ilar tomes. Should you ever find yourself in search of genuine “old” New York, you could do worse than Sleazoid Express as your guide.

—Mark Holcomb

Liber, George O. Alexander Dovzhenko: A Life in Soviet Film. London: BFI Publishing, 2002. $58.00. In this book George O. Liber takes up the difficult task of writing a biography of a film director, which is supposed to account for both Dovzhenko’s life and his films. Liber’s story, narrated primarily as a struggle between Dovzhenko’s internal aspirations and the pressure of external conditions, is based on numerous archival materials as diverse as secret police reports and Dovzhenko’s scattered diaries, and on various published documents and scholarly works. Liber’s biography is first and foremost a story of Dovzhenko’s interaction with his time, with the political milieu of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, which had a fundamental impact on both Dovzhenko’s life and work.

Liber also offers an analysis of each of Dovzhenko’s films and literary works in which he distinguishes between the elements that stem from Dovzhenko’s authentic imagination and those included in order to comply with the official policy. However, the clear-cut distinction between the internal and the external gets complicated in the course of the book and the role of the Stalinist political system in Dovzhenko’s life and work becomes ambivalent: Dovzhenko’s intensive interaction with the official line is described as detrimental for his creativity but at the same time it is presented as a continuous interpretative effort rather than a simple adherence to a rigid set of rules. This effort on Dovzhenko’s part was straining and painful, but it could also be called productive.

A similar ambiguity is also characteristic of Dovzhenko’s Ukrainian identity and his relations with the dominant Russian culture. Although Liber does not theoretically elaborate on these ambiguities, his book forms a complex picture in the mind of an attentive reader. Liber apparently fails to come to a coherent picture of Dovzhenko’s relations with his epoch, but this very failure is, probably, the most valuable characteristic of his book. By allowing ambivalences, Liber becomes adequate to his hero who, in Liber’s own words, “embraced complexity and ambiguity” thereby “alienating groups with a monochromic orthodox view of the world” (113).

—Andrey Shcherbenok

D’Agostino Lloyd, Annette. The Harold Lloyd Encyclopedia. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003. $65.00. With hindsight, silent comedian Harold Lloyd seems to epitomize the American 1920s. An ambitious, unafraid, rollicking go-getter, he was symbolic of a knockout but deeply conservative era. As film historian Roger Manvell wrote, Lloyd was “the all-American boy—bold, brash, thick-skinned and bound for success despite the superficial diffidence and prissy manners.” For the author (no relation), he remains an example to young Americans. Whilst the unabashed appeal to a contemporary generation seems a mite optimistic, this book is so assiduously researched that it could become a key resource. It will be interesting, however, to see if it prompts fresh interest, popular or academic, in one of the great figures of early American comedy.

Emerging from the legitimate theater rather than the vaudeville that spawned Chaplin, Keaton and Langdon, by the mid-20s Lloyd was briefly the highest paid actor in Hollywood. President Harding himself, ailing and beset with corruption, found the young man’s single-mindedness a tonic. But Lloyd’s peers have gleaned the lion’s share of critical attention. Gripping and efficient, but obvious in their appeal, Lloyd’s “thrill pictures” do not appear to resonate beyond the commercial imperatives of the moment. Yet the frenetic logistics of the skyscraper stunt in Safety Last (1923)—fully documented here—historically located these antics in a way that Chaplin and Keaton’s staginess did not. In more than one sense, Lloyd responded to his historical moment, and in a scrupulously researched and detailed compendium of Lloydiana, the author paints a portrait of a booming society itching to stake its claim on the century.

—Stephen Charbonneau

Mesce, Bill Jr. Peckinpah’s Women: A Reappraisal of the Portrayal of Women in the Period Westerns of Sam Peckinpah. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001. $47.00. Despite the promising nature of the title, Mesce makes no attempt to save Peckinpah for feminism but instead wishes to reevaluate the director in terms of the contemporary issues of gender and industry that affected his work. He also points out that Peckinpah’s portrayal of women may not only contain some historically accurate images but may also positively contrast with his critical perceptions of the male hero. It is an interesting thesis, but poorly developed.

Unfortunately, the author has made no attempt to consult recent critical articles and books dealing with the director that could have provided a broader context for his arguments. For example, he cites the first edition of Paul Seymour’s work and seems oblivious to the fact that a revised and updated edition appeared several years ago. Although Marshall Fine’s Bloody Sam receives copious references, no mention is made of David Weddle’s 1994 biography. Despite the author’s valuable experience in film and television, this industrial context is, sadly, not enough to recommend this book as the pioneering study that it really should be.

—Tony Williams

Wollen, Peter. Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film. London: Verso, 2002. $60.00 cloth; $20.00 paper. This new collection of 19 essays from Peter Wollen, written over the last ten years, spans an unusually wide range of topics. Its three parts—“Directors and Film-makers,” “Film and Movements,” and “Themes and Styles”—reflects this range, moving from specific auteurs and films to discussions of broader issues such as the aesthetics of cinema and the space of narrative. In a writing style that is often anecdotal, these pieces unfold naturally and inevitably, making reading somehow akin to hearing a friend tell a good story. A chance meeting