Among the most exciting American film scholarship of the past decade are those works that explore issues of “space” and “spatiality” in the cinema. This diverse body of writing has focused principally upon two general topics—the unique symbiotic relationship of the cinema and the city, on the one hand, and the different sociocultural and historical spaces, whether built or “imagined,” created for and by film spectators, on the other. Several of the leading scholars exploring this rich “territory”—Giuliana Bruno, Anne Friedberg, and Miriam Hansen, among them—have adapted feminist perspectives to reveal the specifically gendered shape historically given to urban spaces mapped on screen. These scholars consistently draw upon the work of Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer, and their Weimar associates and take special inspiration from the ideas of flânerie explored in Benjamin’s unfinished Arcades project. Indeed, these writers are largely responsible for pushing Weimar thought to the forefront of American film studies, where it remains to this day.

Although its primary topic is ostensibly film noir, Edward Dimendberg’s long-anticipated *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* is, first and foremost, a vital and lasting contribution to this body of writing on cinematic space. Dimendberg’s work both expands and refines film studies’ abiding interest in the cinema and the city by revealing how film noir does not simply represent the American city, but also critically interrogates the paradoxes of post-war urban space. Dimendberg’s book combines a critical study of American urban philosophy and policy after World War II with a revisionist examination of film noir as a historical category. Dimendberg insists that the decrepit urban spaces favored by film noir—those back alleys and derelict hotels celebrated by noir aficionados—need to be contextualized within the profound transformation underway in the American city during the 1940s and 1950s. In this way, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* rejects the familiar thematic readings traditionally given to film noir’s distinct topography and instead excavates a new historical specificity from within the films.

Looking alternately at New York and Los Angeles, Dimendberg interweaves detailed histories of the political and philosophical struggles driving the forces of change at work in each city with close readings of individual films that grapple with spatial issues relevant to these same cities. The chapters move roughly chronologically, tracing the metamorphosis of American urban space during the post-war years from densely concentrated centripetal cities to diffused centrifugal cities, a paradigm shift brought on by the twin forces of widespread suburbanization and intense highway development. Dimendberg’s convincing knowledge of architecture and urban theory allows him to establish a context in which to explore the spatial patterns and predilections of film noir and its use of specific urban sites and types of locations. Viewed from the perspective of urban history and theory, key landmarks such as the Times Square of *Killer’s Kiss* and the Bunker Hill of *Kiss Me Deadly* (both 1955) are shown to serve not simply as iconic symbols of location cities, but also as emblems of a changing order, vestiges of the centripetal city that was on the wane in the 1940s and 50s and which is evoked with deep nostalgia throughout those films noir that seek to capture its rhythm of unexpected close encounters.

One of the great pleasures of *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* lies in Dimendberg’s close reading of little-known late noir gems such as Budd Boetticher’s *The Killer Is Loose* (1958) and Irving Lerner’s *City of Fear* (1959), films which Dimendberg holds up as crucial attempts to map and understand the emergent centrifugal city. Throughout discussions of individual films, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* displays a theoretical sophistication that is a signature feature of recent writing on cinematic space. Dimendberg goes a step further here by looking beyond the familiar roster of Weimar thinkers typically evoked in discussions of the cinema and the city to explore the work of theorists lesser known to film studies, such as Ernst Bloch and Henri Lefebvre, who are, nevertheless, equally relevant to film studies. As Dimendberg reveals, Lefebvre’s close attention to the effects of certain larger rhythms, abstract patterns of movement and speed, upon urban space remains especially valuable for understanding how the city is rendered and explored through moving images.

Occasionally, Dimendberg’s evident expertise in the work of European theorists seems to be applied overzealously. Quite frequently, the discussions of films are peppered with fragmentary citations of work by Jean Baudrillard, Guy Debord, Bernd Jager, and a host of others—citations which, because of their necessary brevity, cannot do justice to their subjects and seem unnecessary embellishments rather than supporting ideas. At times as well, Dimendberg’s long—although genuinely fascinating—passages through urban theory and history threaten to “overshadow” the topic of film noir until, many pages later, a film is finally evoked.

In truth, *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* is a very selective work that discusses at length relatively few films. As with any work on film noir, one can quarrel with the selection of films made by Dimendberg, and wonder especially at the exclusion of major and minor works that are apposite to his arguments, such as, for example, *Mildred Pierce* (1945) or *Shield for Murder* (1954). Certainly, Dimendberg’s overall emphasis upon outdoor urban locations barely accounts for the closed, interior spaces and states of mind that remain essential to film noir of the 1940s and 50s. And yet, his careful selection of films is also one of the more valuable qualities of his book since it allows him to deliberately avoid the task of listing and canonizing which is the albatross around the neck of all too many studies of film noir.

One fault, which should not be blamed entirely on its author, of *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity* is the terrible quality and frequent illegibility of many of the film stills that serve as illustrations. The increased use of poor-quality digital images is one of the more depressing trends in aca-
Heffernan pays more attention to Castle than most writers, but his book would be stronger if it addressed what one might call “the Hitchcock–Castle dialectic.” More than enough ink has been spilled on readings of Hitchcock’s films, yet his marketing tactics have received much less attention. Hitchcock’s movies may belong in the “class” camp, but his ironic scare master persona is clearly indebted to Castle. Though the self-promoting “Alfred Hitchcock Presents” TV show dates to 1955, three years before Castle debuted as a filmmaker with Macabre—taking out life insurance, he claimed, in case anyone died of fright while viewing the film—the campy quips that Hitch would develop to market his own high-end productions are (arguably) indebted to Castle’s own marketing strategies. And Hitchcock’s “no one will be admitted after the film has begun” gimmick for Psycho (1960) was clearly a Castle move. In general, Heffernan needed to explain Psycho’s influence on the horror business. Here, he could have also discussed Castle’s Homicidal (1961) instead of simply describing it as “Psycho-derived.” With its transvestite killer, Homicidal was clearly designed to cash in on Psycho, but Castle’s knife-wielding maniac is a woman ruined by patriarchal, not matriarchal oppression. It’s an interesting film, not just a Psycho rip-off.

Heffernan candidly states that he is not an economic determinist. The films “are too interesting to be reduced to