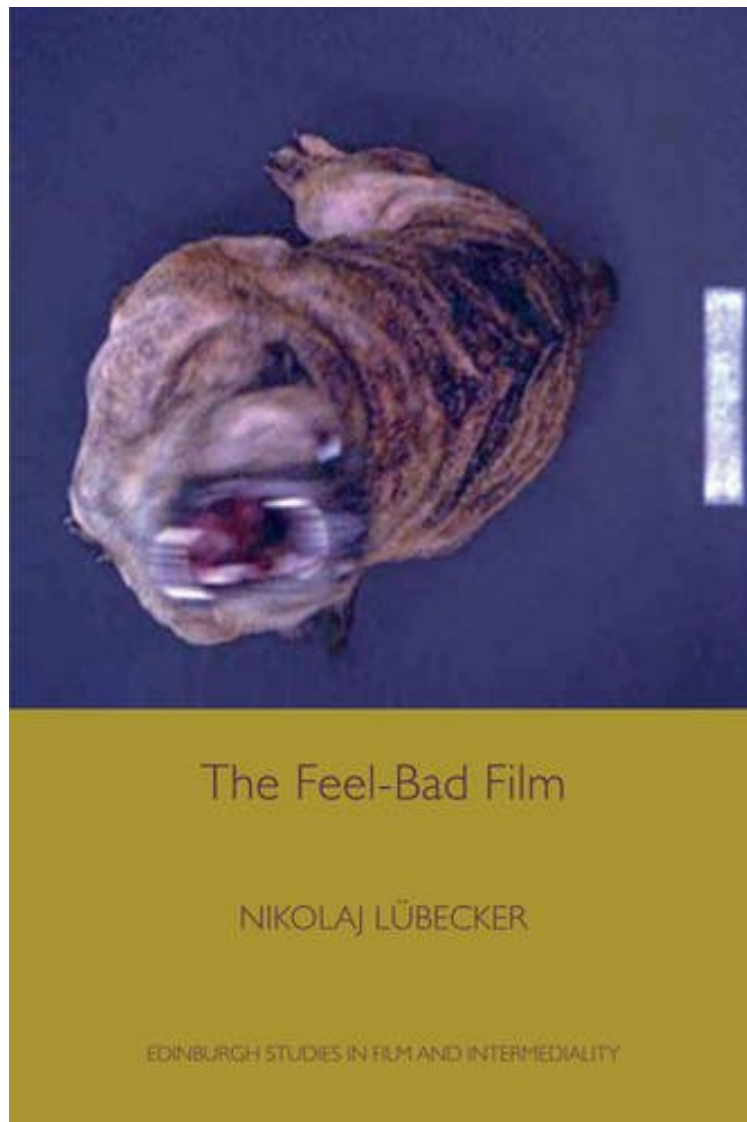


(Mobile pdf) The Feel-Bad Film (Edinburgh Studies in Film EUP)

## The Feel-Bad Film (Edinburgh Studies in Film EUP)

*Nikolaj Lbecker*

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**Nikolaj Lbecker : The Feel-Bad Film (Edinburgh Studies in Film EUP)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Feel-Bad Film (Edinburgh Studies in Film EUP):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Great Book Every Film Buff Should Read By Dave in FL In keeping with his regular habit of turning his friends on to various media and cultural events that he deemed significant, the late, great Dave Monroe of Milwaukee, WI brought this curious book to my attention in August of 2015. Dave emailed me (and a dozen other friends of his) a PDF of its introductory chapter, mentioning that hed enjoyed the book in its entirety. From the onset the title of Nikolaj Lbeckers book sounded intriguing, as if drawing a line in the sand The

Feel-Bad Film was this not an unspoken genre? Well, maybe not a full-on genre, but at the very least a category of cinema. Witness, for instance, the countless Hollywood movie trailers proclaiming the polar opposite, that their latest offering was the feel-good hit of the Summer Surely it stood to reason that the existence of a such a thing as a feel-good film implied its antithesis. But what of it? Lubecker's book, as I would discover a little less than a year later when I purchased a copy and promptly read it, is a thoughtful examination of a largely recent corpus of work made by filmmakers who deliberately aim to engender feelings of displeasure in the viewer. According to Lubecker these films usually tend to either create an atmosphere of unease (as in the case of Alain Resnais's brilliant *Muriel* or the *Time of Return* or Todd Haynes's more recent film *Safe*), or they escalate discomfort to the point of rendering the film experience a downright assault on the spectator (as in the case of Michael Haneke's rather deplorable *Funny Games*, unwatchable titles like *Gaspar Noe's Irreversible*, and Godard's classic feel-bad detour *Weekend*). For Lubecker a hallmark of the feel-bad film experience is that it subverts traditional notions of Hegelian mutual recognition, often attacking the viewer through her body in order to get to her mind. Though the individual works can vary widely in content and approach, a common characteristic of a feel-bad film is that it presents the grounds for a Hollywood-style catharsis and then ends up deadlocking its realization, which of course yields frustration in the viewer. The most typical sensation here tends to be one of claustrophobia, which often goes hand-in-hand with mounting unrelieved desire. In his chapter on Lars von Trier's *Dogville*, Lubecker correctly notes that what makes von Trier's film patently feel-bad not to mention highly manipulative is that it sets up a protracted narrative arc leading toward the inevitable desire for a catharsis, then it finally enables the catharsis but at the very end mocks the viewer for identifying with it, drawing attention to what von Trier deems her inner *svinehund*. The ultimate feeling the film leaves is one of disappointment, perhaps chiefly with oneself for having partaken in it. Lubecker traces the roots of the feel-bad film experience back to the more confrontational strands of the historical avant-garde, though he seems to suggest that a disproportionate amount of feel-bad cinema has sprung up within the last fifteen to twenty-odd years, which indeed seems curious. One of the many interesting revelations in the book is the author's assertion that labeling a film feel-bad isn't to place a qualitative value judgement on it just as feel-good films can range from the saccharine (*Forrest Gump* or *Mr. Holland's Opus*) to the sublime (*Alice in the Cities* or *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday*), feel-bad films run the gamut as well, from the ineffective or just plain awful to the successfully articulated. Lubecker also rightly notes that the existence of feel-bad film experiences should never lead us to confuse the ethical sphere of the movie house with that of the real world outside it something that both those in favor and against such works of art can easily forget. The author also observes that the existence of feel-bad films isn't unhealthy and rejecting them outright can be similar to denying problematic contemporary realities, and sometimes even lead to unforeseen disastrous consequences. In general what makes *The Feel-Bad Film* book work is Lubecker's empathetic tone and lucid outlook combined with his ability to discuss the various films in relation to concurrent issues in philosophy and current events. This is a well researched, well written book that can be appreciated by both hardcore cinephiles as well as more general viewers who just might be wondering why they've felt swindled or confounded at the end of a feel-bad film experience. It is a necessary document. High marks.

In recent years some of the most innovative European and American directors have made films that place the spectator in a position of intense discomfort. Systematically manipulating the viewer, sometimes by withholding information, sometimes through shock or seduction, these films have often been criticised as amoral, nihilistic, politically irresponsible or anti-humanistic. But how are these unpleasurable viewing experiences created? What do the directors believe they can achieve via this 'feel-bad' experience? How can we situate these films in intellectual history? And why should we watch, study and teach feel-bad films? Answering these questions through the analysis of work by directors such as Lars von Trier, Gus Van Sant, Claire Denis, Michael Haneke, Lucille Hadzihalilovic, Brian de Palma, Bruno Dumont and Harmony Korine, *The Feel-Bad Film* invites readers to consider cinematic art as an experimental activity with ethical norms that are radically different from the ones we would hope to find outside the movie theatre. This textbook offers invaluable insights for students of film-philosophy, film and spectatorship and film theory. About the series: *Edinburgh Studies in Film and Intermediality* includes scholarly research intended to challenge and expand on the various approaches to Film Studies, bringing together film theory and film aesthetics with the emerging intermedial aspects of the field.

"Lubecker's work throughout is illuminating, convincing, and contributes to making 'The Feel-Bad Film' a valuable text, one that helps us to unlock and unpack the complexities of extreme cinema." -- Russell Williams, Los Angeles of Books "Nikolaj Lubecker clearly and insightfully analyses many of the most controversial films of recent years by cinematic heavyweights like Michael Haneke, Lars von Trier, Claire Denis and Gus Van Sant. In doing so, he invites his readers to reconsider movies in general: maybe sometimes it's not so bad for a movie to make us feel bad. As we root around for hope at a time when it seems thin on the ground, Lubecker paradoxically conjures hope where there seemed to be none. A unique and ground-breaking work." -- Dr William Brown, University of Roehampton "Lubecker's book is one of the most interesting studies of films that provoke feelings of discomfort; the clear,

apodictic and jargon-free writing style makes it a pleasure to read while his close readings of the films demonstrate a passion for the objects. The films are not mere illustrators of theory, but dynamic objects, whose ambiguity and provocations force us to theorise." -- Angelos Koutsourakis, *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory* "From tragic melodramas to spine-chilling horror, cinema is ripe with kinds of experiences that, under normal circumstances, are undesirable in our perception of reality...Nikolaj Lubecker's *The Feel-Bad Film* can be seen as a unique intervention to this broader body of work...concerned with how film-makers subvert expectations of spectators, but remain ethically virtuous so as to encourage and invoke a critical response." -- Emre Aylan, *New of Film and Television Studies* "If you are a programmer who did not show Rick Alverson's recent film *Entertainment* or Tim Sutton's new *Dark Night* because you were afraid you would not be able to defend the film to an angry board member, then this book is for you. The book clearly and cogently makes the case why films that challenge our ethical and moral frameworks contribute to a richer culture. I would go so far to also recommend that the book should be sold at festivals, right next to the festival T-shirt, coffee cup and beer cozy." -- Mike S. Ryan, *Filmmaker Magazine* "In this book Nikolaj Lubecker offers an astonishing engagement with contemporary trends in European and avant-garde cinema. He cuts through recent discussions of new French extremism to offer a scintillating, urgent, and original take on the subject." -- Emma Wilson, *Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, French Studies* "Insightful and thought-provoking...*The Feel-Bad Film* offers a compelling examination of these often disparaged and overlooked films." -- Kristin C. Brunner, *Pierce College, Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*

About the Author Dr Nikolaj Lubecker is Tutor and Fellow in French at St John's College at the University of Oxford. He has a D.E.A. and Ph.D. (Université Paris 7 - Denis Diderot), M.A. (University of Copenhagen).