Culture Conglomerates: Consolidation in the Motion Picture and Television Industries

By William M. Kunz
Lanham, Md.: Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006. ISBN: 978-0-7425-4066-8 (pbk). ISBN: 978-0-7425-4065-1 (hbk). x + 261 pp. £57.00 (hbk), £19.99 (pbk).

A review by Brenda McDermott, University of Calgary, Canada

Kunz's examination of the consolidation of the entertainment industry provides a good introduction to the current state on the industry from the point of view of political economy. *Cultural Conglomerates* uses an historical account of the industry to argue for increased government regulation. The central purpose of Kunz's book is to demonstrate why ownership is a valid and important framework for television and film studies. He sets out a comparison between US government recommendations that broad media should serve the public interest and the commercial pursuits of entertainment companies.

To demonstrate why ownership is a valid and important framework for television and film studies, Kunz first provides an historical progression through brief case studies, as well as a longer historical narrative. The book offers a resource to the undergraduate study of the political economy of communication. Kunz frames the book in relation to his own experience in the broadcast industry, particularly the Disney acquisition of ABC and the creation of AOL Time Warner.

Through the narrative of synergies and conglomeration, Kunz highlights that the multiplicity of content does not necessarily mean different content, drawing on Graham Murdock. He suggests that ownership is a critical issue because it reveals the dispersal of power. Kunz problematizes this lack of choice by drawing on the 1920s Radio Scarcity Doctrine, which suggested that radio frequencies were limited resources and should be used to voice the public interest. By suggesting that a few companies, such as Fox and CBS, control almost all the stations, Kunz implies that the needs of all of the audiences cannot be represented. Similarly, Kunz repeats this idea of the illusion of difference by emphasizing the notion that independence within the entertainment industry needs to be questioned. Independent film companies, such as Miramax films, are rarely truly independent; rather they are supported through a web of different divisions within major conglomerates.

The relationship of power and institutional control over resources, and therefore the content available to audiences, is the underlying theme in both Kunz's text and the political economy approach. He suggests that ownership is a critical issue because it reveals the dispersal of power. Kunz thus sets himself fully in the political economy tradition. He links the ownership of media with covert power, as it determines what is to be presented. Kunz therefore sets

himself apart from cultural studies, which he states is concerned with the construction of meaning in cultural texts, suggesting instead that power is at the point of production.

Kunz suggests that an increase in the number of outlets in the market, whether at a national or local level, does not increase the number of owners, rather that new outlets are taken over by existing players in the field, in effect reducing competition. He states that there has always been a drive in the entertainment market to develop toward "bigness" (221). The solution presented to stop this tendency is government regulation or action. Accordingly, Kunz suggests that the government has sanctioned the development of large conglomerates, resulting in the loss of the local content which addressed the public interest.

There are limitations to the contribtion of *Cultural Conglomerates* to the larger literature on the development of the entertainment industry. Kunz draws heavily on previous accounts and histories of the progression of the entertainment industry, utilizing documentation of this historical progression, particularly in the case of the rise and decline of the studio system. Kunz's work is an additional resource or a contemporary addendum to the foundational work of Douglas Gomery (1992) and Tino Balio (1976). In terms of a political economy approach, Kunz draws on Robert McChesney (1997), Majunath Pendakur (1990), echoing the fundamental issues in the entertainment markets provided therein.

It is the contemporary nature of Kunz's study, particularly in the sections on the satellite and cable industry that is the strongest in the book. Some readers would also respond favourably to his separation of production from distribution, as is done in the film entertainment industry. Unfortunately, Kunz fails to carry this into an examination or preliminary discussion of the role of the internet in terms of production and distribution. Kunz's study also dates itself by not addressing You Tube and other internet phenomenon. Furthermore, despite some suggestion of a broader focus early in the book, Kunz focuses only on the American entertainment industries. The impact of globalization in Kunz's study is only evident when American owned companies are purchased by foreign conglomerates. This American-centric perspective continues the association of the entertainment products created in America as part of that country's cultural values in a Herbert Schiller-like manner (7-8).

Some scholars who favour the cultural studies approach to popular culture may find Kunz's dismissal of the audience troublesome. Kunz's political economy approach sets out his lack of concern for the audience and how larger conglomerates attract an audience for their content. He also fails to address this question: if this diversity of stations does not serve the public, why it has continued? It would have been advantageous for Kunz to present an argument regarding the function of the expansion of channels, companies, and products, whether their underlying interests are the same. Thus, Kunz's failure to suggest that the audience, even just in market terms, has some role in the content, echoes the Frankfurt school's cultural dupes. The use-values of the programs, in terms of the consumer who watches them, are rarely present, and not considered an important factor in Kunz's understanding of the industry.

Kunz suggests that the only way to change this entertainment business and its drive to monopolization is through government intervention which focuses on public use. He presents a similar conflict between public expression and industry as has repeatedly been the theme of Canadian political economy studies of its national film industry, such as studies by Majunath Pendakur (1990) and Ted Madger (1993). Yet Kunz's failure to engage with, or discuss, the long-standing debate between political and cultural studies makes it hard for the reader to fully support his conclusions. By not addressing the noted problems with alternatives to

political economy, his argument fails to appeal to those readers who do not share his conceptual framework. *Cultural Conglomerates* provides a mainly up-to-date approach to the entertainment industry's organization. It also functions as a useful introductory text to a political economy approach to the industry, which would serve well in an undergraduate course.

The Dream Team -- The Rise and Fall of DreamWorks: Lessons from the New Hollywood

By Daniel M. Kimmel
Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006. ISBN: 1-56663-752-X (pbk), xi + 239pp. £9.99 (pbk).

A review by Erin Hill-Parks, Newcastle University, UK

Formed in 1994, DreamWorks started as not much more than an idea for a new type of entertainment studio. Created by three of the most powerful men in the entertainment industry, Steven Spielberg, David Geffen, and Jeffery Katzenberg, DreamWorks was intended to be "a wide-ranging entertainment company that would produce films, TV shows, music, and interactive games while setting new standards for the coming century" (6). More than that, though, DreamWorks was supposed to be a model of how to run a contemporary studio, doing away with titles and job descriptions, incorporating new technology in all aspects of the business, and maintaining artistic independence in all of its ventures. By 2005, however, most of the company had been split apart and sold to larger companies with only DreamWorks Animation running independently. Daniel M. Kimmel's *The Dream Team* chronicles the formation, running, and eventual dissolution of the DreamWorks studio, asking why a company with so much power and prestige behind it would ultimately fail. While the book is an engaging and informative read, with an abundance of material from the business side of the entertainment industry, it can leave the reader wanting a bit more analysis, theorization, and scope. The material is primarily gleaned from industry and news reports with very little theorizing, though this is understandable given the author's journalistic background and lack of access to the main players involved. Overall, however, *The Dream Team* gives a detailed portrait of DreamWorks' operations from 1994 to 2005, weaving the rise and fall of the studio into an enjoyable narrative of contemporary Hollywood business.

Kimmel wisely focuses the book on the three personalities that founded the company: director and producer Spielberg, music mogul and deal-maker Geffen, and studio executive Katzenberg. After a short overview of the start and end of the DreamWorks studio, Kimmel provides a biography of each man from childhood to 1994, laying the scene for the creation of DreamWorks. While the rest of the book is primarily told chronologically, the later chapters are centred on individual sectors of the company. This mixture of biography and industry report provides an interesting structure, emphasizing the personal nature of DreamWorks' project management and decisions. Kimmel writes that "the notion of creating the first new studio in decades was intriguing and offered each of the three men something beyond what he had already achieved" (25), suggesting that Spielberg would gain even greater power outside of his director/producer role, Geffen could move outside of the music industry, and Katzenberg -- recently fired from Disney instead of being promoted to head of the studio -- could prove to the industry that he could effectively and successfully run a studio. In various sections Kimmel demonstrates why each man decided to embark on this risky adventure, but spends the majority of the book discussing the various fronts of Katzenberg's feud with Disney. Dominant in the feud and the DreamWorks story was the

animation division of DreamWorks, especially with the release of *Shrek* (Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson, 2001), one of the first films to pose a direct challenge to Disney's animation dominance, even winning the inaugural Best Animated Feature Academy Award. The story of the Katzenberg/Disney feud is absorbing, and it is paralleled in the live action arena with the DreamWorks versus Miramax rivalry, especially in regards to the Best Picture Academy Award races in 1999, with Dreamworks' *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998) and Miramax's *Shakespeare in Love* (John Madden, 1998), and in 2000, with DreamWorks' *American Beauty* (Sam Mendes, 1999) and Miramax's *The Cider House Rules* (Lasse Hallström, 1999).

Apart from the Katzenberg/Disney and DreamWorks/Miramax feud, connected of course through Disney's ownership of Miramax, Kimmel also delves in some detail into Spielberg's role in the DreamWorks operation, suggesting that though he used the studio to produce some original and artistic work, and was an important part of DreamWorks formation, Spielberg's commitments to other studios ultimately contributed to the downfall of DreamWorks. The discussion of Spielberg's role in the company is particularly relevant as "from the initial announcement to the bitter end, Spielberg had always been the company's greatest asset and bargaining chip" (189). As Kimmel presents it, Spielberg was essential to making the DreamWorks idea into a reality, as anyone in Hollywood -- and those financing Hollywood productions -- wanted to be in business with Spielberg, arguably the most powerful man in Hollywood. Although this section was interesting, it would have been more intriguing if the issue of power -- or perhaps another theoretical issue -- was brought into the discussion. Warren Buckland's evaluation of Spielberg's recent career path in "The Role of the Auteur in the Age of the Blockbuster" in Julian Stringer's *Movie Blockbusters* (Routledge, 2003) incorporates a discussion of the business side of DreamWorks with Spielberg's recent directorial work. An analysis similar to Buckland's could have informed an intriguing and relevant addition for this book length study with a more substantial look at ideas of auteurism, perhaps extending it to Geffen and, most likely to great effect, Katzenberg as well.

Though focusing on Katzenberg and Spielberg, *The Dream Team* includes discussion of other major players in DreamWorks, including Geffen and the film producers Walter Parkes and Laurie MacDonald, who came into the project with Spielberg. Although Geffen's role is discussed, he seems to have played a smaller part in the DreamWorks operation and so is not given as much attention as are Katzenberg and Spielberg. Kimmel does go into some detail, however, on Parkes and MacDonald who were in charge of live action film production, though they also continued producing films for DreamWorks as well as other studios, which lead to some conflict of interest. These personal and professional connections, Kimmel suggests, helped stabilize DreamWorks at times, but also hindered growth and independence for the studio as a whole.

Ultimately, *The Dream Team* offers a detailed account of the DreamWorks saga. At the end, however, the book does not offer much in the way of answers, leaving the reader a bit disappointed and wondering, since DreamWorks Animation still exists and the production of feature films continues, albeit under the Paramount studio umbrella (for the present, at least), if DreamWorks really can be considered a failure. Kimmel admits as much in his conclusion, noting, "any discussion of why DreamWorks failed must begin by asking what is meant by 'failure.' By several standards, DreamWorks must be considered a successful enterprise" (193). He then lists how all three men, and all financial backers and most employees, came out ahead after being involved with DreamWorks. More analysis of the situation, perhaps with links to similar ventures, would have helped avoid the reader's frustration at the end of

the book. Although Kimmel briefly mentions other production companies ("Since the Golden Age of Hollywood there have been many attempts to start new studios or production entities, Orion Pictures, DeLaurentiis Entertainment Group, Vestron, and CarolCo Pictures" [195]), he conspicuously fails to mention Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope Studios/American Zoetrope. Reference to this well-documented case of a powerful Hollywood personality attempting to build an artist-centric, technologically forward studio could have drawn out some nice historical lessons. *The Dream Team* is a comprehensive and enjoyable history of the machinations behind and history of DreamWorks and the personalities involved. Although a greater degree of analysis or connections to Hollywood history would have enriched the book, it remains a valuable resource to discover some of the inner-workings of the DreamWorks story.

Satyajit Ray: Essays 1970-2005

By Gaston Roberge
New Delhi: Manohar, 2007. ISBN: 81-7304-735-9 (hbk). 280 pp. £31.50 (hbk).

A review by Gëzim Alpion, University of Birmingham, UK

Gaston Roberge's 2007 anthology on the twentieth-century *cinéaste* Satyajit Ray consists of twenty-three articles and a reminiscing essay (chapter 21) by Ray on scriptwriting, which was originally published in 1978. Readers will trace in Roberge's essays, written between 1970 and 2005, his growing interest in and admiration for Ray as an artist and as a human being, from the early 1960s, when he first became aware of Ray's films, throughout their twenty-two years of friendship, that began in the early 1970s, and in the last fifteen years since Ray's death in 1992. This book establishes Roberge as a leading Ray scholar who has not only written widely and insightfully on Ray for almost four decades, but also has lectured regularly on his *oeuvre* at Indian universities and overseas. In the early 1980s, for instance, Roberge gave a series of lectures on the cinema of Satyajit Ray at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, thus rendering an inestimable contribution in introducing Ray to academia in North America.

Although Roberge refers to his "long dialogue" (17) and friendship with Ray as "formal" (19), it is obvious that the Indian master of cinema held Roberge to high esteem, valuing both his "frankness" and "brand of appreciation". This is hardly surprising. A dedicated film scholar himself, Roberge shares with Ray a lifetime passion for films, as well as a keen interest in film societies. Equally important, Roberge shares Ray's conviction that while films cannot change society (97), they "can prepare social changes" by encouraging "subtle shifts in sensibility" (177).

The details about Ray's life and work recorded by Roberge throughout his essays could well justify calling the collection a biographical anthology. Offering an account of Ray's life was never the reason why Roberge started doing research into and publishing on Ray's cinema in the first place. Likewise, while the essays cover most of Ray's acclaimed works from his debut film *Pather Panchali* (The Song of the Little Road, 1955) to the last one *Agantuk* (The Stranger, 1991), Roberge does not approach them as a film critic. Roberge is neither a biographer nor a film critic: he is a film scholar who employs with dexterity and intellectual integrity his profound erudition in Indian and world cinema to highlight the visionary and avant-garde aspect of Ray's films in an Indian and global context.

Roberge sets himself two main tasks in this book: to uncover the "secret" of Ray's success in the West, and explain the mixed response that Ray's films received in his native Bengal and India when he was alive and after his death. Indian cinema is not as well known in the West as it should be, and many Westerners wrongly equate all Indian films with Bollywood. When *Pather Panchali* was shown at the Cannes Film Festival in 1956, it was hardly surprising that at first it did not attract many viewers; at that time Ray was not known even in his native Calcutta. Yet the film was noticed by André Bazin, who asked for the film to have a second screening. Roberge holds that what made film personalities in France pay attention to the film

of a young Indian director and give it a special award was both its technical achievement, and the fact that less than ten years after India had achieved independence, Ray had produced a film that "affirmed the beauty of the life of Bengali peasants, without arrogance, but with self-confidence" (258).

From the start Ray offered to audiences in India and abroad something they had not seen before in Indian films. That Ray produced such an original work from the start of his career as a filmmaker is hardly surprising. As Roberge observes, Ray was aware of what was missing in Indian cinema even when he had not produced a single film. In his 1948 seminal essay "What is wrong with Indian films?", written when he was only twenty-seven, Ray had the audacity to advise Indian filmmakers that what was needed was "not more gloss, but more imagination, more integrity and a more intelligent appreciation of the limitation of the medium" (106). Ray later revealed that he had found the source from where he would draw the raw material of his films, and was eager to share his "discovery" with Indian script writers and directors:

> For a popular medium, the first kind of inspiration should derive from life and have its roots in it. No amount of technical polish can make up for artificiality of theme and dishonesty of treatment. The Indian filmmaker must turn to life, to reality. (106)

Ray would return time and again to the issue of what, in his view, was wrong with Indian films, most memorably perhaps in the article on scriptwriting, which appeared in the *Film Eye* journal in December 1978. In this second "manifesto" Ray draws attention to the lack of "structure" in Indian films arguing that this is as a direct result of the influence of music, the principal Indian art form, which is improvised, and especially of Indian novels, that suffer from "a kind of episodic, discursive approach of story telling" that renders Indian films "shapeless and unsatisfactory" (207).

Ray never attended a film school. This self-taught, multifaceted artist drew some of his conclusions about what was missing in Indian cinema, music and story telling from studying Western music and the work of masters of world cinema and literature such as Griffith, Eisenstein, Renoir, Chekhov and Tagore. As Roberge observes, the attention Ray always paid to organisation of events in a temporal sequence, dramatic structure, character analysis, teleological narration, pattern as well as what Ray called, "orderly method of work" (209), were some of the reasons why his films were and continue to be received favourably in the West.

The enthusiastic response that Ray's films can arouse in Western spectators, however, does not mean that Ray is a Westernised Indian filmmaker or that his films represent a Westernised Indian cinema. To illustrate this point Roberge refers to the Apu trilogy: *Pather Panchali*, *Aparajito* (The Unvanquished, 1956) and *Apu Sansar* (The World of Apu, 1960). Roberge defends the trilogy's "slow pace", which may disturb some foreign spectators, arguing that the slowness in this case is not "boring" but correct, indeed "probably the only correct pace the film could be given" (42). Using a typically Indian novel -- Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay's *The Song of Life* (1929) -- Ray has constructed "a film trilogy that may be more easily accessible to the foreign spectator, but is no less typically Indian than its literary counterpart" (43-4). Roberge illustrates convincingly throughout his essays what Ray's films inherit from India and Indian arts: a wide range of emotions with their subtle nuances, and a

vitality that gives his film form the strength to support the details that make for realism, without the form itself being weakened or thwarted (168-9).

Although Ray was "deeply rooted in the Bengali culture" (153), which in turn gave his work its finesse, he remained all the time an original artist. The secret of his success is that he could appropriate and apply creatively in his films what was best in Western and Indian cinema. Genius, Charlotte Brontë wrote in 1847, is said to be self-conscious. The dictum can be easily applied to Ray, who was always aware of his originality. Referring to the songs in his film *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* (The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha, 1968), Ray once said: "I have definitely set a style of singing which doesn't come from Tagore, doesn't come from Western music, but which is essentially me" (168). Acknowledging Ray's ability to transmute both Indian and Western influences, Roberge postulates that the same could be said of Ray's film form, which is not an imitation of Western music or Western film. In Roberge's words, Ray's film form "is essentially Ray" (168).

While Ray attracted the attention of film critics in the West from the start of his filmmaking career and is "one of the most highly rated" filmmakers in international academic circles (170), he was not properly studied and appreciated in Bengal and India during his life. Regrettably, this situation has not changed much in India since his death in spite of the fact that, as Roberge puts it, "Ray did for the Bengali cinema, what Tagore had done for the Bengali literature" (153).

Roberge is scathing in his criticism of some Indian film critics, who started showering Ray with rave reviews especially after he was awarded a belated Oscar a few months before his death, arguing that much of the praise "should have come much earlier or should come much later" (26). Roberge identifies several reasons why Ray's immense contribution to Bengali and Indian film and culture has yet to be properly acknowledged in India, one of which being the inability of critics to appreciate Ray's film form. As early as 1948, Ray blamed Indian film critics for being one of the reasons for "the general poor quality" of Indian films. In his words, "critics -- which in films means anybody with access to print -- …keep peddling muddled notions about the art form" (232). Roberge holds that the problem with some of Ray's critics is that they "often seem to lack basic film culture" (170), which to some extent explains why they tend to apply haphazardly to Ray's films some of the Aristotelian rules about rigid dramatic structure and precise character delineation. As far as structure and mood are concerned, Ray seems to have learnt more from *Natya Shastra*, written by Bharat Muni in India over 2000 years ago, than Aristotle's *Poetics*. Roberge holds that Ray's "faults" as a filmmaker come from his intention to heighten and prolong spectators' enjoyment of the mood (or *rasa*) of the film by sustaining it.

The main reason why some Indian film critics, actors and spectators find fault with Ray, however, is because he deals with a rather unsavoury reality. Roberge holds that *Aranyer Din Ratri* (Days and Night in the Forest, 1969), for instance, is one of the least successful of Ray's films at home "probably because it revealed so much that was true" (185). Ray's tendency to depict Indian reality without beautifying it is obvious from the start of his career. Roberge notes that one of the reasons why the Indian actress Nargis (née Fatima Rashid), who is best known for playing Radha in Mehboob Khan's 1957 Oscar-nominated film *Mother India*, criticised *Pather Pachali* was because it shows the poverty of India (155). While Nargis believed that the film should not be shown abroad because it was bad publicity for India, she was apparently oblivious of "the spiritual poverty she herself depicted in *Mother India*" (262) where she kills her own son because "she stands by self-imposed moral rules" (ibid.).

Roberge believes that Ray's last three films -- *Gana Shatru* (An Enemy of the People, 1989), *Shakha Proshakha* (The Tree and the Twigs, 1990), and *Agantuk* (The Stranger, 1991) -- are ignored in Calcutta more or less for the same reasons. No other Indian filmmaker has dealt with as many aspects of Indian life -- social, cultural, political, economic and religious -- as Ray did for over forty years in his thirty-five feature films. Ray was prepared to be "ignored" in Bengal and India because he refused to make films that would have won him "immediate and enthusiastic praise" (79), and because, like Tagore, while he was willing to serve his country, he reserved his worship for Right (90).

Some viewers and critics apparently do not like Ray's "true-to-life" images and, more importantly, fail to notice that even in his most realist films, where he addresses the thorny theme of corruption in India, like any great artist, Ray concentrates on the local to fathom the depths of the mystery that is man, and, to borrow a phrase from Auguste Renoir, "to make comprehensible the man in his entirety". As early as 1948 Ray hailed the development of cinema as one of the most significant phenomena of our time. It is hardly surprising therefore that he always strove to, and was very successful, not only in his efforts to employ his cinematic language so that, to borrow a line from a song by Tagore, "India will again occupy an important place in the assembly of nations", but also and equally important, as Ray put it in the early 1960s, "to trace the underlying pattern that binds this life together" (59).

Much of what Roberge calls the "pedestrian" criticism against Ray comes from the fact that some Indian and foreign critics fail to notice that the largest subject of Ray's films, especially of the Heart Trilogy, is "contemporary civilization" (103). As Roberge rightly observes, "the profound humaneness" of Ray's characters (25) comes from his observation and belief that while "man is definitely conditioned by his milieu" (188), he must and can break free from that conditioning. Ray's optimism that change is possible comes from his faith in the youth of West Bengal and India and in man. This optimism was a reflection of Ray's growing confidence, recorded especially in his last three films, that the light of civilization would come neither from the West nor from the East, as Tagore had predicted towards the end of his life, but from the cave of man's heart.

Roberge's collection of essays is a welcome and timely contribution to Ray scholarship. The anthology will be of interest to Ray scholars and film lovers worldwide for many reasons, but especially for the intimate details that shed light as never before on Ray as an artists and as a human being, the analysis of the reviews of Ray's work that appeared in the West between 1965 and 1975, and for the successful attempt to approach Ray's cinema in the context of the prospective and projective disciplines in filmmaking.

What sets these essays apart from some others studies of Ray is that they are not written by or from the point of view of an "outsider". Canadian-born Roberge is an astute, passionate but always objective observer of Indian cinema, culture, tradition and literature. His measured criticism of Ray's cinema has nothing in common with the arrogant, patronising, condescending and often mediocre opinions expressed at times by Western film critics who have a poor knowledge of Indian and Bengali culture and cinema as well as of Ray's work and his inestimable contribution to twentieth century Indian and world cinema. Roberge's essays are a labour of love of four decades to record the quest for perfection of the complete artist Satyajit Ray.

Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture

By Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra (eds.)
Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-8223-4032-4 (pbk). 41 Illustrations, vi + 344 pp. £17.99 (pbk), £59.00 (hbk).

A review by Jane Fader, Wayne State University, USA

Criticism of postfeminist culture is currently one of the liveliest areas in feminist studies. Questions posed by the vagueness and ubiquity of postfeminism has breathed new life into feminist criticism -- it has fuelled a new fire, refreshing the exigency in an area that appeared to be approaching monotony. Without a clear and agreed-upon definition, postfeminism offers feminist criticism an opportunity to engage issues of agency, commodity, and ambiguity (just to name a few) in new and exciting ways. Thus my initial enthusiasm to review the 2007 anthology *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*, co-edited by Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra. *Interrogating Postfeminism* is a collection of eleven original essays that explore contemporary media representations of age, race, class, work, counterculture, sexuality, violence, queerness, and governmentality. Together, these essays forward a notion of postfeminism that is rooted in the ambiguity of representation in an essentially consumerist and mediated Western culture. This notion is sedentary, however, and the anthology as a whole takes no significant steps to complicate and further postfeminist scholarship.

Focusing on traditional popular culture texts, the majority of essays included in *Interrogating Postfeminism* definitively explore postfeminism in terms of what, in the essay "Mass Magazine Cover Girls," Sarah Projansky refers to as "a 'disruption-containment' model of criticism" (66). Through this model, challenges to the status quo are identified and accounted for only through a process of hegemony. For example, in 'Postfeminism and Popular Culture' Angela McRobbie sees the silencing of a feminist political voice as necessary to contemporary representations of the female success that was made possible by that voice. Thus, "this withholding of critique is a condition of her freedom" (34). In 'Killing Bill,' Lisa Coulthard explains that violent action heroines are postfeminized in that their "superficial transgression and postpolitical, individual acts, and achievements become the markers for the ambivalent and problematic pleasures, regressions, and recidivisms of postfeminist popular culture" (173). Seeing lifestyle television as a "primary locus for the articulation of postfeminist ideology" (229), Martin Roberts views disruption and containment as a single, insidious force. In 'The Fashion Police' he argues that in the make-over paradigm, a prevalent trope in reality television programming:

> One can both be a mother and continue to dress stylishly, even sexily, or, to put it in less 'empowering' terms, being a mother, middle-aged, or menopausal does not mean that women can neglect their obligation to be stylish and simply let themselves go. (238)

Projansky recognizes that postfeminism is essentially contradictory and importantly notes that political standpoints in contradiction are only a matter of the particular critic's interpretation. Thus no ground is broken in disruption-containment criticism. What Projansky recommends is to focus on the nature of contradiction itself, as well as the very discourses that ask the critic to take a side. Unfortunately, *Interrogating Postfeminism* concludes with the notion of contradiction rather than taking it as a starting point and directly engaging the contradiction that is so discernibly essential to postfeminist culture, as Projansky suggests.

It is now well known in feminist circles that postfeminism is contradictory. Though in no special way, this anthology offers close readings of texts that illustrate how this contradiction is constructed. What now needs to be explored is how contradiction functions politically and why consumers are able to suppress dissonance in order to enjoy postfeminist cultural products. What does it mean that I am both free to be and required to be stylish, that the boundaries between liberation and oppression have collapsed? Yes -- as Roberts argues, there is a new regime of governmentality. But how does it work -- especially when the traditional understanding of the function of ideology is to mask contradiction? For a long time and in many different ways, contradiction has played a large and productive role in feminist criticism. The phenomenon of postfeminism forces the direct engagement that *Interrogating Postfeminism* circumvents.

Not only does *Interrogating Postfeminism* lack the engagement necessary to forward scholarship in feminist criticism of postfeminist culture, it also reinforces the typical binary division between second-wave feminism and postfeminism. Postfeminism is almost inherently located as the spoiled and ungrateful step-daughter of feminism, free to enjoy the liberation achieved by the feminist second-wave as well as the insidiously oppressive pleasures of consumer culture. The unchallenged opposition between these two discourses is logically flawed, as it assumes that postfeminism is, like the second wave, a wilful political movement. It is clear that postfeminism is not a deliberate political movement but a consumerist-driven force that is more aligned with conceptions of backlash than with second or even third wave political intentions.

More importantly to this review, however, is that the authors' perpetuation of this temporal division is unknowingly (and perhaps embarrassingly) reinforced through their choices of objects for analysis. It cannot go unmentioned that the postfeminist work of disidentifying with second-wave feminism is superseded in this anthology by continuing to rely almost solely on close textual analysis of Hollywood films and network television. This is not to say that studies of this sort are not still useful, but a 2008 anthology on popular culture should not go without a significant interrogation of new mediums.

Beyond the fact that almost every essay in *Interrogating Postfeminism* posits at least a brief description of the generational feminist/postfeminist debate, several authors explore this division in depth. For example, in 'Subjects of Rejuvenation' Sadie Wearing explores the ways in which postfeminist cultural products position traditional feminism as old and in need of a makeover. As contributions such as Wearing's illustrate, temporality is a strong theme in postfeminist culture. It is a shortcoming of this anthology, then, that the internet makes such a brief appearance. Perhaps not merely coincidently, the early nineties marked the introduction of both postfeminist discourse and the commercial internet. Further, postfeminism and the internet attract similar philosophical concerns, such as representation, performance, identity, agency, commercialization, commodification, ambiguity, sexuality, and of course those "generational metaphors," as Tasker and Negra phrase it in the anthology's introduction (18).

Beyond these similarities, the internet is a space that potentially transcends gender, making it a rich site for feminist analysis.

While Hannah E. Sanders examines written text on a research website to demonstrate how teenage girls who self-identify as witches receive the television series *Charmed* (Constance M. Burge, 1998-2006), Sarah Banet-Weiser notes a web-issued press release for Mattel's racially androgynous Flava doll, and Anna Feigenbaum very briefly addresses the role of the internet in Riot Grrrl feminism, no contributor interrogates postfeminism in regards to the specificities of the internet or any other 'new' media forms. Ironically, in Rebecca Feasey's ('Interrogating Post-Feminism.' *Scope* 10, February 2008) report on the conference associated with the publication of *Interrogating Postfeminism*, it is noted that the conference took upon itself the goal of launching a website that will be "devoted to the subject of gender, popular culture and post-feminism." However, 2004 rumours of a website that as of 2008 has yet to launch does not a relevant anthology make.

While most essays in *Interrogating Postfeminism* more or less address the same issues, deviating only in the "matter of interpretation and degree" (68), as Projansky puts it, to which specific postfeminist texts are found to be feminist or antifeminist, two essays stick out as not quite belonging with the others. Bordering on the philosophical, Suzanne Leonard's 'I Hate My Job, I Hate Everybody Here' underscores class assumptions of the hailed postfeminist career-girl by examining the adultery trope that commonly accompanies representations of "women for whom work is a necessity rather than a stab at feminist fulfillment" (123). This essay provided a refreshing break from the form and topicality that prevailed in the others. Steven Cohen's 'Queer Eye for the Straight Guise' was similarly amusing, though the essay itself affected a rather prefeminist disposition: the desire to rid a text of women altogether. Using television appearances of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (David Collins and David Metzler, 2003-2007) characters on *Tonight Show* (Sylvester L. Weaver Jr., 1954-present) and *Oprah* (Oprah Winfrey, 1986-present), Cohen analyzes the ultimate accessory for the postfeminist woman -- the gay male -- and sees a female presence as inhibiting the extent of homosexuality in representations of homosexual men as well as debilitating the possibility of heterosexual/homosexual male bonding and border-crossing.

I recommend *Interrogating Postfeminism* for those who have an intermediate grasp of critical and cultural theory, an amateur knowledge of postfeminism, and no interest in media beyond its traditional forms. The anthology is not an interrogation of postfeminism as its title suggests, but instead an illustration of manifestations of postfeminist ideologies in a limited range of media texts. As a whole and with very little exception, *Interrogating Postfeminism* is safe and repetitive, reinforces previously established thinking patterns concerning postfeminism in general and the feminist/postfeminist binary in particular, and fails to fully engage the complexities of contradiction in representation.

The Virtual Life of Film

By D.N. Rodowick
London: Harvard University Press, 2007. ISBN: 0-674-02698-5 (pbk). 15 illustrations, vii+193pp. £16.95 (pbk).

A review by Jason Kelly Roberts, Northwestern University, USA

As I sit down to write this review, Hollywood basks in the glow of encouraging first quarter box office returns and the exceptionally successful opening of *Iron Man* (Jon Favreau, 2008). For the time being, it appears the demise of the brick-and-mortar theatre has been prematurely declared. In this respect, the digital revolution exerts a paradoxical effect in contemporary film culture. On the one hand, the conversion of film into ones and zeroes channels the cinema through new modes of exhibition (like streaming video or the iPhone), further anchors exhibition in domestic spaces, and threatens to render theatrical exhibition obsolete. On the other hand, audiences around the globe continue to turn out *en masse* for a seemingly endless string of special effects laden spectacles, all intended to qualify (or should I say quantify?) as blockbusters. It is in this milieu that D.N. Rodowick's exciting and urgent new book, *The Virtual Life of Film*, operates, offering a philosophical reflection on cinema's past, an analysis of its present, and speculations about its future. However, Rodowick argues in no uncertain terms that a particular kind of engagement with the cinema is now a thing of the past. Defining cinema as the "projection of a photographically recorded filmstrip," Rodowick traces its "disappearance" as a phenomenological experience: "In the 1970s, it was still possible to believe in film as an autonomous aesthetic object because the physical print itself had to be chased down in commercial theaters, repertory houses, and film societies." But the rise of home video and its attendant archival plenitude signaled a sea change in the cinephile's relation to cinema, and time. "For film scholars," Rodowick concludes, "only a few short years marked the transition from scarcity to an embarrassment of riches, though at a price: *film had become video*" (26). Thus, Rodowick's book returns to many of the foundational questions in film theory, exploring in depth the ontological status of the cinema in its past incarnation as the projection of celluloid and in its current manifestation: *digital cinema*. *The Virtual Life of Film* also inaugurates a similar line of inquiry into the epistemological assumptions of cinema studies as an institutional field, a project Rodowick will continue in a forthcoming companion piece entitled *An Elegy for Theory* (Harvard University Press, Forthcoming). As such, Rodowick's work may signal a return to prominence for the scholarly practice of film theory after a considerable decline in the wake of the turn to history; and if future efforts are as lively, engaging, and accessible as *The Virtual Life of Film*, then theory's re-emergence will undoubtedly be a welcome one.

The Virtual Life of Film is divided into three sections. In the first, Rodowick insists on the indexicality of photography and examines the potential crisis in cinema studies in light of the apparent disappearance of film as a medium. The second section further explores film's status as a medium by drawing heavily on Stanley Cavell's *The World Viewed* (Harvard University Press, 1971) and a variety of essays by Noël Carroll. In the final section, Rodowick engages principally with Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: *MIT Press*, 2001)

in an effort to delineate the distinctions, both ontological and phenomenological, between analogue and digital cinema. One of the most intriguing and original contributions *The Virtual Life of Film* has to offer is its discussion of the ways in which cinema studies as a discipline historically sought justification for its place in the academy by identifying the cinema as a discretely defined and materially-based medium. If, as Rodowick suggests and many others have predicted, the "next ten years may witness the almost complete disappearance of celluloid film stock as a recording, distribution, and exhibition medium," then cinema studies must employ a more subtle and supple definition of a medium in order to survive the digital age (8). Whereas previous generations of film scholars have sought an "ontological ground" for the discipline in a "substantially self-similar" medium, Rodowick boldly contends "there is no medium-based ontology that grounds film as an aesthetic medium and serves as an anchor for its claims to exist as a humanistic discipline" (23). Furthermore, Rodowick declares the "impermanence and mutability of cinema studies as a field… as one of its great strengths" (24). Rather than thinking of a medium as a " 'material' in any literal or simple sense" (33), Rodowick recommends a broader definition of the term, one capable of acknowledging ontological, phenomenological, material, and discursive dimensions:

> We need to go beyond a formal definition and try to understand how a medium is not simply a passive material or substance; it is equally form, concept, or idea. Or, more provocatively, a medium is a terrain where works of art establish their modes of existence, and pose questions of existence to us. (42)

Within this framework, Rodowick is particularly interested in a given medium's "automatisms." Following Cavell, Rodowick defines automatisms as a combination of the "self-acting processes of mechanical reproduction," and crucially, the "forms, conventions, or genres that arise creatively out of the existing materials and material conditions of given art practices." This analysis allows Rodowick to suggest a dynamic vision of automatisms, artistic practice, and media, wherein:

> artistic activity consists not in discovering the essence of a medium [*pace* Arnheim, for example], but rather in exploring and perhaps renewing or even reinventing its powers of expression. Therefore, the existence of an art is neither defined nor guaranteed by the nature of its physical materials or structural properties, but rather by the forms of expressiveness it enables, or which can be discovered in it. (43-5)

In addition to leaning on Cavell to establish the automatisms of photography and film, Rodowick joins a long and distinguished line of aesthetic realists, including André Bazin, Siegfried Kracauer, and Roland Barthes. Rodowick reiterates, then, that the "material basis" of photography is located in an indexical, or analogical, relationship to space and time, wherein the photochemical processes of photography produce a privileged relationship between the profilmic event and its photographic record (48). While Rodowick agrees with the aforementioned theorists that the ontological status of photography produces a phenomenological experience deeply invested in a sense of the past, he refreshingly avoids the aesthetic prescriptions of a Bazin or Kracauer. Though he celebrates the exploration of duration in Jean Eustache's little-seen *Numéro zéro* (1971), one never senses Rodowick in search of a film that conforms to a rigid set of aesthetic standards.

In the final section of *The Virtual Life of Film*, Rodowick concludes that the automatisms of analogue and digital cinema are substantially and significantly different. Contrary to photography's analogical processes, digital cinema bifurcates its "inputs" and "outputs." Conventional photography enjoys something like a one-to-one relationship between its mechanical recording of the profilmic event and its presentation as a photograph, but digital cinema converts registers of light into "algorithmic logics" which may be presented as a "photographic" image in the common sense, or as a series of numbers (138). The difference in ontology produces a similarly profound difference in phenomenology, as well. Whereas the analogical nature of photography inspires a reflection on duration and the "world past," Rodowick agrees with Babette Mangolte that digital cinema struggles to "communicate duration" (163). Yet Rodowick openly admits the difficulty he faces in precisely locating or defining the new experience(s) he has with digital cinema:

> As film disappears into an aesthetic universe constructed from digital intermediates and images combining computer synthesis and capture, and while I continue to feel engaged by many contemporary movies, I still have a deep sense, which is very hard to describe or qualify, of time lost. (164)

Digital cinema, then, becomes a phenomenological experience of the *present*. Even though the "cinema" in its historical dimensions persists as a defining metaphor for the programmers and designers of digital technologies, as both Rodowick and Manovich contend, or in the aesthetic practice of avant-garde artists whose work is exhibited in museum spaces, Rodowick laments:

> that during the last twenty years we have all lost in some degree the capacity to involve ourselves deeply and sensually in the 35mm image, well projected in a movie theater. Film is no longer a modern medium; it is completely historical. (91-3)

My only serious objections to Rodowick's analysis stem from his foreclosure, here, of a certain type of cinephilic engagement with the cinema. In Rodowick's account, a generational divide separates the more authentic encounter with the cinema that he and his peers enjoyed, while a cinephile such as myself -- born in the age of home video and fully synthetic action heroes -- can only experience the cinema in its contextual diminution. I wish to respectfully disagree with Rodowick, then, and stake a claim for the current generation of cinephiles and their capacity to experience the same sensation of *frisson* at the cinema, free of nostalgia but fully in the presence of the "world past" as a play of shadow, light, space, and time. Despite my hesitation to relinquish such a claim to cinephilia, Rodowick's book is too important, too timely, and ultimately too optimistic about the unknown future of digital cinema to be ignored. In fact, I'm certain we'll still be debating its merits and conclusions when the cinema undergoes its next ontological revolution.

The Immortal Marilyn: The Depiction of an Icon

By John De Vito and Frank Tropea
Cambridge, M.D. and Plymouth, U.K.: Scarecrow Press, 2007. ISBN: 0-8108-5886-5 (pbk), 18 illustrations, xviii + 205pp. £19.99 (pbk).

A review by Jesse Schlotterbeck, University of Iowa, USA

In this, what the authors identify as one of "well over five hundred books [that] have been devoted exclusively to [Marilyn Monroe]" (x), John De Vito and Frank Tropea provide an extensive annotated survey of the various incarnations of Monroe-inspired characters across the performing arts. The authors' decision to focus on Monroe's influence on theather, opera, dance, film, and television provides a coherent object of study: physical performances that reference this star. The number of works that De Vito and Tropea cover is exhaustive, indeed, with more than a hundred case examples, ranging from feature-length biopics and documentaries explicitly about Monroe to works which reference the starlet in more passing or ambiguous ways.

The book's four chapters are organized by reference type. The first focuses on works featuring characters identified as Monroe, the second on "thinly concealed" characters, the third on documentary treatments, and the fourth on performances which are partially invested in the Monroe persona, given resembling features of a character's behavior, appearance, or costuming. De Vito and Tropea offer both individual summaries of each cited work, paired with more general assessments of representational shifts that characterize the evolving versions of Monroe.

Though reference types are the topical focus of each chapter, chronological analysis, which provides the structure within each chapter ultimately, provides the text's dominant organizational logic. In every case, the authors find salient connections between Monroe representations and broader socio-cultural changes. Thus, they find in the fifties Monroes a tension between an idealized vision versus more complex social realities, while sixties Monroes are darker, influenced by the Sharon Tate murder. Post-Watergate representations of Monroe are cynical and paranoiac, while eighties versions treat previously taboo subjects like drug addiction and sexual exploitation. Representations of Monroe from the last fifteen years are more postmodern, emphasizing "surface over depth."

By connecting broad socio-cultural shifts to variations on Monroe inspired character, the authors deliver on their promise "to explore the ultimate effect of the powerful and lasting impact Marilyn Monroe has had on the world" (ix). It is worth asking, though, at what point might Monroe become an empty signifier that can be filled in with the concerns of the day? Perhaps representations of Monroe continue not because they represent a vital point of contact between past and present, but because this star image represents an easy option -- a character type to fall back on when a more original one can not be imagined. This argument recalls the debate in film studies between those who read trends in contemporary filmmaking

towards reference and allusion as rich and connected with film history versus those who see them as demonstrating, simply, the inability to say anything new.

Readers who are more familiar with star studies and/or film theory may be surprised to see additional points of reference left out. While De Vito and Tropea discuss the way that the vitality of Monroe's star image can be attributed to her uncanny ability to reconcile oppositional traits, like "sexuality" versus "innocence" and "georgeousness" with "vulnerability," they make no mention of Richard Dyer's essay, 'Marilyn Monroe and sexuality,' which makes a case for her particularity in exactly those terms (*Heavenly Bodies*, British Film Institute, 1986).

The lofty, political rhetoric with which the authors sometimes discuss their subject seems, at times, to have been influenced (again without citation) by the cannonical German film theorist Siegfried Kracauer. Like Kracauer, De Vito and Tropea make a case for the political vitality of a popular subject that, at first glance, would seem to be amongst the most superficial and insignificant of cultural subjects. As Kracauer argues in 'The Mass Ornament,' "The analysis of the simple surface manifestations of an epoch can contribute more to determining its place in the historical process than the pronouncements of the epoch about itself" (Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Mass Ornament,' trans. Barbara Correll and Jack Zipes, *New German Critique* 5, 1975: 67) The following passage, in particular, makes a case for the political importance of Monroe representations in terms that seem remarkably similar to Kracauer's:

> [T]emporarily disengaged from having to reflect any particular cultural space of Zeitgeist, the depicted Marilyn Monroe strays away from the power of immediate presence and is not secured by the presence of any one power. It is within this very disengagement that her depiction can ultimately explode the narrow limitations of Bushian antireason without doing any real serious damage to her stature as the preeminent enduring cultural icon of her time for all times. (xvii)

Yet, if De Vito and Tropea's contention that representations of Monroe, by virtue of their popularity and irreducible meaning, resembles Kracauer's analysis of the Tiller girls in the "Mass Ornament," they would have done well to heed Kracauer's call in the same essay that popular forms -- not just popular content!-- have a higher "degree of reality" than more highbrow arts: "No matter how one gauges the value of the mass ornament, the degree of reality is still higher than that of artistic productions which cultivate outdated noble sentiments in obsolete forms..." (Kracauer, 70).

The authors' avoidance of new media such as the internet and videogames is difficult to justify given their often repeated claims for the importance of Monroe to contemporary culture. Dance and opera remain, of course, vital artistic forms that deserve to be studied, but because the authors pitch the significance of their project in terms of social and cultural importance *not* aesthetic value, why are these forms in the mix and not new media? A ten-minute internet search quickly turned up a number of Monroe incarnations in ascendent new media formats: a popular Japanese Marilyn Monroe pachinko game has been converted to Play Station 2 format for mass release; a multi-media CDROM biography featuring photographs, newsreels, and scanned documents is for sale on Ebay; the PC application Hoyle Classic Card Games includes a robot which can transform itself to Monroe's likeness; the animation company Mirilab chose Monroe as the figure with which to demonstrate the

ability to create virtual reproductions of star figures; the popular game Sims features a Monroe character in its virtual world; a graphic novel, *The Red Diaries* (Gary Reed, Laurence Campbell, Chris Jones and Larry Shuput, Image Comics, 2006), offers a conspiracy theory interpretation of Monroe's death; finally, an Adobe Photoshop contest poses Monroe in various guises: as an aged street beggar, reading "Photoshop for Dummies" in bed, and appearing in numerous 'new movie' posters, like *The DaMonroe Code*. This is not to mention all the other commercial ephemera selling her star image: commemorative plates and coins, paper dolls, clothing, shower curtains, cigar boxes, and on and on.

If De Vito and Tropea want to make the case that Monroe's "standing as an enduring cultural icon has not simply continued; it has over time increased and intensified to uber-mythical proportions," their focus on dance, opera, and stage drama as three of the five forms they study remains curious and unjustified (x). This text will, indubitably, be useful to those interested in the intersections between the traditional performing arts and celebrity icons made famous in more popular forms, but this emphasis will also limit the appeal of this text to scholars working outside of those fields. While there is a certain logic to paring down the range of materials that can be accounted for in one text, *The Immortal Marilyn* would accomplish its stated project -- to make a case for the continuing importance of Monroe representations -- much more effectively if it accounted for a broader range of forms, or at least, more contemporary and popular ones.

Despite these criticisms, the good news about *The Immortal Marilyn* is that the bulk of its problems lie in overblown claims in introductory and concluding passages. While these sections make broad, unsubtantiated claims for the pressing relevance of Monroe material, the core of the text offers an extensive catalog, with annotations, of Monroe references across a variety of performative forms. It is in this capacity, not in terms of its broader claims, that this book will prove most useful. De Vito and Tropea are most effective as archivists, not interpreters, of Monroe material and the exhaustive list that they have compiled here is worth consulting for anyone interested not just in Monroe, but the legacy of screen icons in contemporary arts and media.

The American Western

By Stephen McVeigh
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. ISBN: 9780748621415. 240 pp. £16.99 (pbk).
'Injuns!' Native Americans in the Movies by Edward Buscombe

'Injuns!' Native Americans in the Movies

By Edward Buscombe

Bodmin: Reaktion Books, 2007. ISBN: 1861892799. 272pp. £10 (pbk).

A review by Jo Eadie, The Open University, UK

Stephen McVeigh opens his book on the Western with a ludicrous wish by George Bush for a wanted poster for Osama Bin Laden, bearing the traditional frontier slogan 'dead or alive.' The Western is alive and well as an element of American political rhetoric. Indeed, if we flash forward six years to the recent remake of *3.10 to Yuma* (James Mangold, 2007), a posse pursues fugitive criminal Ben Wade only to find him already in the hands of the authorities. The authorities, however, have chained him up and are in the process of treating him to a course of brutal electric shocks from a hand-cranked generator. Shadows of Abu Ghraib loom large over the scene -- but the film is quick to reassure us of the frontier code's superiority to this state-sanctioned abuse when the posse abducts Wade from his torturers in order to take him to *legitimate* justice. If the Western is capable of indexing contemporary events with particular acuity, it is also never hesitant to wrap them up in myth and idealism.

McVeigh fits Bush into a long line of presidents who have in various ways engaged with the language of the frontier, from Theodore Roosevelt's designation of the Grand Canyon as a national monument, through to Reagan's reliance on the goodwill accruing to his cowboy career. On the way there are provocative readings of Gary Cooper as Eisenhower in *High Noon* (Fred Zinneman, 1952), Clint Eastwood as Reagan in *Pale Rider* (Clint Eastwood, 1985) and even James Stewart as Nixon in *The Man who Shot Liberty Valance* (John Ford, 1962) -- some of which are more convincing than others.

Reading the Western as political allegory makes for an interesting analysis of certain texts, but if it is taken as the defining feature of the Western as a genre, it leads to a skewed picture of a very diverse terrain. McVeigh is happiest when dealing with Westerns where a lone hero faces down a threat to a town -- with or without the support of a background community. Thus *The Gunfighter* (Henry King, 1950), *High Noon*, *Shane* (George Stevens, 1953), *A Fistful of Dollars* (Sergio Leone, 1964), *High Plains Drifter* (Clint Eastwood, 1973) and *Pale Rider* all take centre stage -- but directors for whom this is rarely the central narrative are relegated to perfunctory asides. This is of course bad news for Anthony Mann, John Ford, and Sam Peckinpah, and fatally undermines any chances the book has of being a comprehensive survey of the genre. McVeigh's real interest is less the Western per se than the

uses made of the Western by the American political machine. And one suspects that this is perhaps the book that he would rather have written, under a title such as "Allegories of the Whitehouse: The American Presidency and the American Western". Yet the book comes packaged as a thorough introduction to the field -- from its ambitiously comprehensive title to its back-cover assertions. Is the packaging of this as a textbook a move by the publishers to reach a wider audience than that for the monograph that nestles inside it? If so, slapping "shows the interconnections between the Western (in all its forms)" on the back cover only serves to draw attention to how far away from a satisfactory student textbook the end product is.

As a survey of the Western the book's scope is limited: its focus is essentially cinematic, in spite of interesting chapters that peek beyond that territory. There are brief looks at Willa Cather, Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (Macmillan, 1902) and Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* (Macmillan, 1985), which promise a more expansive consideration of what the Western encompasses, but although a lively chapter on Buffalo Bill Cody shows the role of popular culture in disseminating the frontier myth, the book's focus is firmly on a body of 'exceptional' films and books which in some sense 'transcend' the limitations of the genre. Where is the discussion of how the Western has served as the template for countless adverts and cartoons, songs and comics (DC's *Jonah Hex* (1972) or Marvel's *The Rawhide Kid* (1955))? Even dime novels slip under the radar. This elitism perhaps also explains the resounding silence about TV Westerns: HBO's *Deadwood* (David Milch, 2004-2006) and Joss Wheedon's *Firefly* (2002-2003) are name-checked in the last pages, but there's sadly no glimpse of *Maverick* (Roy Huggins, 1957-1962) or *Wagon Train* (Tay Garnett and Howard E. Johnson, 1957-1965) – let alone *The Lone Ranger* (George W. Trendle, 1949-1957), *Champion the Wonderhorse* (Thomas Carr and William McCarthy, 1955-1956), *Bonanza* (David Dortort and Fred Hamilton, 1959-1973) or *Kung Fu* (Jerry Thorpe, 1972).

But even as a history of the cinematic Western the gaps are too striking to overlook. Those moments which interest McVeigh are set out with admirable clarity -- such as the interest of silent film-makers in recreating the frontier experience in educational terms or the intervention of the Spaghetti Western into the moribund landscape of 1960s Westerns -- but there are too many missing topics which one would expect to see given serious consideration. For instance, it's hard to make sense of the lack of coverage of the flowering of Westerns between *Stagecoach* (John Ford) in 1939 and *The Gunfighter* (Henry King) in 1950 -- which leaves an extraordinary silence regarding seminal pieces such as Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1946) and his cavalry trilogy. The preference for Westerns that have some strong allegorical element also explains the silence about those Westerns that are more focused on the psychological -- such as the entire corpus of Anthony Mann's Western films, or Robert Mitchum in *Pursued* (Raoul Walsh, 1947) and *Blood on the Moon* (Robert Wise, 1948). And a similar silence lies over the extensive genre of comedy Westerns – no Buster Keaton or Bob Hope, no *Calamity Jane* (David Butler, 1953) or *Heller in Pink Tights* (George Cukor, 1960); omissions which, incidentally, serve to make the genre appear far more masculine than in fact it ever was. Equally his conception of the iconic Western narrative leaves no room for a look at the notion of the 'contemporary Western' (*Lonely Are the Brave* (David Miller, 1962), *The Misfits* (John Huston, 1961), *Hud* (Martin Ritt, 1963)), which forms a crucial antecedent to the likes of *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (Tommy Lee Jones, 2005).

Then there's the question of the cowboy's perennial adversary, the Indian -- McVeigh is happy to refer in the vaguest terms to the possibility that they generally represent the Cold War threat of the hostile Other, but shows no interest in the long revisionist arc that starts

with *Broken Arrow* (Delmar Daves, 1950), encompasses *Apache* (Robert Aldridge, 1954) and *Cheyenne Autumn* (John Ford, 1964), runs through *Little Big Man* (Arthur Penn, 1970) and *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* (Robert Altman, 1976), and extends to *Dances with Wolves* (Kevin Costner, 1990). And although revisionist cinema of the seventies is flagged up in connection to the New Western History, it amounts to no more than a list, with no extended discussion. Finally, although there are a couple of lines recording the postmodern interrogations of the form in the 1990s, the likes of *Dead Man* (Jim Jarmusch, 1995), *The Ballad of Little Jo* (Maggie Greenwald, 1993) and *Lone Star* (John Sayles, 1996) are surely more than merely a postscript -- and although it's fair enough comment that *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005) "invites a reappraisal of similar male pairings in other Westerns" (220), it's of little help to students not to have any suggestions made as to what form this might take.

But at the same time, taken as a monograph rather than a textbook, it would be hard to say that the result is much more satisfactory. In terms of the ways in which political situations are worked over by films, the analysis is too often sketchy and naive. Films are assumed to follow dominant social trends in a linear fashion: we are for instance told that *Pale Rider* is markedly a product of the Reagan era because its scenes of mining mirror the environmental problems generated by Reagan's policies. Yet at the same time we are told that Eastwood's character is an allegory of Reagan's wounded evangelical President. In McVeigh's reading both features can be name-checked as social phenomena that the film mirrors. But this is to leave open the bigger question of how the film fuses what are after all surely irreconcilable elements: why is Eastwood's Reagan-character *opposed to* the miners? There is a case to be made for the film as the wish-fulfilling *inversion* of the president -- Clint as a right-wing leader who is concerned about environmentalism -- but it's not a case that McVeigh makes. This is symptomatic generally of his reluctance to conceive of America as divided or contradictory: each new generation of Western hero is said to appeal to "the American people" whether "they" want post-Vietnam reassurances or post-Watergate cynicism, with no sense either of different Westerns appealing to different audiences, or indeed of films being amenable to more than one reading by their different viewers. There is a striking exception when McVeigh offers a sharp discussion of the debates over exactly how to read *High Noon* -- a critique of American isolationism, a vision of the HUAC, a validation of gung-ho policy in Korea? -- and one longs to see more of the films unpicked with equal rigour.

Finally, an odd methodology resides at the heart of the book, most obvious in McVeigh's fascination with the affinity between John F. Kennedy and Alan Ladd as *Shane* (George Stevens, 1953). Various features of Kennedy's presidency are said to 'resonate' with Shane: "the capacity for violence" (136), "his youth, charisma, his relative anonymity"(135); he is " a new leader who, like Shane, arrives fresh and takes up the challenge" (130). This tallying up of interesting coincidences barely amounts to more than an academic version of astrology. Surely we are entitled to expect such an analysis to be grounded in at least some actual depiction by someone of Kennedy as Shane (a political cartoon, say) -- some thread to link him with a film that preceded his presidential campaign by a good ten years, rather than a number of tendentious similarities which result in his being "very much in the mould of the Shane hero" (136). McVeigh seems happy to accumulate the incidental similarities as if this in itself creates a connection between Shane and Kennedy (or Gary Cooper and Eisenhower -- or James Stewart and Nixon), but I remain unconvinced. Overall, there are too many gaps and problems with the way McVeigh handles the shifting movements in the Western, which unfortunately overshadow his careful recounting of various key moments in that story.

Edward Buscombe's *'Injuns!' Native Americans in the Movies* is both clearer and more satisfying in its aims. Much of what is missing from McVeigh turns up in a history of the Western that is far more varied. Rather than the monolithic picture of Westerns as a series of lone vengeful gunfighters, Buscombe take us through the Hiawatha-style pastoral romances of silent cinema which concerned themselves with Indians living either prior to, or largely separate from, the world of white invaders; through the liberal Westerns of the 1950s, the ecologically-minded 'pro-Indian' Westerns, even through the attempts by the administrators of the Production Code to hold back the worst excesses of John Ford's depictions of Indians as violent torturers. There are even forays into the representation of Native Americans in European Westerns. The only odd oversight is the small -- but surely important -- series of more recent Westerns concerned with the politics of Native American reservations (such as *The Dark Wind* (Errol Morris, 1991) and *Thunderheart* (Michael Apted, 1991)).

Buscombe's book also moves smoothly amongst different media that looked at the frontier -- portrait photographs and landscape paintings, anthropological exhibitions and tourist postcards, Longfellow and dime novels -- even *The Lone Ranger* makes it into Buscombe's tightly written monograph. Although he cites approvingly -- as who could not -- the critique of the colonial impulse in much of this material, he also provides a useful stress on the ways that the formal and aesthetic concerns of the Western were established in ways which left few options in how to construct narratives around Indians: already rendered by turns as anachronistic anthropological curiosity, noble but defeated foe, and incomprehensible alien, there are only two viable responses left open once cinema takes up the topic. The Indian must either be rendered as the violent (but doomed) opponent of an inevitable historical extinction, or as the equally impotent peaceful advocates of (suicidal) assimilation. The Western thus inherits the failure of the nineteenth century to conceive of a surviving modern Indian ethnicity, which must wait until Indians come to make their own films (which, as Buscombe notes, are never Westerns).

Having said this -- and it is of course part of the game that a reviewer plays to find a set of films that don't fit comfortably with an author's expansive thesis -- one wonders about those films in which Indian tribes are a necessary feature of the Western, without being central to the narrative. The picaresque Western -- such as *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (Clint Eastwood, 1976) -- often features a non-violent encounter with an Indian tribe as a set-piece. Buscombe refers to films in which the Indians are largely decorative, or serve only to provide verisimilitude - but in this tradition the very refusal to treat the Indian as anything more than a presence in the landscape to be negotiated (sometimes amicably, sometimes more violently) suggests a set of films with an alternative narrative, in which Indians are conceived of not as an obstacle to settlement, but rather as an autonomous nation. The Mormons of John Ford's *Wagon Master* (1950) encounter Indians, trade, and make restitution when one of the Indian women is raped by one of their men and the tribe with which Kirk Douglas trades in Howard Hawks's *The Big Sky* (1952) operates in a parallel economy on which traders are dependant. It's interesting to wonder to what extent these historical images engage with a notion of contemporary Indian ethnicity as "separate but equal".

Although Buscombe's source material is rich and varied, he makes much of his determination to find a new way of looking at the representation of Indians, and it has to be said that in this he fails. It is useful to have a single book collecting material on the great writer of German Westerns, Karl May, whose novels would go on to generate a slew of pro-Indian adaptations, and the curious East German Westerns whose Indians critique the process of colonization; on the host of white actors who have made a career out of passing as Indian; and on the radically

different tradition of representation of Indian ethnicity which runs through the heritage industry clustered around the south-Western pueblos. But for the most part Buscombe's discussion does not reach out beyond the writers that he cites. Indeed, in many cases he proves altogether less adventurous than the sources he relies on, offering a skeptical caution to analysis that seems to him to be "too far-fetched" (217). Yet one is often left wanting an analysis with more reach beneath the surface. Why did whites such as 'Iron Eyes Cody' and 'Grey Owl' claim to be Indian? Apparently just because they quite liked the green credentials it gives them. Why did Hollywood Westerns remain so persistently anti-Indian ? Easy, we are told, it's because mass popular culture likes simple polarities of good and evil. Would it be too much to ask for more complexity than that ?

Reaktion Books's series of small format, large print books are a welcome change of design in a market crowded with unwieldy tomes. Readable, expansive, fun, short, concise and only costing £10, this is not a book pitched solely for an academic audience -- which is part of the pleasure of reading it -- but in consequence it may leave one with the feeling of having read only a pocket guide to an altogether larger territory.

Reconstructing American Historical Cinema: From Cimarron to Citizen Kane

By J. E. Smyth
Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006. ISBN: 0 81312406 9. 447pp. £34.50(hbk).

A review by Jonathan Stubbs, University of East Anglia, UK

According to Gore Vidal,

> On our screens, in the thirties, it seemed as if the only country on earth was England and there were no great personages who were not English, or impersonated by English actors. I recall no popular films about Washington or Jefferson or Lincoln the president… our history was thought unsuitable for screening. *Screening History* (Harvard University Press, 1992: 39).

Among many other things, J.E. Smyth's book proves just how faulty Vidal's memory is. Whereas the majority of recent scholarship on American historical cinema, led by the work of Robert Rosenstone and Robert Burgoyne, has focussed solidly on the post-classical era, *Reconstructing American Historical Cinema* seeks to move the classical Hollywood period the centre of these ongoing debates. To this end, Smyth focuses the numerous prestige dramas, biopics, Westerns and gangster films from the period that engaged with historical subject matter, among them *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932), *Gone With the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939) and *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941). Although these films have not traditionally been regarded as "historical", they all are all examples of what Smyth describes as "a filmic writing of history". That is, they are able to "argue complex historical perspectives and question the formulas of traditional American history and biography" (340). "Between 1931 and 1941", she concludes, "American cinema pushed the borders of traditional historical discourse even as it defined the structures of film narration" (340).

These are bold claims, but Smyth has amassed eye-watering quantities of research to back them up. Adopting a contextual approach to historical cinema that has been sorely lacking in the work of many earlier contributors to these debates, Smyth approaches these films through the written outputs of the various producers screenwriters and historical consultants who fashioned their approach to the American past. Through her discussion of the various screenplay drafts of *Stagecoach* (1939), for example, we learn how Dudley Nichols sought, without a great deal of success, to instil a historical perspective on the plight of Native Americans in the face of white expansionism. On the other hand, analysis of production files from Cecil B. DeMille's bizarre historical compilation movie *Land of Liberty* (John Ford, 1939) reveals how vulnerable to external pressures Hollywood's conception of the past could be. Throughout the several case studies that comprise the bulk of the book, Smyth's close attention to conflicting perspectives among creative personnel greatly enhances her reading of the films at hand.

The book is also very successful in its efforts to rescue 1930s Westerns and gangster films from the entrenched rhetoric of genre criticism. As Smyth argues, strong historical elements in both of these filmmaking traditions have often been masked by a critical emphasis on their mythic dimensions and, in the case of the gangster film, an insistence on their modernity. A wealth of detail is uncovered to re-establish the factual basis of films such as *Public Enemy* (William Wellman, 1931) and *Cimarron* (Wesley Ruggles, 1931) and it is to be hoped that future genre historians take note.

However, Smyth's rigorously contextual approach to historical cinema also poses some problems. In the introduction she states that, for her purposes, "box office-audience reception is of negligible importance compared to the production history and critical reception of these films" (21). She's certainly correct to argue that box office performance was not always the determining factor in Hollywood's operations; then as now, the pursuit of "prestige" and its mysterious benefits left a hole in the industry's bottom line. But it's simply not possible to rule out the drive for profit as a historical factor. Indeed, as Rick Altman and others have noted, financial success has often been the key element in the production of generic characteristics. Smyth's willingness to disregard the reception of these films among audiences is also troubling. If, as she argues, history films were a form of historical writing, surely their influence would have been felt by the public that consumed them.

In addition, I'd suggest that Smyth's arguments put rather too much emphasis on text and too little on the image. Her conception of "a filmic writing of history" is surprisingly literal, and to this end she devotes much of her analysis to the work of authors (particularly Margaret Mitchell and Edna Ferber) and screenwriters, and to the use of written inserts in films. These prove to be highly productive areas for study, but the ways in which history can also be "written" through images and sound surely deserves fuller discussion. Finally, to return to Vidal's reminiscences, the 1930s really was a period when representations European history trumped the American past in Hollywood. Although few in number, prestige productions such as *Mutiny on the Bounty* (Frank Lloyd, 1935) and *The Story of Louis Pasteur* (William Dieterle, 1935) made a massive impact. Neither warrant a mention, and although their exclusion is in some ways understandable, Hollywood's approach to the European past formed a vital context for its narration of American history.

These criticisms aside, *Reconstructing American Historical Cinema* is a hugely impressive piece of scholarship and a vital addition to the growing debate on historical cinema. It also forms a valuable companion to David Eldridge's recent *Hollywood's History Films* (I B Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006), which examined the historical film of the 1950s with similar perspicacity. Too many contributions to this area have seemed impressionistic and lightly researched, but Smyth demonstrates the virtues of a thorough historical approach to historical cinema.

Framed Time: Toward a Postfilmic Cinema

By Garrett Stewart
London: University of Chicago Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-226-77416-9. 140 illustrations, x + 320pp. £25.50 (pbk), £57.00 (hbk)

A review by John-Paul Kelly, University of Nottingham, UK

Since its very inception at the turn of the nineteenth century, cinema has generated a sustained philosophical debate concerning its representation of, and engagement with, temporality. For early European pioneers such as Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey, this new medium possessed great scientific potential in its ability to document the passage of time, offering an insight into precise moments that until then, were beyond the realm of human perception (we are probably all familiar with Muybridge's ground-breaking documentation of animal motion). Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, the birth of the moving image evoked a markedly different set of cultural and philosophical aspirations. As film historian Noël Burch once observed:

> Edison's wish to link to his phonograph [with] an apparatus capable of recording and reproducing pictures, fulfilling a dream of 'grand opera being given at the Metropolitan Opera House at New York … with artists and musicians long since dead' is not just the ambition of a captain of industry; it is also the pursuit of the fantasy of a class become the fantasy of a culture: to extend the 'conquest of nature' by triumphing over death through an ersatz of Life itself. (Noël Burch, *Life To Those Shadows*, California: University of California Press, 1990: 7)

With the introduction of the digital pixel almost exactly a century later, this debate surrounding the relationship between cinema and temporality has once again resurfaced. More importantly, like those geographically disparate innovators of the late nineteenth century, Stewart proposes that this transatlantic split has continued. But now, rather than explicitly articulated by its practitioners, these philosophical discontinuities have become implicit in the text. Stewart identifies these two diverging strains of contemporary temporal narratives as, "the fantasy scenarios of Hollywood plotting" and secondly, the "uncanny temporal twists of recent European Cinema" (2). It isn't until later in the introduction that he deals with these in a little more depth, when he notes:

> The surprise, perhaps, is that such visual options in high-tech screen imaging, maximized in generic sci-fi but also in Hollywood fantasy plots and their sometimes electronic rather than cinematographic execution, should find their mostly low-tech equivalent during these same years in eroticized magic realism, virtual borderlands, and parapsychic rapport of European screen narratives. (8)

His attempt to delineate two divergent cinematic tendencies -- that is, on the one hand the overtly explicit Hollywood *temporality* in all its sci-fi and high-tech splendour, and on the other, a subtler and more implicit European style -- on the whole, seems somewhat reductive. Unfortunately such a broad categorization overlooks the reciprocal cultural exchange at play between these transatlantic neighbours, and perhaps more importantly, those moments of reversal whereby Hollywood becomes the site of "uncanny temporal twists" while European filmmakers dabble in "fantasy scenarios". For instance, French avant-garde filmmaker Chris Marker's enormously influential sci-fi feature *La Jetée* (1965, and noticeably omitted from Stewart's account), which coincidentally later inspired a loose Hollywood remake -- Terry Gilliam's *Twelve Monkeys* (1995). Or, if we are to consider an even broader cultural lineage, then we might also include the considerable effect of European science fiction writers such as Jules Vern upon American film genres.

While European Cinema has certainly had a proclivity for 'uncanny temporal twists' in recent years (*Irréversible*, Gaspar Noé, 2002 is exemplary of this tendency) Hollywood has itself produced a range comparable of texts -- most notably, *Being John Malkovich* (Spike Jonze, 1999), *Memento* (Christopher Nolan, 2000), and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004); all of which oddly enough form the basis of Stewart's later case studies. These examples point towards a more complex set of relations, in which temporality manifests itself in a much more hybridised and unpredictable manner than Stewart might have us believe.

Contrary, then, to what is implied throughout the introduction, these divergent modes of temporal narrative forms should not necessarily be linked to any specific geographic context. Indeed, it might well be argued that it is precisely because of the digital pixel -- with its susceptibility to perfect reproduction, which in turn has helped to facilitate a previously unimaginable global flow of texts -- that the "narratographic" affinities between Hollywood and Europe are surely set to grow.

Despite this early emphasis on a transatlantic sci-fi/humanist divide, the broader objective of *Framed Time* according to Stewart is rather "to note where and how this historical shift in the cinematic medium's own material constitution comes to matter on the narrative screen" (3). In this regard, his argument certainly succeeds. In chapter one, 'Lexeme to Pixel: An Experiment in Narratography', Stewart lays his conceptual groundwork, drawing on a variety of modern and post-modern thinkers ranging from Freud to Jean-François Lyotard, and of course the formidable Gilles Deleuze. But perhaps more importantly, this chapter introduces his own terminological contribution. Rather than narrativity or narratology -- concepts we might associate more closely with the internal structures of a text -- Stewart proposes a *narratography* of cinema. Going to great lengths to explain this neologism, he writes that:

> where narratology concerns plot types and broad dynamic patterns, narratography is caught up in the local mechanics of interval and transition. Where cinematic narratology concerns the visual discourse of plot, filmic (or digital) narratography plots out the textualization of the image itself. (27)

Of course, this doesn't mean that he abandons narratology altogether, as he notes earlier, "narratography without narratology may well be 'mere' stylistics. Narratology without narratography is barely reading at all" (26).

Rather than being bound within the often prescriptive and structural confines of narratology then, Stewart's emphasis on *narratography* allows for a more flexible approach to the graphic tropes, material construction and narrative patterns of postfilmic cinema. From here on in, the reader is taken on a transatlantic tour of carefully selected texts -- in particular those produced since cinema's centenary, and those that have chosen to explicitly foreground their engagement with temporality. From the European uncanny of *Run Lola Run* (Tom Tykwer, 1998) and Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colours* (1993-1994) trilogy, Stewart moves on to 'Out of Body in Hollywood'; a chapter, which as its title suggests, explores the detachment of the psyche from the physical through films such as *The Matrix* (Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski 1998), *Vanilla Sky* (Cameron Crowe, 2001) and *One Hour Photo* (Mark Romanek, 2002). In the process, he provides an insightful and intricate analysis that reveals the various effects of the digital pixel -- in particular its influence upon the material construction of films (for instance framing and editing), their narrative structures, and of course their thematic preoccupation with temporality. Later chapters are framed in a similar way and tackle various other "temporal" sub-genres that Stewart has identified: 'Temporataion', 'VR from Cimnemonics to Digitime', and finally 'Media Archaeology, Hermeneutics, Narratography'.

From the beginning, Stewart maintains that this post-modern temporal fixation is by no means exclusive to contemporary narratives. Indeed, his first close reading of Merchant Ivory's period drama, *The Golden Bowl* (James Ivory, 2000) identifies an array of visual iconography that speak to this sensibility. And, like so many of other the films in his analysis, *The Golden Bowl* self-reflexively plays out the genealogy of its own medium for all to see, beginning with those artefacts that prefigured the moving image -- sculptures, wax work statues, paintings, and so forth -- and concluding cinema's historical trajectory with the public screening of film within a film.

Yet for all its philosophical sophistication, Stewart's argument hinges upon his problematic assertion that the digital pixel marks a radical break from the celluloid past. While this is true to a degree, and is aptly demonstrated at various times (the example he commences with is the dissolve/crosscut of the *celluloid* Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, versus their real time transmogrification within the *digital* frame), Stewart's claim that the postfilmic frame is no longer preceded or followed -- suggesting instead that it is a single and constantly mutating image -- sits somewhat uncomfortably. I am not denying the effect digital innovation has had upon screen narrative; indeed, the temporal punctuation of the dissolve/crosscut Jekyll and Hyde has been replaced by the lingering uninterrupted shot in which the ghastly transformation is revealed in its entirety. But in reality, the *refreshing frame* persists in very discernable ways. Filmmakers still shoot predominantly on celluloid, and even when the eventual switch to digital takes place, the basic principle of the frame will still endure. Like Edison's Kinetograph, *digital* cameras still function by capturing sequences of *individual* images. These graphic impressions -- whether binary or celluloid -- are then laboured upon by film editors who treat each frame separately. In principle, I concur with Stewart's broader argument, yet it remains somewhat undermined by this technical discrepancy. There may be a point in the near future where the individual frame becomes obsolete, but for now it is probably enough to consider the other salient characteristics of the digital pixel -- in particular its reproducibility.

Unfortunately for the reader, Stewart's argument is at times unnecessarily convoluted, and when coupled with an incessant use of metaphor, tends to obscure an otherwise engaging and original debate. However, this may just be due to a necessity to engage with the complex and

abstract subject of temporality. Fortunately, though, this groundwork lays the foundation for his later more coherent and astute textual analyses. Despite these minor criticisms, *Framed Time* marks a significant contribution to film studies, at the very least for its recognition of the complex relations between technology, narrative, and temporality. With any luck, Stewart's *narratography* of postfilmic cinema will generate further academic interest in this burgeoning and exciting new field.

Shakespeare on Film: Such Things as Dreams are Made of

By Carolyn Jess-Cooke
London: Wallflower Press, 2007. ISBN 978-1-905674-14-5 (pbk). 11 illustrations, 125 pp. £12.99 (pbk).

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

Carolyn Jess-Cooke's *Shakespeare on Film: Such Things as Dreams are Made of* has as its cover illustration an image from Baz Luhrmann's 1996 film *Romeo + Juliet*. The choice of image reflects the possible target audience of the book -- a youth audience more familiar with cinematic adaptations of Shakespeare than of the original written works. The line "such things as dreams are made of" is a misquote from The Tempest -- signalling the book's interest in the reworking or reshaping of Shakespeare. Similarly, the bulk of the films analysed are contemporary Western adaptations (the analysis of Kurosawa's *Ran* (Akira Kurosawa, 1985) promised on the back sleeve never fully materialises). The range of subjects explored, however, is wide and, as such, the book seems suitable for either students familiar with Shakespeare, hoping to learn more about his position in contemporary cinema, or those familiar with film theory, looking for a broader knowledge of Shakespeare and adaptation. While much existing literature on Shakespeare in cinema tends towards either cinema or play, *Shakespeare on Film* creates a comfortable bridge between both. As part of the Wallflower Short Cuts series of books aimed at students of media and film, the book keeps it simple -- never presuming a prior knowledge of film or literary theory. It therefore proves an engaging read, helped by Jess-Cooke's inclusion of the historical background of Shakespeare and some of the plays, as well as the films analysed. The book is divided into four sections: performance, adaptation, film style and popularisations. In each section the author illustrates the theme of the chapter with close reading of a small number of films. She also refrains from selecting films that remain "faithful" to the source text, preferring instead those that provide ample ground for reading Shakespeare through the medium of film, for example *Prospero's Books* (Peter Greenaway, 1991) or *Scotland, PA* (Billy Morrissette, 2001).

The introduction provides a brief history of Shakespeare the man and introduces the various debates about the authenticity and originality of his plays. It moves on to raise some of the discussions that will appear throughout the book such as how Shakespeare is reproduced in film.

The first chapter looks at how performance informs the text in four versions of the play, Hamlet: Laurence Olivier's *Hamlet* from 1948, Kenneth Branagh's 1996 film, Franco Zeffirelli's *Hamlet* of 1990 and Grigori Kozintsev's Russian *Hamlet* of 1964. The author concentrates on the performance and acting style employed in each production, and examines how issues such as star persona affect readings of the film. She also demonstrates how each performance is ideological, commenting on issues such as gender, politics etc. This chapter is also concerned with how Hamlet has become a cultural signifier through the years, and has

been employed to cater for specific interests (for example the female Hamlet of Svend Gade's *Hamlet: A Drama of Vengeance* in 1920). An examination of Olivier's *Hamlet* reveals a psychoanalytic subtext, evident through the architecture and camera work. Kozinstevs's rebel *Hamlet* is situated in a restrictive political climate, Zeffirelli's *Hamlet* is informed by Mel Gibson's status as an action hero, and Branagh's *Hamlet* is influenced by previous cinematic incarnations of the figure. The examination of all underscores how performance shapes the readers understanding of the text.

The second chapter, titled 'Adaptation', provides a concise account of the issues relating to Shakespearean adaptations. Questions are raised about the textuality, authorship and originality of both Shakespeare's own works as well as that of the filmmakers. *Prospero's Books* is examined in terms of collaborative writing, adaptation as originality, and the creation of hybrid texts. There follows an interesting investigation of alternative, non-cinematic modes of adaptation and transposition, including screen to script, DVD extras and accompanying books. The author then turns to *The King is Alive* (Kristian Levring, 2000) and discusses the film in the context of its conditions of production. An experimental film which adhered to the cinematic 'rules' of Dogme '95 (a moment that is concerned with issues of authorship), the film recounts the performance of the play King Lear. Jess-Cooke reads the film in terms of multiple layers of authorship such as Shakespeare and the director as well as the Dogme movement itself. Although the two films are discussed in great detail, it may have been more useful to discuss a wider range of films when exploring as broad a topic as Shakespearean adaptations. Although they are examples of unconventional adaptations, as experimental or art-house films, they are not representative of mainstream cinema. Perhaps the inclusion of a classical or conventional adaptation may have provided a more rounded discussion on the subject.

The oddly placed third chapter, 'Film Style' stresses the importance of considering film form and style when examining the Shakespeare film. As the Short Cuts series of books generally seem to cater towards media and film students or researchers, it is surprising the an account of the analytical tools required for reading the film text only appears at this stage of the book. Nevertheless, the chapter provides a detailed explanation of the various elements of cinema including *mise en scène*, cinematography, editing and sound. These are described and illustrated using examples from various Shakespeare film adaptations including *Othello* (Orson Welles, 1953) and *Romeo + Juliet*.

The final chapter, 'Popularisation', examines Shakespeare's position within popular culture and, in particular, how his work has been appropriated for specific ends and to fit certain agendas over the centuries. The author argues that Shakespeare is not a fixture of either high art or popular culture, but moves between both in particular historical periods including the present. It is equally as important, she says, to understand the appropriation and marketing of Shakespeare as a mediator between high and popular culture as it is to understand his texts. *Scotland, PA*, a film that has the commercialisation of Shakespeare as a central theme, is discussed, as is *O* (Tim Blake Nelson, 2001), a film that parallels contemporary concerns about violence in high schools with the racial theme of Othello.

Shakespeare on Film: Such Things as Dreams are Made of provides an accessible introduction to Shakespeare on film. It is both well-structured and well-written, with each argument being illustrated by a number of filmic examples. While those unfamiliar with the subject will most likely benefit from reading the book, even those seeking a more comprehensive account of Shakespeare's film adaptations may find this a useful starting

point. The book contains a bibliography of Shakespeare sources available online as well as filmography (although this is limited to the films discussed) and an extensive bibliography of works cited, both print and electronic. Some criticism may be directed at the choice of films analysed, with some of the most popular adaptations being notably absent, however, this may be to avoid the repetition of prior work. Ultimately, this book should sit comfortably among the more popular Shakespeare on film works in existence.

Image and Territory: Essays on Atom Egoyan

By Monique Tschofen and Jennifer Burwell (eds.)
Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-8892-0487-4, vii + 417 pp. £14.99 (pbk).
Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero by Marita Sturken

Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero

By Marita Sturken

Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-8223-4122-2, xii + 344 pp. £17.99 (pbk).

A review by Fiona Handyside, University of Exeter, UK

Atom Egoyan, an assimilated Canadian from the western Armenian diaspora, has created a remarkably coherent body of artistic work that addresses questions of identity, memory, trauma and recovery. From his very first feature to his latest, and in his other artistic creations (opera, installations, video, theatre), Egoyan has talked about what it means to have a particular ethnic identity, how this is communicated through the generations, and the relationship between memory and technology. He is particularly interested in the representation of trauma and its difficult relationship to memory and narrative. Egoyan's films foreground the ways in which his characters use representations (paintings, photographs, home video footage) as a prosthesis for memory. Cinematic images are not recreations of history or memory, but their replacements. Egoyan's cinema screens pain in both senses of the term -- it reveals it through representational techniques, yet also conceals it, asking how and why pain and trauma is hidden from us. In their excellent and incisive introduction to their edited study of Egoyan, Monique Tschofen and Jennifer Burwell identify Egoyan's cinema as a cold cinema in which the very ability of the image to make us believe that what we are seeing is real is undercut by a desire to show the frame as well as the image: "as in Escher's famous drawing of the hand drawing the hand, in Egoyan's works there are only pictures and frames -- nothing is outside of the realm of representation" (5). Early critical response to Egoyan tended to place his self-reflexivity into the realm of a highly self-conscious post-modernism. The approaches taken by the essays in this volume concentrate more on a cultural studies and recent developments in political philosophy and film theory to investigate the ways in which Egoyan's films provide an intense reflection upon the role of cinema in negotiating and articulating personal and historical trauma. Here, Egoyan's self-

reflexivity is read less as post-modern and more as a way of examining the inter-relatedness of (and gaps between) the cinematic image and the memory image.

An impressively full bibliography documents the available material on Egoyan and his work, and this study provides an excellent starting point for serious engagement both with Egoyan as film maker and the ethical issues concerning trauma and representation his work evokes. It is a pity that no essay in the collection considered the role of Egoyan's wife, Arsinée Khanjian, in his filmic work. She has a role in all of his films and attention to this aspect of his filmic work and its use of Khanjian as wife/muse/star/mediator (and the way in which the vast majority of her roles in his films have her cast as a damaged and/or dysfunctional mother) complicate the inevitable auteurist approach a study concentrating on an individual film-maker assumes. Comments such as "Egoyan is widely hailed as a true auteur -- someone carrying on the legacy of the European art-house tradition" (4) with little questioning of these shibboleths read strangely in a volume that is for the most part attentive to subtlety and complexity. Nevertheless, the sheer range and high quality of all the essays in the volume means that this book will undoubtedly become a standard reference point for those working on Egoyan.

Especially useful is the application of Vivian Sobchack's and Laura Mark's phenomenological models of the cinema which suggest that Egoyan's complex images force the audience to have a differing relationship to the image that may open it up to responses other than the auditory and the visual. Just as Egoyan's cinema maps his own sense of dislocation and movement as the member of a diaspora, so Egoyan's viewers are forced into movement and travel through interaction with his images: "his work tells us to become explorers, actively mapping the terrain of the image on the boundaries between media, to claim its territory rather than be exiled from the realm of media altogether" (16). Egoyan is arguing for a kind of exchange between viewer and text: rather like a member of a theatre audience, a spectator of a film by Egoyan has to be exploratory and suspend disbelief. "In order to be *moved*, the spectator must *travel* into the image [...] Spatial metaphors point to a kinetic, embodied model of seeing" (8).

This notion of cinema as embodied works in Egoyan's cinema through a careful exploration of the relationship between memory and trauma. Trauma has a peculiar and particular relationship to memory, as the traumatic event is one that is not so much recalled as repeated, in which obsessive rituals reproduce (under the disguised form of the symptom) elements of a past conflict. Memory thus takes on a physical and bodily manifestation, linked to the idea that Egoyan's images are as kinetic and sensory as they are visual. The visual and the material work together to articulate the lost past which can be remembered only in conjunction with strategies of denial and manipulation. Egoyan's own repetition of images within and between filmic texts echoes this notion of traumatic repetition. In other words, his films relation to memory structures the form as well as the content of his work. Despite their differing narrative styles and production values, Egoyan's films all address in some ways issues of trauma and memory/forgetting. The experimental film *Diaspora* (Atom Egoyan, 2001), for example, rather than attempting to communicate experiences of exile and longing through plot, character, or other classical narrative devices, attempts to reproduce the emotional and cognitive aspects of this experience through repeated and manipulated images of a flock of sheep, a burning house, and a man's hand reaching out (the extended discussion of this film from Marie-Aude Baronian is beautifully accomplished and insightful). *The Sweet Hereafter* (Atom Egoyan, 1997), in contrast, is a literary adaptation and has a moving and gripping plot in which the sole survivor of a school bus crash, Nicole, wrecks an attempt by the town to sue

the Education board as she gains revenge over her abusive father. These films may appear to have little in common, yet both meditate upon the role of the filmmaker faced with legacies of denial and forgetting. Just as Nicole asserts herself as a survivor of incest against her father's protestations that theirs is a relationship founded on love and respect, so the Armenian diaspora has to assert its historic abuse in the face of state denial of genocide from Turkey. In the face of wilful refusal to speak, artistic representation constitutes a necessary act that legitimates claims concerning the past. Yet representation itself is vulnerable to manipulation and the technologies of representation are open to the altering and forgetting of history as much as to the recording of it.

The traumas that Egoyan's films document tend to consider the gap between adult knowledge and childhood innocence, between adult manipulation and childhood naivety. Egoyan's films consider the ways in which children are lost to us: through car crashes, through murder, through drug abuse, through sexual abuse. Incest acts as a motif for Egoyan's exploration of what it means to possess knowledge that is beyond one's ability to comprehend and possess, where acquisition of knowledge is itself damaging. Furthermore, incest acts as an ontological challenge to regimes of representation. Constructed as a family's 'dirty secret', representation acts to break through lies and obfuscation to construct knowledge while simultaneously having to place unspeakable trauma into palatable forms where in its telling it may lose the truth of its very horror. An essay by Patricia Gruben on three of Atom Egoyan's 1990s films (*Exotica* [1994], *The Sweet Hereafter* [1997] and *Felicia's Journey* [1999]) argues that these films all feature "adults tortured by [...] pain [...] reaching out to a child or child-substitute for emotional intimacy" (249). She considers the appeal of the 'plenitude of childhood' for his damaged adults as a kind of metaphor for the tempting illusions of dramatic cinema which he undercuts through gesturing towards the impossibility (and undesirability) of complete knowledge in his fragmented formalism. Melanie Boyd concentrates on his provocative representation of incest in *The Sweet Hereafter* (1997). Boyd submits Egoyan's work to a sustained feminist analysis which considers the complex way in which Egoyan articulates issues of victimisation and empowerment and although her approach is to my mind rather didactic (the question of 'good' and 'bad' representations is addressed) the chapter represents an important attempt to explain Egoyan's picturing of incest in a kind of romanticised and beautiful, even idyllic locale. Egoyan's ability to create images of great beauty but with devastating content (as also occurs in the images produced during Felicia's abortion in *Felicia's Journey* [1999]) presses on one of the assumptions of cinema studies, that the heritage film's investment in spectacularised landscape robs it of political impact. Rather, Egoyan treads a particular path when it comes to creating a different kind of heritage film (or even an anti-heritage film) which sees family as vectors of pain as much as warmth, houses as closed and potentially dangerous places, and history as a place of denial of the nation as much as its assertion. A reading of Egoyan's project as a critique of our notions of what heritage cinema might be is one waiting to be carried out. The incipient consideration of Egoyan's take on the heritage film is suggested in Tschofen and Burwell's title, *Image and Territory*, for what is the heritage film if not a meeting of image and territory (or even images of territory)?

What are then are the ethical responsibilities of the film-maker in the face of overwhelming trauma, whether personal (sexual abuse) or national (genocide)? Lisa Siraganian's excellent chapter traces the "psychology and politics of denial [of genocide]" (133) and vigorously defends Egoyan's decision not to make an 'Armenian *Schindler's List*' (Steven Spielberg, 1993) but rather to complicate the temporal and spatial response to the genocide in *Ararat* (Atom Egoyan, 2002) in order to allow a more complete notion of what horror is to develop.

Egoyan's film explores the very process of memorialisation -- how and why we remember events -- and this is as crucial as the acknowledgement that these events happened:

> The grammar of the screenplay uses every possible tense available, from the past, present and future, to the subjective and conditional. Because all of these horrors are part of the current Armenian diaspora experience, all grammars need to be used to tell the story of the ongoing horror of the Armenian genocide, reverberating and possibly creating new horrors. (149)

Particularly striking, remarks Siraganian, is Egoyan's refusal to create yet another symbol or fetish of the Armenian genocide. Rather, he is interested in examining the creation and circulation of already existing symbols (a button, some pomegranate seeds, a painting) and how objects come to mediate our grief. It is the interpretation and engagement with these symbols that forms the subject matter of film: his film is not only about the Armenian genocide, but also how this historical trauma is remembered and represented.

This question of the complex relationship between memory, trauma and the symbolic or fetish object is taken up in Marita Sturken's detailed and convincing study of contemporary American culture's attempts to respond to the Oklahoma City bombings and the events of September 11 2001. Sturken argues that the privileging of certain kitsch objects (teddy bears, snow globes, t-shirts) alongside re-enactments of traumatic events in the very architectural designs that are meant to replace destroyed buildings replaces memory as a site of mourning with memory as a site of saccharine sentiment. The prevalence of infantilising and kitsch objects such as teddy bears promotes a myth of American cultural innocence in which the most important thing is not to make things better, but to feel better about the way things are -- a culture of fear responded to by promises of comfort and security rather than a culture of meaningful citizenship. American national identity and the telling of American history thus becomes based on a disavowal of the role played in the world by the United States not simply as a world power, but as a nation with imperialist policies and aspirations to empire:

> The imperialist and unilateralist ventures of the U.S. government at this moment in history (ventures that are the reason the United States is a target for terrorist retribution) are shored up in part by the capacity of Americans to see themselves as innocent and passive victims, rather than aggressors in relation to world politics. (7)

Such a position of innocence creates what Sturken terms a touristic view of history. By this she doesn't simply mean history as a series of tourist sites (although the kitsch objects that have proliferated around these events are often sold at tourist sites associated with them, such as the Oklahoma Memorial Centre gift shop or in the streets of Lower Manhattan near Ground Zero). She takes Dean McCannell's definition of the tourist as someone who goes looking for 'lost' signs of the authentic, such as the viewing of a folk dance or the experience of visiting 'an olde worlde pub'. For McCannell, the tourist was the primary subject position available to modern subjects. The survival of pre-modern rituals and places (folkdances, pubs) was in fact a signal that modernity was omnipresent, as these rituals now symbolise not as themselves but work as signifiers of 'lost' authenticity for tourists who know nothing about the cultures they represent(ed). Sturken is not so interested in actual experiences of tourism as in taking McCannell's idea of the tourist as a person in search for authenticity who has only the most superficial of relations to the 'authentic' culture that is being performed for them (and which therefore is not authentic at all). In Sturken's view, the subjectivity of the tourist,

with its pose of innocence and lack of knowledge of the real meaning of culture is the relationship of America to world history. It:

> evokes the American citizen who participates uncritically in a culture in which notions of good and evil are used to define complex conflicts and tensions [...] The mode of the tourist can [...] be seen in the purchasing of souvenirs at sites of loss such as Ground Zero as a means of expressing sorrow at the lives lost there, without trying to understand the contexts of volatile world politics that produced the attacks of 9/11. (10)

Sturken's aim is however not simply to criticise this kitsch culture. Rather than dismissing these tourist practices as meaningless or trite, she wants to:

> understand how certain kinds of tourist practices, broadly defined, help people make sense of their grief [...] I do not think citizen consumers should not be comforted in the face of [...] tragedy, but rather that we must look carefully when that comfort comes as a kind of foreclosure on political engagement. (26)

Sturken pays careful attention to the way in which, in this tourism of history, survivors of trauma and grieving families become associated with authenticity. If tourism structurally depends on witnessing authenticity, pace McCannell, the grief-stricken wife or husband becomes a powerful source of authentic response to the tragedy for those wishing to tour it; this, argues Sturken, explains the pivotal role such people have been given in deciding on the appropriate punishment for Timothy McVeigh (in the case of Oklahoma City) or the kind of memorial that should be built at Ground Zero. In the case of the re-building of the World Trade Centre site, the desire to replace the towers and the need to find 'closure' and 'healing' has led to a process that ignores the need, in Judith Butler's words, to 'tarry with grief' -- to allow vulnerability, pain and hurt not only to be expressed but to remain raw and felt for as long as needs be. The kitsch snow globe which pictures the Towers still standing, but with emergency vehicles standing underneath them, both denies and confirms the events of 9/11. The snow globe gains its power precisely because in the re-settling of the shaken flakes it promises that once can all again be well -- the world can return to its originary state -- innocence can be regained. Sturken's book is a powerful and beautifully written critique of the use of innocence in American cultural politics. However overstated it may sound, a snow globe is not an innocent object.

Reading Sturken's critique alongside discussion of memory and trauma in Egoyan's films pushes us to think about responses to traumatic events, whether personal or national, and how we are encouraged to make sense of such moments. Both Egoyan and Sturken remain suspicious of forms that allow us simply to tour history, in whatever form that tourism might take (watching a cathartic historical drama such as *Schindler's List*, or buying a souvenir). Rather, they call for an active, embodied relation to history in which visual culture has a responsibility not to anaesthetise us, but to create us as active participants in historical change. The challenge for visual culture in the twenty-first century then emerges as one in which trauma is acknowledged and allowed to act as a catalyst for difference. Sturken identifies this in Art Spiegelman's *In The Shadow of No Towers* (London: Viking, 2004), where "He [Spiegelman] produces not an image of reassuring religious redemption but a complex demand to historically contextualise the discourses of 9/11 and an ironic commentary on how distorted the remembrance of 9/11 has become" (284). Irony, both in

terms of a second degree appropriation of kitsch, and in the dramatic irony of Egoyan's formal fragmentation, time-shifting narratives and complex circular motifs, emerges as the key way in which responses to trauma can be undone from kitsch simplification into something more challenging, more complex, and more truthful.

Superheroes! Capes and Crusaders in Comics and Film

By Roz Kaveney
London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-84511-569-2, x + 278 pp. £12.99 (pbk).

A review by Martin A. Zeller, University of York, UK

Early in *Superheroes!*, Roz Kaveney writes that, "One of the reasons why this book is necessary is because of too many lazy comments about underwear worn outside tights," (64) which tells the reader much of what is wrong with the book. Like too many academic writers who take popular culture as their subject matter, Kaveney starts on the defensive, and this severely limits what she can accomplish.

Before discussing its limitations, it should be said that *Superheroes!* possesses all of the strengths of Kaveney's other work. It is intelligent, readable and demonstrates an encyclopaedic knowledge of its subject matter. This point is especially important as Kaveney's central argument is that, "much of what is best in superhero comics comes from the sheer size of the body of lore... [and] that one of the things that makes for good work in this field is letting the wisdom of continuity work for you" (46). *Superheroes!* is at its best when using the overwhelming quantity of examples Kaveney can bring to bear in order to reinforce its points. Even so, an argument which depends on the author conveying the content created over sixty years of collective endeavour is always going to be a difficult one to make.

Furthermore, there is a problem of address familiar from Kaveney's other work (*Reading the Vampire Slayer* [Tauris Park Paperbacks, 2003]; *From Alien to the Matrix* [I.B. Tauris, 2005]): is this a book on popular culture for academics, or an academic book for a popular audience? *Superheroes!* lacks any citations, or significant engagement with the existing critical discourse surrounding superheroes. Though Kaveney makes up for this with tremendous personal insight, at times this feels self-congratulatory, particularly in a gratuitous transcription of an interview with Alan Moore. A more serious flaw is the defensiveness I mentioned above. Kaveney's constant allusions to canonical literature and classical music smack of protesting too much. Some of these connections are convincing, particularly the contention that the limitations of a form can lead to the production of high-quality work, whether in sonnets, symphonies or comic books (46-7). However the author's tendency to belabour this sort of point mars the book for those who need no convincing. She offers a partial explanation, writing that, "there is often an element of apologia in our work on popular culture, an implied bid to have it admitted to [the canon] or not to have it unthinkingly dismissed by high culture's gatekeepers as unworthy of attention" (201). Yet as readers we are entitled to ask why. Why should superhero comics, the main continuities of which arguably represent the largest coherent bodies of narrative literature produced by human civilization, have to sue to anyone for admittance? It is a pity that with her extensive understanding of superhero comics Kaveney must constantly define their value in terms relative to 'high culture'.

In the opening chapter, 'The Freedom of Power', Kaveney guides the reader through a primer on superhero comics with the aid of several autobiographical vignettes. These segue into a discussion of the common tropes of the superhero genre and of the continuities of DC and Marvel, the two vast publishing companies/fictional universes which produce the bulk of superhero comics. The task of summarising these two bodies of literature is enormous, and even experienced readers of these continuities are likely to be impressed with the scale of the universes Kaveney describes. This is important if we are to agree to her description of superhero comics as "thick texts […] texts whose contingent, collective and polysemous nature renders them especially satisfying" (203). The problem is that the continuities are so large and complex, that even Kaveney's best efforts only manage to suggest their scale, without capturing the emotional resonance created by a lifetime of reading superhero comics.

The second chapter, 'The Heroism of Jessica Jones', is largely successful in redressing this lack. A case study of the fan favourite, *Alias* (Brian Michael Bendis and Michael Gaydos, Marvel Comics, 2001-2004), it provides both a plot summary and auteurist analysis which is engaging enough that it made me seek out the comic. However it would have been useful to have some academically grounded analysis of the text; how, for instance, does it compare with other revisionist superhero narratives as discussed by Geoff Klock in *How to Read Superhero Comics and Why* (Continuum, 1999)? On this, and on most other potential links with existing academic work on superheroes, Kaveney is silent.

In the chapters that follow, 'Watching the Watchmen' and 'Dark Knights, Team-mates and Mutants', the author treats several of the sacred cows of superhero comics. Her analyses of Alan Moore's *Watchmen* (Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons, and John Higgins, DC Comics, 1986-1987) and Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* (Frank Miller, DC Comics, 1986) offer nothing radically different to Robert Reynolds' *Superheroes: A Modern Mythology* (University Press of Mississippi, 1994) and considerably less than Geoff Klock (*How to Read Superhero Comics and Why*), though she does have an added air of authority given her involvement in the comics industry and personal knowledge of Moore. Her discussions of *Avengers Forever* (Kurt Busiek, Roger Stern, Carlos Pacheco and Jesus Merino, Marvel Comics, 1998-1999) and Grant Morrison's *The New X-Men* (Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely, Marvel Comics, 2001-2004) are interesting examples of continuity put to good use. However, Kaveney is forced to spend so much time explaining their convoluted plots that her recurrent argument about their use of continuity and its relationship to their aesthetic quality must be largely inferred.

Kaveney is at her best in 'Some Kind of Epic Grandeur', the fifth chapter, which discusses 'event' comics. Comics which cross over a number of titles and promise (often falsely) to change their fictional universes forever, event comics are "one of the more obviously commercial ventures" in the superhero genre, often feeling as if "they were devised by an editor rather than a writer" (176-7). This leaves them on shaky aesthetic ground, and thus Kaveney's defensiveness is less intrusive here. Moreover, the analysis in this chapter focuses on comics which have come out within the last several years, and is therefore more original and more immediate than the chapters dealing with *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns*. The discussion of Marvel's *Civil War* (Mark Millar and Steve McNiven, 2006-2007) is particularly notable for addressing the superhero genre's potential as a tool for political comment.

Chapter Six, 'Gifted and Dangerous', treats the comic book creations of Joss Whedon and the effects of his 'superhero obsession' upon his more famous creations, particularly *Buffy the*

Vampire Slayer (Joss Whedon, 1997-2003). However readers hoping that this book will definitively address that text's superheroic dimensions will be disappointed. What we are offered is a minute explanation of the various superheroic texts which may have influenced *Buffy* without much discussion of what consequences this might have, apart from our being able to understand a few more references. However Kaveney is successful in her stated aim of suggesting that some of the elements which recur in Whedon's work are due to his more general interest in superheroes.

The final chapter of *Superheroes!*, 'Superherovision', is its weakest, consisting largely of reviews of various superhero films. Kaveney adopts a fairly ordinary position in popular discourse on adaptation, writing that:

> the important thing is not to include every single detail of characters, but rather to discover the emotional truth of what the characters, and the major stories surrounding them, mean and then work with that material in an intelligent way. (226)

Of course with continuities as multilayered as those at work in established superhero narratives, what constitutes the emotional truth of the characters or the major and minor stories, is largely a matter of opinion. As a result of taking such a conservative approach, Kaveney misses the opportunity to say something fundamentally important about superhero adaptations. Namely: every superhero text, be it comic book or film, is an adaptation based on a pre-existing meta-text which partakes of every issue, television program, radio play and film using those characters and is potentially informed by every other text within the superhero genre (and plenty outside it). This is the lesson of the metatextual experiments of comic book writers like Alan Moore and Grant Morrison; it is also an established part of critical discourse on adaptation, succinctly put in Sarah Cardwell's *Adaptation Revisited*, where she writes that we should view, "adaptation as the gradual development of a 'meta-text'... a valuable story or myth that is constantly growing and developing, being retold, reinterpreted and reassessed" (Manchester University Press, 2002: 25). Cardwell's definition of the process of adaptation is as good a description of the ontology of a superhero continuity as one could hope for and Kaveney's more pedestrian approach to the issue ensures that the final chapter of *Superheroes!* says nothing that couldn't be found in reviews of superhero films in the popular press.

Ultimately *Superheroes!* is a puzzling book. It makes a sound introduction to the subject of superhero comics without adding greatly to the academic discourse which already surrounds them. It offers a plausible aesthetic argument in favour of superheroes but looks desperately for support in allusions to high culture. Finally, it sits uncomfortably between the worlds of the popular and the academic, a missed opportunity to significantly enhance scholarship on or enjoyment of superheroes.

The Romance of Transgression in Canada: Queering Sexualities, Nations, Cinemas.

By Thomas Waugh
Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press 2006. ISBN: 0-7735-3146-7. 599 pp. £15.99 (pbk)

A review by Sarah Artt, Napier University, UK

The foreword to this book is by Bruce LaBruce, one of Canada's queer vanguard, an artist and critic who operates in multiple artistic fields. LaBruce's work is cited throughout the book as exemplary of queer Canadian cinema, bridging the gap between the underground avant-garde and pornography. His foreword is witty and flattering, and introduces the (perhaps surprising) breadth of Thomas Waugh's book, a study of cinema long considered niche or marginal to both the film industry and academia. *The Romance of Transgression* is exhaustive in its chronicling of some of the most exciting and sometimes obscure efforts of Canada's queer filmmakers. Finally, Waugh's personalised but highly engaging writing style suits his material, and provides some much-needed comic leverage in a book of this size.

One thing that is immediately remarkable about Waugh's book is his determination to tackle Canadian queer cinema in both official languages of English and French, and his desire to "view Canadian cinema as a matrix of three metropolitan sub-cinemas situated in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, without denying the lights of the regional arts hinterlands of Atlantic Canada and the Prairies" (12). This lack of a single linguistic or geographical bias makes Waugh's book doubly ambitious.

Waugh also introduces what may well be the ultimate acronym, BLLAGTITTISQQ:

> bisexual, lesbian, leather, asexual/celibate, gay, transsexual, intersex, transgendered, two-spirited, intergenerational, sex-worker, questioning, queer…Have I left you out? Each of these letters in the soup has its long and distinctive history both before and after Omnibus/Stonewall, both on-screen and off. (10)

Waugh is also concerned with queer cinema's tackling of the outer limits of sexuality, those practices and identities still considered taboo, ranging from "bug chasing [sex where one partner deliberately risks HIV infection]…[to] the numerous fetishes around which micro-identities have been constituted" (11).

Chapters three and four limit their analysis to four films apiece -- always two English and two French -- in an effort to achieve the much sought after parity of comparison. This works well, though the films in chapter three are so obscure that I wonder if they truly do, as Waugh asserts, really offer us early glimpses of sexual diversity beyond heterosexuality. It is possible that only Waugh can tell us. However, I am now powerfully interested in viewing the films he mentions: *Wow!*(Claude Jutra, 1969). *Don't let the angels fall* (George Kaczender, 1968),

Jusqu'au coeur (Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, 1968) and *Prologue* (Robin Spry, 1969). Chapter four tackles four films from the 1960s and 1970s, with queer concerns at their core. Despite international attention at the time of their release, *À tout prendre* (Claude Jutra, 1963), *Il était une fois dans l'est* (Andre Brassard, 1973), *Winter Kept Us Warm* (David Secter, 1965) and *Outrageous!* (Richard Benner, 1977) "are…seldom revived and have resisted canonisation" (87) and yet Waugh's descriptions and the inclusion of stills and posters for the films pique one's interest. Waugh's unbridled enthusiasm makes us want to see these films. He ends this chapter with an important indication of the historical trajectory of the two solitudes of Canadian queer cinema "in which Montreal's queer cinema would one day most characteristically explore the perils of private intimacy…and Toronto would explore the assertion of public rights" (96).

Chapter five focuses on the juxtaposition of rural and urban settings, as depicted in queer coming of age films. The significance of the rural setting as pastoral ideal has a substantial history of representation in Canadian cinema, particularly within lesbian films. It would be interesting to apply this in relation to a discussion of something like *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005) and its use of the rural landscape as both escape and site of surveillance and punishment. Chapter six details the fraught relationship of queer representation and Canada's National Film Board (NFB). Waugh himself is clearly a thorn in the side of the NFB, and while his concerns were and are legitimate with regard to queer representation in NFB products, his detailed accounts of run-ins with members of the NFB seem a trifle unwarranted: "when I threatened to initiate a lesbian and gay boycott of board products she [Isobel Marks, programming director for English production] looked at me as if I had just started speaking Klingon" (154). Chapter seven is devoted entirely to the place of the male bonding film (mostly films about hockey) in the representation of queer masculinity, beginning with Waugh's personal confessional about the pleasures of swimming and voyeurism. His chapter on the tropes of sex and money is devoted partly to a large section on the work of Bruce LaBruce, in an attempt to redress LaBruce's excision from academic discourse in Canada. The highly personal nature of LaBruce's films, which sometimes deploy scenes of hardcore sex, has tended to relegate him to the marginal realms of porn and the avant-garde. Waugh's discussion of the burgeoning Canadian gay porn industry is illuminating, highlighting bilingual concerns and the use of strategic national motifs (unsurprisingly, the fetishisation of hockey equipment), even deploying the term "porn auteur" (244) in relation to the work of one William Duffault. Also highlighted are the efforts of lesbian video collectives in producing their own pornography. In the final section of this chapter, Waugh turns to John Greyson's seminal feature *Urinal* (1988), a densely visual documentary on bathrooms and the sex that takes place in them. Though perhaps dated in its video art style, *Urinal* is a film that continues to surprise and educate -- it certainly left an impression on me when I viewed it as an undergraduate in the late 1990s. Waugh argues for the importance of the toilet "as an abject and liminal zone whose non-productive energy confronts the mainstream political and economic regulation of sexuality with a transgressive politics of sexuality as pleasure and excess, waste and contestation" (255), exploring the visual trope of toilet sex in a number of features, ranging from *Night Zoo* (Jean Claude Lauzon, 1987) to *Better Than Chocolate* (Anne Wheeler, 1999). Waugh's penultimate chapter deals with the formidable impact of the AIDS crisis on Canadian queer filmmaking and representation. In this chapter, Waugh looks at one of the most remarkable and underseen films to come out of this period, *Zero Patience* (John Greyson, 1993), a low-budget musical based around dispelling an hypothesis that circulated for much of 1980s, that of a 'patient zero' in the spread of HIV. The final chapter in Waugh's book is an in-depth study of issues around the body, sexuality and shame, and the ways in which queer filmmakers have

intervened to produce works that explore alternative notions of beauty, pleasure and understanding.

The latter section of the book functions as a selective encyclopaedia of some of the most exciting and important contributors to Canadian cinema of the last fifty years. To name but a few: listed here are the sublime Quebecois actor Lothaire Blutheau who starred in Denys Arcand's *Jesus of Montreal* (1989) and *Le Confessional* (Robert Lepage, 1995); director Deepa Mehta, whose recent film *Water* (Deepa Mehta, 2005) graced the 61st Edinburgh International Film Festival; and director Denys Arcand, whose film *The Barbarian Invasions* (2003) garnered praise at Cannes and the Oscars. Most gratifyingly for me, there is an entry here for Jay Scott, film reviewer for Canada's *Globe and Mail* newspaper until his untimely death in 1993 from AIDS, whose film reviews probably had the greatest impact on directing me towards a career in film studies.

This is an impressive and entertainingly written book of value to those examining the visual tropes and political concerns of queer cinema from a global perspective. There is also a wealth of information regarding the infrastructure that constitutes Canadian film funding and distribution from approximately the 1960s to the present.

Unless the Threat of Death Is Behind Them: Hard-Boiled Fiction and Film Noir

By John T. Irwin
Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. ISBN 0-8018-8435-7. xii+290pp. £30.00 (hbk).

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

The relationship between American crime fiction and film noir is, as with all matters of adaptation and translation, at once obvious and oblique. John T. Irwin approaches the matter through detailed treatments of Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep* (1939), James M. Cain's *Double Indemnity* (1936), W.R. Burnett's *High Sierra* (1940) and Cornell Woolrich's *Night Has a Thousand Eyes* (1945), devoting a chapter to each author before turning -- inexplicably although not uninsightfully -- to the development of the detective story from Edgar Allan Poe's three C. Auguste Dupin stories from the early 1840s to Hammett's hard-boiled revolution in the 1920s. This is followed by a pair of chapters dealing explicitly with film noir, dealing largely with the adaptations of these novels. In his organisation of the book one can detect something of the hierarchies between literature and fiction and, to a lesser extent, fiction and film, which Irwin unreflexively presents as consensual and common sense. Just as his opening pages cast Hammett's novel as one which transcends and transforms crime fiction, demonstrating "the high-art possibilities [of a] lowly [and] unpromising ... pulp genre" (2), so his overall treatment of both popular fiction and film is one of benevolent condescension.

Irwin contends that in the hands of his selected authors (and it is impossible to tell how well acquainted he might be with the genre beyond these five), American crime fiction became increasingly concerned with the problems faced by the working man who wished to become or stay his own boss. In *The Maltese Falcon*, this conflict is developed through Sam Spade's relationship with Brigid O'Shaughnessy, the con-woman who murdered his partner and whom he eventually surrenders to the police, choosing to follow his code as a means of resolving negotiations and hesitations between public/professional and private/affective spheres. Central to Spade's dilemma and his decision is the fact that he -- like Chandler's Philip Marlowe but unlike Hammett's earlier Continental Op -- is self-employed. Marlowe negotiates his way through a social order stratified by wealth, having, as his "rented room and meagre possessions" (52) testify, "self-consciously ... circumscribed his life-as-having in order to achieve the maximum independence of his life-as-being" (51). *Double Indemnity* features a protagonist "who is smarter and more experienced in his line of work than his employer and who consequently feels frustrated and resentful because, in terms of brains and ability, his boss should be working for him" (75). Walter Huff's mistake, born of this contradiction between the nature and the ideology of American capitalism, is to try "to beat the boss" (189), to go into (illicit) business for himself.

In *High Sierra*, Roy Earle, the last of the Dillinger mob leaves prison to find America transformed, particularly in terms of social relationships around labour: like Donald E. Westlake's Parker, played by Lee Marvin in *Point Blank* (John Boorman 1967), Earle finds a faceless organisation behind the people for whom he thought he was working. Woolrich's "best work is about deadlines ... the race against time"; and the "psychological vein" he mines with "obsessive and consummate skill" is the effect such "exact foreknowledge has on a person's psyche, on his emotional and moral life, the devastating fear it creates, the hopeless sense of being trapped in a predestined series of events as the seconds slip away" (124). Given Irwin's thesis, and the fact that Woolrich, like each of these writers, was himself caught in the contradictory position of being self-employed but also subject to the deadlines of (often faceless) publishers, one might expect Irwin to at last turn to some considered explication and examination of more specific social, political or economic contexts, such as the consolidation of monopoly capital in the interwar years. But instead Irwin follows the rather fleeting connections he draws between these novels' protagonists and the perceived/felt emasculation involved in working for someone else with some tentative and tepid biographical speculations on Woolrich's experience and fictional mediation of his own 'fate' -- being homosexual. Irwin argues that the fiction of Burnett and Woolrich:

> takes on a larger, existential dimension as their protagonists try to maintain control of their own lives against obstacles that are posed less by persons they love or lust for than by the effects of time in Burnett's fiction and by fate in Woolrich's' (xi).

In making such a claim, Irwin's condescension comes once more to the fore: because these authors for him represent the culmination of a trajectory flowing from Hammett, their manifest concerns must not appear too quotidian; latencies must emerge and genres must be transcended.

As a close reader of prose texts, Irwin is not negligible: his discussion of *The Maltese Falcon*'s Flitcraft episode is exemplary if, like the rest of the book, a little too given to summary; his asides about Poe are smart, as are the frequent, lengthy and generally superfluous passages about F. Scott Fitzgerald, an author about whom he would clearly rather be writing. Sadly, few of these skills of textual analysis are evident in his two chapters on film noir. Sweeping aside "well-worked-over arguments" (207) about whether noir is a genre, style, tone, and so on, Irwin unfortunately proceeds to neglect entire critical literatures on film noir and on adaptation. This would not be such a problem if he had something new to say about these films, or had developed some kind of critical-theoretical framework which would have enabled him to explore the films' rearticulation of the novels' concerns, not just in another medium but in another (i.e., wartime and post-war) context. However, he instead offers biographical accounts of his selected authors' experiences of Hollywood and of adaptation, of the personnel involved in the films, and so on. It contains very little that is new, especially when contrasted with, say, Sheri Chinen Biesen's *Blackout: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), or even unfamiliar, except perhaps for his detailed description of John Farrow's little-known version of *Night Has a Thousand Eyes* (1948).

Although a reviewer should try not to criticise a book for what it is not, Irwin's discussion of film noir is so frustratingly pedestrian in its approach and annoying in its abandonment of the book's own argument, and his engagement with the entire discipline of films studies so slight, I cannot resist suggesting that he might have more productively focused his attention

elsewhere. Perhaps on the evolutions of hard-boiled crime fiction after World War Two in, for example, the work of Chester Himes, Jim Thompson or Charles Willeford; or the work of hard-boiled crime writers in other genres (Leigh Brackett, who wrote westerns for Howard Hawks, and John D. McDonald both also wrote science fiction). Perhaps he could have considered the post-war development of the hard-boiled idiom in other genres, such as Elmore Leonard's westerns, or of Woolrich-ian paranoia in 1950s science fiction (Philip K. Dick's fiction is all about the changing demands of capital on the small businessman and corporate employee). Perhaps he might have considered the work of some rather less exemplary hardboiled writers -- Carroll John Daly, Mickey Spillane, James Hadley -- or even the work of some hard-boiled women writers -- Brackett, again, or Dorothy B. Hughes. There are plenty of alternative paths that could have been taken in the last quarter of *Unless the Threat of Death is Behind Them* that would have allowed Irwin to build on his obvious strengths. Instead he has produced a pretty good book on hard-boiled fiction well-suited to more conservative literature departments. Its usefulness to the student of film noir is, however, limited.

The Last "Darky": Bert Williams, Black-on-Black Minstrelsy, and the African Diaspora

By Louis Chude-Sokei
London, Durham: Duke UP, 2006. ISBN 0-8223-3643-X. 277 pp. £14.95 (pbk), £60 (hbk).

A review by Sinéad Moynihan, University of Nottingham, UK

The Last "Darky" rescues from ignominy the figure of Bert Williams, the once (in)famous black minstrel of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who applied burnt cork like his white counterparts. Vilified for playing "in theatres that either barred or Jim-Crowed Negroes" ("Bert Williams," *Messenger*, 4, April 1922, 394), and for supposedly perpetuating stereotypes of African Americans on the minstrel stage, Chude-Sokei's study resituates Bert Williams, establishing him as a key founding influence upon a nascent black modernism that culminated in the Harlem Renaissance (19). The Renaissance was, of course, deeply indebted to the contributions of black artists such as Claude McKay who, like Williams, were not African *American* but Afro-Caribbean. Chude-Sokei argues that interpretations of Williams and his blackface mask are further complicated by his Afro-Caribbean, rather than African American, heritage: Williams was born in Nassau, the British West Indies, now known as the Bahamas (7).

As a black minstrel performing in predominantly American and African American contexts, Williams thus reveals the extent to which African Americans function(ed) as *the* privileged community within the black diaspora. As Chude-Sokei, puts it:

> the 'universal' status of the 'Negro' or the 'stage Negro' enabled the specifics of the African American context to masquerade as fully diasporic, as globally representative in ways that were ironically supported by the cultural power of the United States. (56)

While acknowledging the political expediency of forming black diasporic, or "pan-African," in the parlance of the day, alliances, Chude-Sokei displays a healthy, in my view, cynicism towards what Shelley Fisher Fishkin calls the "Transnational Turn" in American Studies. The book is thus directly relevant to the contemporary U.S. moment, which is witnessing "non-American blacks [. . .] swell to a point where intra-racial, cross-cultural competition, misunderstanding, and various tensions are beginning to overshadow the rich legacies of creative contact and political interaction" (16).

Chude-Sokei's study is divided into six chapters. Chapter one focuses upon the politics of masking, specifically in relation to the Harlem Renaissance. Chapter two is concerned with contemporary discourses of pan-Africanism, and the ways in which Bert Williams asserted himself within those discourses. Chapter three brings together the first two chapters by

applying the notion of the mask to pan-Africanism itself. Drawing upon the work of Houston A. Baker, Chude-Sokei delineates two types of mask: the allaesthetic, which is masking-as-camouflage, as fading into the background, and the phaneric, which advertises rather than conceals. Chude-Sokei extends these two kinds of mask, arguing that the first corresponds roughly to W.E.B. DuBois's assimilationist pan-Africanism, the second to Marcus Garvey's separatist pan-Africanism. For Chude-Sokei, Bert Williams exists in between these two figures, his pan-Africanism "predicated on radical difference, tension, and the sprawl of languages, dialects, and signifying traditions" (93).

Chapter four places Bert Williams in the context of other manifestations of black-on-black masquerade -- for example, African Americans passing as Africans -- at the time. In so doing, Chude-Sokei intervenes in an under-theorised area of (African) American Studies: the connections between passing and blackface minstrelsy as forms of (racial) masquerade. Chude-Sokei also describes the history of transnational blackface minstrelsy, in West Africa, Trinidad and Jamaica. Chapter five focuses upon the hit Broadway show *In Dahomey* (Jesse A. Shipp, Marion Cook and Paul Laurence Dunbar, 1903) as an example of Williams's self-conscious engagement with issues of black transnationalism. Ultimately, Bert Williams is a "convenient fulcrum" for Chude-Sokei's more broad insights into intra-racial, cross-cultural differences, and in the final chapter, he explores the work of Claude McKay to extend his critique of the ways in which intra-cultural differences are often elided when "racial" similarities are insisted upon.

The book's scope is thus both geographically and temporally comprehensive, embracing a wide range of key players in African diasporic thought. In the process of reclaiming Bert Williams, Chude-Sokei also offers new insights on several key figures of the Harlem Renaissance, notably fellow West Indians Marcus Garvey and Claude McKay. Although Chude-Sokei must be commended for his range, the pitfall of expanding the breadth of his scholarly horizons to the extent that he does is that the reader is inevitably left wondering: "Well, if you're going to bring in so-and-so, then what about…?" Take the following example: impressive as Chude-Sokei's analysis of masking and the use of dialect is, because he invokes Paul Laurence Dunbar, a lyricist for black minstrel shows and, of course, the poet who composed the famous "We Wear the Mask," I was thus more than a little disappointed to see Charles Chesnutt, a contemporary of both Dunbar and Williams, completely passed over.

For instance, Chude-Sokei makes much of the publication in 1897 of both Dunbar's poem and W.E.B. DuBois's 'Of Our Spiritual Strivings,' which was subsequently reprinted in *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1903) (68). Chesnutt's Conjure stories, some of which appeared in periodicals between 1887 and 1889, were published as a collection entitled *The Conjure Woman Dies and Other Stories* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1899). They feature the kind of complex layering processes characteristic of Bert Williams's mask. The first-person narrator, a Northern white man who has relocated to North Carolina, yields to the voice of a former slave called Julius McAdoo, who persistently manipulates his white audience to his advantage by donning a mask of subservience. Equally, regarding the use of dialect, Chude-Sokei argues that Bert Williams "functions as a necessary link between the generation of the dialect poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and the generation of Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Claude McKay, who all used dialect in a distinctly modern/ist context" (64). In Chesnutt's Conjure stories, dialect is a crucial function of Julius's mask. Chesnutt's absence is thus deeply felt throughout the study, the more so because Paul Laurence Dunbar is afforded a good deal of space.

In Chapter 5, Chude-Sokei argues that *In Dahomey*, a show set in Africa, starring Bert Williams and George Walker and featuring an all-black cast, represents "a convenient marker for generational transformation" in that "it was here that the subsequent generation of black artists learned that Africa could be commodified as a spectacle which could help them claim cultural capital in the climate of Anglo-American modernism and its aesthetic scramble for Africa" (177). The problem in this chapter is that Chude-Sokei relies almost exclusively on song lyrics as evidence of the "ironic and self-mocking sense of humor" that the show evinces in relation to contemporary African American attitudes toward Africa. *In Dahomey* apparently "identified how a general cultural obsession with African American powerlessness in America manifested itself in the desire for power in Africa" (176). However, it is difficult not to take the song lyrics at face value without further confirmation that *other* aspects of the show -- set design, costume and so on -- undermined such lyrics and indeed rendered them ironic. To give Chude-Sokei his due, he does concede the validity of this point, noting that "it is only possible to speculate on its visual and aural impact on its multiple audiences and on both men and women" (192).

If *In Dahomey* did indeed lampoon contemporary African American attitudes towards a mythical Africa, then curiously absent in this chapter is a discussion of Pauline Hopkins's novel, *Of One Blood*, serialised in *Colored American Magazine* in 1903, which Chude-Sokei does mention (166-167), but fails to explore. Hopkins's novel would have provided Chude-Sokei with the perfect example of a novel by a black middle-class (author) who is "simultaneously contending with the contradictions of race and imperialism, class and historical dispersal [. . .] with its own powerless at home and its symbolic and cultural power abroad" (193).

But these are minor quibbles that arise only because overall, Chude-Sokei's study is a deeply absorbing, thoroughly convincing analysis of the ways in which Bert Williams anticipated the Harlem Renaissance and engaged with and exemplified pan-Africanism. Setting aside critiques of Williams that would interpret his deployment of blackface as evidence of self-hatred and the internalisation of white racism, Chude-Sokei counter-argues convincingly that the layers of Williams's black face and blackface indicate "plural masking," in which "the colonial subject is perpetually suspended in a performance which is diasporic because in it there is no landfall" (215). Furthermore, in *In Dahomey*, Chude-Sokei observes that Bert Williams was the only actor in an all-black cast to perform in burnt cork and argues that "this lone mask gave the play legitimacy in the minds of white spectators and enabled the other performers to operate without it" (181). Full of fascinating and unique insights, *The Last "Darky"* is a significant contribution to the studies of minstrelsy, black modernism and, of course, an increasingly transnationalist American Studies.

Masculine Singular: French New Wave Cinema

The Films of Samuel Fuller: If You Die, I'll Kill You By Lisa Dombrowski

The Films of Samuel Fuller: If You Die, I'll Kill You

By Lisa Dombrowski

Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008. ISBN: 0-8195-6866-X (hbk) 43 b/w illustrations 262 pp. £23.95 (hbk).

Michael Brian Faucette, University of Kansas, USA

At first glance one would ask what possible connection could exist between a Hollywood studio director like Samuel Fuller and the *Nouvelle Vague* (French New Wave). The answer is a complex one and yet, after reading these two new volumes that shed fresh insights into the period of the French New Wave and the career of a studio director who is often forgotten except by cinephiles and directors, what comes across is how much both of these entities, Fuller and the New Wave, were impacted by the struggles to define and understand masculinity post World-War Two.

English film scholars and historians have long lauded the French New Wave as one of the decisive moments in cinema history. Richard Neupert's book *A History of the French New Wave* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2007) and Geoffrey Nowell Smith's *Making Waves: New Cinemas of the 1960s* (New York: Continuum, 2007) represent the continuing fascination with the 1950s and 1960s as periods of real social and artistic change; change that was believed to be led by the forces of cinema in the hands of such directors as Jean-Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, Andre Wajda, and countless other young directors. The assumption that these young turks using film sought to make political and social statements that challenged authority has become the standard that scholars, educators and even film fans have utilized to describe and explain the changing face of European, American, and world cinema.

Genevieve Sellier's new book however, challenges all of these assumptions and for the first time allows English readers a glimpse into the complexity of discussing the French New Wave. Moreover, she continually challenges the notion that this was a cinema of change in this lucidly written and well -researched volume that draws upon film reviews, newspaper articles, sociological data, magazine articles and interviews of the time as evidence to show the complexity of the New Wave period in France and how that period was culturally received. What separates Sellier's work from the numerous other volumes written on the subject of the French New Wave, you might ask? The answer lies in the title.

She uses the title *Masculine Singular* to denote how the young French film critics, filmmakers, and industry worked together in opposition to the burgeoning women's rights movement in France in the 1950s. Moreover she points out that "the movement was, from the outset, 'overmediatized'… and it was vigorously reproached by its detractors for its talent at self-promotion" (1-2). Sellier recognizes that from its inception the *Nouvelle Vague* was relying upon the forces of the media to sell the notion that France had created a new form of filmic expression post-World War Two. Yet, as she brilliantly demonstrates, what was left out of this equation was a discussion that the very persons pushing the agenda were men who felt it their duty to reclaim French masculinity.

Sellier, in the introduction, indicates the limitations of contemporary French film studies which fail to discuss gender, and then explains that in her study she seeks to explain how important questions of gender, especially masculinity were for the formation of the French New Wave. A film culture that was and remains dominated by the idea of the *auteur* or director as sole genius is for Sellier the first indication of the importance placed on men as the arbiters of French cinema culture (10). This is the problem that Sellier identifies throughout the book, as she seeks to show how French cinema was designed to react against the gains being made by women at the time.

In chapter one she provides the background for the entire volume, which is how there was a growing recognition by some people in France that there was a difference in expectations of life for men and women. She explains that two media institutions, L'Express and the Institut Francais d' Opinion Publique, put out a survey to try and identify characteristics of the generation born between the years 1927 and 1939, the generation that would come to be known in France as the New Wave. What strikes Sellier about the findings of these institutes is how the men in charge of them failed to accept the opinions of women, such as Francoise Giroud who wrote up the findings of the study, and instead focused on the concerns of men. Giroud noted "in general the fear is expressed by the whole New wave generation that women would become more masculine because they are working and becoming interested in men's professions, that they would cease to be real women" (13). The developing crisis of masculinity for the French is brought on by a change in gender relations -- the demands of women to be accepted as equals in the home and the workforce and to be seen as intellectual and sexual equals.

Popular contemporary French literature was one area that recognized and embraced these changes in gender relations. Sellier documents how young female authors shocked France with stories centred on the awakening of young women as they expressed the freedom to enjoy themselves both sexually and professionally (14). In particular she focuses on three novels: *Les Ramparts de Beguines* (Francoise Mallet-Joris, 1951), *Bonjour Tristesse* (Françoise Sagan, 1954), and *Le repos du guerriere* (Christiane Rochefort, 1958) and how these novels depicted a world where the "heroines are completely free of any feeling of guilt" (14), guilt which Sellier explains that the society expects these women to experience because France is/was a Catholic nation dominated by male values and laws. Ironically it was two older French directors: Marcel Carne and Jacques Sigurd whose films of the 1950s depict women in a more positive and enlightened light. For Sellier, Carne and Sigurd both "register the strong and active presence of girls in the new generation" (15). While these new cinematic heroines were not without their problems and troubles, as she acknowledges, the films made by Carne and Sigurd depict women in a more rounded fashion that embraces their foibles and celebrations, whereas later iterations of female angst onscreen will be treated in a

much more harsh and shallow fashion, arguably because the later films will be directed by men who care only for women as objects of sexual desire rather than actual persons.

This view of women as merely sex objects, Sellier argues, is the result of the *Cahiers du cinéma* group's overt fascination with American cinema, especially the films of Howard Hawks and Samuel Fuller, both of whom depict masculinity as something normal that is dictated by action, brutality, and only sexual desire for women, not respect. Therefore Sellier, in contrast with many other scholars, views New Wave cinema in relation to the need of "young bourgeois men" to react against women in an effort to accede "to the status of the artist and to the privileges traditionally attached to that status, in the face of the destabilizing emergence of women of their generation into the realm of cultural production" (18). In essence, the politics of the New Wave and its artistic output, Sellier argues, can best be understood as a battle between the sexes.

Cahiers du cinéma and its founder, Andre Bazin have long been respected in English language film scholarship as the voice of more liberal views on society, politics, and art. However, Sellier dispels this notion in chapter two where she uses actual newspaper articles and reviews of the 1950s and 1960s that demonstrate that in fact these men and their magazine were far more conservative than had previously been believed. Their stance on art and genius is merely one component of their conservatism, as she outlines in the book. The theory of auteurism, she explains, is based "in the French cultural tradition" where "creation is considered male prerogative in which the writer experiences himself as a demiurge at the origin of his work, absolutely autonomous from the world and from others" (24). It is this philosophy that the criticism of *Cahiers du cinéma* is based in. Moreover, Sellier notes that the politics of auteurism as advocated by the critics at *Cahiers* and later by the French New Wave directors is:

> a kind of parthenogenesis, a way of giving birth to oneself by inventing fathers as far away as possible from one's natural fathers- namely, postwar French filmmakers who had suffered the humiliating vicissitudes of history. (26)

The suffering that Sellier identifies is that of the horrors these young directors attribute to the loss of French sovereignity to the Nazis during the war as well as the loss of masculine authority.

In chapter three she explains how the state embraced the concept of auteurism as way to reclaim its authority and to further the interests of French film. The government of France created a fund to support both art cinema and mainstream cinema in an effort to maintain France's control of the European film and world markets. Yet, embedded within these needs, Sellier identifies the desire to sell the notion that French cinema is more technically polished and innovative than other forms of cinema. It is this reliance on technical aspects, versus actual narrative content, that she believes allows for the development of the New Wave style, and in particular its emphasis on women as the markers of sexual change and desire within the nation.

In chapter four Sellier analyses the contemporary critical reception of these films and filmmakers in comparison to that of actual box office returns. Whereas many scholars and English language viewers believe the New Wave to have been a commercial success in France, Sellier shows that this was simply not the case: "Those films favorably labeled 'new cinema' that met with broad audience approval mainly came out between September 1958

and September 1959" (42). These dates bookend her discussion of French film culture in the 1950s. Sellier first discusses the ramifications of the stardom of Brigitte Bardot and Bardot's performance in *Et Dieu... créa la femme* ([And God Created Woman] Roger Vadim, 1956). Her performance of French femininity shocked both audiences and critics alike in its graphic, realistic, and scandalous portrayal of the new feminine point of view. Then Sellier analyses the Cannes film festival of 1959 where Truffaut's first film *Les Quatre cents coups* ([The 400 Blows] François Truffaut, 1959) and *Hiroshima mon amour* ([Hiroshima, My Love] Alain Resnais, 1959) were screened. These two films for Sellier represent divergent approaches to portraying French masculinity and femininity. Moreover, Resnais's film, she argues, was a commercial hit while Truffaut's was viewed as something more akin to an exercise in art.

In chapter five she explores the men (Roger Vailland, Pierre Kast, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze and Alexandre Astruc) whom she believes were the cinematic precursors to the New Wave. She first analyses the critical and popular responses to their films before focusing her analysis on how each of these men depicted the struggles between men and women. In each of these men, Sellier recognises an awareness of the complexities that are involved with portraying women onscreen during the 1950s. As she states these filmmakers were "swept aside by history, some because their films became invisible (Kast), others because lacking public or critical success, they stopped making films that directly addressed relations between men and women (Astruc and Doniol-Valcroze)" (94). These men and their contributions to French cinema have been lost to history and the overwhelming interest in the works produced by the youth generation (Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, etc.).

It is this youth generation and its masculine politics that Sellier argues determined the fate of French cinema and has since influenced all forms of cinema that have followed. Theories such as auteurism, and a devout love for cinema are the cross-cultural byproducts of this period. However, what is problematic about these films and filmmakers for Sellier are the ways in which they have been endorsed as liberal voices that represented a generation. The question thus must be asked, whose generation and whose voice do they represent? The answer is the male angst of men who feared the changing face of gender relations in France and who used cinema to depict their anxieties, anxieties that have since been incorporated into film culture globally.

Lisa Dombrowski's book *The Films of Samuel Fuller* provides another view of masculinity at work in the American studio system. She charts the progression of Fuller from his days as a blood and guts newspaperman and soldier to his development into a screenwriter and later director, both within and without the good graces of the studio model. It is the constant struggle that Fuller faced to make his films and express his views that led French filmmakers and auteurists alike to embrace him and his work. In fact the American advocate of auteurism Andrew Sarris wrote in his book *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968* (Chicago: Da Capo Press, 1996) that "Fuller is an authentic American primitive whose works have to be seen to be understood. Seen, not heard or synopsized" (93). I echo Sarris's point as does Dombrowski in this auteurist study. However, what separates Dombrowski's study from other routine auteur studies is her placing of Fuller within the context of the postwar Hollywood system. In *The Films of Samuel Fuller*, Dombrowski looks at Fuller's experiences to explain how filmmaking drastically changed, first because of the Paramount decree of 1948 and then later as a result of the influence of television.

Dombrowski bases her study on interpretations of Fuller's cinematic techniques, studio documents, interviews with Fuller's widow Christina and daughter, Samantha, as well as the

recollections of people who knew and worked with Fuller. She paints an intimate portrait of the man and his artistry and shows how his life experiences as a reporter, novelist, solder, and gruff man influenced the types of stories he would tell and the kind of world view that he expressed consistently in his cinema.

Dombrowski relies on the reader's knowledge of cinematic techniques and an understanding of aesthetics. While I applaud her effort, this strategy often overwhelms her writing and her discussion of Fuller. Take the following passage:

> Fuller's work is shaped by his tendency to shoot long-takes as the primary foundation of scenes; to juxtapose long-take scenes with those reliant on montage; and to develop kineticism, sharp contrasts in tone and style, rhythmic and graphic editing patterns, and stylistic weirdness. (17)

Here, her writing assumes that the reader will possess a knowledge of cinematic terms and understand how they are used. Unfortunately, I would argue that this is not the case. Thus, Dombrowski's work which is supposed to shed new light on a director who is often forgotten today, except by cinephiles and directors, gets tangled up in jargon and a formalistic analysis of the films.

There is value to her study despite her constant reliance on formalism to analyse the films. One of the really promising angles that she does provide is to re-think Fuller's penchant for violence and action. In fact she notes that: "Fuller equates emotional violence with the severe psychological turmoil that results from an individual having two opposing desires that cannot both be satisfactorily fulfilled" (13). In the hands of a lesser director she argues violence would overwhelm any sense of emotional impact and thus reduce the film and its subject matter to pure entertainment or worse yet, a form of ideology.

Fuller may have been an American director working within the studio system and the lesser poverty row studios but he never fails to challenge the audience's assumptions about America. As Dombrowski rightly notes, "Fuller does not balk at revealing the failings of American society, and his films repeatedly engage race and gender in a frank and uncompromising manner rare for their times" (12). It is this quality of his films that most likely attracted the New Wave directors to Fuller, because in him they saw a studio craftsman who was able to use the limitations of the system to his own advantage.

Dombrowski charts the entire course of Fuller's career from his beginnings as a B film director for Lippert Pictures (1948-1951) through his years as a director making films that depicted the horrors of the Korean War while at Fox (1951- 1956) noting his brief stint as an independent producer (1956-1961) and finally to the last years of his life when he was reduced to working for hire (1961- 1997). Throughout each of the chapters she provides an in-depth analysis of his films, the choices he made in the filming to adhere to his vision and the limitations of the budgets he was provided to make his films. In effect, Dombrowski's book serves two purposes: an in-depth analysis of Fuller, the man and the director and it also traces the changing face of the American film industry.

Dombrowski never explicitly discusses the ways in which Fuller examines the crisis of masculinity that impacted American men after World War Two. However, she does not really need to do so, because Fuller's films themselves serve as illustrations of the changing quality of masculine experience. Whether in films like *I Shot Jesse James* (Samuel Fuller, 1949) or

his later Korean war epic *Steel Helmet* (Samuel Fuller, 1951), Fuller is always exploring the effects of violence on the masculine psyche, and moreover in that exploration he reveals the dark underside of America's fascination with men as purveyors of violence and order.

She ends the book with discussions of how Fuller was ostracized by the American film industry for his grim portrayal of America's problems with race, violence, and gender. No film of his more exemplifies such controversy than *White Dog* (Samuel Fuller, 1982); Dombrowski goes as far as to remind readers that this is a film that is "rarely screened" because of its frank depiction of the subtleties of racism in America.

Dombrowski concludes the study by arguing that Fuller "aimed to make gut-punch movies, the kind you don't forget when you walk out of theater" (203). In her reading of his films it was the combination of his themes, filmic style, writing, and passion to awaken audiences that makes Fuller and his films so important even today.

These books continue the trend in film studies to analyse films in connection with gender, especially the construction of masculinity. Sellier's *Masculine Singular* explores the implications of masculinity within national film culture, and shows how the French New Wave was formed as a political protest by men (in particular the *Cahiers* critics and young filmmakers) against the growing women's rights movement in France that blossomed in the 1950s. Dombrowski's *The Films of Samuel Fuller* explores the ramifications of the changing face of American male experience and the film industry through the lens of its films and its directors. Together these books illustrate the significance of re-thinking film through the lens of masculinity.

The Essential Science Fiction Television Reader

By J.P. Telotte (ed.)
Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8131-2492-6. 356 pp. £32.50 (hbk).

A review by David Simmons

With the popularity of science fiction television seemingly at an all time high, J.P. Telotte's edited collection, *The Essential Science Fiction Television Reader* joins books such as M Keith Booker's *Strange TV* (Greenwood Press, 2002) and Jan Johnson-Smith's *American Science Fiction TV* (Wesleyan University Press, 2004) in attempting to offer the reader a scholarly guide to the history, development and cultural importance of this once critically derided genre.

Telotte's own lengthy but fascinating introduction to the volume establishes the reasons for the collection. Central to these professed aims is the belief that Anglo-American science fiction television (or SFTV) has an identity that is markedly distinct to that of other media: "which has moved from weak imitations... to its own mature productions, which have, in turn, begun to reenvision-and energize- the genre itself" (2). Refuting claims that SFTV is bereft of artistic worth, Telotte argues that SFTV is currently positioned to become, both the most influential mode of the genre, and "one of the key mirrors for the contemporary cultural climate" (2). While Telotte's passion for SFTV is more than apparent in these often lofty claims, it is to his credit that he manages to provide an objective and thought provoking opening to the collection that includes a considered discussion of the genre's recurrent themes and motifs in addition to a comprehensive historical overview of its more significant examples.

Though it focuses exclusively on television series in the science fiction genre, the collection is particularly remarkable for the breadth of its discussion. Telotte himself briefly examines the importance of programs ranging from *The Twilight Zone* (Rod Serling, 1959-1964) and *The Outer Limits* (Leslie Stevens, 1963-1965); through the output of Irwin Allen, industry stalwarts including *Star Trek* (Gene Roddenberry, 1966-1969), *Doctor Who* (Sydney Newman, C. E. Webber and Donald Wilson, 1963-1989, 2005-present), and more modern examples such as *The X-Files* (Chris Carter, 1993-2002), *Battlestar Galactica* (Glen A. Larson and Ronald D. Moore, 2004-present), *Lost* (J.J. Abrams, 2004-present) and *Heroes* (Tim Kring, 2006-present). Similarly, Telotte's contributors cover an even greater selection of material, the diversity of which supports his opening claim that "SFTV has indeed reached a level of maturity and warrants more detailed study" (4).

The main body of the collection is divided into five sections which examine the foundations and influences on, narrative practises, thematic and ideological concerns, key examples, and potential future of the form. In the first part of the book, Telotte's interesting essay 'Lost in Space: Television as Science Fiction Icon,' charts the changing relationship between

television and the science fiction genre. The chapter examines television's beginning as "an icon of science fiction" (37), fearful to many, through a close analysis of several early genre films such as *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927) and *The Invisible Ray* (Lambert Hillyer, 1935). Though noting that "it might well be argued that the film industry was simply casting into a negative light a potential competitor" (50) Telotte concludes by drawing some striking parallels between these filmic representations of television and current debates concerning the medium's infringement on our public and private spaces.

In Part Two's 'Tomorrowland TV: The Space Opera and Early Science Fiction Television', Winston Wheeler Dixon tackles a decidedly more optimistic subject matter. Exploring a raft of 1950's SFTV shows which were often considered as lightweight, formulaic and childish, Dixon cleverly contextualises the place of such shows in SFTV history, arguing that they established many of the medium's Cold-War-influenced conventions while also creating a set of normative values that more complex 1960's series like *The Twilight Zone* and *Star Trek* rebelled against (a topic that is reprised in M. Keith Booker's chapter 'The Politics of *Star Trek*').

In 'Anthology Drama: Mapping *The Twilight Zone*'s Cultural and Mythological Terrain', Rodney Hill continues where Dixon leaves off, examining *The Twilight Zone* in greater detail. More specifically, Hill explores how Rod Serling, the series' creator, cleverly adapted the previously 'serious' drama format of the anthology show in order to circumvent the worries of timorous networks executives and advertisers concerning the pointed social commentary of so much of Serling's earlier work. Through a detailed analysis of selected episodes, Hill surmises that one of the strengths of the show is its meta-fictional commentary on the processes by which fear is engendered: "By contrast, *The Twilight Zone* seems to interrogate and criticize that very process of othering, reminding us that evil exists within all men" (118).

Part Four of the collection provides in depth analysis of selected key series in the genre, amongst them *Star Trek*, *Doctor Who*, *Babylon 5* (J. Michael Straczynski, 1993-1998) and *Stargate SG-1* (Brad Wright and Jonathan Glassner, 1997 – 2007). Lacy Hodges' chapter looks at *The X-Files* as an example of the contemporary process of "mainstreaming marginality" (231). Studying the mixing of different genres in the show, primarily the realist framework of the detective series with the fantastical elements of science fiction and horror stories, Hodges constructs a strong argument for seeing *The X-Files* as the first significant example of hybrid SFTV: genre television which is "able to use the tropes of science fiction while maintaining its mainstream legitimacy" (234). Hodges also discusses the importance of *The X-Files*' hybrid structure and postmodern self-consciousness, themes that are built upon in David Lavery's examination of ABC's *Lost*. In 'The Island's Greatest Mystery: Is *Lost* Science Fiction?', Lavery tests the aforementioned show's credentials as SFTV by comparing it to several recognised definitions of the genre. Settling on a methodology derived from reader-response criticism, Lavery ends his attempt to classify *Lost* as SFTV by surmising that, much like the show's own ongoing mysteries, "at this point in the series' development, we do not know" (293).

Charles Tryon's essay 'TV Time Lords: Fan Cultures, Narrative Complexity and the Future of Science Fiction Television' rounds out the collection. The chapter examines recent changes in the field of SFTV, including increasing narrative complexity, the emphasis on convergence in terms of storytelling and marketing, and the growth in fan produced fictions. All of these developments lead Tryon to propose that if current trends in the production and distribution

of SFTV continue the immediate future might witness the creation of a kind of "transmedia" or post-TV state (307), in which series use "Webisodes, graphic novels, alternate reality games, and other narrative forms to keep audiences engaged" (307).

In conclusion, *The Essential Science Fiction Television Reader* lives up to its titular demarcation, serving as an engaging starting point for those interested in learning more about the genre. Such is the diversity of material on offer that I have only been able to touch upon a small selection of the more interesting and innovative chapters within this review. However, the collection's successful marrying of a range of topics with a level of consistent quality translates into a book that I would urge both scholars and fans of SFTV to seek out.

Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television

By John Thornton Caldwell
Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8223-4111-6. x+451pp. £13.99 (pbk).
Short Films… How to Make and Distribute Them By Nathan Parker

Short Films… How to Make and Distribute Them

By Nathan Parker

Harpenden: Kamera Books, 2007. ISBN: 1-904048-81-1. 300pp. £16.99 (pbk).

A review by Heather Macdougall, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

Two new books by filmmaker-academics strive to give readers an insider's perspective on film production, with each book offering insightful perspectives on the process through which creative and technical workers combine their talents to create the finished products that appear on our screens. Beyond this common starting point, however, John Thornton Caldwell and Nathan Parker proceed in diverging directions. Caldwell's *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* is heavily theoretical, aimed squarely at a scholarly audience, and deals exclusively with the studio-centric and commercial film world of Los Angeles. Parker's *Short Films… How to Make and Distribute Them,* by contrast, is an accessible and practical step-by-step guide for anyone interested in trying their hand at making a short independent film of their own; while most of its points of reference are British, the book would indeed be relevant to filmmakers working internationally as well. When read together, the two books give contradictory perspectives on the practice of filmmaking but also underline certain themes -- such as the importance of cooperation between team members -- that are true no matter the scale and circumstance of production.

The central aim of *Production Culture* is to deconstruct the tales told by Hollywood insiders and reveal the stories behind the self-promotional spin. It is a subject that is certainly of interest to filmgoers of all types, but the scholarly writing style, theoretical approach, and lack of juicy gossip distinguish this work from the many behind-the-scenes accounts available at the local bookshop. Caldwell's target audience is other film scholars, and he argues throughout the book that industrial accounts of film production (particularly unsolicited ones such as the "making of" featurettes on DVDs) would benefit from a deeper and more contextualised analysis when used as a secondary source in film research. He further notes that information provided by the filmmaking industry about its own products

and practices is only valuable if such information is understood as being part of a broader cultural economy in which the industry and the individuals working within it promote their own interests through many channels, both overt and subtle. As a result, the book doesn't focus so much on the actual tasks performed by the various people who work in filmmaking (as is the case in *Short Films*), but rather how these people make sense of their role in the industry and the filmmaking process. In short, Caldwell's aim:

> is less about finding an 'authentic' reality 'behind the scenes' -- an empirical notion that tends to be naïve about the ways that media industry realities are *always* constructed -- than it is about studying the industry's own self-representation, self-critique, and self-reflection. (5)

In order to construct his argument, Caldwell examines material from a tremendous range of sources, including trade publications, marketing materials, interviews with film and television workers, web-based fan discourses, management trends, observation of professional gatherings, architecture and layout of studio offices, etc. Caldwell pays due homage to earlier fieldwork-based studies of film production culture in Hollywood, particularly those of Leo Rosten and Hortense Powdermaker, but also stresses the need for "better terms and categories … to describe and explain new and emerging production practices that have not been adequately theorized (or in some cases recognized)" (11). An emphasis on fieldwork, coupled with the influence of scholars such as Clifford Geertz and Benedict Anderson, lend an ethnographic feel to the research. For example, Caldwell compares the "uniforms" generally worn by screenwriters and directors: expensive designer clothing worn in a careful yet apparently haphazard way in the former case, and odd combinations that reference art-school eccentricity, nerdiness, and working-class knowledge in the latter. Caldwell highlights the way that these dress codes both cater to and reinforce certain expectations in terms of professional suitability:

> The male screenwriter is coded as sensitive, tasteful, and approachable (someone not prone to unruly affect or acting out). The male director by contrast is given a longer behavioural leash. He must be avant-garde and hip if he wants to inspire the technical cadres to submit to his unproven leadership. (73)

As mentioned above, Caldwell limits his research to the Los Angeles area. This is likely due in part to geographic convenience (he is Chair of Cinema and Media Studies at UCLA), but also to the fact that L.A. is home to over 250,000 people working in the film industry. It is one specific version of production culture, to be sure, but it is undeniably an important and influential one. Readers from outside the United States, who may bemoan the increased Americanisation of culture around the world, will find it interesting to see the anxieties that American workers themselves have about globalisation. Caldwell points out that the job prospects of the top directors and actors are not threatened, but that American tradespeople are rarely invited along when Hollywood-initiated productions head outside the borders of the United States for filming or post-production work.

Caldwell approaches the industrial culture of Hollywood from a number of angles, but he devotes most of his attention precisely to these "below-the-line" workers -- tradespeople such as cameramen, gaffers, etc -- and the portrait that emerges of their working lives is at times shocking. In addition to horror stories of preventable on-site injuries, long-term health hazards, and even of a worker falling asleep at the wheel on the way home after a nineteen

hour shift, Caldwell provides anecdotes of the viciously competitive and unreasonable way in which workers on the film set are treated and treat each other. He even goes so far as to describe as a "truism" of the film and television industry the idea that "animal waste flows downhill, and that even the lowest and most poorly paid production assistants will find workers with even less power to defecate on" (109).

This disparaging evaluation of the industry is typical of Caldwell's point of view. In the conclusion, for example, he summarises the ultimate goal of Hollywood as "to acquire content for little or no cost and to get everyone to work for free" (324). There are some vague references to the passion many tradespeople and creative workers feel towards their profession, but in general the author paints a portrait of a thoroughly inhospitable and cruel industry. This disenchanted attitude is so pervasive throughout the book that one wonders if some personal bitterness might be the cause. In any case, the constant cynicism makes for very heavy reading. This is unfortunate because the research itself is very insightful and there is much of value in the book. Caldwell skilfully negotiates the complications of studying an industrial culture that already invests significant efforts in producing analysis and critical knowledge about itself. He also rightly stresses the importance of this type of work in the field of film studies, noting "the need to reconsider how we study and understand cultures of production" (342). As such, his work provides important tools for film scholars who would use industry materials as secondary sources in their analyses of individual films.

While *Production Culture* risks scaring off any would-be filmmakers, *Short Films… How to Make and Distribute Them* by contrast provides sensible and encouraging advice for those brave enough to try their luck in the world of production. The compact volume boasts an attractive layout and intuitive organisation, and covers all of the important concepts that are necessary in an introduction to filmmaking. The author, Nathan Parker, teaches short filmmaking at the University of the Arts in London, and he should be commended for highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities of the short format. Parker acknowledges that many aspiring filmmakers are ultimately interested in feature films, but start by making shorts out of necessity. The result is a situation where novice filmmakers are working within a format that they have little experience even watching, and one of the best pieces of advice in the book is to watch as many short films as possible in order to get a feel for what works and what doesn't. To help facilitate this, the book is accompanied by a DVD that provides five excellent examples of short films spanning a good range of styles and budgets.

Parker proceeds chronologically through pre-production, filming, and post-production, giving detailed explanations of the different people and processes involved. Many sections conclude with an interview that serves to clarify a certain professional's role as well as provide a personal experience related specifically to short films. Examples of interviewees include a producer, casting director, sound engineer, music composer, and festival organiser, as well as several writer/directors. These professionals describe some of the challenges they have faced while making short films, but the overall tone is upbeat and encouraging, particularly compared to the personal accounts in *Production Culture*.

There are many decisions that must be taken over the course of each film project; Parker explains the options in each case, while shying away from suggesting any decisive preferences. For example, he details the advantages and disadvantages of the various formats available for shooting (film, DV, etc) but doesn't declare a clear favourite, preferring to leave the filmmaker to choose which format is best suited to his or her project. The focus is

primarily on logistical or practical considerations, rather than on the more creative aspects of filmmaking. For example, little space (barely two pages) is devoted to advice on subject matter and scriptwriting, although perhaps this can be explained by the fact that the same collection (Kamera Books' "Creative Essentials") offers complementary volumes such as *Screenplays… How to Write and Market Them* (John Costello, 2008) and *Script-Editing… And How to Do It* (John Milne, Forthcoming 2010). One might also assume that anyone who is planning to make their own film already has at least the spark of an idea, and the usefulness of the book is in the ways that it reminds enthusiastic young filmmakers of the more mundane considerations that they might not otherwise think of: the value of insurance, for example, or the importance of signed release forms from the actors. Parker even provides electronic templates for these release forms, as well as other key documents such as storyboards, budgets, and location breakdowns, on the accompanying disk. There is also a comprehensive list of helpful links to online resources, including festivals and websites that provide exhibition or distribution of shorts. After all, making the film is only the beginning!

The fundamental flaw with this book is somewhat unavoidable: filmmaking is simply too complex to learn from a written text. Indeed, every interview in the book includes a variation on the question, "how did you get involved in making films?" All of the answers, which range from working on television commercials to directing theatre productions, are centred firmly on hands-on experience. None of the answers even mention any kind of text-based instruction. As thorough as the book may be, it can never be sufficient for those with no experience at all; rather, it is probably of most use to people who have skill in one area but need to fill in the gaps in their experience. In other words, filmmakers will always need to learn by actually making films, but this resource can certainly help to ensure that a first attempt goes more smoothly and efficiently. It is also organized in such a way as to be an easy reference tool for film school students who need reminding of certain technical details or processes. Taking into account the films and templates included on the DVD, the book provides excellent value for the affordable retail price.

The practices of film production are constantly evolving and changing, and it is essential for film scholars and filmmakers alike to keep current on the ways that those changes affect the film cultures we study. *Production Culture* and *Short Films* serve different purposes and address different audiences, but they are both important additions to the field of production studies.

Andrew Lau and Alan Mak's "Infernal Affairs - The Trilogy"

By Gina Marchetti
Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-962-209-801-5 (pbk). 59 illustrations, xii+210pp. £15.95 (pbk).

A review by Ruby Cheung, University of St Andrews, UK

I am not a big fan of Hong Kong cop-and-gangster genre films, though I have to admit that I watched many of them during the years when I lived in Hong Kong. *Infernal Affairs* series (Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, 2002-2003) with its narrative duration spanning between 1991 and 2003 is surely among those that stayed in my head for a long while after I have left the cinema. What has struck me most as both a film scholar and a native Hong Konger is not the action (minimally found in this trilogy) nor the star-laden cast (eight of the prominent characters are of the calibre of best actor award winners in Asia and beyond), but the way in which Hong Kongers' geopolitical identity is *still* portrayed and allegorised in a state of liminality after the 1997 Handover of Hong Kong sovereignty from the British to the Chinese. For this reason, when Gina Marchetti released her book on the *Infernal Affairs* trilogy in 2007 (ten years after the Handover), it gave the impression that the book was far from a pure coincidence with the tenth anniversary of the historic changeover.

Marchetti's monograph is one of the latest titles in The New Hong Kong Cinema Series published by Hong Kong University Press. Similar to much of Marchetti's research, which explores Chinese cinemas in general and Hong Kong films in particular, this book examines the *Infernal Affairs* trilogy by focusing on the issues arising from globalisation, transnational capitalism, as well as the postcolonial concerns of Hong Kong as one of the last colonial outposts of the British Empire and a new special administrative region of the PRC. Yet unlike each of the other books in The New Hong Kong Cinema series that talk about a single Hong Kong film at a time, Marchetti's analysis covers all three *Infernal Affairs* films intertwiningly through several major themes that the author identifies. This gives the edge to the book to embrace the recurrent topics that fuel the multiple readings of this trilogy.

The book consists of six chapters. Chapter one situates the trilogy in the globalised world while it is indebted to the legacy of Hong Kong New Wave films. With the lead-in of the theme song "Forgotten Times" (sung by Tsai Chin from Taiwan) which initially introduces the two male leads to each other (and to the audience), chapter two looks into the convoluted relationship between the characters and their double/destabilised identities as moles for the cops and crooks respectively. It also probes other areas, such as the cinematic representations of Hong Kong as a capitalist metropolis under the rule of the socialist PRC, technology advancement, consumerism, a bygone period (the golden years of Hong Kong in the 1980s), and the repressed time within the limited space both onscreen and off-screen in a historical context that has much to do with the Handover. Due to Hong Kong's special historical and geopolitical circumstances, these seemingly unrelated themes talk to each other inexorably on multiple levels to reflect *Infernal Affairs* trilogy's representativeness of the city and its

citizens, especially during those years right after the Handover. Both Chapters Three and Four deal with the films' allegorisation. Inspired by the films' English and Chinese titles, chapter three brings to its readers the religious allegories and explores some fundamental beliefs of Chinese culture, such as Buddhism, fatalism, Confucianism, and patriarchal tradition. It then segues into the films' politically allegorical reading, pointing explicitly to Hong Kong and its political watershed in the year 1997 when the city began to operate within the 'one country, two systems' political framework, while under attack from the regional financial crisis. Chapter four ensues closely to discuss the allegory that associates with the instability of postmodern life, time, space and identity. Through the examples of drug trafficking, and the commodification of communication and the latest technologies, global economy is regarded as not necessary offering all the solutions to poverty. Chapter five hits the heart of the trilogy by investigating the uncertainty, disintegration and the performance of identity in the midst of the aforementioned issues in a globalised world. Chapter six wraps up the analysis by concerning itself with the *Infernal Affairs* films as commodities in the global film market that is gradually in favour of collective creativeness rather than outputs by individual auteurs. The book is appended by detailed plot summaries of the trilogy, and a reprinted personal interview with the series' co-directors, Andrew Lau and Alan Mak.

A primary vigour of Marchetti's book lies in its multi-faceted readings of the films through various themes (for example, regarding Confucian influence in chapter three, 58-65). The author offers systematic analysis, decoding each layer of concerns one after another, so that readers are introduced to the three films in their own individual right and as an integral whole. In the meantime, Marchetti's book is also devoted to providing her readers with fresh interpretations of a lot of subtleties in the films. A good example comes from the part that deals with Chinese eating culture and its significance in building interpersonal relationship much valued in Chinese communities. The author sees such a culture as a particular kind of ritual (76-77), a notion that could have escaped casual viewing of the films by the local Chinese audience who are so used to the Chinese customs to point out the nuances. Simultaneously, for those who are not familiar with such kind of Chinese practice and have no clue about its significance in the films, Marchetti's study constitutes a major footnote to enlighten their viewing and appreciation of the films.

As far as the writing is concerned, an energetic rhythm suffuses Marchetti's monograph, giving it the dynamics to present her investigations. The book's extensive and integral employment of theories (for instance, Roland Barthes, 71; Fredric Jameson, 66; and so on) certainly contributes significantly to such an analytical pattern. With thorough visual elaboration going alongside the thematic analysis, Marchetti helps portray a vivid off-screen picture of the trilogy in printed form.

It is not hard to conceive how much painstaking work Marchetti has taken in writing this concise monograph, which has less than 170 pages for its main content while covering effectively many important perspectives in discussing the films. The short length of the book may also challenge those readers who are not familiar with the films *per se* and would like to read more thorough explanation of each point being brought forward. For example, Marchetti moves her discussion from drugs, to lifestyle, then to the state's internal corruption in the chapter on global economy. Yet the linkage between these topics may not be readily comprehensible to readers who do not know the films and the situations of Hong Kong well, resulting easily in a turn-off for these readers. Interrelated discussions such as the above could certainly have benefited from more background information if the scope of the book allows.

Marchetti's monograph is one of the first that gives such an in-depth, insightful review of the *Infernal Affairs* trilogy, components of which could arguably have saved Hong Kong cinema from its commercial abyss in the late 1990s. Regardless of the relative condensed size, this book will certainly remain an important literature to help decipher the complex ideas found in this box-office grossing series, and the films' interrelationship with Hong Kong as a particular geopolitical region standing in between the East and West, Hong Kong's cinematic tradition, and the global film market at large.

Hollywood Goes to Washington: American Politics on Screen

By Michael Coyne
London: Reaktion Books, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-86189-368-0. 70 illustrations + 229 pp. £16.95 (pbk).

A review by Shayne Pepper, North Carolina State University, USA

After an American election season long enough to make some people become amateur policy wonks and others absolutely sick of political coverage, it was with equal parts fascination and weariness that I approached Michael Coyne's new book, *Hollywood Goes to Washington: American Politics on Screen*. At the time of writing this review, Barack Obama has just won the election for President of the United States, and, given his unique background, we can only imagine how Hollywood might tell his story one day. This imagined Obama biopic would fit quite well with one of Coyne's central ideas -- that American political films often rely on the "great men of history" narrative. Coyne outlines this notion in his discussion of *Young Mr. Lincoln* (John Ford, 1939), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (Frank Capra, 1939), and many others. In his analysis of American presidents in cinema, he writes:

> The US presidency symbolizes the pinnacle of promise in American life. Every four years, the people of the United States demand a new vision to accompany a new (or reaffirmed) savior; and that democratic process is infused with essentially the same mythic hope that lies at the heart of many classic American movies: the conviction that one good man truly *can* make a difference. (41)

It remains to be seen if Obama's presidency will make such a difference, but with that story yet to be lived, we are left to look back on the history of Hollywood's treatment of politics. Coyne's book is not a bad starting point for such an endeavour.

In addition to tracing out certain thematic threads among American political films, Coyne's book works as a broad overview of Hollywood's engagement with the political process, major political figures (especially presidents), and the rise of post-Kennedy public mistrust and conspiratorial thinking. Coyne outlines several categorizations that one might consider useful for organizing a course syllabus but, unfortunately, he does not develop these categories into a well-argued thesis. At just over 200 pages, this book could ultimately be useful as a primer in an undergraduate course devoted to American politics on film but lacks the scholarly rigor to be particularly helpful for academic research. Footnotes are scant (several chapters have only two to four footnotes apiece), and much of the book would benefit from engagement with the work other scholars have done on these films. If for no other reason, such additions would offer further avenues of research for students who *do* use it as primer.

What the book does offer is a clear and engaging overview of a large number of films, even shining a spotlight on several lesser-known or forgotten gems: for example *Amerika* (Donald Wyre, 1987), the made-for-television film about a Soviet takeover of the United States. Previously publishing as a novelist, Coyne's prose can be highly engaging. While his appealing descriptions may make the reader want to search out particular films, this does not make his analysis any more thoughtful. Ironically, Coyne's critique of D.W. Griffith's biopic *Abraham Lincoln* (1930) could be levelled against Coyne's own book. He writes,

> The trouble with Griffith's film is that it attempts to cover all these stages [of Lincoln's life] -- and in only 94 minutes. Consequently, there is little depth to the film, so that it represents history as 'one damn thing after another.' The effect is akin to flicking through a comic book with few chances to digest scenes or appreciate historically momentous events before moving on to the next tableau. (44)

The same criticism easily applies to Coyne's own project. While he pinpoints key films in American film history, he often says very little about their significance, as he is too busy moving on to the next film.

A particularly obvious example of this is the book's sixth chapter, 'Enemies Within: White Hoods, Red Scares, and Black Lists.' In this chapter (barely spanning twelve pages), Coyne attempts to catalogue the major films that feature far right -- and left-wing extremism. Saying of *American History X* (Tony Kaye, 1998) that because it is "raw, uncompromising and powerful" it could "just as aptly have been titled *American Tragedy X*" does very little to tell us anything about this complex film and its place in the canon of American political film, or even Coyne's own book (162). He similarly breezes over another ideologically-aligned film when he writes of *Red Dawn* (John Milius, 1984) that it is:

> not so much a right-wing guerilla fantasy as a paramilitary wet dream in which resolute, resilient and resourceful American teenagers kicked Soviet and Cuban asses all over Colorado. Joe McCarthy would have been proud of them, and no doubt he would have loved the film. (164)

These statements offer little more than witty criticism, and the chapter has regretfully little to say about many other films it lists like *I Married A Communist* (Robert Stevenson, 1949), *Reds* (Warren Beatty, 1981), and *Citizen Cohn* (Frank Pierson, 1992), films that have received worthwhile attention by other scholars who actually had much to say about them.

Instead, Coyne's work is prone to pithy statements and complains about unsatisfying endings. Coyne even goes so far as to offer suggestions for better casting choices. He states, for instance, that Tommy Lee Jones would have been better than Anthony Hopkins in *Nixon* (Oliver Stone, 1995). At several points in the book, Coyne makes the claim that several of these films ultimately affected whether or not certain politicians were elected to office. He cites footage of Gerald Ford's nomination of Richard Nixon at the RNC convention appearing on a television screen in *All The President's Men* (1976) as a crucial reason why Ford did not win the next election. Similarly Oliver Stone's *JFK* (1991) is said to have had a powerful impact on Bill Clinton's defeat of George Bush. Since much has been written about Oliver Stone's *JFK*, I looked forward to Coyne's own addition to this body of analysis. Unfortunately after calling it an example of "hagiography without the saint" and making other less than insightful comments (particularly about Kevin Costner's performance as Jim

Garrison), Coyne ultimately concludes that in attaching critiques of the film to the published screenplay, "Stone has done history a greater service in making those sources readily accessible than he did by making the film" (73). This critically divisive film, like many other significant films mentioned in the book, is given practically no thoughtful consideration, and the reader is perpetually left wanting more.

The fifth chapter is easily Coyne's strongest, and it is notably the one where he discusses the fewest films. While much of the book zips through several films in a single page, Coyne spends the entire chapter discussing only five films that were released in what he calls the "Brief Shining Moment" of political films in the age of "Camelot," from 1962-1964. His readings of *Advise and Consent* (Otto Preminger, 1962), *The Manchurian Candidate* (John Frankenheimer, 1962), *Seven Days in May* (John Frankenheimer, 1964), *The Best Man* (Franklin Schaffner, 1964), and *Fail-Safe*, (Sidney Lumet, 1964) are informative and engaging, demonstrating the critical depth that one wishes was more present in the rest of the book. He even takes the time to offer intriguing anecdotal information such as the fact that Martin Luther King Jr. was approached to play a U.S. Senator in *Advise and Consent*, though there were no African-American Senators in Congress at the time.

While much of the material discussed in this book is covered in Ian Scott's *American Politics in Hollywood Film* (Routledge, 2000), Coyne does little to update Scott's work to the present. Films released after 2000 such as *Fahrenheit 9/11* (Michael Moore, 2004), *Good Night and Good Luck* (George Clooney, 2005), *Syriana*, (Stephen Gaghan, 2005) and *Death of a President* (Gabriel Range, 2006) get no more than a handful of lines each. Though one of the most recent contributions to American political films, *W.* (Oliver Stone, 2008) was not released before this publication, one would not, based on this evidence, imagine that Coyne would have very much to say about it. Despite such shortcomings, Coyne's book is an enjoyable read and would be a useful text in introducing students to many of the major (and minor) films dealing with American politics. In addition to his many concise and useful descriptions, one could look at these points of contention as a starting point for developing a critical dialogue among the students.