

Reviews

- Alan Lovell

Don Siegel, *A Siegel Film* Faber & Faber, 1993.
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He said, 'You seem to have it under control.'

I said, 'Well I feel like everything's going all right.'

He said, 'So I'm going to head on out.'

And I said, 'Okay, Head on out.'

I loved having you here.'

Clint Eastwood, 'The Padron'

In a variety of ways, Don Siegel marked the most intense phase of my relationship with Hollywood. In 1968, I organised a season of his films at the National Film Theatre in London. I wrote a booklet to accompany the season which I later revised into a more considered piece of work. Because of this work, I got to know Siegel personally. I remember him as a man of charm and modesty. His charm was particularly attractive because it was laced with a subtle and sharp wit: his modesty was engaging because every now and then a simple and strong egoism peeped through. Don more than deserved the graceful tribute Clint Eastwood wrote when he died.¹ Reading Siegel's autobiography provoked both strong memories of past pleasures and uncomfortable reminders of critical problems still unsolved. I'll begin with the pleasures.

Memories of my relationship with Siegel now seem like the fantasies a love of Hollywood encourages. Did I really

- travel round London in a chauffeur driven Rolls which had a drinks cabinet and was available at any time of the day or night?
- have dinner at the Dorchester and on finishing stroll over to another table to chat to John Huston?
- go backstage after seeing Sammy Davis perform and discuss the auteur theory with Sammy?
- watch a television programme in the company of Clint Eastwood?

The groundwork for my enthusiasm for Siegel's films had been prepared when I was a student in the late 1950s. I saw *Riot in Cell Block 11* at the Oxford Scala – a cinema that showed a wonderful range of films. The film created a powerful effect. I was excited by its unapologetic presentation of male anger and violence: the directness of the dramatisation; its stark images; the control evident in the direction; its lack of sentimentality.

Even now, I retain a vivid sense of male bodies from the film. I remember the tallness of Leo Gordon, the thicksetness of Neville Brand. I remember the anger on their faces, the tension in their bodies. I even remember the expressiveness of their clothes – Gordon's vest, Brand's rough prison shirt. I wasn't especially concerned about who had directed the film. My discovery that Don Siegel had directed it came in the middle 1960's. That discovery was inspired by my enthusiasm for the auteur theory.

When the auteur theory started to seep into British film culture, I'd been resistant to it. The main reason for this was that the British source of the theory was the magazine *Movie*. I'd been hostile to *Movie*, mainly on political grounds. Despite this political distance, *Movie*'s auteur criticism began to increasingly interest me. I moved from simple rejection to critical engagement. I started to search out auteur films, Samuel Fuller and Robert Aldrich's thrillers, Anthony Mann's westerns, Max Ophüls' melodramas, Roger Corman's horror films...

In the early/middle 1960s, cinemas offered a wide variety of viewing experiences. Some London cinemas specialised in older genre films; I remember with especial affection the crime films I saw at the Tolmer (a decrepit cinema in Euston) and the Westerns I saw in the company of predominantly Afro-Caribbean audiences at the Electric in Notting Hill Gate. There were

provincial cinemas, which showed slightly older Hollywood films. Some first run cinemas were still putting together two feature programmes, with the second feature often being an older film. Art cinemas mixed old Hollywood movies with contemporary movies from France, Italy and Japan.

The result was a great liberation, discovery after discovery of films that really excited me. The search and discovery was as much part of the fun as the viewing. My enthusiasm for *Underworld USA* and *The Tomb of Ligeia* was made much stronger because I discovered they were showing at an obscure suburban cinema in Leeds and actually found the cinema; for *The Hanged Man* because of a sudden realisation that it was a second feature at the Odeon in the Holloway Road, London; and for *Baby Face Nelson* because of an embarrassed awareness that I was the only person in the cinema who had come to see it rather than the main feature.

Then the National Film Theatre started to run complete auteur seasons, often with the director present. One of the most memorable experiences of my cinemagoing life was a Nicholas Ray season. The experience was created both by the films and by the presence of Ray at most of the screenings. He introduced the films with an engaging mixture of personal eccentricity, general enthusiasm for the process of filmmaking, and a willingness to engage with any kind of questioner from the most pedantic to the most sophisticated.

The presence of the directors at many of these seasons was important for the attractions of the auteur theory. For the critics who organised the seasons and wrote the books the directors developed a symbolic function. We projected onto them the qualities of both the heroes of their films and the stars who played the heroes. I know that for me Don Siegel was among other things some kind of combination of the central figures of *Baby Face Nelson*, *Hell is for Heroes* and *The Killers* (a psychotic gangster, a stoic infantryman, and a brutal criminal!) as well as Mickey Rooney, Steve McQueen and Lee Marvin, the actors who played those parts.

Present problems

To-day the pleasures generated by auteurism appear like relics from an innocent age long gone. The auteur theory has been subject to powerful attacks from all kinds of directions. By now, most film students know about its limitations. Despite all this auteurism flourishes! At all levels of film criticism, directors are divided between auteurs and non-auteurs. Courses are organized and books and articles written about individual directors and their visions. Even students who know about the limitations of the auteur theory organise their film viewings based on director's names. The analyses of films may be more sophisticated, alert to the film's incoherences rather than its coherences. The choice of directors may be wider, more sensitive to gender and ethnicity. But the fundamental auteurist assumption about the dominance and centrality of the director is left intact.

If we want to reflect on this, Don Siegel is a key figure. The development of his critical reputation is intertwined with the development of the auteur theory. His status as an auteur is now pretty much taken for granted but it was the application of the theory to directors like him, which encouraged much of the early hostility to it. Siegel might occasionally make an interesting film, it was argued, but generally, his work suggested no more than a craftsman with modest ambitions did. How could such a person be regarded as an artist of value?

Siegel himself was caught up in these developments. When critics began to discuss him as an auteur, he was initially critical of the theory along lines which were common to people working in Hollywood. Filmmaking was a collective process. No one person should be given special credit. But gradually he became favourable to the theory; a hand-written credit, 'a Siegel film' began to appear on his films.

Given this centrality, Siegel's autobiography should be of great interest. Apart from his relationship with the auteur theory, an account of a film maker whose career began when the studio system was dominant, who established himself as a director when it was declining, who

worked closely with the major star of the post studio period, Clint Eastwood, ought to illuminate our understanding of the Hollywood production process. Sadly, a first response to reading the book is that it tells us nothing useful about anything. It's an embarrassingly bad book. Lem Dobb's hostile estimate of it when it was first published is exactly right, as is his judgement of the dramatised sequences which recur throughout the book as 'awkward, mawkish and phoney'.²

It's tempting to dismiss the book as a disastrous mistake whose failure might be attributed to exhaustion and low spirits caused by bad experiences in the making of his last two films, *Rough Cut* and *Jinxed*, together with poor health. Whether this is the case or not, I think something valuable can still be learnt from the book. To do this it needs to be read in two ways. First, it needs to be read in the spirit it's offered. The numerous dramatic sequences suggest an ambition to write a script. What fiction does this script create?

The hero of this fiction is a 'feisty' individual continuously and endlessly at war with unimaginative studio bosses and incompetent producers. He fights this war in order to do good work and retain his self-respect. It's a hopeless war but in fighting it, our hero demonstrates his courage and resourcefulness. He acknowledges his inevitable defeat through an ironic humour. As I'll suggest later, there are problems with this story but it undoubtedly points to something important about the situation of Hollywood directors – which is the instability and loosely defined nature of the job.

The job has this character because:

1. In the period Siegel is concerned with, directors were, almost invariably, employees. Most of the projects they worked on were assignments. Many of the people they worked with, including key personnel, were not chosen by them. Yet, they took much of the responsibility for the success or failure of a project. This responsibility was complicated by the fact that the rules about how to produce a successful product (a feature film) were elusive. One result of this was that directors

had more room for manoeuvre than conventional employees. Another was that they were likely to be treated in a more arbitrary fashion.

2. The relationship between the director and the producer was always ill defined and unstable. The simplest version, which was most in evidence when the studio system was dominant, gave the producer overall responsibility for the film, both on the business and the creative side. The director was primarily responsible for what happened when the film was being shot i.e. he/she had a limited function on a par with the cinematographer or sound recordist. A more complicated relationship was always possible and became more in evidence as the studio system declined. The producer was responsible for the 'business' side of the film, dealing with contractual, logistical and financial matters. The director was responsible for the 'creative' side of the film, dealing with scripting, acting, shooting, editing. This relationship left it unclear as to who has the final control of the movie. Because of the overall lack of clarity, it's not surprising that conflict frequently occurs between directors and producers or that directors try to resolve the problem by becoming producers as well as directors.

3. There are potential threats to the director's authority from other sources. The most important of these is the star. This threat is especially unpredictable because it's dependent on shifting, hard to calculate elements like respective status and temperaments.

Siegel experienced all the problems which arose out of this situation. 90% of the films he directed were assignments. He was often forced to work with actors he thought inadequate, cameramen who were unsympathetic, writers he regarded as hacks. His status as an employee was classically illustrated when he was forced to shoot a prologue and epilogue of which he disapproved for *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

The ill-defined nature of the director producer relationship dogged him throughout his career. He provides a particularly vivid account of the problems it created during the making of *Madigan*. He had fierce battles with the producer Frank Rosenberg over the script, choice

of locations and editing. His last but one picture, *Rough Cut*, provided a final, humiliating illustration of the director's situation.

Throughout the making of the film, Siegel was fundamentally at odds with the producer, David Merrick. This led Merrick to (among other things): secretly hire another writer to work on the script; fire Siegel, have conversations with Blake Edwards about taking over and eventually replace Siegel with Peter Hunt; rehire Siegel; abandon the ending which Siegel had shot and reshoot it with another director.

He seems to have been luckier in his relationship with stars. His shared outlook on filmmaking and temperamental affinity with Clint Eastwood were particularly fortunate. He had difficulties with Steve McQueen and Shirley Maclaine but his only substantial problem seems to have been with John Wayne during the making of *The Shootist*. But even with Wayne, he was able to negotiate the difficulties which arose. Given all these experiences, it's not surprising that Siegel wants to dramatise his life in the way that he does. But there's another way of reading the book. If we ignore the fiction and read it in as literal a way as possible, a very different picture of Siegel's career emerges.

He appears as the perfect company man who takes on almost any project which is offered him, whatever its limitations (bad scripts, crazy schedules, inadequate budgets, poor actors). Sure, he grumbles but he knuckles down and makes the picture. He often threatens to walk off pictures. But in a career as a director which lasted nearly 40 years and encompassed 35 films he never once carries out this threat whatever the provocation (*Rough Cut* is a telling example in this respect). He even works when other people are on strike.

I don't think this version of Siegel's career is necessarily competitive with the one he tries to dramatise. The two versions can be integrated by exploring why, given all the bad experiences he had of the system, his opposition was weak, never amounting to more than complaints, arguments and jokes.

There's one simple and obvious reason why somebody might continue to work in a situation

as frustrating as Siegel found Hollywood without making strong challenges. At its very worst, the job of a Hollywood director has enormous attractions. Why risk it? To do so requires strong critical principles and/or an adventurous (anarchic?) temperament plus the possibility of comparable alternative employment. In my view, Siegel had none of these, at least in a powerful enough fashion.

In Siegel's case, the question of alternative employment is the easiest to deal with. Once he'd completed what seems to have been rather an unfocused education (the details are rather blurry), he started to work in the film industry. Filmmaking was the only work he knew. His one obvious alternative was television. But, although he worked in the medium, he had a conventional, dismissive attitude towards it, so it was never a serious alternative.

Siegel's own cultural values weren't of the kind that generates serious conflict with the Hollywood system. The two areas likely to cause problems for somebody of Siegel's generation were art and politics. Art doesn't figure strongly in his outlook. Apart from the cinema, he rarely mentions the other arts. When he does he's conventional – he speaks about painting with respect, he's dismissive of rock music and television. But these values aren't strongly felt.

Politics is an especially interesting area in relation to Siegel. For somebody of his generation, they were likely to have a strong presence. His background was Jewish. He became adult at the time of capitalist collapse and the rise of Fascism. He established himself as a director as the cold war started and became virulent. The Hollywood he worked in was strongly marked by these events – first through the politicisation of writers, directors, producers, and actors and then through the anti communist investigations of the late 1940's and the early 1950's.

Siegel always identified himself as a liberal. And yet he remained oddly detached from politics. He doesn't seem to have been involved in any political activities. He always discusses politics in passing. In the course of his work, he met and worked with many Hollywood leftists

including such well-known figures as Robert Rossen, Albert Maltz and Abraham Polonsky. He also worked with Hollywood rightists like John Wayne and Clint Eastwood. His comments on working with them don't indicate much concern or interest in their political positions. Although he seems to have been brushed by the anti-Communist investigations (he may have been incorrectly identified as a communist sympathiser), this inspires no reaction from him about the investigations.

Most revealing is his attitude to strikes. On several occasions, he describes how he continued to work while strikes were occurring. The most dramatic occasion was when he was directing his first feature, *The Verdict*. In 1945/6, a bitter three-cornered battle was fought in Hollywood between the studio employers, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) and the Conference of Studio Unions (CSU). The CSU had been formed partly to organise non-unionised workers and partly because of IATSE's soft relationship with the employers. The employers, recognising the CSU as a serious threat, refused to recognise the union despite Government support. A series of strikes took place.

In *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund describe the character of these strikes:

The strike, especially at Warner Brothers, had witnessed picket line scenes reminiscent of the worst labour-management confrontations of the thirties in Detroit, Chicago or Oakland. Warners (and their IATSE allies) employed scabs, thugs, tear gas fire hoses and the studio's private police to disrupt picket lines and break the strike.³

This was the situation when Siegel began to work on *The Verdict*. Confronted by the strikers outside the Warner studio, he checked with the Screen Director's Guild and was told that legally he had a contract with Warners, which he had to honour. He describes in some detail how he honoured his legal obligation by breaking the picket line either with the help of a police escort or as part of a charge with other non-strikers. His only comment on all this 'I wondered about two

things: why am I fighting for Warner Brothers and why am I fighting against the strikers. I didn't even know what the strikers were fighting for: 'Ours not to reason why'. Ours but to do or die.'⁴ The inevitable conclusion seems to be that politics weren't important for Siegel. Its not surprising that the political ambiguity of films he directed has been a recurring issue: *Is Invasion of the Body Snatchers pro or anti-Communist? How can a liberal direct a film like Dirty Harry? If Siegel lacked the kind of critical principles which encourage strong challenges to the Hollywood system, what about personal temperament? This seems to be more promising ground. Siegel's view of himself both in this book and in his numerous interviews is as an anti-establishment man, an instinctive rebel, temperamentally incapable of tolerating stupidity and philistinism. Much of his autobiography is taken up with descriptions of the conflicts his rebelliousness kept producing. Because of Siegel's poor dramaturgy it's not always easy to follow the logic of his rebellions but what emerges from the overall account isn't the portrait of a natural rebel. Read carefully, the portrait, which emerges, is of controlled outbursts. They can be divided into two kinds. The first kind is verbal aggression but ultimate acquiescence. His account of the production of *The Gun Runners*, is a good example of this. Invited to direct a third version of the Hemingway story, *To Have and Have Not*, Siegel tells the producer: 'Your version, which is much more difficult to shoot than the first two, will have to be made quicker and cost less. It's a stupid trick at best, if you can pull it off... I'm amazed you want to do a remake of a remake. Why not do an original story?' He points to the limitations of the script: 'I was waiting in vain for one laugh'. He laments the inadequacies of the cast: 'How can you compare a Bogart picture, or a Garfield picture with an Audie Murphy picture?' He concludes, 'I do not think the picture, which you are blindly stubborn about, is going to make a dime. Plus, it's going to be physically extremely difficult to do.'⁵ He can be aggressive like this because he knows the producer needs a director like him to make the project work. Siegel directs the movie.*

The second kind is of actions which involve risks but where the odds have been carefully calculated. For example, while shooting *Two Mules for Sister Sarah* he has problems with Shirley Maclaine which climax with her walking off the set. Siegel announces that he is quitting the picture because of her behaviour. Describing how he reached his decision, he says, 'I did some quick mental calculations. I figured I had shot more than half the picture. I would probably share directorial credit.'⁶ He also knows that he has the support of Clint Eastwood against Maclaine. Inevitably, the studio puts pressure on Maclaine. She is forced to make peace with Siegel. He resumes directing.

Reading the book in these two ways, at both a fictional and a literal level made me realise that Siegel was a much more complicated figure than I had imagined. He certainly wasn't the anti-organisation, nonconformist, anarchist hero I had constructed. A much less heroic figure emerges from reading his autobiography.

Conclusion

What consequences does all this have for the Auteur Theory and Siegel's status as an Auteur? Trying to make sense of my own initial response to Siegel's work, I became aware of just how much the auteur theory had been part of a critical battle to establish the cultural respectability of the cinema. It was designed to show that there were filmmakers with their own artistic personalities, whose films expressed a distinctive vision of the world. If this could be established, films would have the same artistic status as painting, poetry, drama and the novel. Since this battle no longer seems quite as urgent, I wondered how I would respond to the films if I reviewed them without having the need to establish Siegel as an artist in the forefront of my mind. Looking at the films again, my first response was to the quality of Siegel's direction. This was most evident in his ability to stage action. He was always inventive in his staging. Andrew Sarris is surely right to say that 'the final car chase in *The Line Up* and the final shoot out in *Madigan* are among the most stunning

displays of action montage in the history of the American cinema'.⁷ But one could add to these numerous other sequences: the sustained bank robbery which *Charley Varrick* begins with; the pursuit of the hero and heroine by the pods in the climax of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*; the attempted escape of the bank robbers in *Dirty Harry*; the motorbike pursuit in the park in *Coogan's Bluff*.

It's very easy to take such sequences for granted and not realise how demanding they are to shoot. They are easy to do routinely or to skimp on. In his account of the making of *Charley Varrick*, Siegel describes in numbing detail the problems of staging the final action sequence of the film. This involved a complex stunt with a car pursuing a plane. But for all its relentlessness, what the detail makes clear is the problems of creating such sequences. Siegel's account demonstrates the complex skills involved, the precise calculations of risk which have to be made, and the level of commitment needed by all the people concerned. Given these, it's all too easy to settle for second best. Siegel rarely seems to have done this.

The second skill was his ability as a director-editor. He always shot films with a detailed awareness of how they would be edited. But compared with a director like John Ford, who shot with a similar sense, Siegel's editing was complex. And he was never in the position of directors like George Stevens or William Wyler with budgets and schedules which allowed them to shoot large variety of angles. So Siegel always carefully prepared his shooting so that he could get all the shots he was likely to need.

Editing was the crucial part of the filmmaking process for Siegel. The composer, Lalo Schiffrin, rightly said 'Because of his experience in montage, he is aware of pace and rhythm in film-making. He is very aware of tempo'.⁸ His commitment to getting the editing right was very strong. It's clearly demonstrated in his detailed and precise comments on early cuts of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.⁹ The result was great control over the rhythm of his films. I don't think there is one film where Siegel directed and controlled the editing which is deficient in this

respect. *Escape from Alcatraz* is one of the best examples. The control over the pace never falters. It's the one area where the film is the equal of *A Man Escapes*.

The most obvious weakness of the films was their scripts. There are a large number of films with obviously weak scripts from *Night unto Night* at the beginning of his career to *Rough Cut* at the end. The difficulties in getting the script right recur throughout the autobiography and in his interviews. This is, perhaps, not surprising for a director in Siegel's position. A director who generally worked in the low/modestly budgeted areas could hardly expect to get the best scripts. Nor could he expect the kind of time which might be necessary to get a script into good order. However, his autobiography suggests that there may be other explanations for the script deficiencies. It is so poorly dramatised – crude characterisation, heavy handed dramatic tension, flat dialogue – that it suggests that Siegel was insensitive to key dramatic values. Maybe the constant exposure to poor scripts desensitised him.

He developed a strategy for dealing with poor scripts. This was to increase the pace of the action. I saw this strategy at close quarters. When he was directing *The Black Windmill*, he asked me for my comments on the script. I said that the plot was so complicated that an audience would find it hard to follow. He responded that he would direct the film fast so audiences wouldn't have time to worry about plot complications.

If my account of Siegel's work is accurate, it poses a central critical question. Can the quality of his direction compensate for bad scripts? According to the critical orthodoxy which has dominated since the *Cahiers du Cinéma* intervention in the 1950s, bad scripts shouldn't necessarily matter. Since *mise en scene* is the key creative area of filmmaking, it can overcome deficiencies in scripts.¹⁰ This orthodoxy was in part developed to accommodate directors like Siegel who worked with low budgets.

But my reviewing of the films didn't convince me that Siegel's *mise en scene* could save a bad script. For example, the *mise en scene* of *Edge of*

Eternity has much the same quality as that of *The Line Up*. But it can't compensate for poor characterisation, mediocre dialogue and a slack narrative. The British director, Ronald Neame, was surely right when he said that a director can only plus or minus a script by 25% through his work on the film.¹¹ How can decisions about setting, decor, the placing of actors, camera movement, lighting, fundamentally change the nature of a script?

It's clear that *mise en scene* has been given a magical role, the ability to turn dross into gold. And this power has played a key part in giving the auteur theory intellectual credibility. The most obvious and powerful objection to designating the director, as the author of a film is the lack of control directors have over the films they direct. If the deployment of *mise en scene* is considered the fundamental creative act in the making of a film, this objection can be met. *Mise en scene* is the area, which directors are most likely to control so their lack of control in other areas may not be so significant. But if we don't grant *mise en scene* this kind of power, the question of control reasserts itself.

Siegel's autobiography makes it abundantly clear that throughout his career his control over the films he directed was partial. There wasn't one film he directed where his control wasn't substantially qualified. The films he made with Clint Eastwood probably gave him most control but even with these, Eastwood's power was a strong limit. (In a recent Sky television documentary about Siegel, his son, Christopher Tabori, suggested there were considerable tensions in their relationship). And to take the most extreme example where his control was limited, his account of the production of *Rough Cut* makes any claim for it to be regarded as 'a Siegel film' ludicrous.

So, where does this leave the auteur theory? This article isn't the place to develop a substantial account of authorship in filmmaking but I can make some suggestions.

1. A strong model of individual authorship is inappropriate for filmmaking. Far from establishing

the cultural value of the cinema, such a model either makes the cinema seem a second rate art or produces intellectual contortions in an effort to justify it.

2. The model of authorship needs to be a decentred and more diffuse one, capable of taking into account the contributions of a variety of the people involved in the making of a film. These contributions need to be discussed in a substantial way not simply acknowledged.

3. If a model of individual authorship isn't appropriate, neither is a model of collective and equal authorship. Filmmaking is a political process with, for a variety of reasons, an unequal distribution of power.

4. Directors have a strong claim for being given a priority in any discussion of authorship. Not because of their control over *mise en scene* but because of their centrality in the film making process. Their position allows them to contribute to all the key areas. However, their ability to do this varies a good deal, depending crucially on their experience and commercial success. It also varies in different periods of history. For example, in the Hollywood, which was dominated by the studio system, producers should probably be given priority.

Where does Siegel's work stand if we take a less exalted view of the power of the director? For me, the most striking feature to emerge from re-viewing the films was no longer the artistic vision expressed in them but the fact that they are rarely dull. In almost every film he directed, there is a sense of energy: the pace is well judged, the story telling is economic, the editing is extremely tight, the humour is engaging and the action is vivid and exciting. All of these are areas where it can be demonstrated that he made a substantial contribution. This suggests that rather than thinking of Siegel as an artist with a vision, it might be more profitable to think of him as an artist who entertained audiences. But is this to diminish Siegel? Only if we accept the common judgement that providing entertainment is an inferior activity and that there is some fundamental distinction

between art and entertainment. This isn't the place to explore the nature and validity of that judgement. For the moment I am happy to remember and honour Don Siegel for all the pleasure I got from *Riot in Cell Block 11*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Line Up*, *Baby Face Nelson*, *Charley Varrick* and many other of the films he directed.

Notes

- 1 Clint Eastwood, 'The Padron' [Don Siegel], *Film Comment*, September/October 1991.
- 2 Lem Dobbs, 'Two Rode Together', *Sight and Sound*, vol. 3, no. 10, 1993.
- 3 Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, University of California Press, 1983, p. 217.
- 4 *A Siegel Film*, p. 98.
- 5 *A Siegel Film*, pp. 207–08.
- 6 *A Siegel Film*, p. 334.
- 7 Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929–1968*, New York, p. 137.
- 8 Stuart Kaminsky, *Don Siegel: Director*, New York, 1974.
- 9 These can be found in Al LaValley ed., *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 1989).
- 10 *Mise en scene* doesn't have a precise meaning in film criticism. Effectively it has become a synonym for direction.
- 11 Quoted in Eric Sherman, ed., *Directing the Film*, Los Angeles, 1979, p.46.

• Katerina Loukopoulou

Angela Dalle Vacche, ed., *The Visual Turn: Classical Film Theory and Art History*, Rutgers University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-8135-3173-X

Angela Dalle Vacche's dialectical coupling of essays from film theory and art history offers a timely response to calls for a broadened perspective of cinema, articulated, for example, by exhibitions which marry art and film histories: *Renoir/Renoir* (Cinemathèque Française, 2005), where paintings of Pierre-Auguste Renoir were exhibited next to the films of his son, Jean Renoir; and *The Movement of Images* (Centre Pompidou, 2006), where the filmic experience of art was brought to the fore. As the curator of the latter put it:

Nowadays, at the dawn of the 21st century, while we are witnessing a massive migration of images . . . borne along by the digital revolution. . . . it becomes possible, not to say necessary, to redefine the cinema beyond the experimental conditions which governed it in the 20th century – that is to say, no longer from the limited viewpoint of film history, but, at the crossroads of live spectacle and visual art, from a viewpoint expanded to encompass a general history of representations.¹

Dalle Vacche's compilation approaches such a global compass in two respects. Firstly, it explicitly demonstrates the common visual grounds of film history and art history, which the two disciplines explore, research and cultivate by pursuing similar lines of enquiry: the haptic and the optical, iconography, iconophilia and iconophobia, the linear and the painterly, the structuring of perception and subjectivity. Secondly, the dialogical juxtaposition of essays written by art historians and film theorists demystifies the process of bridging the gaps between two disciplines, often physically and metaphorically separated by academic institutions, which nevertheless have many methodological questions and themes in common.

A main contribution to the so-called 'visual turn' of film studies, which Dalle Vacche posits, is the actual unearthing and anthologising of essays which would otherwise be rarely consulted by *both* film and art historians. The film-oriented reader will encounter Heinrich Wölfflin's general visual interpretation principles on the linear and the painterly, and the art-minded one will encounter Sergei Eisenstein's polemical essay on El Greco: art history as written by a film director and film theorist. These interdisciplinary encounters within the same textual space are of great value, since art historians and film historians rarely stray beyond the (physical and metaphorical) boundaries of their respective disciplines to meet each other.

Dalle Vacche's diachronic matchmaking of essays is thought provoking and innovative. All the essays' themes and topics cover the

formative years of art history as a discipline on the one hand and of film as an art form on the other. It is stimulating to work through this volume which, more than many other edited collections, conveys in practice the sense of how ideas and concepts are carried forward from one writer to the next and of how the work of one theorist is reassessed and even deconstructed by future scholars.

Walter Benjamin's appropriation of Alois Riegl's art history of tendencies in the 'The Work of Art' essay [1936] is revisited by Patrice Rollet in his essay 'The Magician and the Surgeon: Film and Painting' [1990]. Rollet's essay, here translated from the French for the first time, originates from a volume of essays on painting and cinema edited by Raymond Bellour; it gives the reader some sense of Dalle Vacche's position with regard to prior work in the field of writing about cinema and painting in tandem.

Another notable coupling of essays is Erwin Panofsky's 'Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures' [1936] with Thomas Y. Levin's essay 'Iconology at the Movies: Panofsky's Film Theory' [1996]. Levin discusses, probably for the first time, the significance of Panofsky's paper on the art of the film (delivered to a bemused audience of the Metropolitan Museum of Art) within its historical context, and its subsequent reception by film theorists – most notably by Siegfried Kracauer.

This collection renegotiates, at a timely moment, the possible directions film studies and film history can take now that they have established their institutional status. However, Dalle Vacche's introductory essay is permeated by a tacit or even unconscious belief in the superiority of art history methods and in the benefits to be gained by film historians encountering these methods, as opposed to those to be had by art historians encountering film. The latter is only touched indirectly, while Dalle Vacche purports to 'broaden the horizon of film studies' (1) and asks 'Why have so few art historians written about the cinema?' (16).

If we accept the hypothesis that art historians might have eschewed engagement with moving

images because of what they see as film's illegitimacy as an academic subject, what would be the reason for film theorists and historians not to have engaged with art history's methods as a model to approach the realm of images, when film studies as a discipline made its first steps in the 1970s? Although Dalle Vacche categorises the project as a reaction against film studies' strong allegiance with literary theory, she does not tackle the root of the problem and explicitly criticise the methods and theories which have kept the study of film away from a sustained analysis of the visual. The methodologies dominant in film studies during its own formative period, be they semiotics, formalism, psychoanalysis or ideology, are evicted from the new territory of the visual turn without a sustained critique of their shortcomings. Thus it is not made clear how the visual turn thesis proposes to complement, expand on or even replace them, and for what purpose.

The introduction's scope is microscopic; it discusses each essay and its coupling analytically, but does not elaborate on how this dialogue can rework the existing methodological canon. Admittedly, this is a vast area of enquiry to tackle within the space of an introduction, but it needs to be approached if Dalle Vacche's argument is to be validated. The project of crossing disciplines is promising, but needs further elucidation and justification.

The positioning of this volume within the film studies and art history disciplines is left to a telescopic foreword by Donald Crafton, which usefully maps the territory, but with too broad brushstrokes and without reference to the actual essays compiled. However, Crafton's cautionary tone and reference to David Bordwell's testing and criticism of art history methodologies in his ground breaking *On the History of Film Style* (1997) problematises the debate on the history of 'viewing film through the lens of art history.' (x)

The Visual Turn appropriately literalises the Rutgers University Press Depth of Field Series,

a series which channels film and visual culture to new depths. The (literal) depth of field is a common ground of enquiry for art and film historians, but not necessarily researched with films and paintings held in tandem. Dalle Vacche's project provides some of the required steps in this direction. The compilation of such eclectic, yet significant interventions is a performative act itself of traversing boundaries. Above all, the book's well researched, up-to-date and extensive bibliography is a worthwhile addition to this new territory of interdisciplinary historiography and should prove to be an invaluable map for further navigation.

Note

- 1 Philippe-Alain Michaud, *The Movement of Images* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2006), p. 16.

• Lance Pettitt

Myrto Konstantarakos, ed., *Spaces in European Cinema*, Intellect Books, 2000.
ISBN 1-84150-004-6

Anne Jackel, *European Film Industries*, BFI, 2003.
ISBN 0-85170-948-6

Dina Iordanova, *Cinema of the Other Europe*, Wallflower 2003. ISBN 1-904764-20-7

Peter Hames, ed., *The Cinema of Central Europe*, Wallflower, 2004. ISBN 1-903364-61-2

In recent years within the British popular print and broadcast media, the changing contours of the EU, the political and administrative expression of 'Europe', have become a regular news item. Featured often as a problematic expansion, debates about Poland, Bulgaria and Turkey typically focus on economic and social impacts on existing 'Western Europe'. In a parallel fashion within academic circles and dating from the late-1980s, the development of film studies and area studies at universities has produced a body of work that usefully

complicates popular media perceptions of the cultural terrain and histories within and proximate to 'Europe'. The clutch of books reviewed here focus on the cinemas of European countries, with particular emphasis on Central East European films and filmmakers. They would be well worth the attention of media journalists for the insights that they provide about a transitional generation across a vast and variegated range of societies and their cultures. Those who are professionally engaged in the teaching of film and media at university will welcome publications that force us to re-consider our curricula, to push at the dominant bodies of films that we teach and the way that we teach them. The challenge offered by some of titles reviewed here, most forcibly by Iordanova (pp. 9–13; p. 167), is to consider a regional discourse and networks of cinema cultures, rather than the established 'national' mode or current de rigueur 'global' paradigm.

The Wallflower publications are astutely pitched, produced and framed to appeal beyond the purely academic market. Film studies as an academic subject has itself expanded and become more sophisticated, and certainly these books are evidence of a useful complicating of 'European cinema' dominated in mainstream curricula by (an unspoken) 'western' emphasis, 'European' often prefaced with 'art' and featuring French, Italian, Spanish and German films. Duncan Petrie's *Screening Europe* (BFI, 1992) was an early, emblematic collection of essays based on papers from a conference held in the terminal year of 1989 concerned to redefine and problematise 'Europe'. In a sense the books under review suggest the lines of the debate and different approaches that have followed in its wake. Hames and Iordanova both have a keen interest in promoting central and east central European cinema which has been a 'Cinderella' figure in curricula and scholarship. Iordanova also makes clear that her own work resonates between the disciplines of film studies and area studies often 'located' institutionally in language departments, and her book makes the case for greater

rapprochement. Both she and Hames (p. 4) critically acknowledge the investment and publication providing major reference books by OUP and the BFI.

Coming out of the BFI stable, Anne Jackel's *European Film Industries* has the most tightly defined remit of the titles reviewed here since it focuses on developments within the industries linked across the EU and Scandinavia since the early 1990s, with particular regard for implications for European public policy and business strategy (p. 2). It follows on from Angus Finney's work (1993, 1996) but without his use of interview material, adopting an approach informed by a political economist agenda. Supported with statistical tables gleaned from *Screen Digest*, *European Cinema Journal* and the EAVO sources, Jackel tends to treat cinemas in terms of their national units. On the evidence of her book, Iordanova is the leading advocate to argue that 'examining the cinema of East Central Europe in a regional context is a pre-condition for serious academic investigation' (p. 164), though Hames quietly but firmly rebuts this in his introduction saying that 'there is little case for regarding the four cinemas [Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia] as constituting a 'regional' cinema or for identifying a common Central European or East Central European cinema' (p. 6). For her own book, Jackel is insistent that 'it therefore continues to make sense to discuss the importance of the competitiveness of Europe's film industries in national terms' (p. 1). She is concerned primarily with assessing the present, noting the collective industries as 'undergoing transition' but is also interested in spotting future trends in its conclusion, perhaps with the idea that findings will contribute to future policy. She argues that the proliferation of pan-European networks witnessed since the 1990s are key to securing production and distribution strength in a rapidly changing and globalised mediascape. She notes that such a cinema and the films that it produces express a longer history of valuing the social and the cultural over the commercial, and that many EU states and those awaiting membership continue through their policies to support this

broad stance (p. 141). Whilst the book tends to focus on the established and dominant players, with some case studies devoted to northern European and Scandinavian cinema, there are short sections that deal with the emergence of and links with (p. 23 and p. 61) central and eastern European territories in the post-1989 period.

In a way, this illustrates Iordanova's point, bluntly put, that 'film scholarship on Eastern Europe in the West does not occupy a particularly prominent position in the context of Western studies into world cinema' (p. 161). It is thus for a much fuller treatment and with a different disciplinary emphasis that we can consider the *Wallflower* and *Intellect* books, providing as they do a clear indication of the state of research and publishing in the developing field of European cinema. The '24 Frames' series is distinctive venture by an independent publisher whose stated aim is to publish books on cinema that are text-based – but giving due attention to production contexts, genres and modes of representation, and retaining a strong director-led emphasis. Underlying both *Wallflower* books is the key theme of definition: what constitutes Europe, central, eastern; how this changes over history; and what is at stake in making groupings of territories, countries and new states as they emerge or re-form from the past? In Hames' book, the line-up of contributors is internationally spread, largely but not wholly academic, involving film makers, programmers of festivals and cinema culture broadly. *The Cinema of Central Europe* displays considerable skill in handling the contrasting but accessible styles of contributor without falling into unevenness, often a fault of such collections. Unfussy in style, with a lifetime's knowledge brought to bear, the book is expertly edited by Peter Hames, himself a renowned expert in Czech cinema. His introduction gives a lucid explanation of contexts pertaining to Central Europe and explains why he favours a 'national' frame within which to place the films he examines, but allows that others have accented the terms of a regional cinema to better

understand some of the productions discussed. Hames is careful to offer a measured objective 'to provide entry points into the cinematic cultures of the four countries' (p. 11) and a little later of 'access' via the series twenty-four essay approach on selected films. Whilst these are set out chronologically from the mid-1930s until the mid-1990s, he argues they can be read differently with equal merit and resists the idea that they are somehow 'representative'; rather, he argues, his selection aims to show what remarkable films were produced out of a variegated historical and cultural development, in interplay with western Europe, US cinema and earlier soviet models. Filmmaker Istvan Szabo's preface conjures up the image of a multi-lingual and cross-cultural village square in Budapest of pre-1914 as an ideal template for diversity and tolerance, framing the collection in a broadly humanist light in which 'our differences are in our methods of survival' (p. xiv) from common experiences of political and cultural oppressions. The strengths of the approach behind the '24 Frames' series are illustrated in this particular volume. What comes across here (more so than in the Myrto Konstantarakos collection) are clearly written, vibrant essays not just from academics but film lovers and people dedicated to the promotion of film culture. Their varied backgrounds and experience is refreshing and most of the authors write well in a way that acknowledges non-academic but nevertheless demanding readers. What marks this collection out is that Hames has chosen and successfully encouraged his contributors to communicate their knowledge and enthusiasm about particular films. The effect is to promote single fragments of a bigger picture of diverse and fascinating moving image-bank that is slowly making an impact on film studies and area studies curricula.

And a more explicit proselytising project underlies *Cinema of the Other Europe* which in its structure and content probably provides the best single volume work with which to organise and teach a university course on the topic. This is not surprising since the author acknowledges its long ten-year gestation and

that it is based as much in designing and teaching courses as giving academic conference papers. It certainly delivers a concise survey that sets out to provide a general overview that is nonetheless comprehensive in its coverage. Its three parts and seven chapters clearly lay out the territory for readers unfamiliar with the historical and cultural contexts for the films that are then analysed thematically, grouped in logical sections. The book is aimed at use by teachers as well as students, though at times the advice given to the former in 'Resources' section moves into overkill as we are instructed how to book lecture halls to show films (p. 168 in particular). As a book to teach with and learn from it shapes up well to be key text, in that the main body is supported with a resources appendix, filmography, full bibliography and no less than thirty pages of notes! These notes are in themselves a fascinating read since they seem both a product of the author's desire to police herself in the main text, keeping her work streamlined, lucid and pithy, but also acting as a way of venting her considerable personality, scholarship and involvement in the field. Her notes range from punchy two-liner put downs to longer discursive musings, all of which are informed from a range of sources, including book proposal outlines, correspondence, conversations and websites. Iordanova tends to be overly self-critical in the introduction, and at various points along the way, about the difficulties and responsibilities of producing a survey-type of book, noting how much she has to cover and the problems produced by compression or excision of material. Whilst one can sense her frustration, there is little need to be so: in the 162 pages of the body of the book, she does a remarkable job and succeeds in her objectives. This reviewer was not sure what kind of 'political correctness' she alludes to in her introduction, but her agenda is clearly to promote an interest in and understanding of a body of films and the regional cultures that produced them. For non-initiates of this corpus of work, the historical and political lines she draws are clear and instructive; she points out for instance that within the

established historiography of European cinema, the year 1968 in 'the West' is mainly remembered for the powerful student protests. In the context of East Central Europe, however, the most important event of that year was the suppression of the Prague Spring and the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia (p. 94). This neatly demonstrates her and Hames' thesis that viewing these countries as a group from a different point of reference, through a different lens, alters the way we define the geo-political and cultural history of the entity called 'Europe' and its relationships to 'Asia' and 'America'.

Intellect Books has an established list of European Studies books and journals and publishes vigorously in film studies too with several specialised journals. In a sense, it represents an attempt identified earlier to make available work out of the interface between these fields of expertise. However, as an exemplar, Konstantarakos's *Spaces in European Cinema* is a less than satisfying collection, attempting to address the issue of space within a series of essays that range across French, Italian, German, Swiss, Finnish and British cinema, across a wide period range. As in the other titles discussed above, the editor notes the importance of delineating definitional borders represented in the narratives of films from the cinemas of different countries, and how these function to include and exclude, draw to the centre or marginalise. In particular the essays are attempts to show how 'cinema acquires a power of control by fixing in place conflicting ideas about the constitution of social space' (p. 1). But the rationale for drawing these essays together needed much more justification and elaboration. Within an all too brief introduction, she attempts to set up the collection using a focus on 'space' as a concept with which to interrogate European cinema. While this is an interesting and worthwhile intellectual project, this reviewer was not fully convinced by the argument that 'there is a specificity to the European representation of

space, which clearly characterises it and makes it unique, even in such American genres as the film noir' (p. 5) Neither do I find evidence for her claim that 'centrality and marginality' in European cinema form a 'leit motif [that] one does not find in the film making of other cultures with quite the same obsession' (p. 4). Whilst the individual essays are in themselves mostly well written, passionate about their topic and cast new light on some well known directors and a familiar body of established and newer films, the spatial topic does not come across as a sustaining, overarching theme. Lacking contributor notes or an indication of the gestation of the essays, unlike the other books reviewed, this collection's readership seemed less clearly defined. Whereas in Hames' book the eclecticism seemed structured and enabling, Konstantarakos's collection lacked the sense of a common project, a quality that is difficult to achieve in such enterprises.

• Robert Shaughnessy

Sarah Hatchuel, *Shakespeare, from Stage to Screen*, Cambridge University Press, 2004. ISBN 0 521 83624 7

Judith Buchanan, *Shakespeare on Film*, Pearson Longman, 2005. ISBN 0 582 43716 4

The academic study of Shakespeare and the cinema is now well over a quarter of a century old, having in this time moved from the position of a marginalized sub-discipline, regarded with suspicion by practitioners of longer-established literary and performance-based scholarship, to that of well-nigh disciplinary centrality. An indispensable component of teaching, as well as an expanding area of research that has yielded conferences and symposia devoted to the topic and, on average, half a dozen new books each year, film and television Shakespeare is beginning to displace the theatre as the dominant cultural locus of performance; in recent years, in particular, work in this area has been at the forefront of interdisciplinary dialogue and theoretical innovation in the field as a whole.

In a marked shift of emphasis, the last decade has witnessed the emergence of a critical methodology and vocabulary more obviously attuned to the disciplinary emphases of cultural, media, film and television studies than to those of the performance-based, theatre-centred critical traditions from which the first generation of Shakespearean film scholarship originated. Critical discussion was once dominated by questions of fidelity in adaptation, the types, categories and classification of adaptation itself, the relationship between poetry and the visual image, and, most of all, the implications of the plays' transition to the screen from the cultural space in which they were assumed to be at home, the theatre; these days these preoccupations tend to be subsumed into the theoretically inflected and historically informed consideration of generic and institutional location, of the mechanisms through which Shakespearean films locate, identify and address spectators, of the ways in which they construct and mediate gender, race and class, of their implication within national and global marketplaces, of how they negotiate the relations between elite, mass and popular cultures, of how they register the impact of new film technologies, and of how they participate in representations of heritage and contribute to processes of canon formation. The definition of what constitutes 'Shakespeare on film' has also broadened: if the initial project was to isolate and legitimise an arthouse, auteurist canon that centred on the films of Olivier, Kurosawa, Kosintsev, Welles and Brook, the discipline now addresses a far more diverse low cultural output that incorporates derivatives, transpositions, offshoots, parodies, embedded citations, and even hardcore pornography.

Aspects of this current dispensation are evident in these volumes, which, in their own ways, both attempt to map the entire field of Shakespearean film, from its origins to the present. Hatchuel's study declares at the outset that, 'in order to understand the aesthetic stakes of screen adaptation', it must begin by examining 'the theatrical presentation of Shakespeare's plays from the Renaissance to the present' (p. 1), which is both something of a tall

order in just less than fifteen pages, and a task whose relevance to what follows is not entirely clear. It is succeeded by a brief history of the century of Shakespearean cinema and a consideration of the boundaries of the study; surveying the various attempts that have been made to categorise and define the various modes of Shakespearean film adaptation, Hatchuel determines 'to restrict the study to the adaptations which have as many common points as possible with the original plays' (pp. 18–19). Hatchuel defines this approach as 'historical and aesthetic', in that the aim of the work is 'to analyse how those plays are modified when they go through the film directors' prisms, and to identify which methods are chosen to put the images and Shakespeare's text in context' (ibid.). Taken together with the from/to trajectory inscribed within the book's title, the selective focus might suggest that Hatchuel is more concerned with the canonicity of Shakespearean film, and with its formal relationship with the theatre, than much recent media studies-influenced work has been; there is little sense here of contemporary film's conditions of articulation within cross-media, multimedia or intercultural contexts, nor of the lengths to which popular film has reduced and traduced Shakespeare, sometimes to little more than a residual presence. Hatchuel concentrates instead on the mainstream, predominantly but not exclusively realist tradition, whose contours have been shaped by the films of Olivier, Branagh, Zeffirelli and Welles; recent one-offs such as Julie Taymor's *Titus*, Richard Loncraine's *Richard III*, Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet*, and, inevitably, Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* are also discussed in depth (experimental or avant-garde work, such as that of Peter Brook and Derek Jarman, is only briefly considered). Hatchuel organises her discussion of Shakespearean film aesthetics under four main headings: 'From theatre showing to cinema telling', which deals with the adjustments involved in moving from enactment to narration; 'Masking film construction', which examines how the ruses of classic realism operate within Shakespearean adaptation; 'Reflexive constructions', which looks for

analogies between Shakespearean and cinematic self-reflexivities; and 'Screenplay, narration and subtext', which, via a detailed comparison of the script work of Branagh, Zeffirelli and Almereyda, considers the ways in which film narratives tend to invest Shakespearean texts with both 'Stanislavskian' and 'metafilmic' properties. This is certainly theoretically sophisticated and stimulating work, considerably more advanced than much previous work in the field in its deployment of analytic methodologies drawn from semiotics, psychoanalysis and cinematic narratology, and in places (such as in the discussion of music) she draws attention to aspects of the vocabulary of the Shakespearean cinema which have been surprisingly overlooked (this section begins with a sentence which, citing terminology devised by Alain Bergala, is characteristic of the writing's occasional tendency to lapse into rather stilted jargon: 'In the system of filmic connotations, music is perhaps the semiotic element which contributes most to the diegetization of enunciation' [p. 82]). The book is at its most convincing, and straightforward, when it addresses the films' methods of engagement with the techniques of classic narrative cinema, a discussion wherein Branagh, unsurprisingly, occupies a central position. Hatchuel argues that one of Branagh's achievements as an innovator in this area has been to prompt directors to extend the temporal vocabulary of Shakespearean cinema: as the maker of 'screen adaptations' which 'very often include formal work on time', Branagh has encouraged the use of 'ellipsis, flashback, quick- or slow motion', creating 'story reminders and causal links that bring narrative, spatial and temporal logic' (p. 64). Branagh is also closely identified with the cinema of Shakespearean realism, in which 'a film can offer the illusion of being as real, if not more real, than life itself'; Hatchuel tellingly cites a television interview, in which Branagh was playing word-association games with the interviewer: 'to the words "real life", Branagh replied immediately, "movies"' (p. 71). It is a cinema of which Hatchuel, by and large, approves; referring to the school of Shakespearean film commentary which regards

the manipulation of emotion as 'an ideological trap' (and Branagh's *Henry V*, in particular, has been soundly attacked on this front), she contends that this is 'a denial of the nature of the cinematic experience', in that spectatorship 'implies a certain kind of surrender to a particular vision of the world', which has the potential to 'renew our perception of things . . . make us enter a different, hitherto unknown imaginary world' (pp. 92–3).

Considering alternatives to the dominant tradition, Hatchuel then turns to instances of Shakespearean film which test the issue of whether it is 'possible for screen adaptations to adopt the devices of Brechtian presentation', and whether the cinema can 'reflect the *mises-en-abyme* (i.e. embedded structures and mirror constructions) that can be found in Shakespeare's plays' (p. 94). If I find the case that is constructed against Shakespearean 'meta-cinema' more contentious, it is due to the rather generalised and almost completely depoliticised citation of Brecht, and to the questionable conflation of the epic (in the 'Brechtian' sense) and the metatheatrical: writing of adaptations that have 'tried to reproduce the metadramatic discourse of the original plays and allow the viewers direct access to the mechanisms of film-making', Hatchuel cites 'gazes or speeches addressed to the camera' as comparable to 'the theatrical convention of asides', while 'screens-within-screens offer equivalents to plays-within-plays' (p. 95). But the use of direct address in, as discussed here, the films of Branagh, Taymor, Adrian Noble, and Oliver Parker, is hardly calculated to effect the kind of critical 'exposure of the mechanisms' that Brecht advocated; nor is Brecht's account of Laughton's technique of distanced portrayal in his performance of Galileo (which exemplifies the principle that 'every character is played by an actor is one way of disclosing the social and material conditions of theatre production' [p. 102]) particularly helpful for a consideration either of Noble's double casting in his *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or of the documentary elements of Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard*. Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books* is described as 'very Brechtian'

because it is 'made up of images carefully composed to look like Renaissance paintings and juxtaposed without much of a narrative logic' (p. 110), but two films which much more obviously, and self-consciously, attempt to harness both the formal techniques and the political perspective of Brecht's practice, Peter Brook's and Jean-Luc Godard's versions of *King Lear*, are only briefly mentioned.

Judith Buchanan's engagingly written, thoughtful and lucid *Shakespeare on Film* is similarly representative of much current critical practice in this field in that it addresses the challenge of saying something new and distinctive about an already much-discussed, though relatively narrow, field of enquiry through the categories of adaptation that it constructs, and, hence, through the connections that it is able to forge between disparate film texts. Buchanan's selection is more eclectic and wide-ranging than Hatchuel's, particularly in the first part of the book, entitled 'Degrees of Remove', which engages the transpositions, translations and offshoots that Hatchuel systematically excludes, and which seeks to 'explore a multiplicity of possible engagements between a notion of a source and a cinematic counterpart' through 'some of the more tangential of these possible engagements' (p. 19). These include the American, British, German and Italian silent shorts of the pre-First World War period, the interwar German silent films (notably Gade and Schall's transvestite *Hamlet*, starring Asta Nielson), the 1932 horror movie *Island of Lost Souls* (taken from *The Tempest*) and Tim Blake Nelson's *Othello* update, *O*; although many of these have become as familiar a subject of recent critical discussion as the canonical works against which they are sometimes counterpointed as 'alternative', Buchanan succeeds in presenting them in a fresh light. Reviewing the critical reception of *Forbidden Planet*, for example, Buchanan argues that what recent commentators have considered as a conscious indebtedness to *The Tempest* was not at all evident to its first viewers: 'the film's early reception . . . was determined by real rather than by subsequently constructed ideal

spectators, and seemingly those real spectators were struck by nothing in the film sufficiently Shakespearean to merit published comment' (p. 102). Buchanan has an eye for the telling moment, too; as evidenced for example by the discussion, in her account of the Vitagraph 'quality' silents, of the sly incorporation of a sight gag (a sleeping figure on the senate benches, who snoozes through the whole event) into the assassination scene of the 1908 *Julius Caesar*: 'when the cataclysmic, earth-shattering, history-making piece of action is taking place in centre frame . . . its gravitas is gently ironised by the figure of the nodding senator at the peripheries of the frame' (p. 40).

The second part of the book adopts a chronological approach to the major mainstream adaptations, examining 'a range of ways in which film texts emerge from, are expressive of and engage with the priorities and predispositions of their own production moment' (p. 119). This takes in screen histories

of *Dream* and *The Tempest* (featuring a superb reading of Jarman's *Tempest* as coming-out psychodrama), a chapter on (yet again, inevitably) Branagh, and a final chapter exploring 'cinema as subject' in the Shakespearean films of the *fin de siècle*, which includes films as apparently unrelated as *Prospero's Books* and Kristian Levring's Dogme 95 piece, *The King is Alive*, as well as Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*, Taymor's *Titus*, and Almereyda's *Hamlet*. Whereas Hatchuel is sceptical about the claims that have been made for the cinema of self-referentiality, Buchanan finds in these films hope for the Shakespearean cinema of the twenty-first century, in that they 'still manage to tell a story of love and loss, of greed and dissatisfaction, of displacement and revenge, of ambition and hate, of hope and fear' (pp. 257–8). It is these qualities, rather than the films' imagined relation to their fabled Shakespearean originals, that will determine whether they will continue to be worth watching.

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