Detecting Men examines the history of the Hollywood detective genre and the ways that detective films have negotiated changing social attitudes toward masculinity, heroism, law enforcement, and justice. Genre film can be a site for the expression and resolution of problematic social issues, but while there have been many studies of such other male genres as war films, gangster films, and Westerns, relatively little attention has been paid to detective films beyond film noir. In this volume, Philippa Gates examines classical films of the thirties and forties as well as recent examples of the genre, including Die Hard, the Lethal Weapon films, The Usual Suspects, Seven, Devil in a Blue Dress, and Murder by Numbers, in order to explore social anxieties about masculinity and crime and Hollywood’s conceptions of gender. Up until the early 1990s, Gates argues, the primary focus of the detective genre was the masculinity of the hero. However, from the mid-1990s onward, the genre has shifted to more technical portrayals of crime scene investigation, forensic science, and criminal profiling, offering a reassuring image of law enforcement in the face of violent crime. By investigating the evolution of the detective film, Gates suggests, perhaps we can detect the male.

“This topic is timely and in many ways overdue. This is the first book to really put all the pieces together, and in the process of constructing this historical overview, Gates discovers profound connections and shifts that others have missed.” — Peter Lehman, author of Roy Orbison: The Invention of an Alternative Rock Masculinity

Philippa Gates is Associate Professor of Film Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, and is the coeditor (with Stacy Gillis) of The Devil Himself: Villainy in Detective Fiction and Film.

A volume in the SUNY series, Cultural Studies in Cinema/Video

JULY  1  336 pp
26 b/w photographs
$29.95 pb 0-7914-6814-3
$89.50 hc 0-7914-6813-5

The Death of Classical Cinema
Hitchcock, Lang, Minnelli
Joe McElhaney

A study of three classical filmmakers and the films they made at the cusp of the modernist movement in cinema.

The Death of Classical Cinema uncovers the extremely rich yet insufficiently explored dialogue between classical and modernist cinema, examining the work of three classical filmmakers—Alfred Hitchcock, Fritz Lang, and Vincente Minnelli—and the films they made during the decline of the traditional Hollywood studio system. Faced with the significant challenges posed by alternative art cinema and modernist filmmaking practices in the early 1960s, these directors responded with films that were self-conscious attempts at keeping pace with the developments in film modernism. These films—Lang’s The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse, Hitchcock’s Marnie, and Minnelli’s Two Weeks in Another Town—were widely regarded as failures at the time and bolstered critics’ claims concerning the irrelevance of their directors in relation to contemporary filmmaking. However, author Joe McElhaney sheds new light on these films by situating them in relation to such acclaimed modernist works of the period as Godard’s Contempt, Fellini’s La dolce vita, Antonioni’s Red Desert, and Resnais’s Last Year at Marienbad. He finds that these modernist films, rather than being diametrically opposed in form to the work of Hitchcock, Lang, and Minnelli, are in fact profoundly linked to them.

“This is a brilliant work that restores my faith in film studies. McElhaney’s sweeping command of film history and theory, his nuanced formal analyses, and his stately and sustained argument result in a book that I already find indispensable in my own teaching.” — Scott Bukatman, author of Matters of Gravity: Special Effects and Supermen in the 20th Century

“A sharp, erudite, and sensitive mind, wholly committed to the cinema, is here at work. At a time when the idea of the film director as ‘auteur’ is making a comeback, McElhaney’s perspective will no doubt emerge as crucial for the necessary critical realignment between the performativity of Hollywood as a studio system and the achievements of its outstanding masters.” — Thomas Elsaesser, author of European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood

Joe McElhaney is Assistant Professor of Film Studies at Hunter College, The City University of New York.

A volume in the SUNY series, Horizons in Cinema

OCTOBER  1  352 pp
58 b/w photographs
$31.95 pb 0-7914-6888-7
$95.50 hc 0-7914-6887-9