Ray's films, spaces leading to the safe and private worlds of his heroes but also where differences in interpersonal power (and henpecked, apron-clad fathers) are graphically on display.

To its detriment, *Perkins on Movies* contains few articles on movies contemporary to the decades in which he was writing: Nothing on "New Hollywood" of the Sixties and Seventies, and, except for a lively critique of Godard's *Vivre sa vie*, little on the seminal international art cinema of Bergman, Fellini, Antonioni, Buñuel, Kurosawa, etc. Nor did he care to write home about British cinema either before, during, or after its 1960s "kitchen sink" realism breakthrough, except to pan even esteemed directors (including David Lean and Carol Reed) for what he viewed as a literary-based bias that sent personal style, imagination and, yes, mise en scène, down the drain.

Perkins's valedictory in the volume instead highlights another U.S. film retrospective, the Frederick Wiseman 1968 "direct cinema" documentary *High School*. Specifically, Perkins gives an uberclose reading lesson on the final minutes in which the school's principal, Dr. Haller, reads aloud a letter written by a soldier and former student while he was on an aircraft carrier transporting him to the then-raging Vietnam War. Armed with a Vincente Minnelli quote ("a picture that stays with you is made up of more than a hundred hidden things"), Perkins contemplates the long, low-angle close-up of Haller's face that speaks volumes—or at least a chapter—and yet are hardly contained in the words we hear. Her diction, her pauses, her expressions (in fact, Béla Balász's "microphysiognomy"), her *gender* all produce meaning for the viewer, and especially as we try to discern what Wiseman *wants* us to see and hear in the way of the film's rhetoric or "message." For Perkins, Wiseman tips his hand in the last seconds of Haller's speech, when the sound drops out and only her proud, smiling face remains. This is right after she tells her faculty audience that "I think you will agree with me"—that is, insofar as the letter attests to what a "very successful" school they have. We may be left to ponder whether a school should grade as a success the willingness of a young man to sacrifice life and limb so blithely (he says he's just "a body doing a job") in what then had already become a costly, calamitous quagmire of a war.

As sequels go, *V. F. Perkins on Movies* is no *Godfather II*, but neither is it *Godfather III, or French Connection II* for the matter. *Au contraire*, it's a sprawling, alternately fruitful and fitful complement to his more accessible *Film as Film*. Together they provide answers to long-running "big picture" questions for those still studying, understanding, and judging classic movies as meaningful popular art. And for those who still think that is what today's movies can be.—**Thomas Delapa**

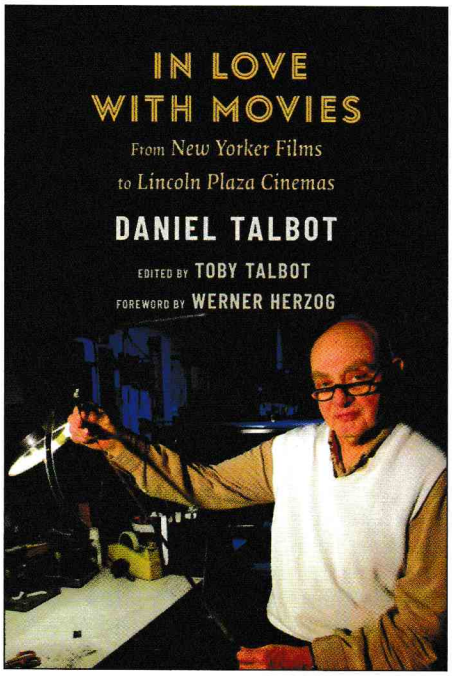
In Love with Movies:

From New Yorker Films to Lincoln Plaza Cinemas

by Daniel Talbot (Edited by Toby Talbot). New York. Columbia University Press, 2022. 328 pp., illus. Hardcover $100.00 and Paperback $25.00.

Many if not most regular readers of *Cineaste* will be familiar with Dan Talbot, who, with his wife Toby, established and operated the legendary New Yorker Theater and, perhaps even more influentially, founded the distribution company New Yorker Films. And serious filmgoers who perhaps cannot place the name have nevertheless very likely benefited, directly and indirectly, from their indefatigable efforts, which brought attention to then-obscure and now-revered films, labors of love that stretched across more than half a century. As Martin Scorsese wrote in his foreword to Toby Talbot's memoir, *The New Yorker Theater and Other Scenes from a Life at the Movies* (2009): "Anyone who lives in America and cares about cinema and history, no matter how old or young, owes something to the New Yorker and to Dan and Toby Talbot."

The New Yorker Theater, located on Broadway between Eighty-eighth and Eighty-ninth streets, opened in March 1960 and swiftly became one of the most influential art house theaters in the city (and by extension, the country, as the Big Apple was then at the height of its postwar cultural influence and predominance). And as this fragmented, posthumous memoir recounts, (assembled and edited by Toby, from assorted writings by Dan), among the theater's



devoted denizens were a breathtaking who's who of prominent cinephiles and legendary or soon-to-be legendary critics. It was the sort of place where Peter Bogdanovich would, for some years, program a two-week Forgotten Films series. (This was the dawn of the era when Americans, following the lead of French critics, started to understand popular filmmakers like Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, and Howard Hawks as more than entertainers, but major artists.) It was the sort of place where the evening's program notes might be written by the likes of Jack Kerouac, Andrew Sarris, Terry Southern, or Jules Feiffer. It was in the lobby of the New Yorker where, in *Annie Hall* (waiting in line to see Marcel Ophüls's *The Sorrow and the Pity*) Woody Allen introduced the phrase that would swiftly become a staple of academic conferences. Conjuring Marshall McLuhan to settle an argument with a pontificating professor, the Canadian philosopher rejoined: "You know nothing of my work...How you ever got to teach a course in anything is totally amazing."

The New Yorker, and New Yorker Films (established in 1965, it would amass a library of over four hundred films), became crucial launching points in America for international cinema. Although most prominently associated, in the Sixties and Seventies respectively, with the French New Wave and the New German Cinema (Talbot had close working relationships with most, and developed friendships with many, of the leading filmmakers of those movements), the breadth of the distribution company's offerings stretched seamlessly across films from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Closer to home, it was Dan Talbot who, when approached by director Louis Malle with a curious, cinematically implausible script, took the screenplay home—and then took a big chance on *My Dinner with Andre*. Talbot opened the film at the Cinema Studio, where it played to modest audiences for eleven weeks before taking off; it would eventually become, he reports, "the biggest grossing film in the history of our company."

The Cinema Studio, on Broadway between Sixty-sixth and Sixty-seventh, was the theater that got the Talbots back in the exhibition side of the business in 1977, after (perhaps regretting) the sale of the New Yorker Theater in 1973 to focus on distribution. Other properties would follow—most notably The Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, with first three and then six screens, which they would oversee from 1981 (a debut accompanied by a *New York Times* feature profiling "The Man Behind Manhattan's Art Theater Boom"), until it was shuttered in January 2018. For many cinephiles in New York, the closing of the Lincoln was a "can they do that?" shock akin to the razing of Penn Station in 1964—the blow all the more bruising as it came on the heels of Dan Talbot's passing a month earlier, in December 2017, at the age of ninety-one.

In Love with the Movies is not so much a traditional memoir as it is a tribute and a scrapbook. Despite gesturing at the notion of an anticipated book in a brief introduction, it comes across, and likely was, a tapestry knitted together from found footage after the fact. Some of this ground has been well covered previously—in an essay by Dan in these pages ("Fragments from the Dream World: Reminiscences of a Film Distributor and Exhibitor," *Cineaste*, Spring 2017), via his 2004 speech accepting a lifetime achievement award from The Gotham—and, especially, in *The New Yorker Theater*, Toby's earlier and indispensable memoir. As such, those coming to this book anticipating a deep, comprehensive dive (or even much of a self-reflective one) into an astonishing life at the center of things cinematic will likely be disappointed. But those moved to see assorted sketches from such a life will enjoy a series of often delightful if at times frustratingly fleeting aperitifs.

Talbot begins at the beginning. Like many of his cohort, his was a childhood at the movies, with eyes bloodshot from long days in the flicking darkness. Moving swiftly through the decades, Dan and Toby marry in 1951; it was by all accounts a storybook romance, with the happy couple scuffling along in fledgling careers before stumbling upon the vacant theater that would become the New Yorker. After an impossibly thrilling half decade—what Phillip Lopate dubbed "The Heroic Age of Moviegoing"—New Yorker Films is added to the mix. (It is impossible not to feel nostalgic for the handshake deals that Talbot sealed in that context: "I dealt only with filmmakers—Ousmane Sembène, Werner Herzog, Alain Tanner, Louis Malle, Jean-Luc Godard, and so on. I wrote my own contracts, which consisted of one page of lay prose, stating our arrangement.")

One can only imagine what it must have been like, and for readers (like this reviewer) who were not there, a bit too much is left to the imagination. This is a book of loosely knit fragments—from the start and throughout, most of the "chapters" are two or three pages in length. Occasionally that's about right; it brings a smile to learn that legendary critic Manny Farber worked as a carpenter because he could not support himself from writing about film, as his contributions were reserved for "serious" (and thus low paying) outlets. But it is almost teasingly short for others, especially regarding some of those Talbot knew personally, and often well, such as Rossellini, Godard, Wenders, Herzog, and Varda. A thumbnail sketch of Kieslowski is irresistible, but it is, alas, no more than a sketch.

And there are some vexing silences. Talbot is surprisingly (and disappointingly) taciturn about 1968, to take a notable example. One expected more than a slim two pages on that revolutionary year from a man who would take pride in reports that he was

on Nixon's enemies list—and who was at the Cannes Film Festival during the wild melee instigated by Godard and other combative filmmakers to force the suspension of the festival in solidarity with those then at the barricades in Paris. (A bit more about the New Yorker Films-distributed *Far from Vietnam* would also have been welcome.)

Similarly, somewhat superficial is the treatment of Pauline Kael. During the salad days of the New Yorker Theater, she was then programming across the country in Berkeley. Speaking weekly, Talbot drew on her experience, and her savvy as to where, in obscure corners of the country, coveted prints of classic gems might be found. Their relationship would have its ups and downs over the decades, especially when she became a powerful (and often controversial) fixture in the rough and tumble New York critical community for thirty years. But the reflections here, even accounting for tact, lack both novelty and intimacy. And surely the glorious adventure that was *My Dinner with Andre* merited more than a page.

It may be, however, that longer form writing was simply not Talbot's strong suit, nor should it necessarily have been. He was at the epicenter of the New York art house scene during its most glorious days—"when movies mattered" in David Thomson's phrase—but not as a writer or a critic (of which at the time there was an impressive and abundant supply). Perhaps tellingly, one of the book's few "proper" chapters is among its least impressive. A dozen pages on "the new frankness" engages a key issue, really a paradox, to which many who were raised on the films of the studio era were especially sensitive: that the absurdly censorious Production Code Administration forced a subtlety on the cinema that the greatest filmmakers navigated brilliantly, with "judgement, taste, insight and cinematic interest"—while the late 1960s new permissiveness often yielded vulgar, pandering, and exploitative ham-handed efforts. But on these themes, even in longer form the discussion only skims the surface. (Molly Haskell—another celebrated regular at The New Yorker Theater, whose own memoir is reportedly in progress—remains the go-to source on this enduring dilemma.)

In Love with the Movies closes with a moving epilogue by Toby (as Kent Jones wrote in the pages of *Film Comment*, "It was never just Dan, but always Dan and Toby"), followed by appendices. One features a selection of notes Talbot jotted down at film festivals (his keen eye was quick to appreciate the promise of Nuri Bilge Ceylan—New Yorker Films distributed his early film, *Distant* (2002) and, as often, the two became friends). Another coda presents a previously unpublished long form interview with Stanley Kauffmann from 1972. The conversation covers mostly familiar ground, but once again illustrates Talbot's talent for spotting the movies that would matter and endure. Whether calling out Barbara Loden's then languishing and obscure *Wanda* as "one of the best American films I've seen in ten years," or with his description of Jacques Rivette as "the most interesting director working in France" when describing his two-year effort to secure the rights to *L'amour fou*, it becomes clear that Dan Talbot was the right man for what must have been one of the world's best jobs.

Ultimately, Talbot was a programmer/exhibitor and a distributor, not a writer or a critic. Nevertheless, over the course of these pages he is good company. It is hard to resist a man who reveled so globally yet lived so locally ("rarely do I go below Fifty-Ninth street or east of Central Park West"). Werner Herzog's foreword to *In Love with the Movies* is somewhat wistful—"Where is the New Dan Talbot? Why do we not have his New Yorker Theater any longer?"—but ultimately hopeful: "We shall inevitably be a minority, but film culture will not die out."—**Jonathan Kirshner**

20th Century-Fox:

Darryl F. Zanuck and the Creation of the Modern Film Studio

by Scott Eyman. Philadelphia: Running Press, 2021. 295 pp. illus. Hardcover. $28.00.

MGM may have had the coolest logo—Leo the Lion roaring in close-up, under a Latin motto the studio did not live up to—but Twentieth Century-Fox had the best musical fanfare—a dramatic drum roll and a triumphal flourish from a soaring brass section, punctuated by a climatic percussive clash, as searchlights sweep the sky over an Art Deco monolith bearing the studio name. The harmonic convergence of image and sound embedded the studio brand so powerfully that it hardly needed to update the name.

Scott Eyman, the author of too many erudite and easygoing film histories to mention (well, maybe just *Hank and Jim: The Fifty-Year Friendship of Henry Fonda and James Stewart* [2017], an affectionate and utterly absorbing portrait of the parallel lives of two corn-fed American stars) takes on (appropriately) a full century's worth of the Twentieth Century-Fox story. Ostensibly a corporate history, it is really a biography of the two founding fathers, William Fox, who created and ran the first iteration from 1915 to 1930, and Darryl F. Zanuck, who from 1935

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