasonable to conclude that Dickens's work occupies a crucial position in the transition from realist to modernist aesthetics. As John Sutherland sums up, "His dense thematic compositions, striking use of imagery, rhetoric and dramatic device advanced fiction technically to the threshold of modernism." While traditional scholarship has been eager to place Dickens within the confinements of nineteenth century realist writers, Smith persuasively argues that the realism in novels such as *Bleak House* is "heightened by poetic and symbolic exaggeration" (159). It is indeed important to note that Dickens's concern with visual perception clearly transcends realist conventions. In this vein, Alter maintains that Dickens's work "is so thoroughly of its Victorian age and at the same time anticipates thematically and sometimes even technically modernist practices in fiction and in poetry." Further elaborating on this most noteworthy point, Smith introduces the metaphor of "Dickens as camera," a camera that does not merely record the outer world, but is rather "in the service of a controlling imagination." To put it differently, in his representations of urban reality, Dickens ventures beyond mimetic concerns by "bestowing meaning on his fictional world in the very moment of actualising it in words" (36). Time and again, his narrators indulge in panoramic views of urban scenes, but the mirror they hold up to nature "is a highly distorted one" (159). It is at this very instance -- when Dickens employs

cinematic devices in order to transcend strictly truthful modes of representation -- that his anticipated modernity takes shape.

Far from sharing "the apocalyptic anxiety that often assails modern commentators, especially in relation to developments in Victorian technology", Dickens readily accepted that "technology could often enhance human life, whether in entertainment, the speed of travel or … the control of pain" (82 f.). Smith describes Dickens as a passionate admirer of modern technology, especially the new means of transportation. Above all, Dickens enjoyed train travel -- an experience which, in light of its "panoramic perception," has often been compared to watching a movie. In *Dombey and Son*, locomotives are referred to as "tame dragons" that seem to possess the great powers of times to come.

One of the salient features of Smith's account is his compelling attempt to contextualize Dickens's writings within the larger frame of a nineteenth century Victorian era that was "a densely visual epoch" in its arts, popular culture and everyday social reality. As Smith points out, reading Victorian novels "creates the illusion of our immersion in a sensuously vibrant fictional world pulsating with the sights, sounds and smells of a novelistic image of reality" (103 f.). Smith asserts that "Dickens's novels can be experienced as pictures to the mind, and that this was, in fact, part of his conscious artistic intention" (106). His remarkable preoccupation with panoramic perceptions, it can be argued, anticipates modernity's concern with creating all-encompassing, at times even totalizing representations of a world that proves to be increasingly fragmentary and utterly contingent.

Altogether, *Dickens and the Dream of Cinema* is a convincing, elegantly written and, above all, original account on a writer whose work has provoked shelves of secondary literature. Smith's approach to Dickens's writings is undoubtedly a most illuminating study, eventually shedding light on a topic which has rarely been dealt with so far. However, while Smith generally does an impressive job in substantiating his thesis by referring to all kinds of primary texts and secondary authors, the strategy of incorporating various external viewpoints sometimes obscures his own thoughts. In essence, Smith's fascinating argument would have been much easier to grasp if he had focused on Dickens's texts without getting sidetracked quite so often. The author himself describes his book as a "postmodern tale" that defies the causal coherence of a realist text. The ingredients of his book are indeed "linked by contingency rather than necessity," the time frame is constantly shifting between past and present, and its narrative can certainly be called "circular and overlapping rather than straightforward" (102). What Smith describes here as a virtue, however, tends to leave the reader bewildered and more than a bit disoriented. Smith's book shares many of the cinematic qualities it attributes to the work of Charles Dickens. For the sake of academic clarity, a more sober approach would have been suitable.

Why Buffy Matters: The Art of Buffy the Vampire Slayer

By Rhonda Wilcox
London and New York: IB Tauris, 2005. ISBN: 1-84511-029-3 (pbk), 246 pgs, £12.99 (pbk)
Sex and the Slayer: A Gender Studies Primer for the Buffy Fan By Lorna Jowett & The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy By Milly Williamson

Sex and the Slayer: A Gender Studies Primer for the Buffy Fan

By Lorna Jowett

Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005. ISBN: 0-81956758-2 (pbk), ISBN: 0-81956757-4 (hbk) 241pgs, £14.50 (pbk), £36.95 (hbk)

The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy

By Milly Williamson

London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2005. ISBN: 1-904764-40-1 (pbk) ISBN: 1-904764-41-X, 213 pgs, £16.99(pbk), £45.00 (hbk)

A review by Sarah Artt, Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh, UK

The academic writing that surrounds Joss Whedon's cult television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) tends to focus on what's there: on screen, on the page, online. What so much of it misses is the fact that -- like a great deal of quality science fiction -- *BVS* is speculative and alternative. It imagines a world that looks very much like our own reality, but ultimately does not replicate it. In the last episodes of its final and seventh season, all the young women who are potential slayers have their powers 'activated', and now rather than a single slayer, there are millions. With a spell on a double-headed axe and the words 'so, are you ready to be strong?' physical gender equality is achieved. Suddenly, there are women who cannot be beaten, women who can truly, physically unman their oppressors. To me, alongside the overarching refrain of season seven -- 'it's about power' -- this is the most important narrative moment, these words are what make *BVS* important. These three recent offerings add to the increasingly broad field of analysis that is sometimes collectively referred to as 'Buffy Studies.' Rhonda Wilcox's single authored book *Why Buffy Matters: The*

Art of Buffy the Vampire Slayer deals with several narrative themes from the series, as expressed in three key episodes. Lorna Jowett's *Sex and the Slayer: A Gender Studies Primer for the Buffy Fan* undertakes a detailed character analysis of the entire Buffy series. Williamson's *The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy* devotes a chapter to Buffy as a contemporary expression of western culture's continued fascination with the image of the vampire, but incorporates it into her larger study of gothic fandom and subculture.

Wilcox was one of the first to tackle Buffy in academia, and is also an editor of the journal *Slayage*. Why Buffy matters is appealingly and engagingly written, to appeal to a wide variety of scholars and fans. Wilcox's approach to Buffy as a cultural object of study is clearly grounded in literary scholarship and this works well for discussion of *BVS*'s many grand themes and narrative arcs. Throughout the book, Wilcox draws strong parallels between *BVS*'s serialised television structure and that of the serialised Victorian novel. She frequently frames her chapters with contrasting quotations from Dickens and sections of dialogue from the show, demonstrating that Buffy, like the portmanteau Victorian novel, crosses generic boundaries and deals with similarly grand themes. Wilcox's study is determined to declare *BVS* as art, "I want to show that Buffy is art, and art of the highest order" (1). In her quest to elevate Buffy, Wilcox moves away from much of the terminology that has come to be associated with film and television studies, preferring " the term reader for any viewer who actively engages with the text" (31). While Wilcox's study does succeed in furthering the idea of a complete television series as a text on par with the classic novel, it tends to deal only with narrative and genre, and less with the visual and aural elements that form a key component of television and film studies.

The book is clearly and effectively divided into two parts; the first part deals with major symbolic themes in *BVS*: language, light as pain, naming and identity, redemption. She also devotes a chapter to the theme of heroism in Buffy, via a textual comparison with JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels. This chapter feels almost self-contained, as it deals primarily with similar narrative arcs and representations of the hero in Rowling's novels and *BVS*. While it raises some interesting points, particularly with regard to the equation of technology and magic (69) in both works, the chapter curiously omits any discussion of the *Harry Potter* films. In the final chapter of the first half, she also opens a discussion of *Buffy* as a text that reflects globalization. In terms of its narrative and representation, *BVS* has certainly broken some new ground, however its ability to convey the effects of globalization is dubious. Wilcox does mention the global popularity of *BVS* via a string of fan websites (97) and this aspect of Buffy and the audiences it has reached via dubbing, subtitling and translation certainly warrants further investigation, particularly in light of Wilcox's observations with regard to the importance of naming and language in *BVS*. The strongest chapters in the first half are by far the ones that deal with light symbolism, language and redemption. In Chapter Two, Wilcox points out that the image of light serves multiple functions:

> In the Buffyverse, the pain of light is not associated solely with the 'difficult return,' but with crossing in either direction. At times of a major step in the story, at a point of what might be called cognitive dissonance, repeatedly there is a visual image associating strong light with pain, and with a border or threshold. (41)

In *BVS*, light and dark imagery do not retain their traditional associations, but instead reflect what Wilcox argues is an increasingly complex moral universe (87). In Chapter Three,

Wilcox offers an analysis of the polysemic nature of character names in Buffy, with a particular focus on the significance of variants of the name William and its associations. In Chapter Five, Wilcox takes on the much discussed sexual relationship between Buffy and Spike as metaphor for psychological exploration. Through this decidedly bizarre and violent affair that at times verges on the abject, both characters explore the opposite elements in their natures, eventually leading to their redemption and reintegration into the social group.

The second half of the book encompasses close textual analysis of six key episodes that have generated the most interest from both scholars and fans, including the now ubiquitous musical episode, 'Once More with Feeling'. The second half is where Wilcox really makes use of the material, providing detailed deconstructive analysis of episodes such as 'The Zeppo' and 'Hush'. Her choice of episodes reflects the series as innovative in terms of both narrative and genre. 'Surprise/Innocence' are the episodes where the teenage Buffy consummates her relationship with her vampire lover Angel, only to have him transform into his evil alter ego Angelus. 'Hush' is known for its near absence of dialogue, making it a particularly striking example of *BVS*'s use of the purely visual possibilities of television. 'The Zeppo' marks the only episode entirely devoted to an exploration of the non-traditional masculinity and heroism of Xander. In the chapter devoted to the episode 'Restless' which chronicles the dreams of the main characters the night before a major battle, Wilcox makes a convincing argument for similarities of structure between 'Restless' and Eliot's *The Wasteland*. In the book's final chapter, Wilcox takes on the musical *BVS* episode, 'Once More with Feeling' pointing out its extraordinary textuality and disregard for the standard conventions of the Hollywood musical.

Wilcox's enthusiasm for the material has led her to draw largely positive, optimistic conclusions as to the show's content, and she declares her intention to praise the show in her introductory chapter. *BVS*'s knowing and sophisticated mixture of genres and lively use of its own slang are seen as a source of great intellectual delight. *Why Buffy Matters* draws on general themes which are accessible to academics from a variety of backgrounds, and is particularly suited to those embarking on their first scholarly look at Buffy the Vampire Slayer, particularly if making the transition from casual viewer or fan to critical viewer.

Lorna Jowett's *Sex and the Slayer* provides a fitting compliment to Wilcox, focusing exclusively on the portrayal of gender in Buffy. Her thorough chronicling of every major (and many minor) characters to appear throughout the series is to be admired. While Jowett also finds *BVS* a rich text for analysis, she takes a considerably less praiseworthy tone than Wilcox. While she acknowledges that *BVS*'s characters negotiate constantly between femininity and feminism, there are few instances in which this cultural minefield is successfully navigated. For Jowett, it is only gay characters such as Willow and Tara that are seen to escape the containment of the masculine gaze. Despite the transgressive qualities of the Slayer powers, Jowett points out that Buffy, as well as most of the other female characters are still very much subject to traditional standards of beauty, as well the cultural expectations that surround heterosexuality. While the middle class Buffy is permitted to be sexual within the confines of committed relationships, working class Faith is joyfully promiscuous.

Male characters are also subject to similar binary oppositions: in 'The Zeppo' the normally sensitive Xander is allowed to demonstrate his ability to conform to dominant masculinity via a car chase and casual sex. Jowett claims that Xander's comedy function is a direct result of his failure to comply with traditional notions of masculinity. In *BVS*, only vampires manage to negotiate masculinity and femininity in an alternative way, but she questions the validity of

this representation: "In Buffy, vampires are liminal gender hybrids, but this transgression too is re/solved by closure in the show's narrative -- Angel leaves and Spike dies" (193). She does imply that Andrew is a promising character, who transferred into the spin-off series Angel.

Jowett's book is structured into chapters devoted to particular character types, such as good girls, bad girls, tough guys and new men. She also devotes a chapter to mother and father figures, as well the male vampires. For Jowett, *BVS* is a text in which traditional gender roles are constantly held in tension with the constraints of televisual genres and the pressure of new gender models, models that *BVS* is partly responsible for perpetuating. In *BVS*, good female characters must be both feminine and feminist, and good male characters are sensitive yet virile. She also points out the lack of racial and class diversity in *BVS*, noting that the few working class characters are constructed as 'authentic' or 'real' in their representation of gender, while middleclass characters occupy more recent gender models ie. Buffy and Willow are middleclass characters who are permitted greater complexity, while Faith undergoes little change throughout the series. Jowett states that "fans see heterosexuality, consciously or not, as a stumbling block to reconciling the 'problems' in constructing contemporary masculinity" (138). Using numerous examples from throughout the series, she demonstrates that "Xander's behaviour is consistently motivated by sexual jealousy -- a typical 'masculine' quality" (139). However, she also notes that Robin Wood presents "an interesting development in Buffy's representation of race, but he is also ...the most uncompromised new man" (140). In her conclusion, Jowett notes that audience research on *BVS* could provide some much needed evaluation as to whether "its 'open images' of gender will affect subsequent representations" (197) or indeed viewers' perceptions of their own gender roles. Sex and the Slayer does take a particular slant on *BVS*, pointing out that in many ways, it is not nearly as revolutionary as perhaps was once anticipated. However, Jowett's detailed mastery of the huge cast of characters and clear explanations of various concepts from within gender studies makes it an excellent 'primer' as the title indicates, for both Buffy and gender studies.

Milly Williamson's *The Lure of the Vampire* weaves together numerous types of popular texts, ranging from John Polidori's *The Vampyre* to Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, numerous trash, cult and mainstream vampire films, and the gothic fan culture to form an overview of our continuing fascination with the figure of the vampire. Williamson boldly tackles all of these as inter-related texts, images, and movements, picking up the themes that unite them, such as the glamour of the outsider, innocence, evil, elegance, and difference. Williamson successfully straddles the divide between high and low culture, drawing on examples as diverse as the short-lived vampire soap opera *Dark Shadows* (1966; 1991) to the early medical literature of dissection. This eclectic approach to the vampire myth makes her study all the more comprehensive and fascinating.

Williamson links her textual research to a series of interviews she conducted with female members of the New Orleans-based Anne Rice Vampire Lestat Fan Club (ARVLFC) and the UK London Vampire Group (LVG). Chapter Six uses ARVLFC as a case study for vampire fandom and the effects of commercialisation. In Chapter Seven, Williamson uses her interviews with members of LVG to focus on the vampire as an image to be emulated within the gothic subculture, particularly with regard to female fans' sartorial practices. This chapter is particularly interesting in relation to Jowett's book, as Williamson also references the idea of "the vampire signal[ling] an end to gender distinction" (157). Like Jowett's comments with regard to the binary notions of gender in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Williamson observes that the transgressive gender possibilities of the vampire "cannot take into account that these

women [fans] look to the past as a time when clothes for women were more feminine" (158). Despite a frank rejection of contemporary femininity, which Williamson's subjects signal through the colour pink and the goal of slimness, at least a few of her subjects engage in a brand of aggressive femininity via the goth subculture that aestheticises elaborate, orientalised eye-makeup, heavy silver jewellery, as well as modern primitive body modification practices such as piercing, tattooing and corsetry. Many of these practices are now accepted for both men and women in goth subculture, though Williamson's analysis does not encompass this.

Williamson's book includes two chapters that reference *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. She discusses the image of the vampire in *BVS* as it relates to Rice's novels, as well as the practice of *BVS* slash fiction. Perhaps because this is a wide-ranging study, Williamson's approach to the *BVS* phenomenon is more measured, taking into account "the variety of factors that have shaped the fortunes of Buffy" (77) which include the literary success of Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* as well as the deregulated structure of US television at the time of *BVS*'s inception. Her analysis of *BVS* assumes a greater familiarity with the series than either Wilcox's or Jowett's books, which may prove confusing for readers unfamiliar with the series as a whole. She also does not consistently identify seasons and episodes, whereas both Wilcox and Jowett are meticulous, with citation styles that indicate season and episode number, as well as episode title.

Williamson differs markedly from Wilcox in her approach to fan scholarship. Where Wilcox, in *Why Buffy Matters*, writes from the position of fan/scholar, Williamson distinguishes her own study with the advocacy of distance: "it was my distance from this fandom, rather than my proximity and affinity which enabled me to engage with these processes, or even to identify them" (95). She also points out that in the case of vampire fandom and the gothic subculture, "fandom is not a subordinated social position ... writing as a fan is not the same as writing as a lesbian, an African American and so on (although both are sometimes fans, it is inadequate to collapse the two positions together)" a rarely discussed distinction whose articulation is much needed in the field.

Chapter Five provides much of the theoretical basis for Williamson's cultural analysis, which draws heavily on the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Her discussions of his theories of the field of culture, as well as his particular concept of distinction, are informed and lucid. However, the theoretical discussion does go on at length before re-connecting with ideas of fandom. Structurally, this chapter forms the bridge between the first four chapters which are comprised largely of textual analysis and historical survey, and the second half of the book, which deals with Williamson's qualitative field research with the two vampire fan clubs.

Wilcox's and Jowett's books are the more easily accessible, as they each provide an important entry point for both fan and scholar into the deeper textual and cultural analysis of a television show that has had an undeniable impact. Williamson's book is both more ambitious and more problematic. By attempting to articulate a general cultural fascination with the vampire image, she undertakes qualitative research within the gothic subculture, specifically amongst women who belong to Anne Rice fan clubs in London and New Orleans. Williamson attempts to account for the appeal of the vampire myth via both textual analysis and qualitative research, offering up the kind of audience research Jowett calls for in her conclusion to *Sex and the Slayer*. While Williamson's book is not comprehensive in this sense (nor does it claim to be) her approach serves as a critical model for future research within media and cultural studies.

Teen Movies: American Youth on Screen (Short Cuts Series)

By Timothy Shary
London: Wallflower Press, 2005. ISBN: 1-904764-49-5 (pbk). 125pp. £12.99 (pbk)
Children, Cinema & Censorship: From Dracula to the Dead End Kids By Sarah J. Smith

Children, Cinema & Censorship: From Dracula to the Dead End Kids

By Sarah J. Smith

London: I.B. Tauris, 2005. ISBN: 1-85043-813-7 (pbk), ISBN: 1-85043-812-9 (hbk). 237pp. £16.99 (pbk), £47.50 (hbk)

A review by Richard Harrison, Norwich City College, UK

There is no doubt that, despite youth being arguably the most important film audience, films concerning it and the effects films have upon it have oft been neglected. Indeed, compared to other social or historically-based studies, youth finds itself greatly under-represented, both in terms of general histories and theoretical approaches. These two books attempt to redress the balance, but each has a different focus -- the former provides a brief history of youth within films, the latter a far more detailed amalgamation of children, cinema and their relationship to censorship.

The author of *Teen Movies: American Youth On Screen* himself identifies the problematical nature of the 'Short Cuts' series -- "a book such as this can only offer an overview and evaluation of past practices" (109). That this comes at the end of his book produces an effect akin to that of eating a rather forgettable meal and being told during the coffee that it was prepared by the third choice chef -- you had already made that same deduction but it was nice of your host to admit it. Thus, the words 'overview' and 'evaluation' are appropriate to the point of summing up Shary's book rather neatly and conveniently, something he does to many teen films across many years by giving them the 'film guide' treatment. What starts out as a promising investigation into the under-researched and unjustly neglected area of 'teen movies' swiftly becomes a chronological synopsis of such films -- and, in this vein, becomes sadly less and less readable.

Although recognised as both a coherent cultural group and a specific cinematic audience since the 1950s, the teenager has found their portrayal on screen lacking in most critical film analyses. Whilst attempting to set the record straight, Shary constantly acknowledges his predecessors, a habit that ultimately becomes frustrating -- his voice is only heard as a whisper amidst the resounding echoes of previous critics who have made the 'teen movie'

their focus. True, such critics as David Considine (1985), Thomas Doherty (1988), and Jon Lewis (1992) have made many useful points (Doherty's book *Teenagers And Teenpics* is a seminal work on the genre of teen movies, for example), but they have not drained the teenage movie well of water. Thus, there would be mileage in a critical study which provides an overview of the 'teen movie' with an in-depth discussion of specific examples. Shary's book does not really do this, but instead flits swiftly between examples of the genre spanning the 20th Century and into the 21st. The result is a book that, whilst useful to the casual reader interested in the genre's development, proves a frustratingly distant experience for the critic searching for a greater degree of analytical depth and interaction with the films themselves.

I have referred to the 'teen movie' partly because this phrase features in Shary's title and partly to disassociate this review from other studies (such as Doherty's, which coins the term 'teenpic'). In essence, the teen movie can be loosely defined as a film that depicts characters supposed to be in their teenage years, who bring with them the trials and tribulations of the age that marks them as not still children but conversely not yet adults. That the audience for a 'teen movie' is a teenage one is almost a fait acompli, but not all the films Shary discusses were aimed at the same audience the films themselves portrayed on screen, for example *My Own Private Idaho* (Gus Van Sant, 1991). Thus, there is a curious discrepancy between pre. 1950s films that included teenage characters (such as the Andy Hardy series) and those made during the early 1950s that led the genre towards the exploitation film and spawned many sub-genres like the beach movie and the hot-rod film.

Although Shary admits limiting himself to "exclusively US teen films" (3), his study begins with *L'Arroseur Arrose* (Louis Lumiere, 1895) before going on a whistle-stop tour of representations of American youth on screen pre-1949. This is rightly abbreviated, for it marks the era discernible for its very lack of awareness of a coherent social group -- the teenager -- which the 1950s would embrace and subsequently exploit. Throughout the first of five chronological chapters of the 'teen movie', Shary usefully discusses several series of films (such as the Andy Hardy movies and those starring the Dead End Kids- later The East Side Kids and later still The Bowery Boys) as well as individual films. He does, however, make some surprising omissions -- there is no mention of young teenage characters such as *Anne of Green Gables* (George Nichols Junior, 1934), or Henry Aldrich for example. There is also the difficulty (which Shary does not really address) of children in films being of sometimes uncertain age -- and to some extent the definition of teenagers themselves: taking the usual definition as including those aged thirteen-nineteen, one could theoretically include any film featuring juvenile cast members in a book such as Shary's.

Once Shary enters the 1950s, however, the book realises its raison d'etre and incorporates references to many films dealing with teenage characters. Although Shary contextualises the genre with succinct comments relating to socio-economic developments in the post-war America that paved the way for the 'teen movie', his discussion of the films within this era are rather less satisfying, incorporating an annoying habit of summarising the plot so each development ends up reading like an excerpt from a film guide. Thus, what starts out as a useful and very readable overview of the origin of 'teen movies' slides lazily into a plot summary exercise as the book develops, which to some extent removes the curiosity factor from such exploitation films that the film industry of the 1950s produced. Shary refers to "the JD fixation" (18) which is not (as could be supposed) an instinctive reaction to the James Dean phenomenon, but that of 'juvenile delinquency'. This leads the author on to refer to films falling under this socially-reprehensible banner, but the motivation for the critic to watch these films is largely inherent in their structure -- will the bad male lead end up in

reform, jail, or meet their death in unsavoury circumstances? Too often does Shary answer this question as part of his documentation of this most unusual of film genres, thereby demystifying the very films he documents.

The golden age of the 'teen movie' in the 1950s should also provide much material for Shary's book, but it is instead an opportunity lost. The comments on rock and roll films are lamely summed up as "teen characters defending the music and dancing as a form of expression" (31), whilst the films themselves, argues Shary, promoted "a few rising stars in the music field" (ibid.) What the author seems reluctant to recognise is the immense lasting value of such films, whose plots had "little variation" (ibid.), in showcasing the unique roster of talent that existed in the mid-late 1950s through to the early 1960s. Therefore, although not perhaps as enlightening in their portrayal of teens as later or earlier films, the rock and roll sub-genre is arguably the most important. It is this slightly aloof approach to his analysis that causes Shary's style to become vaguely irritating- it is inevitable, as even Shary says, that in a book like this (a mere 125 pages including index) 'teen movie' ground is merely raked over and not fully dug, but it is lamentable nonetheless. This lack of specific detail and close textual analysis becomes a greater problem as the book progresses, because some films are more fully dealt with whereas others are all but ignored.

This rather arbitrary approach reaches its zenith in the fourth chapter of the book, which discusses "subgenres and cycles" (83): 'the slasher film', 'the sex craze', 'youth by John Hughes', 'teen tech', 'the revisionist teen film', 'the African-American crime cycle'. Here, certain films are ushered forth as Exhibit A -- illustrative of the very subgenre or cycle under scrutiny -- but others are brushed under the cinematic carpet with astonishing sang froid. Thus, there is room for lengthy discussions of *WarGames* (John Badham, 1983), *River's Edge* (Tim Hunter, 1986), *Boyz n the Hood* (John Singleton, 1991) but those that do not fit into the cosy generic boxes are ruthlessly dismissed from view. The compelling *Kids* (Larry Clark, 1995) merits just a few lines of critical scorn whilst *Elephant* (Gus Van Sant, 2003) is amazingly mis-read as 'vapid'.

As Shary's book moves towards its previously cited semi-apologetic conclusion, other key films are missing: where is Rob Reiner's nostalgic masterpiece *Stand By Me* (Rob Reiner, 1986) for example? This even seems to fit in where some others do not -- it is surely a highly significant revisionist teen film. There is also a curious lack of focus on stars -- no River Phoenix (William Richert, *A Night in the Life of Jimmy Reardon*, 1988), Johnny Depp (John Waters, *Cry Baby*, 1990) or Leonardo DiCaprio (Scott Kalvert, *The Basketball Diaries*, 1995). These stars did not, of course, appear in just the named teen movies but several, making their omission a more serious matter if the range of Shary's book is to be taken seriously.

However, all is not lost -- "the good news is that American teen films have generally improved in quality since the Second World War era" (109). Although probably comforting (possibly more so if the meaning was clearer here -- does Shary mean the representations have got better, the production values of the films themselves or something else besides?), this leads on to a rather jingoistic summation which does not, as is befitting of the book as a whole, challenge but meekly state an ideal.

In contrast to the broad sweep of Timothy Shary's book, Sarah J. Smith -- in *Children, Cinema & Censorship: From Dracula to the Dead End Kids* confines herself to exploring waters which, although seemingly shallower, are more fully plumbed. To be fair to Shary, his

book did not attempt (nor succeed) in being a detailed study of one particular moment in the 'teen film' genre, but an overview of its history. Smith, on the other hand, states her case systematically very early on -- she aims to provide "an extended, detailed case study of the controversy over children and film in 1930s Britain" (5). In her book's seven chapters, she does exactly that, by utilising a huge range of both primary and secondary sources. One of the main interest points in Smith's book is her reference material from Lancaster University and the Scottish Film Archive -- interviews with ordinary people who actually went to the 'pictures' and were significantly influenced by them. Thus, a strong sociological ambiance is created surrounding cinema-going in the 1930s, which is used efficiently to support Smith's conclusions.

However, before she attempts to draw any conclusions from her material, Smith usefully outlines the issues under discussion by justifying two questions -- "why the 1930s?" and "what is a child?" This rational approach marks the whole book, and makes it very coherent, which, in turn, makes her arguments that bit more compelling and convincing. After a well-researched chapter on cinema regulation between 1895 and 1929, Smith makes two points important for the rest of her book -- that British regulation of children's film should not be seen in isolation from practices in other countries and, more crucially, "evidence … strongly suggests that the principal driving force behind the early regulation of cinema was concern regarding the influence of the medium on children" (44). Thus, censorship, Smith argues, was not really guided by worries over the influence certain films would have on social morality but by the concern over the impressionable young.

Given the general misgivings about the effect films have on children (even in the present-day), it would be all too easy from our 21st Century viewing platform to criticise the 1930s 'do-gooders' as being overly prescriptive and punctilious. In actual fact, as Smith highlights, putting desired theory into workable practice proved remarkably difficult, especially so with the coming of sound. The advent of the 'talkies' meant two main things: cutting was made trickier (as the soundtrack was often adversely affected) and the uses of sound could enable further 'unsuitable' content to be foisted on children. With these difficulties being surmounted by the Hays Code not being fully operational until 1934, the 'pre-code' films made life harder than ever for the protectors of child morality and demeanour. The cycles of films that resulted from film production in the early 1930s (Smith cites gangster, sex and horror) are little different to the profusion of 'sequels' in today's Hollywood in terms of commercialisation. In other words, if a formula succeeded in attracting an audience, why change it?

Although the problem of popular exotic Hollywood genre films had persisted since the early 1910s, the violence (gangster), lasciviousness (sex) and frightening nature (horror) of these three early 1930s film genres caused concern to reach its apex, and led to increasingly pragmatic if ineffective regulation. Thus, debate surrounded the usefulness of the 'A' certificate (which, although intended to push cinemas towards not admitting unaccompanied children to films thus designated, was not rigidly enforced -- Smith cites a survey which found that just two in three local urban authorities complied with the 'A' ruling). The problem was that the three cited genres did not only pose the biggest 'risk' to children -- they theoretically posed the biggest profits to an industry that, whatever its other aims and objectives, is in business to make money.

It is this seemingly irresolvable battle between commercialism and morality which underlies this period, making it and the films that defined it that much more fascinating. In 1931, the same year as the 'A' certificate survey took place, a film was released which "was a pivotal

film in the children and cinema debate in Britain" (70) -- James Whale's *Frankenstein*. This film stoked the fires of indignation amongst those eager to protect childhood morality and caused the additional 'Horrific' label (first applied to Carl Dreyer's classic *Vampyr* later that same year) to be applied to certain horror films. Crucially, this certificate banned children from seeing such films, and marked a slight detour from the path of protecting child morality to concern over the psychological effects of severe fear/trauma which could be brought about by such horror films. But, despite this shift in emphasis "it would appear that the key developments in the regulation of cinema and censorship ... were directly related to specific concerns regarding the impact of film on young people" (76). Therefore, as concern rose, increased regulation was brought in and films more suitable for children became popular, such as the literary adaptations of the mid.-late 1930s like *Treasure Island* (Victor Fleming, 1934) and *Captains Courageous* (Victor Fleming, 1937).

One of the main strengths of *Children, Cinema & Censorship* is its structure -- the book is a tightly organised sociological study which makes a hypothesis before citing the following chapter to enforce the points made. A good example of this is Chapter Four, where Smith argues that the concern over cinema in 1930s Britain "did not constitute a moral panic in the classic sense", having previously defined what a 'moral panic' actually is and how applicable it might be to cinema-going in the 1930s. It is links such as these that help to make the book's narrative logical and its arguments persuasive.

Chapter Five, for me, explored relatively new territory in a fresh and exciting way. Entitled 'Children As Censors', it takes the view that children made choices of what to see which effectively 'self-censored' the more 'horrific' productions as they "made deliberate decisions regarding the films they wished to see (or avoid)" but, as Smith points out, they "were informed decisions" (126). Therefore, the child audience cannily used the plethora of cinema fan magazines and studio publicity to work for them in organising their viewing habits, as opposed to the Hollywood machine dictating what would be consumed, as might be supposed. The primary sources used to support Smith's hypothesis here are entertaining and fascinating, especially with hindsight. Jesse Boyd, a Lancashire cinema fan, was adamant in her tastes -- "knock-about comedy didn't appeal to me … Hates? Shirley Temple- ugh- sickening, simpering BRAT" (128). Given that Miss Boyd is talking about a sub-genre and a star now thought to have been universally popular at the time, the historical relevance of such a statement is startlingly refreshing. It does, though, endorse Sarah Smith's view that "film choices were made by children in the 1930s ... to reflect their personal preferences and moods" (138-9), but this is no different, of course, to the way today's youth get used to the concept of 'choice' at a very young age, whether the items under scrutiny be films or Frosties.

The chapter also incorporates references to films that children then (as now) should not have seen but somehow still managed to, such as *Outward Bound* (Robert Milton, 1930), summed up by Ralph Hart (whose Mother had taken him to see it) in four words -- "it gave me nightmares" (121). Therefore, the pleasure/displeasure link is evident, as children went to see films they liked, avoided those they didn't, and sometimes saw the films they were frightened of through their fingers. This link with having an intense empathetic engagement, devoid of cynicism and radiating childhood credibility, is picked up in the next chapter, possibly even more dynamic than the last.

In this, her book's penultimate chapter, Smith refers to the "afterglow effect ... a continuing emotional reaction to films, often expressed through re-enactments on the way home" (147). As children we all experienced some sort of fantasy world where we became the hero/villain

of the film we had just seen, even if for a short while. This blurring of the fiction/reality divide is present as early as 1919 in a *Just William* story entitled 'William Goes To The Pictures', where our eponymous hero brings the world of the cinema into his everyday sphere with typically disastrous results. The vital importance of "living the lives that they [children] had seen on the screen just before" (148) cannot be overstated, for it complimented the 'cinema culture' that led to the collecting of film star photographs and memorabilia- the very immersion into one part of adult society that was accessible to even the very young. As well as this positive contribution to society, cinema-going was also viewed with some distaste in its encouraging of British children to mimic Americanisms and slang -- "I liked to copy expressions used by my favourite actors, and use them often" (150).

Although citing such interview material makes Smith's book that much more uplifting, contextualises the topics and makes them more readable, I feel the significant influence she shows cinema had over children then (and still has to this day) goes against her own argument of "bogus scapegoating" (2). This refers to her reluctance to lay the blame for horrific incidents involving children at the door of popular culture -- Smith feels that an excuse is looked for, a scapegoat (film/ TV and so on) found, and the guilty media sentenced without trial. The pendulum of influence cannot swing both ways simultaneously however: there is a clear link between activity on the silver screen and childhood influences that can not be chosen arbitrarily whenever the occasion suits.

In concluding her book, Smith refers to "the many ways in which [children] allowed film to penetrate and permeate their lives" and "the sense of autonomy among children" (173) which caused yet another worry related to "the socialisation of the young" (ibid). It is somewhat reassuring to note this concern with then, as now, new media technologies, a pastime which could prevent children from 'normal' peer interaction and outdoor activities.

As *Children, Cinema & Censorship* draws to its conclusion, a sense of deja-vu is created by pages 174-5, which echo (sometimes in identical words!) some of page 2, which does detract from the valuable final few pages of text. However, Smith's overall thesis had been pretty much consistent -- that censorship in the 1930s was not motivated by a desire to raise general moral standards of the working classes (as has almost become part of a prevailing ideology) but resulted from a concern for child welfare. Ironically, Smith also recognises a problem that was prevalent in the 1930s and that has persisted to the present day -- "in reality children frequently evade such attempts at regulation" (175). Thus, the children who now lie about their age to participate in adult pursuits of any nature have their predecessors in the 1930s youths who would seek to gain illicit entry to films they were not legally entitled to see.

The consequences of children's film viewing in the 1930s were twofold: restrictive (regulation and censorship) and productive (cinema clubs, film societies and films made specifically for a young audience, such as those produced by the Children's Film Foundation). Smith closes her book by posing the intriguing question of the motivating purpose of regulation. Was it, she asks, a form of protection or a form of control? That the question is asked without being answered suggests that maybe Smith herself is unsure or she is planning to address that very issue in another publication or she prefers to keep her readers active and their cognitive juices salivating.

These two books are very different but seem to agree on one thing -- the making of films with, for and about youth keeps cinema itself fresh and evolving. If films with appropriate content can be made there is no reason why the continually changing youth of the world

cannot be maintained as a target audience for film-makers and ensure the cinema itself stays young as a result.

Documentary: The Margins of Reality

By Paul Ward
London: Wallflower Press, 2005. ISBN: 1-904764-59-2. 8 illustrations, 115 pp. £12.99 (pbk)

A review by Dave Rolinson, University of Hull, UK

The recent resurgence of documentary is not due simply to the high-profile commercial success enjoyed by individual filmmakers such as Michael Moore and Morgan Spurlock, but also to independent filmmakers experimenting with form and academics taking an increasing interest in serious analysis of the form's past, present and future. According to Alan Rosenthal and John Corner's introduction to the second edition of *New Challenges for Documentary* (Manchester University Press, 2005), the atmosphere has changed from the concern over critics' and practitioners' neglect of the form which dominated their previous introduction eighteen years ago. Documentary, and the myriad 'hybrid' forms which it has spawned, are now the subject of numerous university courses and an increasing range of publications.

This increase in activity is drawn upon and contributed to by Paul Ward's *Documentary: The Margins of Reality*, although this active academic climate also produces a risk of repetition and -- particularly in an introductory study such as this -- reductionism. Clearly aware of these dangers, Ward argues that documentary is "an umbrella term" for a "complex set of overlapping discourses and practices" (1, 3) and selects from a range of illustrative films and programmes which persuasively reiterate the wide variety of documentary styles and modes. Although these selected texts are not always ideally-chosen, many are intriguing and enable Ward -- during the book's best moments -- to contribute to existing debate with more invention than one might expect from a book of this format. The book does occasionally fall short of this level, but it is a lively addition to this growing field of study.

Ward is quick to point out that "this book is not intended as an 'introduction' to documentary", and instead makes "idiosyncratic" choices from the "margins" (3). However, it does still focus on 'key issues', and it is largely successful in this aim: it provides a short critical bibliography, usefully responds to recent writing on documentary and drama-documentary (including, unsurprisingly, Stella Bruzzi, Steven Lipkin, Bill Nichols, Derek Paget and Brian Winston) and cogently identifies crucial ideas in documentary study. Of particular importance is "the central tension that constitutes all debates about documentary: the relationship between reality and artifice" (6). Ward explores the limitations of the 'commonsense' understanding of documentary as an 'objective', 'transparent' and 'balanced' form as opposed to the 'subjective' and 'personal' forms of drama, drama-documentary and animation. As Ward points out, critics continue to debate the argument that "documentaries are also constructed" (3, 10) and that other forms cannot contain their own levels of 'indexicality', thereby challenging 'commonsense' scare-mongering about staging and narrative structure. Knowledge of the historical development of the form provides ample evidence that "there is nothing inherently 'fictional' about narrative structure and the editing styles that have developed to tell stories" (7).

Ward adheres to tradition by responding to Bill Nichols's categorisation of documentary 'modes' not as definitions of discrete areas but as evidence of documentary's scope for a wide variety of approaches and as evidence of the overlapping that occurs between those modes and thereby blurs formal essentialism. Picking up on the extent to which critics have misread visual rhetoric as a guarantor of objectivity, Ward discusses the 'documentariness' of the 'mock-documentary' (72). He focuses here on recent television comedies, some of which are discussed more effectively -- particularly the reflexive Chris Morris and the neglected Mark Thomas -- than others. Useful chapters are included on drama-documentary and -- following Ward's previous publications on the subject -- the animated documentary, all of which provide evidence of the form's "increasing 'hybridisation'" (29).

Ward's better case studies include his contrast between documentaries -- *Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer* (Nick Broomfield, 1992) and *Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer* (Nick Broomfield, 2003) -- and the fiction films *Overkill: The Aieleen Wuornos Story* (Peter Levin, 1992) and *Monster* (Patty Jenkins, 2003). As Ward notes, the fictions seek legitimacy through recourse to the 'true story' whereas the documentaries foreground storytelling, including Broomfield's own. For instance, the second Wuornos film features Broomfield as a witness in Wuornos's trial, answering questions about his manipulation of footage in the first film. Ward sensitively discusses the "two competing discourses … 'battling' for *their* version of Wuornos", although he could perhaps have developed the relation between debates on "interactive" form and Broomfield's interventionist "persona" as participant and practitioner (45). Ward's discussion of historical documentary is very welcome, taking in political radicalism, record and reflexivity in such intriguing pieces as *The Battle of Orgreave* (Mike Figgis, 2001). He also uses fascinating animated documentaries such as *Obsessively Compulsive* (Andy Glynne, 2003) to touch upon postmodernism, arguing that documentary cannot easily be separated from more 'subjective' forms because it "can be the realm of subjectivity, fantasy, and non-normative approaches to understanding the world around us" (83).

These examples demonstrate the partial success of Ward's approach: the focus on recent texts makes this a valuable 'update' book which should refresh the 'canon', and the section on animation is one of the book's distinctive selling points. However, other case studies are less persuasive, and, notwithstanding Ward's intention to avoid writing an 'introductory' book, it serves as an introduction to contemporary documentary, and the focus on recent examples risks undermining its understanding of documentary and, therefore, the book's effectiveness. The argument that "'Documentary' in the twenty-first century is a complex set of overlapping discourses and practices" (3) implies -- misleadingly -- a genealogical interpretation, as if documentary was less complex before it was hybridised by animation or, less convincingly, reality television or "the changing climate of deregulation" (100). Focusing on recent examples certainly works in part -- for instance, although postmodernism might have been developed through reference to key texts from the past, the animated titles are intriguing and highly useful.

However, there is occasionally the sense that an engagement with the historical development of documentary practice and criticism, or more established texts, could have provided clinching detail. Instead, some well-made points are undermined by illustrative examples which sell the idea short. This is particularly the case with the book's discussion of reflexivity; also, it is momentarily refreshing to see a section on drama-documentary which focuses on *Tina Goes Shopping* (Penny Woolcock, 1999) and *Pissed on the Job* (Paul Wilmshurst, 2004), but neither programme illustrates the form's potential as articulately as

more commonly-studied practitioners such as Ken Loach or Peter Watkins. Equally, despite Ward's references to John Grierson, there is little reference to the British documentary film movement, despite an acceptance that their films had a "profound influence on the documentary form" and raise crucial "theoretical and critical issues" (3). The work of Humphrey Jennings is missed, not because I lament the absence of documentary history but because it could have reinforced the book's discussion of the 'poetic' mode and 'creativity' in documentary. Ward's insistence that this book is not 'introductory' fudges the issue: should this qualified revisionism be restricted to a monograph rather than a book in this format? Should a book of this type select its case studies by prioritising the clear explication of central issues, or seek material with which students may empathise more readily than with (in my experience) filmmakers such as Jennings?

These are not so much complaints as questions of emphasis: I see no problem with most of the choices which Ward predicts will be seen as 'idiosyncratic' by some readers (3). Another point of emphasis is raised by Ward's foregrounding of "the relationship between reality and artifice" (6), which left me wanting more engagement with aesthetics. It remains true that, as Barry Keith Grant and Jeannette Sloniowski argued in their collection *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video* (Wayne State University Press, 1998: 20), documentary critics tend to ignore "the significance of aesthetic pleasure and complexity" with works which are "discussed *as documentaries* rather than closely read as rich works of cinema". At times, Ward almost apologises for his distinctive choices with unconvincing equivocation -- "the techniques used are with a view to assert something about a real actual person: the result is therefore a form of 'documentary'" (9) -- or unhelpful comments about 'conventional' documentary.

As this statement implies, there are momentary lapses in the prose, rare moments lacking in persuasiveness: whether because of the structure or the chosen examples, Ward occasionally reiterates and paraphrases ideas rather than working through them. Therefore, it does not entirely shrug off some of the restrictions of the format, published as it is in Wallflower Press's *Short Cuts* series, a series which is largely commendable and impressive but which is also erratic enough to let through inferior, under-edited titles.

However, for the most part *Documentary: The Margins of Reality* stands on its own merits as a well-written, insightful and occasionally elegant study. It may not displace John Corner's *The Art of Record* (Manchester University Press: 1996), Kevin Macdonald and Mark Cousins's *Imagining Reality: the Faber Book of Documentary* (Faber: 1998) or Stella Bruzzi's *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (Routledge: 2000) as a core module text, but it is certainly a welcome supplement, particularly on issues in contemporary documentary.

Dogville vs. Hollywood

By Jake Horsley
London: Marion Boyars, 2005. ISBN: 0-7145-3117-0 (pbk). 379pp. £9.95 (pbk)

A review by Adam Atkinson, University of New South Wales (Australian Defence Force Academy), UK

Bemoaning the general silence with which his book *Dogville vs. Hollywood* has been met by critics, Jake Horsley proffers his own neat assessment on his blog spot:

> Probably, the book starts with a bang and ends with a roar, and rather meanders in between. I think I attempted to save my energies for a final burst of inspiration in the last chapter; then later I found out, from my publisher Marion Boyars, that reviewers tend to read only the first and last chapters anyway! (Horsley, www.movieblues.blogspot.com, April, 2006).

In all fairness, Horsley's appraisal is roughly accurate: the meat of his argument is confined to his introduction and, to a lesser extent, his concluding chapter. And a large portion of what lies between -- aimless meanderings connected only tangentially to Horsley's thesis -- can be justifiably skipped over.

Dogville vs. Hollywood treads the all too familiar territory of the conflict between independent filmmaking and the slick productions of Hollywood. Specifically, Horsley wonders if "the two 'schools' ... can be combined into a single discipline and a unified intent" (20). In returning to old ground, though, Horsley fails to offer much in the way of insight and anything more than vague responses to his own question. His stated goal is largely ignored beyond his introduction and the long midsection consists of a string of anecdotes, potted film history, and his own recycled reviews strung together under the encompassing image of independent filmmakers being crushed by the Hollywood behemoth.

The book's weaknesses are something of a shame, though, as Horsley launches from a generally insightful and refreshing reading of *Dogville* (Lars Von Trier, 2003). Avoiding the usual politically charged, (anti)Americanist analysis the film has drawn, Horsley reads *Dogville* as a critique of the Hollywood system. According to Horsley, the character Grace figures as Lars von Trier himself, and her narrative reflects the director's escape from the confines of Dogme 95 to Hollywood where he must earn the town's respect. Von Trier succeeds to some degree in living by their rules, but the relationship soon shifts to one of abuse and being taken for granted. He wants to leave, but finds himself shackled to a Hollywood product, a Nicole Kidman movie. He takes revenge on the town, like his heroine Grace, by in a sense killing his film *Dogville*. The audience is not allowed to enter a new reality but are forced to recognise the film's artificiality and the film itself combines disturbing events with banality and even boredom. In short, the audience is made to feel completely uncomfortable, in stark contrast to the entertaining comfort of a Hollywood movie.

Horsley develops this insight further in relationship to Grace's confrontation with her gangster father. Both consider the other repulsively arrogant: Grace believes her father arrogant because he assumes a God-like role, seeing humanity as "unfit to govern itself" (21) -- as irredeemable -- but treating it as responsible for its own actions. Grace, on the other hand is considered arrogant because she forgives unconditionally -- the townspeople's violence is in their nature -- thus disallowing Dogville any responsibility or understanding of who they are and their actions. In Horsley's reading, Grace, prior to converting to her father's way of thought, acts in the same manner as Hollywood: Hollywood protects its audience "from the truth, under the guise of compassion. It is arrogance ... that treats us as children and consumers to be amused and kept out of trouble" (21). The arrogance of Grace's father, on the other hand, matches the attitude of the independent film artist: the indie director respects her audience by showing it "utter contempt" (21), by punishing it (with a film like *Dogville* for example) hoping that viewers will grow from the experience.

The potential for growth, argues Horsley, works against Hollywood's need to keep its audience docile, leading to Hollywood's unceasing endeavour to crush the artist. And the independent artist must face this crushing possibility head on if he or she is to ever reach an audience (132). Horsley's opening question -- can Hollywood and independent film function successfully as one? -- is slightly misleading; his intention seems to be, rather, to show that, assuming the independent artist has no choice but to come to Hollywood, such a relationship will always favour Hollywood and discard the artist drained and used -- a burnt-out *Dogville* shell.

Horsley's introduction offers several interesting directions of thought: considering, for example, that Grace converts to her father's point of view, extending Horsley's reading further might suggest that the independent film artist, in fact, has some power over Hollywood. That power might be the capacity to subvert the system from within (an ability that Horsley champions in Hitchcock), but the middle section of *Dogville vs. Hollywood* seems content merely to list examples of directors who tried and failed. Orson Welles naturally serves as the prime illustration and the fall of Scorcese and Coppolla into mediocrity is chronicled in lengthy detail. Most anecdotes fail to address Horsley's initial question and appear to have been selected on the sole criterion that they show independent film struggling against and within Hollywood -- and failing. Interesting reading, certainly, but hardly compelling given that Horsley only summarises his sources, offering no critique of his own.

Having 'saved his energies' for the final chapter it is a little deflating to find that Horsley's conclusion is simply that ideas have to struggle to be art: Hollywood serves as the dragon that "proves the hero" (341). Ironically though, Horsley argues earlier that an "in-bred Christian terror" (286) in all of us creates a prejudice that anything of value must be struggled for, that art must be lofty: "it makes us better people by stretching and straining our capacities" (286). Low-brow art, art as entertainment, tends to be dismissed as too easy. But Horsley claims that art can and should be entertaining. He seems to side here with the low-brow world of Hollywood, dismissing the struggles of high art and contradicting his arguments in both his introduction and conclusion. Is independent film worthy because it requires the audience to step out of complacency or is it merely pretentious for the same reason? The vagaries of *Dogville vs. Hollywood*'s arguments are apparently of little concern though: whether independent film is a positive or negative force, the anecdotal evidence Horsley provides shows it doomed to be squashed by Hollywood in any case.

Ultimately, *Dogville vs. Hollywood* smacks of a tired 'fight the system' mindset that encourages very little in the way of actual fighting and seems just a little unsure as to who one should fight at all. After an entire book of proliferating examples of an issue that might be just as well left to common sense -- surely, only a very few are unaware of Hollywood's dominance over independent film -- Horsley offers no exit from the status quo or even a compelling reason to disturb it. His message to the independent film artist seems to be, 'It's worth giving it a shot, although failure is all but guaranteed.' Hardly inspiring. Still, Horsley writes with some wit and his reviews of individual films are original and could stand well on their own. Strung together by a weak and contradictory argument, though, his work fails to impress.

Selling Television: British Television in the Global Market Place

By Jeanette Steemers
London: British Film Institute Publishing, 2004. ISBN: 1-84457-055-X. xi + 240pp. £ 15.99 (pbk)

A review by Sara Steinke, St Mary's College, University of Surrey, UK

The stated aims of *Selling Television* are to review the shape of the British TV industry's export performance asking why and how some types of programming have worked better than others, and to examine how the market for exports operates, the value and volume of British TV exports, trade policy initiatives and also the activities of Britain's most important overseas traders. Jeannette Steemers' book fulfils both of these objectives in a focused manner, and to a high standard of achievement.

One of the key reasons for the success of *Selling Television* is the logical structure of the book. The theoretical groundwork for Steemers later discussions of the selling of British television in the global marketplace are laid out in the first chapter 'Going Global -- Theoretical Bearings'. Key theoretical approaches to the idea of globalisation, including cultural domination and transnational corporations, are identified; as well as their relevance to studying British television within the global broadcasting landscape. The second chapter 'Process and Product -- The Global Trade in Television Programmes' explains how the global trade in television programmes actually works. Information is provided on trade markets, the types of programmes that are sold; as well as factual information about the funding of programmes and programme rights. Chapter Three 'Policy Interventions -- Promoting British Exports' looks at the reasons behind the broadcasting policy (in particular, the exporting of British television) of the New Labour government. Key government policies are identified, and their consequences analysed. Chapter Four 'British Players in the International Marketplace' examines the key players in the export of British television programmes and formats, accompanied by case studies of well established individual television distribution companies. Chapter Five 'Collaboration and Emulation -- The American Connection' examines the issue of British-American co-production, and the re-packaging of British television programmes and formats for the American market. Chapter Six 'You Can't Sell Everything … European Particularities' considers the reasons why British television is less successful within the Western European broadcasting landscape. In both of these chapters the idea of a distinctive and indigenous British television culture and industry is usefully discussed. The final chapter 'Old Friends and New Markets -- Australia, New Zealand and East Asia' compares the exporting of British television to these territories in an enlightening way. The titles of the chapters clearly indicated their content, and there is a coherent and well signalled progression through the chapters.

Another key reason for the success of *Selling Television* is the balance that is struck between the context of the production of British television and the texts themselves. Alongside case

studies of well known and established production and distribution companies, varies popular programmes, genres and formats (such as nature programmes, costume dramas and children's television) are discussed. The links made between the broadcasting companies and programmes is well maintained throughout the book. Such an approach is now the norm within Television Studies, and its value is clearly demonstrated in *Selling Television*. It is an approach that might benefit the recent interest in the transmission of 'quality' American television on British television.

A further achievement of *Selling Television* is its research methodology. A substantial amount of the information in the book has been obtained from interviews with television buyers and executives. This in itself is to be commended and admired. The qualitative information gleaned from these people is invaluable, giving us a rare insight into the reasons behind the decision that are made. The quantitative information comes from companies' annual reports and trade publications. Again, it is the balance struck, and the linking of this vast amount of quantitative and qualitative data in *Selling Television* that makes the book a significant contribution to the study of contemporary British television in the global marketplace.

Jeanette Steemers handles such a large amount of material in a confident manner. The use of tables to present factual information throughout the book ensures clarity in the delivery of such a volume of information. On one level, the overall arguments in *Selling Television* can be digested in the first reading. On another level, however, given the density of the material collected and covered in *Selling Television*, it could be equally useful to approach the book as a reference manual.

The overall conclusion of *Selling Television* is that a particular survey of British television in overseas markets is still relevant in an age of global trends. This survey is relevant because it demonstrates the continued importance of ethnicity, local production, the context of reception and the regulation of imports. In putting forward this conclusion, Steemers takes us back to the stated aims of the book, and demonstrates that there are no straight forward answers or solutions regarding the exporting of British television in the global marketplace.

As a textbook, *Selling Television* will be of interest to undergraduates, postgraduates and lecturers studying television. It provides plenty of ideas and information in an accessible writing style for undergraduates and postgraduates to engage with in their essays and dissertations. For lecturers, its approach to the topic can be seen as a source of ideas for individual research; as well as teaching material on university courses.

Les Diaboliques (French Film Guides)

By Susan Hayward
Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005. ISBN: 1-845-11102-8 (pbk), ISBN: 1-845-11217-2 (hbk). 118pp. £9.99 (pbk), £25.00 (hbk)

A review by Alison Peirse, Institute for Cultural Research, Lancaster University, UK

A free and easy adaptation of Pierre Boileau and Thomas Nercejac's 1952 novel *Celle qui n'était plus* (*She Who Was No More*), *Les Diaboliques* (Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1955) is set in a private boy's school outside Paris in the mid Fifties. The suspense-filled thriller charts the perverse relationships between cruel headmaster Michel Delasalle (Paul Meurisse), his timid wife, teacher Christina Delasalle (Vera Clouzot), and Michel's mistress, fellow teacher Nicole Horner (Simone Signoret). Remarkably, mistress and wife form a friendship in sympathy for the violence they both suffer at Michel's abusive hands, and plot to murder him. Needless to say, with its film noir influences -- indeed, this film is described by Hayward as "the French film noir to end all French film noirs" (41) -- *Les Diaboliques* unravels a plot is anything but simple, offering a transgressive narrative revealing more to this triangular relationship than initially meets the eye.

For the French Film Guides series, Professor Susan Hayward deconstructs this stimulating filmic text in careful and precise detail. With an accessible and jargon-free writing style, Hayward picks out multiple layers of signification within the film, opening up whole new levels of understanding even to readers more than familiar with Clouzot's classic. Describing the film as a "transgressive and transcendent film noir" (60) her analysis includes a discussion of how "French noir is distinct from its American counterpart" (41), while arguing that *Les Diaboliques* is mould breaking in noir terms, for Clouzot "makes two women the centre of his narrative" (43). Additionally, Hayward sympathetically examines how Clouzot reduced the overt lesbian relationship between the female characters in Boileu and Narcjec's novel and instead in *Les Diaboliques* relied on visual hints and subtle framings between Christina and Nicole. Furthermore, historical readings of the film are addressed, as Hayward considers how the film makes political reference to the French-Algerian war of the Fifties, "particularly in the use of 'clean torture'" (57), when Christina and Nicole viciously drown Michel in the bathtub.

In terms of autueur theory, Hayward offers many analogies between Clouzot and Alfred Hitchcock, particular in their approach to the spectator and the film text. Clouzot is quoted describing the filmic viewing experience as brutal, that the editing should be "a system of permanent shocks" (7) and that "the spectator is placed in a situation where he might react at the beginning of the film but where his face is being punched repeatedly, and as quickly as possible to annihilate him" (3). Hayward draws together Clouzot and Hitchcock as masters of suspense, arguing that they offer similar filmic practices, whereupon "actor, character, mise en scène and plot are in some kind of dramatic tension with the purpose, generally, of creating suspense" (6). However, while Hayward confidently claims "Clouzot was an auteur, and, with the passage of time, he has been recognised as one" (8), conferring upon him the

same status as Hitchcock, she also finds innate differences in their work. Clouzot's "mise-en-scené is bleaker, more oppressively detailed, and, therefore darker in its horror than Hitchcock's" (8), and it can be argued that *Psycho*'s (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) shock ending has nothing on *Les Diaboliques*, described in the Edinburgh Film Festival catalogue as "one of the most terrifying films ever made" (13).

Chapter Four is devoted to a series of sequence analyses involving the protagonists Michel, Christina and Nicole, in order to observe more finely the dynamics between them, comment upon their performance as actors and, finally, examine more closely how camera work and mise en scené function in each instance to enhance performance, underline the atmosphere or convey a specific sense of space (62).

These detailed analyses are the highlight of the book, and offer an incisive guide to all Film Studies students on the best way possible to write about film. The level of close textual analysis verges on spectacular, both in its lucid and confident study of the formal construction of the film, and also in the fluid and engaging way that Hayward takes these technical findings to prove her wider theories around *Les Diaboliques*. In one instance, Hayward argues that Vera Clouzot (playing Christina) is a poor actress who is doted upon by her director husband and favoured in the film above the acting talents of Signoret and Meurisse. To make this statement evident, Hayward points out that Vera Clouzot has 121 solo shots as opposed to Signoret's 72. Half of Clouzot's shots of Vera are in close-up or medium close-up (9 CUs and 51 MCUs), three times the number reserved for Signoret, who has only 18 (3 CUs and 15 MCUs) (17). From this, Hayward truly can admonish "it was the Clouzot's wish that she, Vera, should stand out" (17).

A few pages are spared for a well-deserved diatribe in Chapter Five against the 1996 remake, *Diaboliques* directed by Jeremiah Chechnik and starring Sharon Stone as Nicole. Described by Hayward as an "'anti-feminist, backlash film" (98), *Diaboliques* controversially and overtly reinserted the lesbian plot; however Hayward bitterly argues that "any suggestion that there might be a lesbian link between the two women is so artificially contrived, so heavily flagged up … that it gets in the way of the plot development" (97). Chapter Six on the 'Critical Reception of Les Diaboliques' would have been better served at the beginning of the book, alongside the Introduction and a historical description of Clouzot's life. The fairly banal press and trade reviews that were accorded to the film jar after the fluid poetry of Hayward's filmic analysis and seem simply pedestrian in comparison to her detailed sequence analysis in earlier chapters.

While the background information on the film, the novel, Clouzot and the main actors is well-researched, clearly written and methodical, what really makes this book a joy to read is the detailed film analysis. So often, texts that purport to analyse films do nothing more than bend the filmic text to suit the author's pre-chosen critical theories and agenda. Instead Hayward takes as her point of departure the film itself and from her incredibly detailed study of its formal construction, unpicks the significant themes, motifs and the method of the film's address to the spectator. Her suggestive and perceptive critiques of key moments in *Les Diaboliques* thus become utterly substantiated as they emerge directly from close readings of film itself. When, in the book's final line, she announces "Clouzot remains most assuredly one of the great film director's of the 20th century" (113), we know this to be true, for Hayward has proven it throughout this study, time and time again.

Women Screenwriters Today: Their Lives and Words

By Marsha McCreadie
London: Praeger, 2006, ISBN: 0-275-98542-3, xxiv + 176 pp., £22.95 (hbk)

A review by Daniel Gritten, University of Bristol, UK<

In the Writers Guild of America's recent *101 Greatest Screenplays* (New York: Newmarket Press, 2007), no scripts penned by women made the top twenty. Indeed, only five screenplays on the list were credited or part-credited to women, including Callie Khouri's *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991) -- 72, Melissa Mathison's *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial* (Steven Spielberg, 1982) -- 67, and Nora Ephron's *When Harry Met Sally* (Rob Reiner, 1989) -- 40. This under-representation of women in the profession has not always been the case, as recent critical attention has made clear. Cari Beauchamp's *Without Lying Down* (University of California Press, 1998 and Bridget Terry, 2000) highlights the importance of women screenwriters from early cinema through Hollywood's Golden Age. Lizzie Francke's *Script Girls* (British Film Institute, 1994) takes a wider sweep, following the role of women writers from early cinema to the mid-1990s. Marsha McCreadie's *Women Screenwriters Today: Their Lives and Work* adds to this recent trend by drawing attention to the work of over thirty contemporary female screenwriters, whose contribution to the practice and profession is currently undervalued by the public and the industry.

McCreadie combines primary interviews with analysis of these women's films. She has several lines of investigation which structure the interviewees' responses: is there an awareness of 'new' women's issues, and does that influence the theme and form of the stories told? How do the women position themselves within the industry, and what networks exist to support them? While Beauchamp was able to structure her exploration around the career of the hugely successful Frances Marion, McCreadie's work lacks such a narrative spine and feels disjointed at times. However, her central aim of drawing attention and recognition to the canon of contemporary women screenwriters, and allowing them to recount their experiences is successful. The Writers Guild of America West statistics show that "male writers outnumber female writers 5 to 1 in feature film and 3 to 1 in television" (124), and that "in 2003 only eight of the 100 top grossing films were written by women, and in 2004 the figure dropped to seven" (xxiii). It seems that little has changed since the 1930s, when Frances Marion and others would have be wary of discrimination:

> When we carried the scripts on which we were doing re-writes, we made sure that they were in unmarked, plain covers. But we knew male writers were complaining about the 'tyranny of the woman writer' supposedly prevalent at all the studios then, and particularly at MGM. (Frances Marion, quoted in Franke:35)

However, by allowing these women to tell their own stories, McCreadie never gives herself the critical distance which might allow her to address the issues they raise: why has the

profession become a virtual closed-shop to women since the Second World War when other professions have become more open? How can this trend be addressed?

Perhaps in recognition of this, McCreadie's book is not merely a topological survey of the current field. She asks the women about their writing habits and practices, how they 'broke into' the industry, and what advice they would give to aspiring female screenwriters. Unlike screenwriting gurus such as Robert McKee or Syd Field, their replies focus less on story structure, and more on the practicalities of becoming a professional writer. The women almost exclusively write best in the morning; some target a certain number of pages to achieve in a day. Alexandra Seros -- *The Specialist* (Luis Llosa, 1994); *Point of No Return* (John Badham, 1993) -- states that, "I write three pages a day, go back the next day and edit that, and then write three more." (30). Melissa Rosenberg -- *The O.C.* (2003-2007) -- gives more specific advice about how to 'break into' the business. First, go to Los Angeles,

Find a way to live if you're not independently wealthy. Have some life experience. Know how to type. If you can, get a job as a writer's assistant so you can find out how things are done, and be on hand if something opens up. If you can't get a job as a writer's assistant -- generally a hard gig to get -- get a job as a literary agent's assistant. It's a brutal job that will kill your spirit. But you will form relationships with people in the business. Take screenwriting classes at UCLA or AFI. And all the while keep writing. Then somebody may give you a shot. (126)

The interviewees recount various experiences of help and support they received from both men and women. While some found a mentor: a director, producer or actor who championed their work, others found the business more cut-throat. Despite McCreadie's prompting, there does not appear to be a sorority spirit to help fellow women. Indeed, Gina Wendkos -- *The Princess Diaries* (Garry Marshall, 2001); *Coyote Ugly* (David McNally, 2000) -- notes that, "I love California. But most of the women here are just bitches in Prada" (43).

Added to this is the often-vented frustration at studio or directorial interference. The pitch with which Barbara Turner won the commission to write the first draft of Pollock included a non-linear story structure: "I would write a script that would mirror a Pollock piece of art" (55). When this was substantially altered by director Ed Harris, Turner was unaware of these changes until she attended the preview screening. Such changes to the original script idea lead many interviewees to express a desire to direct in order to retain creative control.

This is symptomatic of the collaborative Hollywood system and contrasted sharply with case-studies from France and Australia. Catherine Breillat notes that in France, "movies, and therefore directors, go under a copyright law -- the author law -- and the producer has no right to interfere with any content decisions" (137). While American writers must yearn for such protection, Breillat and others must deliver profitable pictures.

These financial realities are a fact of the movie business. In the chapter on 'The Independents', McCreadie lauds the freedom gained by writers such as Allison Anders and Maggie Greenwald by working outside of the Hollywood system. This independence allows these women to write and produce films which are important to them; films which deal with themes uncommissionable in the mainstream: films with darker endings, with strong female leads, or which represent a gay or lesbian experience.

McCreadie suggests television is one area where women writers are in demand. Melissa Rosenberg and Susan Dickes are part of an elite group of episodic television writers. TV success has lead to celebrity status for writers like Marti Noxon -- *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) -- and Tina Fey, the first female show-runner on *Saturday Night Live* (1975-), and writer and star of *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004), who is strangely overlooked by McCreadie.

Perhaps the most contentious and least successful line of McCreadie's enquiry is whether there is such a thing as a 'female' structure, story, character or dialogue. Anna Hamilton Phelan -- *Mask* (Peter Bogdanovich, 1985); *Gorillas in the Mist* (Michael Apted, 1988); *Girl, Interrupted* (James Mangold, 1999) -- admits to writing films which concentrate on women's experiences and preferences. However, Suzette Couture pragmatically refuses to accept certain scripts could only be written by a man or a woman: "No woman wants to admit that. That we may be different from men. Besides, if you say that you may be losing some work by limiting yourself in that way" (121).

Such disagreement is typical of the responses canvassed. However, this lack of continuity should not be viewed as a failing, but rather it is the success of the book. Women Screenwriters Today demonstrates the variety of experiences for women within the business: from Oscar winning writers to jobbing hacks to highly renumerated script doctors. It may fail to address the larger questions, but McCreadie's accessible survey is littered with insightful interviews, stories and anecdotes which allow the small number of women screenwriters to record their experiences of the industry. Women Screenwriters Today illuminates this often overlooked area of the film industry. In drawing attention to the spectrum of work being done by contemporary women screenwriters, McCreadie not only rectifies this, but also demonstrates how little the business has changed since Frances Marion carried her scripts around the MGM lot in an unmarked folder.