

The London Film and Media Reader 1



Essays from FILM AND MEDIA 2011
The First Annual London Film and Media Conference



The London Film & Media Reader 1

is published by **The London Symposium**
on behalf of **Academic Conferences London Ltd**

This ebook is copyright material, protected by the laws of the United Kingdom and under international law. *It may not be reproduced or transmitted by any means and in any form, in whole or in part, without the permission of the publisher.*

The individual essays which make up this ebook are copyright material, protected by the laws of the United Kingdom and under international law. *They may not be reproduced or transmitted by any means and in any form, in whole or in part, without the permission of the publisher.*

This collection copyright The London Symposium &
Academic Conferences London Ltd 2013

Individual chapters copyright the authors 2013

ISBN 978-0-9573631-3-7

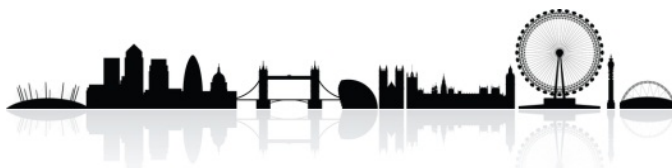
Editorial Office

25 Miranda Road, Lower Highgate, London N19 3RA, UK

The London Film & Media Reader 1

Essays from FILM AND MEDIA 2011
*The First Annual London Film and
Media Conference*

Edited by
Phillip Drummond



The London Symposium

Conference Proceedings Series

Advice to Readers

This ebook was created in PDF
using Adobe Acrobat Professional XI.
It can be read using most freely available PDF readers.

*Individual chapters are bookmarked
for ease of navigation.*

This ebook is distributed free of charge to those interested in our work.
No-one received payment for their work on the volume. You are invited to
make a modest donation if you would like to support us.

For details, please see our websites at

www.thelondonconference.com
www.understandingbritain.com
www.thelondonfilmandmediaconference.com

The London Film and Media Reader 1

C o n t e n t s

Introduction x-xviii
Phillip Drummond

Notes on Contributors xix-xxvii

1. The Cinematic Institution

1 / 2-11

**Film Scholarship and the 50th Anniversary
of the French New Wave**

James Rowlinson

2 / 12-21

The Paradoxes of Cinematic Authorship: Dogme 95

Fernando Ramos Arenas

3 / 22-31

Cinema *Grimoire*: Kenneth Anger's *Magick Lantern Cycle*

Alan Wright

4 / 32-43

Representations of the Scottish Islands in British Cinema

Phillip Drummond

5 / 44-51

**The Dissolution of Authorship in the Koker Trilogy
by Abbas Kiarostami**

Daniel Marcolino Claudino de Sousa

6 / 52-62

**DEFA's Forgotten Memory:
The Holocaust in East German
Film**

Oleksandr Kobrynskyi

2. The Régimes of Television

7 / 64-74

The Evolving State of the 'Black Aesthetic': From the Experiential Perspective of African-American Film and Television Screenwriters

Stephen V. Duncan

8 / 75-86

TV and the Architecture of the Olympic Experience

Graham Cairns

9 / 87-97

Environmental Issues in the Animated TV Series: *South Park*, *The Simpsons*, and *The Family Guy*

Silvia Ceausu and Tamara Steger

10 / 98-109

Aesthetics, Appropriation and Intimacy in Ballet for Post-WWII BBC TV: Margaret Dale's *Petrushka*

Jessica Escue

11 / 110-115

Questions of Reception:

The Iranian TV Soap Opera *Sandglass*

Teja Mirfakhraee and Fereshteh Taherinia

12 / 116-127

Transformations and Reinventions in Children's Television Production

Anna Potter

3. Media Identities

13 / 129-139

Representations of the Non-Conformist in Consumer Society: Linklater's *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset*

Angela Meyer

14 / 140-150

Nation, Religion, and Disability: Identity Politics in Bombay Cinema - *My Name is Khan*

Asma Sayed

15 / 151-160

Australia's Colonial History and Political Present: Ivan Sen's *Beneath Clouds*

Rayma Watkinson

16 / 161-172

Foreigners in their Homeland: Documenting Conflicted National Identity on the Football Field

Lea Mandelzis and Alina Bernstein

3. Media Identities (cont.)

17 / 173-182

Little Mosque on the Prairie:

Interfaith TV through Malaysian Eyes

Nur Kareelawati Abd. Karim, Norazirawati Ahmad,
Ainurliza Mat Rahim, Muhammad Yusuf Khalid,
Roslizawati Mohd. Ramli

18 / 183-189

**Representations of Czech and Slovak Cultural
Identity in Contemporary Film and Comics**

Erika Grendelová

19 / 190-198

**Questions of Social and Personal Identity
in Soviet Cinema of the Seventies and Eighties**

Lesia Kulchinska

4. Narratives of Gender

20 / 200-207

Stardom and the Movie Magazines:

The Case of Jacqueline Kennedy

Oline Eaton

21 / 208-218

Post-feminist Representations of Pre-feminist Times:

***Mad Men*, Nostalgia and Self-indulgence**

Katixa Agirre

22 / 219-226

Visual Pleasure in Pakistani Cinema

Wajiha Raza Rizvi

23 / 227-235

Cinematic Stardom, John Wayne and

the Post-WWII Western

John White

24 / 236-245

Fear of the Sexual Gaze in the Boxing Gere (1930-1959)

Amanda J. Field

25 / 246-254

Mohamed Saad, el-Limby and

**the Popularisation of the Masculine Code
in Egyptian Cinema**

Koen Van Eynde

5. Ontologies

26 / 256-266

The Cinematic Image: From Phantasmagoria to Constraint

Ted Hovet

27 / 267-276

**The Interface between Live Action and Animation
in Contemporary Film**

Ling-Yuan Fabia Lin

28 / 277-287

**The Cinematic Representation of Memory
in the Autobiographical Documentary**

Jill Daniels

29 / 288-298

**The Virtual and the Vacuous in Literary and Media Fictions
dealing with 'The Communication Society'**

Paul Grundy

30 / 299-307

***Wikileaks* on Film? The *Movie Thought* Approach**

Robert S Watson

6. Interactions

31 / 309-317

Consuming Bollywood in Portugal

Inês Lourenço

32 / 318-327

Visual Literacies in South Africa:

The Challenge for Media Education across the Curriculum

Alan Taylor

33 / 328-337

Fan Film and ‘Legitimate’ Culture:

YouTube as a site of Para-adaptation

Costas Constandinides

34 / 338-347

Documunity: A Collaborative Online Video Project

Jeremy Weinstein

35 / 348-356

**Young People’s Preferences in Respect of Information
Design: Research Findings from Spain**

Ana Isabel Bernal Triviño

7. Transgressions

36 / 358-365

Mythic Vampires and Sexual Allegory in the Cinema

Emma Anne James

37 / 366-374

**Hercule Poirot as Transmedia Figure:
From Television Fiction to Computer Games**

Serena Formica

38 / 375-384

**The Narrative Image and Critical Reception
of the 1970s Vigilante Thriller**

Tom Edwards

39 / 385-395

Sympathy for a Serial Killer? The Case of *Dexter*

Joanna Ioannidou

40 / 396-405

**Somalis, Somali Pirates and Foreign Powers:
Media Identities in BBC On-line News**

Lyndon C.S.Way

41 / 406-417

Violence and Values in the Japanese Manga *Naruto*

Norman Melchor R. Peña Jr.

42 / 418-428

**Extreme Pornography, the Law
and the *Casino Royale* Debate**

Alex Antoniou

Introduction

Phillip Drummond

Introduction

The essays which make up this Reader were presented at **FILM AND MEDIA 2011: The First Annual London Film and Media Conference**, held at the Institute of Education, University of London, on 12-14 July 2011. Organised by Academic Conferences London, the conference announced its intention to celebrate, analyse and critique the screen-based traditions of film, TV and digital media. This opening conference had no central theme, but opened itself to the diverse interests of the research constituency. The response was remarkable: a total of some 165 Papers were included in the final programme, marking the arrival of the event as the largest 'home-grown' UK conference in the field, and the most internationally diverse, with participants from some 40 nations in attendance.

The event was a 'double-header', running in parallel with our companion event **LONDONICITY 2011: The First Annual London Studies Conference**, which attracted a further total of almost 70 Papers. The twin events were open to all participants. They shared Keynote Addresses, Panels, refreshment breaks and the Conference Reception. At the latter we were much entertained by historic London Jewish music from Klezmer Klub.

Outstanding Keynote Addresses were offered at **FILM AND MEDIA 2011** by Professor Robert C. Allen (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), on 'The Experience of Cinema: An Online Digital History of Film in North Carolina, 1896-1930', Professor Julian Petley (Brunel University, UK) on 'Censoring the Media in the Internet Age', and Professor Michael Tracey (University of Colorado at Boulder) on 'Murder, Media Mayhem and the Condition of Culture: The Cases of JonBenet Ramsey and Madeleine McCann'. A screening of Ken Loach's *Ae Fond Kiss* celebrated the 75th birthday of the great British director.

Keynotes were also offered in the context of **LONDONICITY 2011** by Mike Seaborne (Museum of London, UK) on 'Photography and the City: A London Eye', Professor David Gilbert (Royal Holloway, University of London, UK) on 'Cast Iron Histories of London: Empire, Modernity and Marginality at the Hungerford Bridge', and author and broadcaster Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, on 'A Settler's London: Tales of Migration, Multiculturalism and Resistance'. For more on LONDONICITY 2011, please see our separate ebook of Conference Proceedings, *The London Reader 1*.

The Cinematic Institution

The essays which are included here offer a valuable souvenir of **FILM AND MEDIA 2011**, and a remarkable snap-shot of research across the world at an exciting moment in the evolution of research. The first part of this collection draws together essays principally concerned with 'The Cinematic Institution'. We start with James Rowlin's 'Film Scholarship and the 50th Anniversary of the French New Wave', in which he reflects on critical responses to this landmark moment in film history, and his own research on the significance of the Hollywood 'B' movie to French cinema.

Two further essays in this section are concerned with the role of the cinematic author. Looking to Denmark, Fernando Ramos Arenas debates the application to film practice of the notion of the 'death' of the author in 'The Paradoxes of Cinematic Authorship: Dogme 95', while Daniel Marcolino Claudino de Sousa turns to Iranian Cinema for his examination of the relationship between documentary and fiction in 'The Dissolution of Authorship in the Koker Trilogy by Abbas Kiarostami'.

The film author is a clear-cut figure, on the other hand, in Alan Wright's 'Cinema *Grimoire*: Kenneth Anger's Magick Lantern Cycle', but the author's main interest is in the American experimental filmmaker's unique manipulation of magic, which he sees as a fundamental aspect of modernism in the arts. Two other essays in this section offer more broadly social visions. Oleksandr Kobrynsky argues that we have undervalued the attention to the Holocaust paid by the cinema of the former East Germany, in his essay 'DEFA's Forgotten Memory: The Holocaust and East German Film',

while my own contribution on 'Representations of the Scottish Islands in British Cinema' suggests some of the ways in which a range of films has projected varying fascinations with identity upon these far-flung outposts of the United Kingdom.

The Régimes of Television

Part 2 turns its attention to 'The Régimes of Television'. We start with a personal account by Stephen V. Duncan of the ways in which American film and television remain unrepresentative of the racial diversity of the nation, in his essay 'The Evolving State of the Black Aesthetic: From the Experiential Perspective of African-American Film and Television Screenwriters'. Graham Cairns, in 'Television and the Architecture of the Olympic Experience', shows how the design of architecture for recent Olympic events builds into its very fabric the visual requirements of the medium of television. Silvia Ceausu and Tamara Steger turn to an unusual source in their examination of popular TV's support for - and neglect of - the ecology, in 'Environmental Issues in the Animated TV Series: *South Park*, *The Simpsons*, and *Family Guy*'.

Historical concerns inform Jessica Escue's examination, in 'Aesthetics, Appropriation and Intimacy in Ballet for Post-WWII BBC TV: Margaret Dale's *Petrushka*', of the ways in which a female pioneer created strategies for the incorporation of ballet, taking as her case study the televising of the Stravinsky/Diaghilev *Petrushka*. Soap opera may be a more familiar topic within Television Studies, but Teja Mirfakhree and Feresteh Taherinia provide insights into a rarely studied national type, in their account of female viewers and their relationships to Iranian TV soap in their

essay 'Questions of Reception: The Iranian TV Soap Opera *Sandglass*'. Anna Potter concludes this part of our collection with her essay 'Transformations and Reinventions in Children's Television Production', focussing principally on the Australian context but also looking at its symbiotic relationship with broadcasting in Britain.

Media Identities

The third section of the Reader is devoted to a variety of accounts of 'Media Identities'. Cinema is to the fore, as in Angela Meyer's opening essay 'Representations of the Non-Conformist in Consumer Society: Linklater's *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset*'. Comparisons and contrasts between a pair of films also provide the framework for a study of differing representations of an Arab-Israeli soccer club's historic success, in 'Foreigners in their Homeland: Documenting Conflicted National Identity on the Football Field'. Studies of individual films follow, also exploring important issues to do with personal and social identity, in Asma Sayed's 'Nation, Religion and Disability: Identity Politics in *My Name is Khan*' and Rayma Watkinson's essay 'Australia's Colonial History and Political Present: Ivan Sen's *Beneath Clouds*'.

The fast-changing world of Eastern Europe is the focus for the final contributions to this section. Erika Grendelova's study links film and comic books in her essay 'Representations of Czech and Slovak Cultural Identity in Contemporary Films and Comics', while Lesia Kulchynska returns to the former Soviet Union to illustrate the shift from collective to individualised aspirations in her analysis of 'Questions of Social and Personal Identity in Soviet Cinema of the Seventies and Eighties'. Religious

colleagues' introduction of a Canadian TV series to Malaysian audiences in '*Little Mosque on the Prairie*: Interfaith TV through Malaysian Eyes'.

Narratives of Gender

'Narratives of Gender' takes up the fourth part of the Reader. Women are central to the opening essays here. In '*Stardom and the Movie Magazines: The Case of Jacqueline Kennedy*', Oline Eaton focusses on a cultural icon who never made a film, but who became inscribed into the very fabric of public discourse on cinema. The wider issues of historical drama made in the knowledge of more recent socio-political change provide the backdrop to Katixa Agirre's focus on '*Postfeminist Representations of Prefeminist Times: Mad Men, Nostalgia and Self-indulgence*'. The treatment of female identity in a very different national context is then discussed by Wajiha Raza Rizvi, in her account of '*Visual Pleasure in Pakistani Cinema*'.

Under the microscope in the other half of this section are male identities and masculinity. Two cases of stardom are examined here from different national contexts, in John White's essay '*Cinematic Stardom, John Wayne and the Post-WWII Western*', and Koen van Eynde's '*Mohamed Saad, el-Limby and the Popularisation of the Masculine Code in Egyptian Cinema*'. Amanda Field looks at masculinity from another perspective in her revealing account of '*Fear of the Sexual Gaze in the Boxing Genre (1930-1959)*'.

Ontologies

Our fifth section, '*Ontologies*', considers some of the more abstract conditions of media existence. We return to the pre-

history of cinema, to better understand its subsequent evolution, in Ted Hovet's 'The Cinematic Image: From Phantasmagoria to Constraint', whilst Ling Yuan Fabia Lin pursues related issues arising from recent technological advances in her analysis of 'The Interface between Live Action and Animation in Contemporary Film'. A film-maker's reflections on memory and autobiography are at the heart of Jill Daniels' 'The Cinematic Representation of Memory in the Autobiographical Documentary'. The world of digital, and its critical representations in film and literature, is studied in Paul Grundy's essay 'The Virtual and the Vacuous in Literary and Media Fictions dealing with 'The Communication Society'', whilst Robert S. Watson proposes a new 'shorthand' approach to the origination of the screenplay itself, in 'Wikileaks on Film? The *Movie Thought* Approach'.

Interactions

Part 6 of the Reader examines a variety of media interactions. The intercultural relations in which audiences become involved is the focus for Inês Lourenço's essay, 'Consuming Bollywood in Portugal'. Alan Taylor looks at 'Visual Literacies in South Africa: The Challenges for Media Education across the Curriculum'; Costas Constandinides reflects on the ways in which audiences not only 'consume' media texts but re-work them to their own ends, in 'Fan Film and 'Legitimate' Culture: YouTube as a site of Para-adaptation'; whilst Jeremy Weinstein considers the prospects for collaboration in the field of media authorship as made possible by the new technologies, in 'Documunity: A Collaborative Online Video Project'. We return to basic issues about young people's experience of media design, and of the ways in which this affects their engagement with news

coverage, in Ana Isabel Bernal Triviño's essay 'Young People's Preferences in Respect of Information Design: Research Findings from Spain'.

Trangressions

The seventh and final part of this collection is entitled 'Transgressions'. The opening essay here, Emma Anne James' 'Mythic Vampires and the Cinema', considers recent cinematic manifestations of an historic figure of disruption. The transgressive nature of crime is the subject of the next three essays. Serena Formica considers the way in which the figure of a famous detective has passed from literature into television and now into the computer game, in her essay 'Hercule Poirot as Transmedia Figure: From Television Fiction to Computer Games'. Tom Edwards rescues a subgenre from critical dismissal, in 'The Narrative Image and Critical Reception of the 1970s Vigilante Thriller', whilst Joanna Ioannidou argues that television is powerful enough to convince us that even a serial killer may be worthy of empathy, in 'Sympathy for a Serial Killer? The Case of *Dexter*'.

The final essays in this section look to broader themes. Lyndon C.S. Way treats BBC news output to critical discourse analysis to discover simplification and stereotypes at work, in his essay 'Somalis, Somali Pirates, and Foreign Powers: Media Identities in BBC Online News'. Japanese manga is subjected to detailed content analysis, and its reputation for empty violence is challenged, in 'Violence and Values in the Japanese Manga *Naruto*'. We conclude with an essay on the operations of the law itself, and with questions over its ability to successfully address the morality of the visual image, in Alex Antoniou's contribution, 'Extreme Pornography, the Law and the *Casino Royale* Debate'.

Conclusion

The essays which came forward for publication in this collection - about a quarter of the total presented at the conference - represent a wide range of people, institutions, and countries. Brought together in the mix are established scholars, early career Faculty, young researchers, and doctoral students. Their essays reflect a wide range of ways of thinking about the media. Following presentation at the conference, they were submitted for the Reader with some key editorial concerns in mind. They were to be compact - not more than 3,000 words, just about the length of a 20-minute Conference Paper - and they should be unencumbered by extended academic apparatus (footnotes were restricted to a total of just ten).

The intention was to streamline the often inchoate nature of conference discourse and to offer more than just a routine 'record' of the event. We were looking to honour the hard work of our authors, but we also wanted to ensure a highly readable experience for our other audiences. For this editor - who, as Conference Director, could, like any other participant, only attend a small number of the Papers at the point of presentation in 2011 - reading and working on them as a group long after the event itself has been both a pleasure and a challenge. I am most honoured to have been entrusted with the task of bringing them to light in the first of what we plan as a continuing series of such endeavours.

The London Film and Media Reader 1

Notes on Contributors

NUR KAREELAWATI ABD KARIM is a Lecturer in Broadcast Media at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia. She is currently researching a PhD in Television Production at the University of Leeds Institute of Communications, UK. She is a former media practitioner and content regulator at the ASTRO All Asia Broadcast Centre. Her co-authors, Dr. Muhammad Yusuf Khalid, Ainurliza Mat Rahim and Roslizawati Mohd. Ramli, lecture in Communication at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, whilst Norazirawati Ahmad lectures at Kolej University Islam Selangor, Malaysia.

DR. KATIXA AGIRRE is a Lecturer in Audiovisual Communication at the University of the Basque Country, Spain. Her recent audience research study of the TV series *Mad Men* will be published shortly. In addition to her work on women, television and film, she has also published fiction in the Basque language.

ALEX ANTONIOU is completing a PhD at City University, London, where he also teaches. He holds an LLM in Media Law from The City Law School and a MA in Cultural and Creative Industries from King's College, London. He also holds a degree in Law from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. In addition to his work in journalism he has considerable experience across Secondary and Higher Education and in the media and law sectors.

DR. ALINA BERNSTEIN is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Communications, College of Management, Israel. Her publications include *Sport, Media, Culture: Global and Local Dimensions* (co-ed, 2003) and *Bodies of Discourse: Sport Stars, Mass Media and the Global Public* (co-ed, 2011).

DR. GRAHAM J. CAIRNS has held Visiting Professorships in the UK, the Gambia, Mexico, South Africa, Spain, and the US. He has worked in architectural studios in London and Hong Kong and founded the performing arts group Hybrid Artworks. His publications include *El arquitecto detrás de la cámara* (2007), *Deciphering Art, Architecture and Advertising* (2010), *The Architecture of the Screen* (2013), and *Reinventing Architecture and Interiors* (2013). He edits *Architecture_MPS*.

SILVIA CEAUȘU is a Research Fellow in the Faculty of Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal. She holds an MA in Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management following an MSc in Systems Ecology and Sustainable Development from Bucharest University, Romania.

DR. COSTAS CONSTANDINIDES is a Lecturer in the Department of Communications at The University of Nicosia, Cyprus. He holds MA and PhD degrees in Film Studies from the University of Reading, UK, where he taught in the Department of Film, Theatre and TV. He is the author of *From Film Adaptation to Post-celluloid Adaptation: Rethinking the Transition of Popular Narratives and Characters across Old and New Media* (2010).

JILL DANIELS is a Senior Lecturer in Film and Video Practice at the University of East London, UK. An award-winning film-maker, she has been making experimental documentaries and short fiction films since 1989. She is currently working on an autobiographical film, *The Circle*, that delves into long-held secrets in her Jewish family.

PHILLIP DRUMMOND is the Director of Academic Conferences London Ltd. Educated at the University of Oxford, he has been a contributor to the development of national and regional UK film and media education since the early 1970s. He founded and ran the pioneering MA programme in Film, TV and Media at the Institute of Education, University of London, 1980-2000. Since 2000 he has taught British history, culture, and cinema for a range of US universities in Britain, currently New York University in London.

STEPHEN V. DUNCAN is Professor of Screenwriting at Loyola Marymount University School of Film and Television, USA. His publications include *A Guide to Screenwriting Success: How to Write for Film and Television* (2006) and *Genre Screenwriting: How to Write Popular Screenplays That Sell* (2008). He was the Co-creator of and Executive Consultant on the Emmy Winning CBS-TV series *Tour of Duty*; the writer-producer, of the ABC-TV series *A Man Called Hawk*; and co-writer of the Emmy-Nominated TNT film *The Court-martial of Jackie Robinson*.

OLINE EATON is researching a PhD in the Life-Writing Programme at King's College, London. She holds a BA in English Literature and Language from Mississippi State University and an MA in Biography and the Humanities from the University of Chicago. She is the host of the 'New Books in Biography' podcast on the New Books Network.

TOM EDWARDS is a Lecturer in Film Studies, Communication and Culture at Boston College, UK. He is researching a PhD at the University of Lincoln on the pleasures of spectatorship in relation to 1970s vigilante thrillers.

JESSICA ESCUE is researching a PhD in Mythological Studies at the Pacifica Graduate Institute, USA. She holds an MFA in Screenwriting from Hollins University, USA, and an MA in Radio, TV and Film from the University of North Texas. She is in pre-production with her first feature film, *Love is Dead*.

DR. AMANDA J. FIELD is an independent UK film historian. She gained her MA and PhD in Film Studies at the University of Southampton. She is the author of *England's Secret Weapon* (2009), on the wartime films of Sherlock Holmes. The first volume in her three-book series on the history of the boxing film will be published by her film publishing company, Chaplin Books, in 2014.

DR. SERENA FORMICA is an Associate Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of Derby, UK. She holds BA and MA degrees in Media Studies from the Università Pontificia Salesiana, Rome, followed by a PhD in Film Studies awarded by the University of Nottingham, UK. She published *Peter Weir: A Creative Journey from Australia to Hollywood in 2012*.

ERIKA GRENDELOVA is a PhD candidate at Charles University in Prague, researching Comics in Art Education. She is a freelance writer on comics and culture in Bratislava, Slovakia. She holds BA and MA degrees in Art Education and English Language and Literature from the University of Presov, Slovakia.

DR. PAUL GRUNDY is a Senior Lecturer in English Studies at the University of Valenciennes, France. He holds a PhD in 20th Century French Literature following a first degree in French and Italian at the University of Manchester, UK. He researches ethnicity in 20th Century US literature, and literary and media representations of the Information Age and transmediality.

PROF. TED HOVET teaches English and Film Studies at Western Kentucky University. He holds MA and PhD degrees in English from Duke University. His research on early cinema, 19th century popular entertainment, and pedagogy has been published in a wide range of journals.

JOANNA IOANNIDOU is a graduate of Media and Performance Studies from Utrecht University. Her research, presented at various conferences in Europe and the US, largely focuses on monstrous narratives and their effect on audiences as well as emotional engagement with fictional characters.

EMMA ANNE JAMES is researching a PhD on American culture and post-apocalypse cinema at the University of Leicester, UK. She holds a BA in Film and Television Studies from Aberystwyth University and an MA in Film/Literature from De Montfort University, UK.

OLEKSANDR KOBRYNSKY is completing a PhD in the Department of English, American and Romance Studies at the Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany. He holds an MA in Holocaust Studies from Royal Holloway, University of London.

DR. LESIA KULCHYNSKA is a researcher in the Department of Film and Television Studies at the National Academy of Sciences of the Ukraine, and a researcher and curator at the Visual Culture Research Centre, Kiev. She holds a PhD in Film and Television Studies. Her current research focuses on the soviet cinema of post-Stalin period.

DR. FABIA LIN is a Lecturer in Filmmaking and Communication at National Chengchi University, Taiwan. She holds a PhD in Arts from Loughborough University, UK.

DR. INÊS LOURENÇO is a Post-Doctoral fellow at the Centre for Research in Anthropology (CRIA)/Lisbon University Institute, Portugal, with a post-doctoral Grant from the Portuguese Science and Technology Foundation. Her main investigation is focused on the Hindu Diaspora in Portugal supported by fieldwork carried out in Portugal and in India since 2000.

DR. LEA MANDELZIS is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Communication, Netanya Academic College, Israel. She is a former professional journalist in Israel and a member of the Peace Journalism Group at the Toda Institute of Global Peace and Policy Research. Her publications on war, peace, media, sport and nationality include *Media Conceptual Shifts from Conflict to Peace: News Discourse in the Middle East* (2011).

ANGELA MEYER is a Doctor of Creative Arts candidate in the Writing and Society Research Group at the University of Western Sydney, Australia.

TEJA MIRFAKHRAEE is an Assistant Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication at the Central Tehran Branch of Islamic Azad University at Tehran. He has published a number of books and articles on media, as well as conducting some large-scale research projects.

NORMAN MELCHOR PENA JR. administers the Information Service Office of the Society of St. Paul in Rome. A doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Social Communications of the Pontifical Salesian University, he holds an MA in Communication from Griffith University and graduate degrees in Management and in Theology from Macquarie University and Sydney College of Divinity respectively.

DR. ANNA POTTER has been a Lecturer in Communications at the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia, since 2001. She previously spent ten years working in the commercial television industry in London for the pay-TV operation BSkyB before moving to Australia. She is currently conducting research into the effects of technological, industrial and policy change on the production ecology of Australian children's television.

DR. FERNANDO RAMOS is an Assistant Professor in Film and Media Studies at the University of Leipzig. He studied Philosophy and Film Studies in Spain and Germany. His 2010 doctoral thesis on the history of authorship discourses in cinema has been published as *Der Auteur und die Autoren: Die Politique des Auteurs und ihre Umsetzung in der Nouvelle Vague und Dogme 95* (2011).

WAJIHA RAZA RIZVI is a media professional, outreach consultant, and educationalist and a Fulbright, FCOSAS, and Chevening Scholar. She runs a small non-profit organization that collects the archives and conducts research on the rapidly disappearing history of Pakistani cinema. She has produced and directed documentaries, TV commercials, and TV quiz shows. She is a member of the Advisory Board of *The Annual London Film and Media Conference*.

DR. JAMES ROWLINS is a Lecturer at the Singapore University of Technology and Design, established in collaboration with MIT. He holds a PhD from the University of Southern California, USA, with a dissertation entitled *Deadly Deviations, Subversive Cinema: The Influence of the Hollywood B-Movie on the French New Wave*. He is the Editor of the International Academic Forum's *Journal of Film, Media and Communication*.

DR. ASMA SAYED holds a PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Alberta. She teaches and researches Comparative World Literature, South Asian diasporic literatures in Canada, and Indian Cinema. She co-edited *World on a Maple Leaf: A Treasury of Canadian Multicultural Folktales* (2011). Her forthcoming books include *Writing Diaspora: Transnational Memories, Identities and Cultures*, *M. G. Vassanji: Essays on His Works and Cinema and the Mother: Representations of Motherhood in World Cinemas*.

FERESHTEH TAHERINIA works for IRIB (Iranian Radio and Television). She holds a BA in English Translation from Chamran University and an MA in Mass Communications, specialising in Journalism, from the Central Tehran Branch of Islamic Azad University.

DR. ALAN TAYLOR is the former Acting Section Head of the Tshwane University of Technology Film Programme, South Africa. He is a graduate of the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, the University of London Institute of Education, and the London Film School. His publications include *We, the Media* (2005) and *Jacobean Visions: Webster, Hitchcock and Google Culture* (2007).

DR. ANA ISBAEL BERNAL TRIVIÑO is a researcher in the Group Labcom at the University of Malaga, Spain. She holds a doctorate in Journalism and has a Masters in Art History from the University of Malaga. She has worked as a producer and editor for press and TV.

KOEN VAN EYNDE is a Tutor in Arabic at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, Egypt. He is also researching a PhD at the University of Leuven, Belgium, focussing on the representation of masculinities in Egyptian cinema between the revolutions (1952-2011).

ROBERT S. WATSON is a film-philosophy PhD researcher based in the School of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania. He holds a research MA from Queensland University of Technology, and BAs from the University of Tasmania and Griffith. He has also worked as a movie studio creative executive at two international movie studios, and as a screenwriter and screenplay editor.

DR. LYNDON C.S. WAY is an Assistant Professor in Media and Communications at Izmir University of Economics, Turkey. He worked in radio and TV news for a number of years before receiving a PhD in journalism from Cardiff University in 2010.

RAYMA WATKINSON lectures in Screen Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. She has also taught film at the Universities of Sydney, New South Wales, Newcastle and Macquarie.

JEREMY WEINSTEIN is researching a PhD on the mechanics of distributed, collaborative documentary film editing at Swinburne University of Technology, Australia. A graduate in Mechanical Engineering from Monash, he holds an MA in Media and Communication from Swinburne. His short film *Looking for Harvey* screened at Cannes in 2001. In 2005 he raised \$1.45m to direct his first feature film, *WIL*, which won awards at various festivals.

JOHN WHITE teaches in the Department of English, Communication, Film and Media at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge, UK. He holds a BA in English Literature, a BSc in Natural Sciences, and an MA in English Literature. His publications include *Westerns* (2010), *Fifty Key American Films* (co-ed, 2009), and *Fifty Key British Films* (co-ed, 2008).

DR. ALAN WRIGHT is a Senior Lecturer and Programme Coordinator of Cinema Studies at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. His research on Kenneth Anger is part of a larger project on magic and cinema.

1. The Cinematic Institution

1 / Film Scholarship and the 50th Anniversary of the French New Wave

James Rowlinson

The Anniversary

The fiftieth anniversary of the French *Nouvelle Vague* ('New Wave') was celebrated in 2009-10, marking the half-century since Truffaut's *Les 400 coups* (*The 400 Blows*, 1960) and Godard's *A bout de souffle* (*Breathless*, 1960) were released in France. The anniversary was commemorated around the world, with special screenings at *La Cinémathèque Française* in Paris, *Ciné Lumière* in London, and MOMA in New York. The anniversary was also recognised in scholarship. In this essay I will be reviewing some of the most recent books and articles on the New Wave in relation to this historic moment and its legacy.¹ Additionally, I will look at the New Wave's relationship to Hollywood genre cinema, with the aim of demonstrating how it remains possible to open new avenues

for researching a field that, according to some film scholars, has become saturated and unproductive.

Indeed, the tone of recent criticism of the French New Wave has been largely hostile, and while the anniversary was certainly acknowledged by scholars, this was on the whole not an event deemed worthy of much attention. These sentiments are reflected in Ginette Vincendeau's introductory comments to the *Cinema Journal's* New Wave feature, where she asserts that *"that there is not a lot to celebrate about the French New Wave."* Vincendeau concedes, nonetheless, that the *"last few years have seen a new generation of scholars turn the spotlight on the New Wave in a number of fresh and different ways"* and that the fiftieth anniversary has proved an *"opportunity to give pride of place to these new approaches that both stretch the boundaries of what we think of as 'the French New Wave' and challenge some of the basic tenets, even clichés, associated with it."*²

A number of scholars have challenged received ideas about the New Wave by considering the movement's sociological dimension. This approach is championed by Philippe Mary, who re-examines the way in which the cultural field of the New Wave was perceived by its practitioners to be 'new', from industrial, historical, and sociological perspectives.³ Another scholar whose work is characterized by a sociological approach to the New Wave is Jean-Pierre Esquenazi, whose book on Godard offers an engaging account of Godard's early filmmaking career in relation to the political, sociological, intellectual debates of the 1960s.⁴ The New Wave's influence on culture, filmmaking, sociology and politics, both in France and internationally, is another reliable centre of continued research.

Conspicuous by its absence, however, is any work exploring the New Wave in relation to May 1968 and social and political upheaval in 1960s France. Dorota Ostrowska closes her analysis just before May '68, preferring to restrict her analyses to the relationship between literature, theory and cinema, rather than considering questions of politics.⁵ The considerable interest of Ostrowska's book, however, lies in its study of the multifarious literary and philosophical influences that shaped the New Wave, including *nouveau roman* authors such as Robbe-Grillet and Cayrol. Ostrowska demonstrates that these authors drew upon many of the same inspirations as the *Cahiers du Cinéma* group, such as the work of William Faulkner. Furthermore, she traces the influence of the Surrealists, Borges and Sartre on the formation of the New Wave. Sartre's influence in particular has previously been given little attention in New Wave histories, even though prominent scholars such as Dudley Andrew have alluded to his importance.

In recent years, Geneviève Sellier has established herself as one of the foremost authorities on the New Wave. Sellier, whose work is characterized by detailed analyses of such data as surveys, box office figures, and popular magazines, has consistently reminded her readers that between 1958-62 a total of one hundred and fifty young people made first time feature films. Sellier has therefore diverted attention away from the New Wave's male headline-grabbers, such as Godard, Truffaut, Rohmer, Chabrol and Rivette, and on to the movement's female stars, such as Anna Karina, Jeanne Moreau and Brigitte Bardot. Sellier has helped to establish gender as the prime avenue of inquiry into New Wave cinema, convincingly arguing that the predominately male *auteurs* 'wrote' their films in the "*masculine first-person*

singular" and expressed a fundamental ambivalence regarding sexual liberation.⁶

While Sellier generally believes there to be little positive in the New Wave's representation of gender, she continues to find the films of the period worthy of consideration. She makes an analogy between the New Wave *auteurs* and the 18th-Century libertines, who depicted love as a game. Sellier asks if this game provides some scope for reconsidering her previous position insinuating misogyny on the part of the New Wave, given that this game "*takes into account, to a certain degree, the female Other, who is not reduced to the status of mere object, nor to that of a figure alienated by social conventions.*"

In exploring this idea, Sellier analyses two low-profile New Wave films, Philippe de Broca's *Les jeux de l'amour* (1960) and Michel Deville's *Ce soir ou jamais* (1961) - both of which were, unusually, written by female scriptwriters. After critiquing the male actors' performances and the directors' overriding influence, she nevertheless concludes that this "*so-called renewal of the representations of male-female relations ... is simply a readjustment of male domination rather than an attempt to call it into question.*"⁷ Thanks to Sellier's work, a consensus has emerged regarding Agnès Varda, namely that she fully deserves to be considered a New Wave contemporary rather than its 'godmother' (being only two years older than Godard), or some kind of affiliate of the Left Bank filmmakers.

In her *Cinema Journal* contribution, Vanessa Schwartz claims that it is "*time to simply recognise once and for all that Agnès Varda's 1954 'La Pointe-Courte' might be the inaugural New Wave film.*" Schwartz also believes that the films of the 1950s

and 60s starring Brigitte Bardot have unfairly been “*sidelined in favour of a narrative that has overplayed and privileged the history of the New Wave; Bardot becomes important only insofar as she starred in the films of directors such as Jean-Luc Godard who then self-consciously offered visual unpackings of her enormous celebrity while (perhaps unwittingly) contributing to furthering it.*” Schwartz’s principal claim, however, that the New Wave “*murdered*” Brigitte Bardot in order to secure financial success is, to say the least, overstated.

Schwartz is, however, highly perceptive regarding the two fundamental approaches to the New Wave in contemporary scholarship. On the one hand, there is the approach concerned with film aesthetics and *auteurism*, that seeks to group New Wave films according to their stylistic attributes and narratives. On the other hand, “*a more recent trend in the interpretation of the New Wave has been to see it as a cultural historical phenomenon rather than as an aesthetic school.*”⁸ This latter approach includes such influential events as, for instance, the 1959 Cannes Film Festival and the premières of début films by Chabrol, Rivette, Rohmer, Truffaut and Godard. By her own admission, if this is the favoured approach on the part of critics, then events such as the fiftieth anniversary have some critical validity - although conversely, the New Wave becomes something of a closed book in terms of the films deemed to be part of the official canon.

Schwartz’s comments are indicative of the central debate in recent scholarship of New Wave cinema, which concerns the taxonomical definition of the movement and the development of new ‘criteria’ for establishing the New Wave’s official filmography. These questions are at the heart

of my own doctoral research. My thesis, 'Deadly Deviations, Subversive Cinema: The Influence of the Hollywood *Film Noir* on the French New Wave', develops an extensive comparative study of the influence exerted by Hollywood 'genre' film, in particular the B-series *film noir*, on the French New Wave. The central premise stems from an observation by Fereydoun Hoveyda that the *Cahiers* critics and future New Wave filmmakers realised that their favourite *auteurs*, in particular directors of American *film noir*, were in fact all talking about the same things: "*solitude, violence, the absurdity of existence, sin, redemption, love, etc.*"⁹

The Hollywood B-Movie

The *Cahiers* writings about American genre cinema have been the subject of some excellent research - by Antoine de Baecque and Jim Hillier among others - but there is a surprising deficit of scholarly writings on the New Wave's adaptations of the Hollywood B-movie, a matter which is treated either as meriting only superficial consideration or as a total enigma. I therefore embarked on a study that considers in great detail the New Wave's reprise and adaptation of the *film noir* format - involving more than fifty New Wave crime or gangster films made between 1958 and 1965 - with analyses focused not only on character and plot conventions, but also on the tropes, aesthetics and production techniques common to both cinemas.

I believe I have reached a number of important conclusions. First, I argue that this relationship is so omnipresent that it becomes *the* principal identifying criterion of the movement. Second, I show that while New Wave filmmakers sincerely admired the Hollywood aesthetic, their manipulation and subversion of American *film noir* conventions are at the heart

of their *politique des auteurs*. Specifically, I show that the *politique des auteurs* manifests itself as a political critique of the Americanisation of French society of the 1960s, as well as exhibiting a profound reticence in the face of the impending sexual revolution.

In my considerations, I also demonstrate how American film noir was pivotal in shaping New Wave realism. I categorise the movement's approach to representing reality as the 'actuality aesthetic'; an approach that fuses documentary and fictional modes in order to imbue seemingly objective representations of everyday life with an authorial point of view and political bias. I consider how this approach bears the influence of the 'semi-documentary', an American *film noir* sub-genre of the late 1940s which includes films such as Jules Dassin's *The Naked City* (1948).

I go on to illustrate - with regard to an eclectic selection of New Wave films including Morin's and Rouch's *Chronique d'un été* (*Chronicle of a Summer*, 1960), Rozier's *Adieu Philippine* (1961), Rohmer's *Le Signe du lion* (*The Sign of Leo*, 1962), Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (*Cleo from 5 to 7*, 1962), and Godard's *Vivre sa vie* (1962) - how the New Wave achieved a political criticism of issues relating to the war in Algeria, social issues such as housing and prostitution, the Americanisation of the Parisian urban landscape and the *Angst* and *malaise* experienced by the New Wave youth generation.

I concur with Sellier that these *auteurs* were fundamentally conservative and sceptical about sexual liberation. I show how the plot, character and cinematic style conventions of the B-series *film noir* such as Ulmer's *Detour* (1945), Bernhard's *Decoy* (1946). *Detour* and Lewis' *Gun Crazy* (1950)

are re-inscribed into New Wave films by Malle, Truffaut and Godard. I pay particular attention to the generic personages of the *femme fatale* and the fatalistic 'child-man,' as well as to the recurring visual trope of the carnival ride, present in both *film noir* and New Wave films and which serves as an allegory for the impending upheaval in the traditional *ménage*. I conclude that the New Wave's representations of courtship and the couple are revealing of a psychological anxiety, fear and trepidation about the impending changes to the 'rules of the game' between men and women.

I believe that this research makes a lively contribution to the current debate in Film Studies and French Studies regarding the legacy of the New Wave, particularly in light of the recent tendency to cast doubt on the movement's engagement with politics and to dispute the New Wave's status as a defining moment in French cinema. By way of conclusion, one might consider that the reticence among scholars to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the New Wave goes beyond a mere sense that scholarship on the period is saturated.

Rather, there is a sentiment that film scholars have for decades been deceived by the New Wave's virulent attacks on the 'tradition of quality' cinema, and lacked critical distance from Truffaut and the other *Cahiers* critics' denunciation of French mainstream cinema of the 1950s. In the words of Vincendeau, "*there is a belief that the New Wave directors were skilfully adept at perpetuating their own legend through a trick of historiography ... creating a historiographical vacuum around the New Wave*" meaning that "*for a long time, and to a large extent still today, the French cinema of the 1950s and 1960s, beyond the canonical New Wave titles ... has remained terra incognita.*"¹⁰

Vincendeau attributes the current antagonism between scholars and the New Wave to the movement's vehemently self-proclaimed anti-academicism and to the highly orchestrated nature of its campaign against mainstream cinema, beginning with Truffaut's incendiary attack on the cinematic *status quo* in his 1954 *Cahiers* article, 'A Certain Tendency in French Cinema'¹¹. Indeed, the ambivalence and hostility by scholars towards the New Wave, is arguably a final testimony to the powerful and enduring nature of the movement's revolt against all established systems of authority.

Notes and References

¹ I will draw in particular on the *Cinema Journal*'s 'In Focus' feature entitled 'The New Wave at Fifty: Pushing the Boundaries', vol. 49 no. 4, 2010, pp. 135-166.

² Ginette Vincendeau, 'The French New Wave at Fifty', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 49 no. 4, 2010, pp. 135, 137.

³ Philippe Mary, 'Cinematic Microcosm and Cultural Cosmologies: Elements of a Sociology of the New Wave', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 49 no. 4, 2010, pp. 159-166.

⁴ Jean-Pierre Esquenazi, *Godard et la société française des années 1960*, Paris: Armand Colin, 2004.

⁵ Dorota Ostrowska, *Reading the French New Wave: Critics, Writers and Art Cinema in France*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

⁶ Geneviève Sellier, *Masculine-Singular*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2008, p. 7.

⁷ Geneviève Sellier, 'French New Wave Cinema and the Legacy of Male Libertinage', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 49 no. 4, Summer 2010, pp. 153, 158.

⁸ Vanessa Schwartz, 'Who Killed Brigitte Bardot? Perspectives on the New Wave at Fifty', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 49 no. 4, 2010, pp. 147, 146, 147.

⁹ Jim Hillier (ed.), *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s, Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 76.

¹⁰ Ginette Vincendeau, 'The French New Wave at Fifty', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 49 no. 4, Summer, p. 137.

¹¹ François Truffaut, 'Une certaine tendance du cinéma français', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 31, 1954, pp. 15-29.

2 / The Paradoxes of Cinematic Authorship: Dogme 95

Fernando Ramos Arenas

Introducing Dogme 95

The film movement Dogme 95 represents something of a paradox. While the figure of the individual filmmaker is explicitly denied in the movement's Manifesto, its films are continuously understood in relation to the figures of its founders, the directors Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg. As Jack Stevenson writes, *"Never have directors been more in the spotlight. Never had a specific filmmaking style managed to steal so much attention away from the movie itself."*¹ In this essay I would like to shed some light upon this paradox. In doing so, I will try to clear up the contradictions of Dogme's idea of authorship while addressing some general issues to do with film authorship in general.

In March 1995, at a conference celebrating the 100 years of Cinema held at the *Odéon* Theatre in Paris, the Danish film director Lars von Trier surprised the organisers by spreading some red leaflets among the audience. They were the manifesto of a new film movement, Dogme 95. This manifesto presented, in revolutionary language, a set of ten rules or vows, which would determine the aesthetic, narrative and production style of the films of this Movement. The first examples would appear some years later: since 1998 Dogme 95 has given birth to important works such as *Idioterne* (*The Idiots*, von Trier, 1998), *Festen* (*The Celebration*, Vinterberg, 1998), *Mifune* (Kragh-Jacobsen, 1999) and *Italiensk for begyndere* (*Italian for Beginners*, Scherfig, 2002).

The manifesto featured some formal characteristics connecting this document to other proclamations of this sort in film history. These included a reaction against the established production or aesthetic order; the presentation of a new, alternative style; as well as the defence of ideals like 'freedom' or 'realism' in film production. Whereas among these other historical examples there has been a direct (or sometimes indirect) defence of the figure of the author-filmmaker, his/her creative freedom and his/her position as catalyst of the changes announced in the manifesto, Dogme 95 takes a different perspective. The manifesto is very clear on the subject of authorship - but in its negation, as in the tenth vow ("*The director must not be credited*") or in the oath at the end: "*I swear as a director to refrain from personal taste! I am no longer an artist. I swear to refrain from creating a "work" ... I swear to do so by all means available and at the cost of any good taste and any aesthetic considerations.*"²

Perspectives on Authorship

In what follows I will try to answer the following questions. What are the aesthetic and film historical implications of the negation of authorship as proposed by the movement? How did these implications affect the products, namely the film themselves? How do they look like? What has been the public reception of the movement? What role has the author played in this process of reception? But before answering these, I would like to clarify my theoretical starting point regarding the question of authorship. Following a constructivist approach, I consider authorship, in the tradition of Foucault, primarily as a function, a group of beliefs or assumptions governing the production, circulation, classification and consumption of texts or any other cultural products.³

This means authorship ideas are constantly changing and are the result of a complex network of interests, dispositions and manifestations of power. However they *seem* to be quite the contrary: firm, stable, simple and direct. A good example is the concept of the *auteur*, which can be read as a translation of the romantic idea of authorship into the field of cinema, identifying the author with the director as part of society, yet also an outsider, who gets to express his personality through his works. Stylistically there is in these works a pattern to be discovered, a series of characteristics in form or content, which tend to be constant in a body of work and are often read as representations of the director's world-view or even as biographical clues.

In this Romantic tradition, authorship can therefore be considered, at least for the last 200 years, as a modern *petit bourgeois* myth, whose function is, as Barthes said, to make us understand *history* (a group of changing beliefs and discursive constructions) as if it were *nature* (stable, firm immanent structures or convictions).⁴ The emergence of the discourses of the *politique des auteurs* and subsequently *auteur theory* in the 1950s and 1960s can be understood as the imposition of a way of looking at films, which considers authors as a central focus. The best proof of the power of the myth is that we accept it without questioning it: we all see authorship, one way or another, as this Romantic ideal intends it. 'Auteurism' thus acts as a method of organisation of films and also as an evaluative tool: not every filmmaker is an *auteur*, only good directors can become one.

Questions of Narrative and Genre

At first sight the Dogme manifesto can be read in the tradition of the *politique des auteurs*, since the negation of the authorship proposed by Dogme 95 is based on the idea that the director is the author of the film, the person who determines its form and content. This negation of the author is above all the negation of style, as style is supposed to be proof of individuality. There is a negation of the author, of his personal style and his taste but also a substitution of the individual by the group. This takes place, on the one hand, through the style of the movement, since most of the aesthetic characteristics observed in the films can be traced back to the 'Ten Vows' of the manifesto, and on the other hand, through its linkage of the titles of the films with those of the movement: *Dogme No. 1: Festen*, *Dogme No. 2: Idioterne*, and so forth. Numbers present the film as the

group-work, as the homogenized production of an artistic movement.

Dogme 95 also proposes a re-reading of the realist tradition in Film Theory. Film is consequently a perfect illustration of reality, it acts as a medium, which leaves aside the intervention of a human hand or mind and achieves its perfection in its own disappearance. Cinema is, thanks to its objectivity, the best way to capture reality. Consequently there is no need for an expressive author, who would get in the way between reality and image. The best way of putting this author aside is by limiting his power according to the 'Ten Vows'. Von Trier said that Dogme is about giving up control, but I see it rather as a way of avoiding decision-making, an aesthetic preventing the audience from a direct contact with the reality of the narration.

This is the way the author, according to the manifesto, *should* be. How can we then actually find the author in the films? Analysing the most distinguished films it is easy to find very traditional narrative structures, outlined by David Bordwell, in *Italian for Beginners*, or classical 19th Century Theatre (the *pièce bien faite*) in *The Celebration*.⁵ The films focus their attention on the description of characters and they could be considered - even though genre films are strictly forbidden by the manifesto - to be working within the generic structures of melodrama or romantic comedy.

Therefore the distinguishing characteristics of the Dogme films can be found on the level of aesthetics rather than of narrative. Some of their similarities involve the regular use of the hand-held camera, the zoom, 'open' framing and non-traditional lighting. There are also differences among the various directors: the work of Lars von Trier, for example,

represents in its radicalism a challenging of these parameters in its use of an extreme shaky camera, regular jump-cuts and common disregard of the 180-degree rule. In spite of all these stylistic challenges the films are usually well understood by their audiences.

Dogme and the Audience

Where reception of the films is concerned, Dogme 95 seeks to achieve an effect of reality on the spectator. The movement looks for documentary sincerity (Danish: *'ægthed'*) in a fictional product. It tries to achieve it through directness: *"we show you a story as it really is!"* could be the slogan of the movement, trying to accomplish this through the ignorance or intended transgression of many classical film techniques, which guide our reception and comprehension of films. In the manifesto, such techniques are regarded as the main obstacles to the creation of genuine films. The Dogme films, with their systematic mis-matches in the cutting, their heterodox use of lighting and their constant heightening of stylistic devices, stand therefore in sharp contrast to the traditions of Hollywood cinema.

The reaction of the spectator is not one of identification with this 'reality', thanks to the absence of an author and therefore, a style, but quite often one of unintentional alienation and disturbance. This occurs as a reaction on the part of the audience to the material aspects of the artwork, heightened as they are by the interpretation of the 'Ten Vows'. These material aspects, which are not contained by the unifying, narrative forces of a film, are what I call, following Kristin Thompson, the *"excess"*⁶.

The audience cannot however ignore the codes which guide its viewing of the film, and the associated background knowledge which structures reception. The films' disregard for those norms doesn't allow a direct identification of the audience with reality but instead an irritation because of their absence. For instance, there is nothing 'natural' in the 180-degree rule, but spectators are so used to it that its disregard, in many Dogme films, produces such irritation that it demolishes any effect of documentary 'near-ness' in the narration.

The Death of the Author?

Given what we have heard from the manifesto concerning the 'disappearance' of the author, there is a curious mismatch here with the ways in which the films are promoted, presented at festivals, and discussed in interviews with their directors. Here, the disappearing author clearly reappears. The best example would be Lars von Trier, a master of self-promotion, as recently shown during the Cannes Film Festival of 2011, but other Dogme directors have also taken part in the promotional activities necessary for the commercialisation of the films. These directors propose, while marketing their films, a singular example of that 'commerce of *auteurism*' described at the beginning of the 1990s by Timothy Corrigan.

Corrigan understands the development of the author figure, especially since the 1970s - a long way from its Romantic beginnings - as an effective way of guiding the reception of the film and assuring commercial success. Corrigan sees the author/*auteur* construct as an attempt "*to monitor or rework the institutional manipulations of the auteurist position within the commerce of the contemporary movie industry.*"⁷

Dogme understands the importance of the author figure in two different ways. On the one hand it creates polemic with its proclamation of the disappearance of the author, whilst on the other hand the author-directors act like Corrigan's 'authors of commerce', actively guiding the reception of their films.

The Manifesto's proclamations concerning authorship, and especially the way these have been received, relate to another interesting phenomenon in film culture during recent decades. This is what Dana Polan calls the '*auteur* desire', that is, the search for authors as a central aspect of contemporary film consumption.⁸ In relation to what I said earlier about the mythological character of authorship, there are some similarities to the analysis of modern myths as proposed by Barthes.

The successful propagation of the myth of the *auteur* suggests that even the disappearance of the author is something of a paradox: "*Myth can reach everything, corrupt everything, and even the very act of refusing oneself to it. So that the more the language-object resists at first, the greater its final prostitution; whoever here resists completely yields completely*".⁹ Against all odds, some forty years after the 'death of the author' in other disciplines like literature or philosophy, we are thus surrounded if not any more by *auteurs*, then certainly by *auteurists* - proof that the notion of film authorship still functions, both inside and outside academic film studies, as a crucial paradigm of coherence in many of the discourses governing the consumption of films.

In neither film production nor in the public positioning of the director has the disappearance of the author, which Dogme so clearly proclaimed in its Manifesto, in fact been achieved.

The topic is plagued by contradictions, as I have tried to demonstrate. By trying to systematise these contradictions in order to deliver an answer to the 'paradoxical' question with which I began, I would like to summarise Dogme's proposed negation of authorship as follows. Dogme's negation of authorship is a negation of a simplified version, the negation of the *auteur*-myth; a surrogate of the idea launched in the 1950's in the French film journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*, which can be identified with the traditional Romantic authorship ideal.

In this tradition, Dogme says 'no' to author, to style and to the individual. Dogme's understanding of the authorship idea is for the first time in history a programmatic one. It constitutes a commentary *on* film history with a clear source (the manifesto), and a clear goal (to locate the movement *within* film history). It is also a polemical proclamation of authorship, brought into being in order to create a discourse surrounding the production and reception of the films of the movement, which can be well explained according to ideas about the 'commerce of *auteurism*' and '*auteur* desire'.

Notes and References

An extended version of this essay appears in German in my book *Der Auteur und die Autoren: Die Politique des Auteurs und ihre Umsetzung in der Nouvelle Vague und Dogme 95*, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2011, ch. 10.

¹ Jack Stevenson, *Dogme Uncut: Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg and the Gang that Took on Hollywood*, Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica Press, 2003, p. 155.

² Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg, on behalf of Dogme 95, 'The Dogme Manifesto' and 'Vow of Chastity', 1995, In Stevenson, *Dogme Uncut*, pp. 23-5.

³ See Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?', in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977, pp. 113-138.

⁴ Barthes as summarised by Ottmar Ette, *Roland Barthes: Eine intellektuelle Biographie*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998, p. 113.

⁵ David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies*, London: University of California Press, 2006, p. 35.

⁶ Kristin Thompson, 'The Concept of Cinematic Excess', *Ciné-Tracts* vol. 1 no. 2, 1977, pp. 54-63.

⁷ Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture after Vietnam*, New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991, p. 106.

⁸ Dana Polan, 'Auteur Desire', *Screening the Past: An International, Refereed, Electronic Journal of Visual Media and History*, no. 12, 2001.

⁹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, New York: The Noonday Press, 1972, p. 132.

3 / Cinema *Grimoire*:

Kenneth Anger's *Magick Lantern Cycle*

Alan Wright

Magic, Modernism and the *Magick Lantern Cycle*

Scorpio Rising brings the forces of magic, modernity and cinema into productive alignment. Yet Kenneth Anger's 1963 film displays an ambivalent response to the impasses and contradictions of 20th-Century art and culture. Anger devoted his artistic career to directing the thaumaturgic power of film against the dream-images of popular culture yet, as a true subject of modernity, remained enthralled by their spell. *Scorpio Rising* channels the dark powers of modernity just as a Tarot reading reveals the occult significance of cosmic events. *The Magick Lantern Cycle*, as Anger called his body of short films, holds the key to a secret history of cinema: film as the phantasmagoric object of the troubled dream of modernity.

Magic, according to MacCabe, is “the hidden underside of modernism”.¹ He was referring to *Performance* (Cammell/Roeg, UK, 1970), another accursed film made under the influence of Aleister Crowley, Borges, the Kray brothers, drugs and rock n’ roll, but the idea can be productively applied to an analysis of *The Magick Lantern Cycle*, since it opens up a promising line of inquiry into the alchemical effect of cinema as a modern art form, and especially as it resists the general line on Anger’s films and refuses to assign them to the accepted categories of camp, counter-cultural or bizarre curiosity.

The Magick Lantern Cycle assumes, therefore, critical importance as a vehicle for reorienting the conventional categories and canonical formations of film history. *Scorpio Rising*, Anger’s most famous film, serves as an act of desecration, a curse against everything that the movies represent. On the other hand, it invests the film image with a miraculous aura. In this respect, *Scorpio Rising* stands as both perfect synthesis and radical negation of cinematic tradition. This essay re-evaluates the position of Kenneth Anger’s work in general, and *Scorpio Rising* in particular, and reassesses its place within the critical conjuncture of modernity in the middle years of the last century.

Anger likened making movies to casting a spell. The logical and conceptual structure of magical thought reflects, in method and style, the practice of many modernist writers, artists and theorists. The arsenal of modernist strategies and techniques - mimicry, montage, metamorphosis, ritual, repetition, quotation, performance, transgression, automatism - draw their strength from the principles of sympathetic magic. Metaphor and metonymy, the constitutive elements of a modernist poetics, operate

according to the same laws of similarity and contagion that govern the primary processes of primitive magic. Magic, rather than being an archaic form of pre-modern knowledge and belief, or a reactionary mode of anti-modern sentiment, is a privileged category of modern consciousness. *The Magick Lantern Cycle* participates in the cinematic, artistic, cultural and intellectual tradition that understands magic as a modern phenomenon and apprehends modernity by magical means.

Cultural Traditions

The Magick Lantern Cycle returns cinema to its source in the spectacular visions conjured by the phantasmagoria and *camera obscura*. It combines elements of the prehistory and early days of cinema, the glamour and glory of Hollywood in the 20's and 30's, the technical audacity of Soviet montage, the artistic freedom of the *film maudit*, as well as the more obvious features of experimental film. *Puce Moment* (1949, 6 mins) celebrates the screen goddesses whose sordid lives Anger revealed in his catalogue of exposés, *Hollywood Babylon*, first published in French in 1959 with a first English-language edition appearing in 1965.

The somnambulist hero of *Fireworks* (1947, 20 mins) stalks the corridors of dream like a ghostly extra from Cocteau's *Blood of a Poet* or Dreyer's *Vampyr*. *Rabbit Moon* (1950, 7 mins) and *Eaux d'Artifice* (1953, 12 mins) imagine film as a lost branch of roccoco art or the last refuge of *commedia dell'arte*. *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1954, 38 mins) presents a delirious celebration of Eisenstein's visionary poetics filtered through the Babylonian theatrics of Griffith at his most excessive, all in glorious colour. *Invocation of My Demon Brother* (1969, 12 mins) *Kustom Kar Kommandos*

(1970, 3 mins), and *Lucifer Rising* (1972, 29 mins) complete the cycle.

Similarly, *Scorpio Rising* (1963, 28 mins) achieves a fusion of the customary practices of the historical avant-garde and the dominant mode of contemporary visual art in the late 50's. Anger deploys the formal preoccupations and artistic provocations of Cubism, Dada, and, especially, Surrealism against the cultural iconography of Pop Art and the Beat movement. The film's celebration of speed, death and masculinity is best understood in terms of the fascination with magic that characterises the history of modern art.

The Magick Lantern Cycle also claims a more dubious cultural patrimony. The birth of cinema coincides roughly with the great Victorian revival of interest in spirituality, mysticism and the occult. The 19th Century of course also marked the triumph of the principles of scientific and technological progress. The ideals of the Enlightenment were fired in the furnaces of the Industrial Revolution. The invention of modernity, as a product and a concept, demanded a strong faith in the exercise and authority of instrumental reason. Ignorance and injustice were to be swept away by the systematic application of positivist logic and secular wisdom.

The path of esoteric knowledge, however, as explored by a growing number of men and women from 1860 to the early 20th century, leads to a radically different view of modernity. Alex Owen argues that a critical reappraisal of the place of the occult in the Victorian imagination is integral to an understanding of "*what it means to be modern*", and that magic should be regarded as "*constitutive of modern culture at the fin-de-siècle*".² Rather than occupying an irrational space on the fringes of contemporary intellectual and

cultural life, the practices and beliefs of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Madame Blavatsky and the Theosophists, Aleister Crowley and his *Ordo Templi Orientis* (Order of the Temple of the East, or Order of Oriental Templars) are an intrinsic aspect of an emergent modern sensibility that sought to define and articulate the experience of the new, to refine and express a heightened consciousness of subjectivity and reality as a distinctively modern phenomenon.

The modern Magus did not simply withdraw into the charmed circle of ancient ritual and occult lore as protection against the evil demons of industrialised culture. The rise of occultism cannot be explained away simply as an aberrant reaction to the material conditions or spiritual poverty of contemporary life in the late 1800s. It is best understood as an inherent phase in the dialectical movement of modernity. The relentless advance of capitalist production mobilises immense resources of creative energy just as it unleashes a catastrophic appetite for destruction.

Magic restores the balance between Man and Nature. It resolves the contradiction between social progress and moral decline. The “*transvaluation of all values*” called for by Nietzsche in the closing exclamation of *The Antichrist* is achieved at the psychic level.³ The promise of revolutionary violence, as prophesied by Marx, is fulfilled on the astral plane. In proclaiming that that “*every man and woman is a star*”, Aleister Crowley established an uneasy synthesis between the sovereignty of human will and the authority of divine law.⁴ But, once summoned forth, the ghost of History cannot easily be conjured away, as we shall see.

Scorpio Rising

Anger, Crowley's most famous cinematic acolyte, invoked Lucifer as the tutelary spirit of his art. In *Scorpio Rising*, the Angel of Light rides with the Prince of Darkness. The figure of the Devil presides over the more demonic aspect of Anger's project. Carel Rowe describes the heady mixture of decadence, dandyism and revolt that pervades Anger's films as Baudelairean cinema.⁵ But Anger's affinity with Baudelaire involves more than a pose and a penchant for evil. Walter Benjamin thought that Baudelaire's writing represented the fate of the lyric poet in the era of high capitalism. In similar fashion, *Scorpio Rising* can be read as performing the last rites for cinema amidst a rising tide of conformism, consumerism and mass media. With its infernal machines and demon lovers, the film projects an image of post-war American culture as Hell.

At an earlier stage in the history of visual spectacle, which would ultimately culminate in the invention of cinema, the phantasmagoria performed a similar brand of shock therapy for bourgeois audiences in Paris after the Revolution. Anger's demonic invocation of Terror in the guise of a band of apocalyptic joyriders and juvenile delinquents bears a striking resemblance in tone and effect to the magic lantern projections of the period: Marat in his bathtub, executions, bloody riots, shades of the revolutionary dead. *Scorpio Rising* opens up a charged space, filled with dangerous objects and dubious characters. The boys and their bikes represent an ideal of beauty set against a backdrop of lust and crime.

The phantasmagoria converted the trauma of the recent past into an entertaining spectacle, a diverting parade of spectres and ghosts. The revolutionary potential of History is thereby disavowed. Margaret Cohen, in her pioneering study of Gothic Marxism, *Profane Illumination*, comments that the magical lantern projection of Etienne-Gaspard Robertson and his contemporaries turned to technology “as an imperfect substitute for the authentically supernatural ... but maintain[ed] an ambiguous relation to the rationality the Enlightenment put in its place. For in continuing simultaneously to link his technological creation to some sort of supernatural power, Robertson indicates his recognition of the demonic potential of human invention.”⁶

Robertson’s invention was designed to dispel superstition but revelled in the frightening apparitions it produced. In this respect, the phantasmagoria acts as one of those “*morbid symptoms*” that arise, as Gramsci observes, when “*the old is dying out and the new cannot be born.*”⁷ The death throes or birth pangs of the modern - often the two are difficult to separate - are captured in the afterlife of the image. Kenneth Anger resurrects the spectre that haunts the history of cinema and *Scorpio Rising* preserves its phantasmatic power.

The iconoclastic impulse at the heart of *Scorpio Rising*, and, arguably, of avant-garde art in general, belies an exhilarating encounter with the transformative power of the visual image and the revolutionary potential of film as a modern art form. The history of film becomes the latest episode in an ideological, moral, aesthetic and political struggle over the good or evil properties of the image. For Kenneth Anger, film is the site for the magical reconciliation of the opposed forces of spiritual darkness and light as they manifest themselves in contemporary cultural form. In this light, the

constellation of baleful images formed by *Scorpio Rising* conveys the critical conjunction of social, sexual and spiritual life in post-war American culture.

Objects of Desire

Under the banner of Puck Productions, Anger created a dream world that mirrored the disenchanted universe of everyday life and contemporary American society. Film supplied the medium for reinvesting reality with a sense of the sacred, an important concept for both the Parisian *Collège de Sociologie* and the Frankfurt School. *Scorpio Rising*, with its images of excess, display and abjection, mounts an attack of sacrificial and sovereign violence against the political economy of capitalist production and consumption. Kenneth Anger, in the manner of Baudelaire, presents a portrait of the artist at the high point of 20th-Century modernity.

Anger described *Scorpio Rising* in the sumptuous language of erotic fantasy: “A conjuration of the presiding Princes, Angels and Spirits of MARS, formed as a “high” view of the Myth of the American Motorcyclist. The Power Machine seen as tribal totem, from toy to terror. Thanatos in chrome and black leather and bursting jeans.”⁶ The fetishistic character of *Scorpio Rising* bears more than a passing resemblance to Marx’s description in *Das Kapital* of that “very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties”, the commodity:

“The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men’s own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves ... It is

nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things."⁸ Anger's loving depiction of flesh, leather and chrome in *Scorpio Rising* offers an inverted reflection of the mysterious object of desire that governs consumer society. Only in the fantastic form of a relation between things, that is, between images, can a social or sexual relation exist between men. Cinema, for Anger, becomes the site for their magical reconciliation.

Scorpio Rising has attained cult status both as an underground classic as a shimmering piece of pure pop art. One of the film's considerable achievements is that it appeals to a diverse audience of teenagers, queers, dandies, thugs, Satanists, radicals and other curious onlookers. It has initiated thousands of disaffected lovers, loners and rebels into the bitter joys and pleasures of film as a subversive act. The pull of *Scorpio Rising* has always exceeded the confines of respectable analysis. Anger's films are both esoteric and popular in their appeal. They straddle the great divide between high art and vulgar taste. Knowledge of the traditions of Renaissance painting or medieval allegory is as vital for an appreciation of *Scorpio Rising* as the contemporary influence of rock n' roll or motorcycle gangs.

In this context, *Scorpio Rising* marks a significant turning point in Anger's career. It condenses all of his aesthetic interests and influences but casts them in a striking new configuration: B-picture, skin-flick, home movie, documentary, musical fantasy. *Scorpio Rising* contains much that is innovative in terms of visual design, *mise-en-scène*, colour and costume, editing, music and sound. The film also invents a new form, mixing raw documentary footage with highly stylised and choreographed set-pieces, blending a

grungy realism with finely wrought artifice. But *Scorpio Rising* also bears the mark of the future. Aside from setting the agenda for underground filmmaking for decades to come, *Scorpio Rising* anticipated the focus of the popular media and primetime entertainment in postmodern culture. The spectacular performance of narcissism, masochism, and other scenarios of totalitarian control was already laid bare in Anger's anatomy of the image. *The Magick Lantern Cycle*, poised as it is on the cusp of a new era in the history of film, heralds the eclipse of modernity.

Notes and References

¹ Colin MacCabe, *Performance*, London: British Film Institute, 1998, p. 82.

² Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004, pp. 14, 16.

³ Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Antichrist* (1888), New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923, p. 182.

⁴ Aleister Crowley, *The Book of the Law*, London: Ordo Templi Orientis, 1938, p. 19.

⁵ Carel Rowe, *The Baudelairean Cinema: A Trend within the American Avant-Garde*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982.

⁶ Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1995, p. 238.

⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, rev. ed., 1971, p. 276.

⁸ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867), London: Penguin Books, 1976, vol. 1, pp. 163-5.

4 / Representations of the Scottish Islands in British Cinema

Phillip Drummond

Islands and the City

In the Scottish island films, the city and its metropolitan values are never far away. In rare and precious cases, subtle and poignant stories of imagined and remembered lives, and of the impact of migration, may be told in authentically Scottish narratives linking the islands and the mainland, as *Ill Fares the Land* (Bryden, 1982), *Blue Black Permanent* (Tait 1992), *From the Island* (Alexander, 1993), and *Seachd: The Inaccessible Pinnacle* (Miller, 2007). I have given such powerful and poignant texts the attention of which they are so clearly worthy in the longer version of this study. With the exception of the richly multivalent *Seachd*, these are however largely meditations on the experience of a movement inwards, from the islands to the mainland, and

from, we might say, 'nature' into 'culture'. Mainstream cinema, on the other hand, prefers larger and more abstract binaries as, from its own urban centred-ness, it goes in search of an otherness in which its existing dramas can be projected and worked out. Such narratives may thus begin elsewhere, with no intimation of a Scottish connection, before moving to the island destinations of the west and north to either pose a challenge, or for their development and eventual resolution.

In comedies of personal identity, the geographical and cultural distances between London and the Scottish islands are clearly marked, and indeed provide a crucial incongruity. When islands are besieged by urban bureaucrats, as in such classic comedies as *Whiskey Galore!* (Mackendrick, 1949) and *Rockets Galore!* (Relph, 1958), it is from the city that the operations of the latter are controlled, giving rise to comic alternations, replete with difficulties in communication, between London and the Outer Hebrides. This motif continues apace in the comedy *Staggered* (Clunes, 1994), where a bridegroom-to-be from England is abducted by a love rival and deposited naked on a beach in Barra, whence he must make his way home to London to thwart his rival and to reclaim his bride.

The circular journey from London to the Scottish islands and back finds one of its earliest expressions in the Arthur Askey comedy *The Back-Room Boy* (Mason, 1943). Here, Arthur Philbeam is posted to a lighthouse on the 'Orry' islands, somewhere near the Orkneys, when the rigorous demands of his job in London as the man who makes an art out of striking the radio time 'pips' causes him to lose a frustrated fiancée. Demanding a posting where there are no women, he ends up in a lighthouse, marshalling the varied characters who are

stranded with him on his rocky outpost: sailors and their cargo of a group of models taking fashion to Brazil, along with Jane, a no-nonsense and capable young Cockney who has been evacuated from Lambeth because of war.

This motley crew of travellers find themselves involved in German infiltration of Scottish waters, and unwittingly manage to inveigle a German warship into a minefield, where it is destroyed. Largely thanks to the abilities of Jane, Philbeam returns to London mistaken for a hero, and even appears to have retrieved the affections of his fiancée, who has taken over his job in his absence. She closes the film by mischievously putting out the same jocular version of the pips which previously cost Philbeam his job, suggesting that she too has become a freer spirit – and may in turn be set loose - thanks to the return of Philbeam.

It is under the influence of women - whom he has furiously eschewed in favour of his male retreat - Philbeam becomes the 'man' he hoped to be, and in a similarly preposterous fantasy appears to have recaptured a lost love. Conversely, in a tragic variation on *The Back-Room Boy*, the pressures of the City are associated with the marine disaster which destroys a family in *Blessed* (Aldridge, 2008), and provide the impetus for a widower's poignant rediscovery of self and place and childhood on an unnamed Scottish island. *Ring of Bright Water* (Couffer, 1969), based on the real-life experiences of naturalist Gavin Maxwell, here provides the original template for the urban character leaving London in search of a new identity amidst the fauna of a Scottish island.

If Périer's *When Eight Bells Toll* (1971) exploits the Scottish islands in the interests of little more than a sub-Bond caper movie, in the thrillers *Eye of the Needle* (Marquand, 1981)

and *Madame Sin* (Greene, 1972), the West Coast islands are the destinations for more ambitious espionage dramas which begin in London and then move north for their action-oriented and spectacular later stages. In the WWII drama *Eye of the Needle* the Isle of Mull acts as a condensed site for international hostilities displaced from the capital (and also from the German capital, Berlin, whence we see the spy Faber receiving his instructions). *Madame Sin* fantasises not a real and historic World War but imaginary international conflicts, and again London is the place which must be displaced in favour of the Scottish islands. Just as in *Eye of the Needle*, London is itself a problematic social site as we follow a disoriented figure making his way across a city from which he is estranged by unknown drives. He turns out to be former secret agent Anthony Lawrence, left in despair following the disappearance of his fellow agent and girlfriend, Barbara.

Gendered Islands

In *Eye of the Needle*, the genders are caught up in a more critical farrago. Here, the young mother Lucy Rose becomes the pivotal figure between her disabled husband David and the charismatic German spy who eventually kills him just as he has killed a series of other challengers in the film. Her fate is to betray her husband, to lose him to her German lover, and then to become her lover's desperate, amateurish nemesis as the film finally centres on images of threatened and desperate femininity and maternity as she attempts to protect her young son. *Madame Sin* then turns these preoccupations with gender in a different direction.

The central figure here represents a troubled and disabled masculinity as he suffers both the loss of his lover (the source of his urban alienation in London and in Paris) and the controlling power of Madame Sin, played by Bette Davis, the source of his disorientation and impotence. These apparently divergent female pressures unexpectedly converge to become the source of his eventual extinction. The film's preoccupation with troubled psychic worlds both natural and artificial, adds an extra psychological dimension to the protagonist's experience of insularity: when questioning his unexpected island situation, he is advised that "*There is only one island*".

The women from the cities who make their way to the Inner Hebrides in *I Know Where I'm Going* (Powell, 1945), *The Brothers* (MacDonald, 1947), and *The Governess* (Goldbacher, 1998), have differing goals, but the difference proposed by the islands, especially Skye, still leads to strained interactions in a gendered landscape. The urban heroine of *I Know Where I'm Going* discovers that her sense of destination is only partial, and can be altered by the discovery of powerful romantic alternatives when Hebridean weather stalls the last stage of her journey from Mull to the smaller, imaginary island of Kiloran.

In *The Governess*, the Jewish Rosina DaSilva travels from London to Skye, masquerading as the Christian 'Mary Blackchurch', in order to start a new life. She falls into a passionate affair with her master, photographic pioneer Charles Cavendish, only to learn that masculinity is a fickle quality. She must return to London to regain her hidden Jewish identity, and to attain her own status as a professional photographer. It is in this capacity that she is able to capture her former lover's image when he humbly visits her studio,

and whence, with some of her identity and power restored through her control of the new representational medium, she is then able to let him go again.

For the dying heroine of *Hold Back the Night* (Davis, 1999) the Scottish islands are a final destination. She chooses to make a long journey from England to the Orkneys to pass away at dawn in the Ring of Brodgar. Death on the islands also awaits the needy heroine of *The Brothers* (MacDonald, 1947). Looking only for a stable family life, she has to endure ferociously competitive male interests and pay with her life for masculine absurdities. Nikki, the young woman at the centre of *The Island* (Mitchell and Taylor, 2011), is also caught up in desperate familial relations, this time with the mother who abandoned her and whom she vengefully tracks down in later life to her refuge on a Hebridean island.

Intercultural Encounters: Germany

The intercultural palette of the Scottish island films is thus provided by a series of encounters between social types from varying locations. Seen in purely geographic terms, some of these encounters are internal, between islanders themselves. Some are encounters between varieties of Scottishness, involving a relationship between the islands and the Scottish mainland. Others draw upon understandings of Britishness in general as other national types, notably the English, are exposed to island ways and values.

Questions of social class, land ownership and animal rights, for instance, are worked out in the course of brutal struggles across the landscape of the island of Mull in *Blooded* (Boase, 2011). Beyond the national context, however, there is a limited range of international signifiers. The island films

prefer two main types of national figure, European and also transatlantic, around whom to build an intercultural complex. For films dealing with the Scottish islands, the not entirely dissimilar terrain of the Mediterranean could have been an interesting reference point.

Indeed it is, in the solitary case of *When Eight Bells Toll*, where Agent Philip Calvert is called back to the 'Isle of Torbay' (in fact Mull) from his post in Malta, and where the opposition is Greek, including a villainess longing for warmer territories of isolation. But the key European other in these films is Germany. Dealings with Germany in the island films have the effect of challenging the cosy pictorialism of some of the island traditions, whilst also threatening to lock the films into a fixity of time and intercultural perspective as they predicate themselves exclusively on memories of war.

The spectre of WWII haunts several of the films - including the wartime comedy *The Back-Room Boy* - with Germany seen both as a shadowy and also a very real presence in the Scottish islands. One of the earliest feature films considered here, *The Spy in Black* (Powell, 1939), dramatises German attempts to destroy the British fleet off Scapa Flow during WWI, whilst ominously anticipating, as a pre-war film, the eruption of a second European conflagration. The film focuses on the German effort, building suspense around the adventures of Captain Hardt. It goes on to develop considerable fascination with the Captain as a figure of charismatic brooding. It complicates the picture by depicting the murderous brutality of German agents on the ground.

On the British side, it builds a parallel story of female courage and daring, counterpoised with the seeming treachery of a disgraced British naval officer. The British have the last laugh

when their capacity for strategic duplicity outwits German daring: the naval officer has in fact merely been playing the traitor in order to deceive the Germans, and the 'agent' they believed that they had successfully substituted for the new schoolteacher turns out, confounding their subterfuge and also the audience's expectations, to be the original teacher, Jill Blacklock - another migrant from the mainland exposed to island challenges.

Whiskey Galore! may develop its central satire on both wily islanders and pig-headed English civil servants, but this binary satire rests on a wartime setting (1943) which contextualises both the wartime conditions of scarcity which render the fortuitous cargo of whisky even more valuable, and the 'jobsworth' determination of the (very English) Home Guard Captain Waggett. It is in this context that the threat of potential German invasion can be mobilised at key moments in the cat-and-mouse game between the islanders and the excise men. Germany is however more emphatically inscribed in a much later film, *The Rocket Post* (Whittaker, 2006) set in the Outer Hebrides of the 1930s.

Here, the German scientist Gerhard Zucher visits the Hebrides to experiment with a new short-range rocket. Intercultural tensions with the islanders relax, especially when he becomes romantically involved with local girl Catherine Mackay, but remain at a high level in his relationship with his devoutly German assistant, Heinz Dombrowsky. When a German military team arrives to escort him back to Germany, the islanders spring to his defence. But ultimately, with his family back home under threat, he has no option but to leave the islands in order to sacrifice himself to the Reich.

The Eye of the Needle sets its action within the early time-frame of WWII. It follows the exploits of embedded agent Henry Faber, who uncovers crucial information – fallacious, as it transpires – about the point of origination for the D-Day operations. Rather in the manner of *The Spy in Black*, the story follows him as he develops his mission, masquerading as an Englishman whilst actually under the control of Berlin. With his apparently vital information he eventually goes on the run up to Scotland to be taken off by U-Boat, casually and brutally eliminating a number of opponents along the way, and in the process developing a complex moral experience for the spectator: he is a treacherous and dangerous opponent of the nation, and the native spectators of this British film will want to see him thwarted. But the protocols of the cinematic institution tend in the opposite direction.

The intense narrativity of the manhunt calls for the prolongation of his escape as well as his early capture, and he is after all the incarnation of a major international star, Donald Sutherland (in truth neither English nor German but of course Canadian). A further intercultural dimension is introduced when Faber reaches Scotland. What has hitherto appeared to be a powerfully masculine narrative, centring purposefully on Faber himself, takes on more complexity here as the young mother Lucy Rose she is drawn into an adulterous sexual liaison with him, only to discover his true identity.

By the time he has also murdered her husband, she and her child are left alone in a new, final opposition – an English mother determined to protect her child and yet also committed to preventing him communicate his vital information to his controllers. At this point *The Eye of the Needle* joins up with films as various as *The Brothers* and *The*

Governess in its story of a lonely woman from elsewhere caught up, in a profound struggle with her own lover, over her personal safety and identity, set against the terrible beauties, in their material conditions, of the landscapes of the Scottish islands.

Scotland and America

Americans, or Americanised Brits, are significant identities in a number of the films. In *The Bridal Path* (Lauder, 1959), the identity of Ewan McEwan gets confused with that of the Irish-American Bud Flanagan, with his fin-tailed motorcar and tough male coterie. Only by escaping from the mainland, and recapturing his island authenticity, can Ewan shake off this damaging 'foreign' association. These values are however here not static: at the same time, the young woman who accompanies him on his return is herself in a stage of intercultural transition, needing a connection for the mainland boat to meet up with her fiancé, himself an American.

In *From the Island*, by contrast, the American connection is more clearly negative. Nurse Janet Cameron's fiancé Derek comes home from the United States thoroughly transformed into an American – wearing a fringed jacket and presenting one to his fiancée, singing an American folksong to a delighted audience of local men. His brash espousal of his new identity leads quickly to a sexual assault on his fiancée, and drives her ever closer, although traumatised, to the different masculinity of Charles McAllister, the schoolteacher she has befriended during Derek's absence. Perhaps the fullest exploration of this theme comes in *The Maggie* (Mackendrick, 1954). At first sight, *The Maggie* comically explores the world of difference between the motley crew of

the eponymous Clyde 'puffer' under Captain Mactaggart and the bullish, saturnine US aviation magnate Calvin B. Marshall.

Because of a shipping agent's error, the Maggie has been awarded the job of transporting household furniture to Marshall's island home, an error with which they gratefully collude in order to raise the money necessary to cover the costs of repairing the ship to renew its license. Theirs is the world of an antiquated and struggling tramp steamer, limping around the Clyde coast, his the more expensive territory of long distance trains and airplanes between Scotland and England; he is even able to hunt down the errant vessel by private plane when it fails to answer his command to halt.

His coastal home is never seen, but he is filling it with modern amenities; the Central Hotel in Glasgow becomes his base; their only landfalls are at waterside bars. He is continually frustrated by their inefficiency and dilatory approach to business. They run aground while still on the Clyde by misjudging the tide, make a diversion to give a needy family a lift, and wreck an island pier. Marshall himself comes to the rescue by manfully repairing the engine, and by jettisoning his cargo when the ship runs aground and threatens to break up.

If Marshall's marital tensions provide one poignant undertow, it is not as if the crew of the Maggie offer a more integrated or fulfilled vision of domestic intimacy. The elderly skipper does not hold ultimate legal ownership of his own craft; it is the ferocity of his sister back in Glasgow that thwarts Marshall's punitive attempts to buy the Maggie out from under him. He is a skinflint, according to the mate,

whose failure to maintain the boat has led directly to its present parlous state.

The deckhand starts the film canoodling in a bar, but thereafter is condemned to the frictions of the all-male group. The ship's boy is a fierce defender of his skipper's pride, but can be roughly treated in return. And so the values of the self-sustaining motley crew of the Maggie may elude the determined 'big business' approach of Marshall, and yet they are not seen as offering a viable alternative – even if, in a final amalgamation of opposites, the Maggie is unexpectedly renamed the 'Calvin B Marshall'. Marshall may or may not have reached a new understanding of his potential marital estrangement, but there is clearly no superior domesticity available to the ship's crew, no preferable Scottish alterity.

5 / The Dissolution of Authorship in the Koker Trilogy by Abbas Kiarostami

Daniel Marcolino Claudino de Sousa

Kiarostami and Iranian Cinema

By the end of the 1940's, the film industry in Iran was already well established, producing around 80 mainly commercial feature-films a year, so-called 'farsi cinema'. It is along with the consolidation of this kind of cinema that another kind of cinema appears, which came to be known as '*Cinema Motefävet*' ('Different Cinema'). It included names such as Farrokh Ghaffari, Forough Farrokhzad, Dariush Mehrjui, Masoud Kimai, Sohrab Shahid Saless, Bahram Beizaie, figures generally unknown in Western culture. This is the context for the films of Abbas Kiarostami, born at the beginning of this decade. His first work, in 1970, was the short film *The Bread and the Alley* (*nan va kuche*). From then on, he would shoot several films at KANUN, the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, where he created and directed the department of cinema.

Its status as a government institute freed him from worrying about ticket sales, but it obliged the films to target young people as their audience. This allowed Kiarostami to try a specific means of communication with the public that would become one of his hallmarks. It is also possible to notice an aesthetic connection with the films of Forough Farrokhzad (*Khaneh siah ast, The House is Black*, 1962), Dariush Mehrjui (*Gav, The Cow*, 1969), Sohrab Shahid Saless (*Yek ettefaq-e sadeh, A Simple Event*, 1973, and *Tabiate bijan, Still Life*, 1974).

The Koker Trilogy is taken by critics to be made up of *Where is the Friend's Home?* (*Khane-ye dost kojast?*, 1987), *Life and Nothing More ...* (*Va zendegi edame darad*, 1992), and *Through the Olive Trees* (*Zire darakhshan zeyton*, 1994), because all three films feature the village of Koker in northern Iran. The films also relate to the 1990 Manjil-Rudbar earthquake, in which 40,000 people lost their lives. The trio of films opens with *Where is the Friend's Home?*, an 8 year-old boy must return his friend's notebook in order to prevent his friend from being expelled from school. The second and third films in the series look back in an increasingly reflexive way on the relationship between fiction and documentary, and on the role of the filmmaker as the central agent of these representations.

In *Life and Nothing More ...* a fictional version of the director returns to the earthquake-devastated region area in search of the actors of the earlier film. *Through the Olive Trees*, in turn, then focuses on one of the events in *Life and Nothing More ...* and further explores the relationship between the filmmaker and his actors. Local actors play a couple who got married following the earthquake, whereas, in reality, the actor is trying to persuade the actress to marry him.

Kiarostami himself, it should be noted, prefers to think of the trilogy as comprising the last two titles plus *Taste of Cherry* (*ta'm e guilass*, 1997), a film about man in search of someone to quietly bury him under a cherry tree after he commits suicide.

I have chosen the Koker Trilogy partly for their thematic connections, but also because they use metalinguistic resources, in the form of a film that takes shape inside another. In *Life and Nothing More ...*, for instance, the supposed director of the film looks with his (presumed) son for two actors of another film, *Where is the Friend's Home?*, in order to know if they have survived the earthquake that occurred in 1990 (the year of the film). The final film of the trilogy, *Through the Olive Trees*, is a film which 'contains' a film of the same name and which also refers back to *Life and Nothing More ...*

Hossein, the main character, from one character to another, both with the same name, which gives the first the impression of being completely natural. This will contrast with his entrance in the second character, when, as an actor, he is informed by someone on the film set of the beginning of his acting on another level. At this moment, he leaves behind one fictional role only to enter another, a moment that makes clear to the spectator when the actor's work starts inside the second film, i.e., when he starts to perform in the bigger film. We see the clapboard indicating the beginning of the representation and we hear the director say "Action!".

Questions of Cinematic Realism

In general, critics of Kiarostami films are unsure whether such scenes are organised or occur 'naturally' in the film, as

though the filmmaker had chosen them from a transparent, pure and genuine Iran (these films are generally considered a portrait of his country). The analysis of authorship challenges the assumption that Kiarostami's cinema is 'documentary' in intention - in spite of the fact that critics are convinced that the way people and their relationships are shown in his films, and represent themselves, constitute a truthful portrait of Iran, understood in the worldwide press as a rural nation. Kiarostami knows that pure documentary is impossible, but he does not despise the importance of the documentary ideal, as his cinematic inscription of the earthquake demonstrates.

Italian Neo-Realism, for its part, replaced the sophisticated and antiseptic artificiality of the Hollywood studios with simple plots, real scenarios, amateur actors, and reduced editing effects. Neo-Realism seems, indeed, to sustain the belief in a narration that is able to capture so-called reality in a direct manner. Playing with real and fictional material, Kiarostami suggests that it is simplistic to think that one can simply tell a story which shows reality as such. Unlike a painting on canvas, whose fictional limits are quite clearly the borders of the picture, film sometimes gives the impression that by turning the camera around a little towards one of the sides one might find a continuation of the diegetic elements of the film. But this is of course not the case. No such transparency is possible because, in the very first instance, everything is an expression of cinematic discourse.

It is possible to say that up to *Where is The Friend's Home?* Kiarostami intends to make a finished narrative, because there is the development of a story that shows tensions and evolutions that are, in a way, resolved (as, for instance, the case of the non-expulsion of the boy). In *Life and Nothing*

More ... , even though the initial project is find the two actors of *Where's The Friend's Home?*, the film delivers its main characters for casual enjoyment, with the future uncertain. The only conviction in the film is that there must be one way, the way that will lead them to Koker, as the actor who plays the director says.

"All roads end somewhere", says the father. The boy replies: "It can be a non-exit road". There is no other rejoinder. There's only a negative silence, which leaves the spectator in doubt. And in this atmosphere of structural uncertainty, we are conducted to events that relegate the search for the boys to second place. Take, for example, Hossein's acting in *Through the Olive Trees*. How to characterize the transition of one level of performing to another? What happens, for instance, when the two characters of Hossein interact with Tahereh? Is she refusing to play when, in the beginning, she refuses to address to Hossein as "mister"?

Verisimilitude and Indeterminacy

Through the Olive Trees emphasises its constructed nature by foregrounding indeterminacy, making a puzzle of information that the spectator thinks s/he is in command of, but which remains untrustworthy and without guarantee because in general it has originated in a fictional discourse. Tahereh is involved in a similar situation when she argues with Mrs. Shiva, the producer of the film inside the film, about the dress that a female friend had lent her and that she would wear for the film. She assumes that that dress would be used by many peasant women, but Mrs. Shiva keeps saying that she must use a dress like her grandmother's.

Tahereh argues that her friend's dress is appropriate, since students don't use the same clothes as illiterate peasants or old people. Mrs. Shiva says "*no*" and that she should wear "*a peasant dress*". This notion of the different roles assigned to people in Iranian society is consistent with Tahereh's refusal to address Hossein as 'mister'. Meanwhile, the spectator, in this case passive, entirely depends on the characters' information, but tends to agree with Tahereh, since she lives in the region and, for this reason, she knows more about such a basic topic as this. Here in this simple example Kiraostami is clearly preoccupied with issues of representation, verisimilitude, and the 'reality' effect.

Actually, the dress is one of a number of elements that come to be part of the scenario created by the film crew, from the small plant vases donated by seeming volunteers through to the speeches that make reference to other ones which have already taken place, as, for instance, the number of Hossein's relatives killed by the earthquake. He insists on a total that was supposed to be real, contradicting the 'live' shooting (in two shots that are made for Hossein to say a number desired by the director), the director's wish (in fact, the actor who plays the director), as Hossein himself will indeed say to Tahered (as well as to the spectator): "*When I ask for the socks, won't you think that it's me. It isn't me. That's what the director wants ... If I marry you, I'll take care of my socks, of my clothes and all of my things! I want to marry just to be happy, not for you cooking for me.*"

This being said, Hossein has to go back to his speech from the 'internal' film: "*Tahereh, where did you put my socks?*". This speech is relativised by the prior one, which assumes a truth characteristic because it was spoken by Hossein himself, but by an actor performing a role. Hossein seems to say that,

even though it's like this in art, it can be better in real life. However, according to another character in the bigger film, Hossein in the course of a delirious night, whispers "*where are my white socks?*" – and in so doing prevents the crew from sleeping. The man who says to Tahereh that he isn't the kind of authoritarian husband who demands to know where things are, involuntarily assumes in the dream (or nightmare) the character of a typically chauvinist husband.

As the film progresses, the director of the film-within-a-film seems to be worried about the development of the parallel history or story between Hossein and Tahereh and decides to follow it. For this director, it seems to be necessary to pay attention to what happens in the lives of the actors and, for this reason, he asks Hossein what is going on between them and finds out about the unfulfilled romance, Hossein's desire to marry Tahereh and her grandmother's denial. By mixing up the 'real' and the 'fictional', Kiarostami opens gaps in the representation, foregrounding the process of construction.

Opening gaps between what is represented and what is not, he seeks to promote the aesthetic experience by means of resources which go beyond the iconic and the linguistic. In this way, he reveals the illusory aspect of art: "*It's necessary to keep in mind that we are seeing a film. Even in the moments when it seems very real, I would like that two small arrows could stay twinkling in both sides of the screen, so the public would not forget that it is seeing a film, not the reality. I mean, a film that we have done with a basis in reality.*" ¹

Kiarostami thus works on a kind of border zone, disrupting the rules and the expectations of classic drama and allowing the scenes to occur in a looser way than the traditional patterns of action have led us to expect. Furthermore, it

leads to reflections about the role of the cinema itself, suggesting that a meta-linguistic procedure such as outlined here might be one of the few ways now left to build a history in contrast to the closed and totalised narratives characteristic of the cultural industry. Made then in opposition to both commercial cinema and the traditionally understood 'cinema of authors', this "*incomplete cinema*", as Kiarostami calls it, draws attention to the special nature of Kiarostami's contribution to the development of ideas about film as discursive system, and of its relation to the real.

Notes and References

¹ Youssef Ishaghpour and Abbas Kiarostami, *Abbas Kiarostami: Duas ou Três Coisas que Eu Sei de Mim*, São Paulo: Cosac Naify/Mostra Internacional de Cinema de São Paulo, 2004, p. 114.

6 / DEFA's Forgotten Memory: The Holocaust in East German Film

Oleksandr Kobrynsky

Challenges to Holocaust Memory

Representations of the Holocaust in American and European films have been attracting attention for decades. Less well-known, however, is the fact that the annihilation of European Jews was repeatedly addressed by filmmakers in Socialist countries during the Cold War. In this essay I deal with the question of how the Holocaust was represented in East German films. I discuss four films produced by the state-owned DEFA (German Film Stock Company). DEFA was the monopolist in the Soviet zone of occupation and, later, in the German Democratic Republic. I analyse a number of strategies which filmmakers employed to create empathy and closeness with the Jewish victim. Overall I challenge the

widely accepted theory that the Holocaust was marginalised in East German popular culture. Instead, I argue for a perspective that acknowledges the efforts of a number of filmmakers to integrate Holocaust memory into the official anti-fascist narrative.

In academic accounts of this issue assumptions concerning the marginalisation or even exclusion of Holocaust memory in East Germany are predominant. Let me clarify this mainstream perspective by quoting from Daniela Berghahn's *Hollywood Behind the Wall: The Cinema of East Germany* (2005): "*Given the abundance of anti-fascist films, the anti-Semitic aspects of the Nazi regime are certainly under-represented. While the annihilation of the Jews is addressed, it is usually instrumentalised to support the Marxist interpretation of anti-Semitism. This is not surprising since due to the state-control that governed all aspects of film production, it had to reflect the official historiography.*"¹

Here we find three basic assumptions which are essential for all discussions of East German collective memory and film production. First, there is the view that the issue of the genocide committed against Jews has not been assigned the appropriate value in public discourse. Since we do not have enough space here to discuss this question by looking at popular cultures in West Germany, United States, Israel and so on – and I suggest we would identify a similar 'under-representation' of the anti-semitic aspects of the Nazi regime in these and other countries during the Cold War – I will limit my criticism to the observation that Berghahn's assessment is fuelled by moral prescriptivism and is not supported by a sober historical enquiry. From a contemporary perspective, it is easy to pass moral judgements but it is very difficult to establish what an appropriate representation of anti-

semitism and the Holocaust should be today, let alone should have been in East Germany or in any other country.

Second, where the 'instrumentalisation' of the Holocaust for political purposes is concerned, this well-known trope is both alluring and little helpful at the same time. (Just think about the so called 'Holocaust industry' or the similarly vague notion of 'Americanisation of the Holocaust'.) The German film historian Wolfgang Becker suggests that German post-war film bears "*little self-contained memory of the destruction of the European Jews*"² implying that there is something like an independent, authentic and un-political Holocaust memory. This view is outdated.

The present-time orientation of personal and collective memory has been widely discussed in Cultural Studies and, today, we would agree that the way memory manifests itself has to do more with the present than with the past. In other words, the present socio-political and psychological situation has a far greater influence on the way the past is remembered than the events of the past themselves. Application of the morally laden term 'instrumentalisation' can be misleading, especially if we are talking about discourses in the past which are not immediately comprehensible for us today.

Finally, Berghahn suggests that DEFA's film production was under the all-encompassing ideological supervision of the state authorities. It is true that no film could be screened without official approval in East Germany. However, conditions of film supervision were subject to historical changes and throughout DEFA's history only a small number of films was actually banned. If we look at the immediate post-war period, we can identify very strict film censorship in

Western zones of occupation. At the same time, filmmakers in the Soviet zone of occupation worked in a close and friendly way with Russian officials. *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (*The Murderers are among us*), was produced by DEFA after Wolfgang Staudte had met with resistance in Western zones with his idea for the first German post-war film. Surprisingly enough, the Soviet zone offered filmmakers the best working conditions and largest free spaces in post-war Germany.

The Problem of Anti-Fascism

Anti-fascism pervaded the official discourse in East Germany, influencing individual and collective memory and shaping the subtext of most films produced by the DEFA. On the political level, the anti-fascist ideology meant celebrating the memory of Communist resistance in Nazi Germany. This also meant that some aspects of the Nazi dictatorship were selected and privileged at the expense of others. Thus, the memorials at the sites of the concentration camps Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald were dedicated to the heroic struggle of Communist resistance fighters, whereas the suffering of Jewish inmates was often disregarded.

DEFA responded to the requirements of the anti-fascist state doctrine. In 1954 Kurt Maetzig directed *Ernst Thälmann: Sohn seiner Klasse* [*Ernst Thälmann: Son of His Class*] a compliant apotheosis of a Communist leader who, in the film, spearheads a heroic struggle against Hitler's regime and dies in the Buchenwald concentration camp. Maetzig's popular film became one of the pillars of identity in the socialist state. Dan Diner passes a fairly strong judgement on East German collective memory: "*The primacy of anti-fascism ultimately stripped Auschwitz of its core.*"³ In other words, if we remember the resistance fighters we refuse to remember the

victims. If we follow the Marxist line of thought assuming that all historical events are manifestations of economic inequalities and class struggle, we eclipse the irrational core of the genocide.

So how does the issue of Jewish suffering fit in at all? Does the foregrounding of the one mean exclusion of the other – and do Marxist methods of interpretation, when applied to Nazi Germany, exclude any representation of the Holocaust? The first to point out that there was indeed a Jewish Holocaust in official East German anti-fascism was David Bathrick, who gives direction to future research by discussing some representations of Jewish persecution and providing something like the first chronology of the Holocaust theme in early DEFA films.⁴

My criticism of Berghahn does not serve to whitewash the socialist dictatorship or the ideological imperatives which governed political and cultural discourse. What I suggest, however, is a differentiating approach to the constituents of collective memory, political discourse and the conditions of film production in East Germany. Essentially, we are dealing here with an antagonism between state power and grass-roots participation in an anti-fascist society. As Stern reminds us, Anti-fascism was more than the official *raison d'être* of the socialist state: *"German anti-fascism was not only an ideology that soon became instrumentalised for the purposes of creating a society that should be moulded according to the Soviet model. Anti-fascism was also the basic context of lives, aspirations, and activities of those who had decided to contribute to the development of a just and democratic society in the East."*⁵

Collective memory does not exist in a vacuum. It is influenced by individuals and their work. Most directors, actors, camera operators and screenplay writers had lived in Hitler's 'Third Reich' and worked as film makers for the nationally owned film company UFA (Universum Film AG). Some of them had Jewish ancestors, most of them had lost Jewish friends, and all of them had witnessed the anti-semitic propaganda, the state-ordered discrimination against the Jewish minority and sometimes even the deportations. Making films meant working through one's own past. Directors and screenplay writers used the opportunity to bring forward their experience and their interpretation of the 'Third Reich' – by integrating Holocaust memory into their anti-fascist films.

Ehe im Schatten (Marriage in the Shadows)

Kurt Maetzig's melodrama *Ehe im Schatten (Marriage in the Shadows)* (1947) was one of the most popular German post-war films, seen by millions in all zones of occupation. The film tells the story of the Jewish actress Elisabeth Maurer who loses her job after racial laws are passed. As the situation for Jews gets worse, Elisabeth's non-Jewish husband decides to commit a desperate act of love and solidarity: when Elisabeth's deportation is imminent, he kills his wife and himself. The trope of mixed marriage serves to create a personal and cultural closeness between the viewer and the persecuted Jewess Maurer. Some critics charged Maetzig's domestic melodrama with an oversimplification of the Holocaust, but the film was not far removed from historical reality. Maetzig's Jewish mother felt impelled to divorce her 'Aryan' husband and killed herself in flight from the Gestapo; the German actor Joachim Gottschalk committed suicide

with his Jewish wife and his son. Many filmmakers in the 'Third Reich' who were Jewish died in tragic ways.

The film does not only express a painful personal memory of very recent events. What Maetzig tried to do in his film was to establish a theory of guilt by passivity. Faced with irrational racism and a pernicious policy of exclusion most characters behave passively. Bystanders are cogs in the bureaucratic machinery. Victims refuse to recognize the dangers of an increasing anti-semitism until it is too late and become complicit in their fate. Thus, *Ehe im Schatten* provided East German collective memory with both problematic and influential inputs. On the one hand, the film creates a semantic unity of all passive characters and thereby inculcates a majority of innocent Holocaust victims. On the other hand, the plot extensively depicts the destructive irrationality of anti-semitism and its horrific outcomes for the lives of innocent people.

Sterne (Stars)

Konrad Wolf's remarkable production *Sterne (Stars)* (1959) comes very close to what we today expect from a Holocaust film. The image of the yellow star bears a double symbolic value - it contrasts the notion of a de-politicised open space of stellar constellations with the confinement of Greek Jews in a Bulgarian transit camp waiting for their final journey to Auschwitz. One of these Jews is Ruth, a primary school teacher, who apart from Yiddish, Ladino and Greek, also speaks German. She asks the German corporal Walter to find a doctor when one of the Jewish internees is about to give birth to a child. Walter, a disillusioned artist and a pacifist at heart, falls in love with Ruth. When he learns that Auschwitz

is not a “*vegetable garden*” but “*a mill for human flesh*” he tries to rescue Ruth. But when Walter arrives at the station the trains have already left. The young lover is left with Ruth’s ripped-off yellow star in his hand, now a symbol for a place of no return.

In *Sterne*, the memory of Jewish suffering is only superficially embedded in an anti-fascist narrative. Yes, there is a group of Bulgarian partisans fighting the German occupants, but the political references in this film remain vague allusions and the anti-fascist narrative is not imposed upon the viewer. The essential conflict of the film is not constituted by the struggle of Communist resistance fighters against Fascists but by a more general dichotomy between civilisation and barbarism. While barbarism is embodied by the fierce Nazis, civilisation is represented by the Jews, who speak several languages and read German classics, and by Walter, who condemns racism and war as a “*roll-back to Middle Ages*”. This contrast motivates the plot and shapes the characters – but it also creates empathy with the victims. The viewers identify with innocent Jews who suffer hardships and face certain death. At the same time the viewers must cope intellectually and psychologically with the cultural closeness of the Jewish Other as well as with the historical fact of its extermination.

Professor Mamlock

Konrad Wolf’s *Professor Mamlock* (1961) deals extensively with the racist aspects of Nazi anti-semitism and with the success of Nazi propaganda. Again, the trope of a mixed marriage is used. The viewer can easily identify the typical subject of the anti-fascist genre - Communist heroes fighting Nazi villains. However, the film also has a complex deep

structure. Good and the evil are clearly separated semantically, but the characters are allowed sufficient dramaturgical space for decisions and developments. The Jewish doctor Professor Mamlock is driven out from his position in a hospital. When he refuses to comply, he is arrested and publicly ridiculed by SA squads. While Mamlock's rebellious son joins the communist resistance, Mamlock refuses to give up his hope in law and order. Finally, after all hope is gone, he commits suicide.

While Maetzig's *Ehe im Schatten* had left the viewers with the notion of an unshaken German-Jewish harmony in a mixed marriage, *Professor Mamlock* deconstructs this myth. Mamlock's 'Aryan' wife frames her accusations against the Jewish husband in abusive anti-semitic language, using racist stereotypes. Hitler's propaganda was successful. Another aspect of the film is the empowerment of the victim. Although Mamlock does not become a Communist resistance fighter like his son, he refuses to comply with racist laws and resumes his work at the hospital. Mamlock's suicide symbolises the destruction of German high culture through Nazi barbarism. Mamlock's legacy to the viewer in East Germany is never to forget the crimes that have been committed against Jews and to reflect on the moral guilt German bystanders have incurred.

Das Zweite Glas (The Second Track)

Joachim Kunert's *Das Zweite Gleis (The Second Track)* (1962) is one of the films which were in danger of completely disappearing from the academic DEFA canon. In 2005 it finally received some public attention when shown at a DEFA retrospective in New York. *Das Zweite Gleis* reveals the

‘skeletons in the closets’ of the seemingly ‘healthy’ East German society. It offers both a vivid profile of perpetrators and bystanders and a criticism of East German World War discourses. To put the film’s unsettling message into words: *“While we, the proud citizens of German Democratic Republic, pretend to have overcome fascism, there are still ‘murderers among us’. The criminals of Nazi Germany live a normal life in the socialist state!”* By asking how a Nazi perpetrator who had killed a fleeing Jew could easily escape de-nazification and assimilate into East German everyday life, the film completely abandons the established black-and-white perspective of the anti-fascist genre.

These films are just four examples taken from a long list of East German films that address the Nazi period. From 1946 to 1990 DEFA produced 677 feature films, of which 106 films contain references to the Nazi past.⁶ The Holocaust was not a very prominent topic in the GDR. The anti-fascist films distinctly focused on communist resistance against the Nazis. However, a predominance of the ‘communist theme’ did not necessarily mean a suppression of the ‘Jewish theme’. Quite the contrary: a number of films treated these discourses on equal terms, others focused on a Holocaust-related issue, such as the question of guilt or the representation of Jewish suffering. These films supported the Socialist paradigm but they often went without any significant representation of anti-fascist heroism.

I hope to have made clear that it does not really make sense to talk about the marginalisation or even exclusion of anti-semitic aspects of the Nazi regime in DEFA films and would like to conclude with a statement a DEFA filmmaker made when asked about his personal experience of how the Holocaust was dealt with by the East German film company.

The script editor Klaus Wischnewski nicely sums up the points I have tried to make: “*We did not produce such films [as *Sterne*] every year ... But then, for years on end, we failed to make films on other important topics ... And when ‘Jakob der Lügner’ [Jakob the Liar, Beyer, 1975] was released it was not an issue at all ... I would not say that the Jewish theme was a taboo ... Films that dealt only with Jewish subjects were simply not required because they wanted heroes ... Some people say that the Holocaust wasn’t really ‘our topic’. But I cannot agree.*”⁷

Notes and References

¹ Daniela Berghahn, *Hollywood Behind the Wall: The Cinema of East Germany*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005, p. 87.

² Wolfgang Becker, ‘Antifaschismus in den DEFA-Spielfilmen’, in Raimund Fritz (ed.), *Der Geteilte Himmel: Essays zur Geschichte der DEFA und Filmografien von 61 DEFA-RegisseurInnen*, Vienna: Filmarchiv Austria, 2001, p. 90.

³ Dan Diner, ‘On the Ideology of Antifascism’, *New German Critique*, no. 67, 1996, p. 124.

⁴ David Bathrick, ‘Holocaust Film before the Holocaust: DEFA, Antifascism and the Camps’, *Cinémas: Journal of Film Studies*, vol. 18 no. 1, 2007, pp. 109-134.

⁵ Frank Stern, ‘The Return to the Disowned Home: German Jews and the Other Germany’, *New German Critique*, no. 67, Winter 1996, p. 64.

⁶ See Detlef Kannapin, *Dialektik der Bilder: Der Nationalsozialismus im Deutschen Film - Ein Ost-West Vergleich*, Berlin: Dietz, 2005, p. 52.

⁷ Interview with Klaus Wischnewski, in Ingrid Poss and Peter Warnecke (eds.), *Spur der Filme: Zeitzeugen über die DEFA*, Berlin: Links, 2006, p. 138.

2. The Régimes of Television

7 / The Evolving State of the 'Black Aesthetic': From the Experiential Perspective of African-American Film and Television Screenwriters

Stephen V. Duncan

The Black Aesthetic

The term 'Black Aesthetic' was established by Hoyt W. Fuller in an essay first published in 1968.¹ Hoyt, who taught creative writing and African-American literature at several universities including Columbia College, Northwestern University and Cornell University, edited *Negro Digest* (published by *Ebony* and *Jet Magazine* publisher John Johnson) and his own journal, *First World*. Fuller's essay focuses on the ways in which White literary criticism prevents Black racial upward mobility because of the nature of literary criticism in which White critics evaluate the writing of Black writers. In my own remarks here, I am embracing, from an experiential and anecdotal perspective, a more

contemporary and high-profile 'Black Aesthetic' that has emerged in the last twenty years - that of the Black screenwriter.

For my purposes, the 'Black Aesthetic' has evolved to refer to how African-American screenwriters explore and portray their own culture in the writing of feature films and television programmes and how White critics (agents, producers and executives) prevent racial upward mobility. In this essay I ask: What is the state of the 'Black Aesthetic' in these changing times, and how is it evolving? How is the 'Black Aesthetic' affected by the thematic and cultural competition for screen time? And what are the effects of expanding media outlets such as Black Entertainment Television, TV-One, Bounce TV and the use of smart phones, tablets, and the internet as viable distribution channels?

A recent authoritative survey indicates that overall hiring of minority writers in TV has increased since 2009 - rising from 9% to 10% of all TV writers - but that the earnings gap has more than doubled, representing the widest differences in a decade. Minority writers' share of employment in film, meanwhile, declined from 6% to 5%, its lowest in a decade. Since African-Americans make up 12-13% of the American population, there is clearly a huge disparity, proportionately, in the employment of Black writers in the US entertainment industry.²

Darnell M. Hunt, Director of the UCLA Ralph J. Bunche Center for African-American Studies, concluded in 2010: *"my experience has convinced me that business as usual in the industry is wholly inadequate for addressing the stagnation in Hollywood diversity. A new paradigm is needed that understands diversity as a public good and a sure bet for the*

*bottom line. This new paradigm would move beyond symbolic pronouncements and token gestures; it would establish realistic goals, reasonable timetables and effective mechanisms for an industry truly committed to catching up with a changing America.”*³

The Black Writers Committee of the Writers Guild of America, West represents the interests of Black writers. I met with a group of African-American screenwriters to discuss their experiences in the entertainment industry. All the television writers agreed that in the casting process they have to ask to change the race of certain character roles. All the writers in the room said they find that Whites in the business find it uncomfortable to talk about race. Furthermore the notion of African-American writers not being ‘black enough’ to write certain kinds of projects comes up often as, ironically, African-American writers pursue ‘colour-blind’ projects.

Nearly all of the African-American screenwriters I talked to echoed the same sentiment: *“Black people are often hired as writers just to make sure the jive is right.”* David Wyatt also said the joke is that some Black writers have to read the hip-hop magazines to *“keep up on the latest slang.”* They all agreed that friendships are important to landing jobs, but that Blacks have to do more. All the writers in the room agreed that African-Americans need to start creating, producing and owning content in order to progress to the next stage.

Black Images in Film and Television

An exploration of the Black Screenwriters’ Aesthetic must include a look at the use of stereotypes of African-Americans

in media, which, as Donald Bogle has famously shown, harks back to the days of early cinema and *The Birth of Nation* (1915).⁴ In the 1920s a new image emerged, that of the high-stepping and high-falutin' and crazy comic Negro, the Jester.⁵ It is the Jester figure that seems to have endured more than other Black stereotypes and has become a centre-piece of contemporary comedy in feature films – for example Jeff Pollack's *Boozy Call* (1997) was just one of the poster-child films that presented African-American images in a negative and stereotypical manner.

The same is true in television series such as *Good Times* (CBS, 1974-89), *The Jeffersons* (CBS, 1975-85), *What's Happening!!* (ABC, 1976-89), *Sanford and Son* (NBC, 1972-77) and *Diff'rent Strokes* (NBC, 1978-85; ABC, 1985-86), perpetuated the Jester image.⁶ While not as exaggerated as the archetypal Stepin Fetchit, these later characters belong in the same tradition. Stereotypical images from the 1970s and 80s sitcoms had indeed started to fade until Tyler Perry's situation comedies *The House of Payne* (TBS, 2006-) and *Meet the Browns* (TBS, 2009-) appeared, both attracting big ratings. In this regard, it seems little progress has been made to eliminate Black stereotypes in comedy even when African-Americans are creating, writing and producing them.

However, Black Entertainment Television (BET) picked up the CBS-Warner Brothers network (CW) cancelled series *The Game* and started producing its first scripted series in 2010 in Atlanta. In 2011 BET also launched a new scripted romantic comedy series, *Let's Stay Together*, which highlights the relationships of five young Black professionals and is executive produced by African-American actor-singer Queen Latifah. It largely avoids the old stereotypes. BET produces the new *Cosby Show*-like comedy *Reed Between Lines* in

addition to four original web series - *Lennox Avenue*, *The Come Up*, *Odessa* and *Asylum*, the last two with a sci-fi/thriller bent.⁷

Personal Experiences

Overall, fewer feature films are being developed and produced primarily because the cost of making and marketing a feature film has grown tremendously in the last five years. In the early 1990s, films by Spike Lee and John Singleton paved the way for many aspiring African-American screenwriters. Tyler Perry ushered in a new era of Black genre pictures and became the first African-American in contemporary times to build and sustain a working studio with sound stages and a back-lot - but was criticised by filmmaker Spike Lee for an alleged reversion to stereotypes. In reality, studios rely heavily on Black moviegoers. Blacks, who represent 12-13% of the US population, are responsible for the purchase of a similar percentage (12%) of all movie tickets, according to the latest statistics from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA).⁸

However, industry experts agree that fewer Black-themed feature films are made each year despite the fact they've established significant business domestically, because they do not travel well overseas. To combat this, African-American screenwriters are writing mainstream material. Some have been told their writing is 'not Black enough', that Black drama is unpopular, or that interracial romances are too hard to sell. By comparison, far fewer African-American screenwriters work exclusively in feature films than in television because writing for the big screen is a high-risk, high-stakes environment. Studios prefer to make blockbuster

films that earn well over \$100m, and no African-American screenwriters fall into this category.

By comparison with the cinema, TV is experiencing an expanding number of networks. In recent years, with the demise of the Black situation comedy on the major networks, African-American screenwriters have made progress breaking into TV drama, formally the sacred ground of White screenwriters. In 1985, I pitched the Vietnam series *Tour of Duty* (CBS, 1987-90) to CBS. It did get picked up for production, and was not considered a 'Black' series. In fact, *Tour of Duty*, which aired for 65 hours, was the first non-Black-themed one-hour drama on television created by an African-American to survive beyond a pilot pickup.

Since this was not considered a 'Black' series, many executives and producers with whom I met were surprised that I was African-American. When I was hired to write and produce the *Spencer for Hire* spin-off (ABC, 1985-88), I was emphatically told by the ABC network executive assigned to the series that *A Man Called Hawk* (ABC, 1989) was not a Black series and that the network expected to see White characters in each episode. Because of this edict, most of the White roles in that series featured White actors as villains. In an ironic twist, the African-American star of the series, Avery Brooks, insisted on hiring a well-known African-American Studies scholar as a consultant to "*keep the images of African-Americans honest.*"

Today, most African-American television writers I have interviewed say Black storytelling is dead: "*In a tight economy, writing staffs have become smaller, so those spots that might be considered for a minority writer tend to disappear*"; "*I find myself dealing with gender politics more*

than issues of race since there are only two women on the writing staff"; "I had to go beyond the call of duty to prove myself"; "White producers and executives hold a profound difference of opinion with African-American writers as to what is interesting to audiences about African-American culture and history".

All the African-American writers agreed *"You have to have a Godfather behind you, because the powers-that-be seem to think Black writers can't know anything other than Black-themed stories."* Those African-American writer-producers who were benefited by the agreement between the major television networks and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to pay for a diversity writer to join a series writing staff, say they had to work twice as hard and be twice as good as White writers.

One African-American screenwriter-director-producer who has flourished in television is Shondra Rhimes, creator of *Grey's Anatomy* (ABC, 2005-), *Private Practice* (ABC, 2007-) and *Off the Map* (ABC, 2011), none of which are considered to be Black-themed. These series embrace a multicultural approach to casting. She is the only African-American listed in the Top 50 'Showrunners' in US TV Drama⁹. Of the forty-two drama pilots announced for 2011, however, hers is the only one with an African-American lead character, featuring a love affair between the African-American female lead and a married US President.

In the comedy genre, some African-American screenwriters who pioneered writing for mainstream series found themselves steered back to Black sitcoms as a result of their success. Black comedies are blossoming again, albeit on cable television, because of the void left by the demise of the

United Paramount Network (UPN), and the CBS-Warner Brothers (CW) network's shift away from Black sitcoms. Despite a wealth of experience of African-Americans writing in the comedy genre, during the 2007-2008 television season, few Black comedy writers worked on the staffs of mainstream sitcoms and none of the thirty-nine comedy pilots slated for 2011 have an African-American lead.¹⁰

Many of the African-American screenwriters I talked to have had the same experience: they are presented as 'writers of colour' while White writers are not presented as 'writers of no colour.' One African-American writer said, *"In getting an agent or writing scripts you never write a Black spec script as a Black writer. You really don't want to reaffirm that 'see, told you that they only can write for a Black show. We are put upon to make sure our writing is racially ... mainstream."*

Another said, *"I got the job at NCIS myself through a Writers Guild of America West diversity program, and then signed with an agent and manager."* This seems to be a universal experience with the African-American writers I interviewed. In 2010, talent agent Marcus Washington did the unthinkable by suing Hollywood's premier talent agency, William Morris Endeavor Entertainment, for the disparate impact of racial discrimination, aiding and abetting and retaliation in a \$25 million dollar civil lawsuit.

The Digital Age: New Rules, New Opportunities

The Pew Research Center's 'Internet and American Life Project' of May 2011 revealed that African-Americans use Twitter twice as much as the general US population¹¹. BET used internet social networks to create an out-of-nowhere smash hit out from a faded series, *The Game* (BET, 2011-).

The Executive Producers of that series have signed a three-year mega-production deal with Black Entertainment Television to create both comedy and drama series. TV-One, another cable network that caters to the African-American audience, aims to take advantage of the financial benefits of the emerging digital age by developing a long-term strategy toward more half-hour comedies and plan to launch a gritty one-hour series that appeals to their primary demographic, African-American women.

Comcast-NBC-Universal have announced plans for two channels which will be primarily African-American owned, and Tyler Perry said in a recent interview that he is working on launching his own television network. An African-American screenwriter has created Web Fest, a web-based film festival that is quickly catching on globally. He told me: *"Technology makes us less dependent on the current studio system, the more the better, new tools will get you from under the label of Black writer."* All the African-American screenwriters I researched echoed this sentiment. One screenwriter I interviewed likens digital to the emerging Hip-Hop age, when rappers made their own CDs and sold them out of the boots of their cars: *"Black writers and directors need to stop whining and do it themselves."*

Implications and Conclusions

It would be remiss of me not to emphasise the point that sustaining a career as a screenwriter is a nearly insurmountable pursuit for anyone in the entertainment industry, not just African-Americans. While I haven't explored every single African-American screenwriter's plight in this brief overview, my assessment does offer a sense of the direction in which the Black Screenwriters' Aesthetic is

heading. At the start of the 21st Century, Blacks played 15% of roles in film and television. Today, according to the Screen Actors' Guild, their share has fallen to 13%. Black directors, for their part, make up only a paltry fraction - just 4% - of the membership of the Directors' Guild of America. The lack of influential African-American directors, studio and network executives adds to the challenge. In talking and with working with African-American screenwriters and researching them over the years, a common ingredient amongst those who have successfully written for non-Black-themed films and television series emerges: the presence of a non-African-American mentor with strong credits, high-level access and influence.

The new digital environment does offer a new-found freedom to write about the Black experience without turning to the old stereotypes, however persistent. While critics tend to claim that the lack of diversity in the entertainment industry is an 'unconscious' phenomenon, most African-Americans working in the entertainment industry disagree: they insist the powers-that-be are making a conscious choice not to deal with it. Even as the digital age is changing the rules for all creative people, especially for African-Americans, and despite the success of someone like Tyler Perry, there seems to be a lack of entrepreneurial achievement among the African-American screenwriters whom I've researched.

It is encouraging that the number of cable networks offering programming aimed at African-Americans is on the rise but it is not originating from African-Americans, instead from the studio system that currently maintains the *status quo*. In my opinion, until the Black Screenwriter's Aesthetic joins forces with commerce in a much more meaningful and sustainable way there will be little progress beyond the empty promises

of an entertainment industry that so far has made what are in truth largely symbolic gestures toward creating true diversity.

Notes and References

¹ Hoyt W. Fuller, 'Towards A Black Aesthetic' (1968), in Angelyn Mitchell (ed.), *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994, pp. 199-206.

² Writers Guild of America, West, 'Recession and Regression: The 2011 Hollywood Writers' Report', WGAW, 2011.

³ Darnell M. Hunt, Testimony on Hollywood Diversity, Hearing on the Proposed Combination of Comcast and NBC/Universal, 7 July 2010.

⁴ Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattos, Mammies and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*, New York, London: Continuum Books, 1998, p. 4.

⁵ Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattos, Mammies and Bucks*, pp. 19-20.

⁶ J. Fred MacDonald, *Blacks and White TV: African-Americans in Television since 1948*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1992, chapter 14.

⁷ Cynthia Littleton, *Daily Variety*, 21 April 2011, p. 5.

⁸ Pamela McClintock and Tim Appelo, 'Where are all the Black Actors?', *The Hollywood Reporter*, no. 417, 11 March 2011, p. 63.

⁹ Tim Appelo *et al*, 'Top 50 Power Showrunners 2011', *The Hollywood Reporter*, 12 October 2011.

¹⁰ Stuart Levine and Jon Weisman, 'Pilot Watch 2011', *Daily Variety*, 11 March 2011, pp. 8-9.

¹¹ Aaron Smith, 'Social Networking: Twitter Update 2011', at www.pewinternet.org.

8 / Television and the Architecture of the Olympic Experience

Graham Cairns

Mediating the Olympics

Olympic stadium design is big business. It has seen the construction of numerous iconic buildings in the 20th and 21st centuries and has cemented the name of many an architect, including Kenzo Tange, Frei Otto and Santiago Calatrava. Although built to house thousands of spectators these buildings are also designed to *represent* the host nation, to function as symbols for the country in question. Consequently, millions are spent every four years in their construction and promotion.

However, although these buildings are important physical and often iconic constructions, their main audience is not the live spectator. The Olympic Games are the world's largest multi-national television spectacle and consequently these

buildings are designed as a form of television stage set. They are primarily experienced not by the spectator inside the stadium but rather by the spectator at home in front of the TV screen. It will be argued in this paper that this shift has radically altered the way sports stadiums are designed and conceived today.

This transformation of the sports stadium into a television stage set has its origins in the first half of the 20th Century. In Leni Riefenstahl's celebration of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, *Olympia* (1938), the Games reached an international audience through the medium of film for the first time, whilst the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne were the first to shown on television across the globe. However, it was in the second half of the century that the Games really established themselves as a televised spectacle, with live coverage first broadcast from the Rome Olympics of 1960.

Since then audience numbers have continued to grow. According to figures quoted by Rod Sheard, one of the principal architects for the 2000 Sydney Olympics, the audience, astonishingly, comprises 50% of the entire global population.¹ Picking up on the same phenomenon but modifying these numbers slightly, an article in the Spanish daily *El País*, published on the eve of the 2004 Athens Games, estimated the figure to be in the order of 4,000 million people, with increases expected for the 2008 and 2012 games.²

The magnitude of this audience represents an enormous economic opportunity and explains the financial circus surrounding the selection of host cities. The Games incur astronomic costs for all concerned - the host nation, the International Olympic Committee and the television channels

that compete for licences to broadcast the two week event. According to the same article in *El País*, the Greek government's budget for the construction and promotion of the 2004 games was in the region of 1,920 million euros. Although an apparently enormous figure, the article quotes Greek government sources which estimate that 88% of these costs would be recuperated through the sale of television rights alone.

Given the economic dependence on television that this generates, it is not surprising that the relationship between television and the Olympics has grown ever stronger. It is of such importance today that the media specialist Eric Louw argues that the Olympic Games now represent a phenomenon "*constructed almost entirely around the requirements of the television spectacle*".³ Amongst the complex set of benefits and compromises that this inevitably entails is the use of the Olympics as a sort of national advertising campaign for the host nation (something seen in occasionally embarrassing ways in the Beijing Games of 2008).

Barcelona

Louw suggests that this interpretation of the Olympics as a potential national advertising tool leads governments to invest huge amounts of money to obtain the Games and then to construct spectacular buildings which, in theory at least, become the promotional face of the country. One obvious objective of this, explicitly dealt with by *El País*, is the prolongation of direct economic benefits through a subsequent increase in tourism. In this sense the Barcelona games are still considered to be exemplary, with the Catalan government promoting not only the city of Barcelona but the

entire Catalan region as a tourist destination and business hub in 1992.

The promotion of tourism in Barcelona, and Catalonia generally, was largely based on the architectural patronage of the city of Barcelona itself. It was a strategy that saw the buildings of Antonio Gaudi presented to a world audience as never before. However, it also underlay the use of five 'beauty cameras' in various points of the city. The only objective of these cameras was to capture memorable images of the city that would be beamed around the world as fillers between the coverage of the actual sports events. In addition to this type of city filming however, there were certain facilities that were designed, at least in part, to also facilitate the televisual presentation of the city.⁴

The Montjuïc diving pool occupies a hilltop spot overlooking Barcelona. It was deliberately orientated towards the city so that each time a camera filmed one of the high divers performing one of their spectacular feats, the background image would be an equally spectacular view of the city beyond. Thus, although the building's facilities in themselves were not particularly notable from an architectural perspective, their strategic orientation converted the event itself into a postcard view of the city.

However, the contribution of this architecture to the televised image was not simply based on appropriate orientation. One of the cameras filming the events used a rectangular opening constructed in one of the building's main walls as a sort of picture frame to the filmic image. By filming the city through this opening the architecture of the building itself acted as a compositional device that formed a sub-frame of the televised image. In both the detail of

architectural design and in the presentation of the city in general terms, these games were considered to be the epitome of the Olympic Games as a media spectacle and its buildings as televised stage sets.

The media strategy used by the Catalan Games subsequently became a management and promotional template that continues to serve as a reference model some 20 years later. Indeed, the design of the Athens stadium in 2000 by the Catalan architect Santiago Calatrava is a case in point. As with the Montjuïc diving pool this stadium was often filmed from very specific positions in order to ensure a compositionally interesting shot. The most arresting of these images came from behind the throwing positions of the shot-put, javelin and discus competitors so that the roof structure would be seen curving to a single vanishing point behind the competitors. Although not designed around this specific television effect it is undoubtedly the type of effect that contemporary Olympic stadium architects are drawn towards emphasising. The stadium is now an integral visual feature of the televised image.

Munich

Another interesting project in this sense is the Olympic stadium designed by Frei Otto together with Gunter Benisch in Munich for the 1972 Games. Used until recently by Bayern Munich Football Club, it was for many years an anomaly. Created for the celebration of the Olympics in a completely televised epoch, it was a stadium that had many characteristics totally alien to the football spectacle, but perfectly understandable in the context of the Olympics. The most obvious of these characteristics was the athletics track around the perimeter of the central field. Although necessary

for an athletics stadium it was a feature that distanced the public from what would later be the stadium's principal event, the football match.

The design of the stands also seemed somewhat out of place in the context of the stadium's later use. These stands have a relatively low pitch which further distanced the public from the football event in a way rarely found in standard football stadiums. Their roof covering is an undulating PVC hi-tech structure which, whilst a spectacular piece of architectural engineering, does not completely cover all spectators. Whilst this may be a perfectly acceptable characteristic of a summer event such as the Olympic Games, it is rather more inappropriate for a winter sport such as football. In addition, this open characteristic reduces the intensity of the noise generated by the competitive atmosphere of a football match in allowing the sound of the fans to dissipate, rather than resonate around the pitch, yet another characteristic of traditional football stadium design.

All these qualities stem from the fact that the stadium was conceived for the Olympics, a friendly summer event that required an athletics track, a sports field and a building that would offer a spectacular aesthetic image for the television cameras. Otto and Benisch achieved this last requisite with great success through their flowing tensile structure - as easily consumed by the eye of the actual spectators in the stadium, as by the lens of the multi-national television camera. The resulting design led to some of the most evocative televised images of architecture ever seen; the camera passed effortlessly along the undulating forms of the stadium, taking in views of the background hills as it did so.

Repeating an effect similar to that created by the Montjuïc diving pool in Barcelona, this project not only involved spectacular architecture, but also a spectacular view of the city. This was clearly more than a place of sport; it was an aesthetic experience in itself, an object of interest and awe for both the public inside the stadium and the audience at home in front of the television. However, its relationship to the television age is more complicated than a simple interpretation would suggest.

The two most notable features of the stadium's construction are its use of tensile technology and its employment of glass-fibre panels to create a transparent roof structure. The transparency of the undulating form not only created an impressive visual effect for the camera but also helped to reduce the shadows falling on the track and field events. Although in the era of digital filming and more advanced stadium lighting such factors are of less importance, in 1972 they were considered to be fundamental as shadows on the field of play can of course detract significantly from the quality of the television image.

In addition, the 1972 Munich stadium incorporated inordinate amounts technological facilities for both television and radio channels at the time. It had multiple camera positions, press rooms, TV commentary gantries and a number of press boxes never before seen in a sports stadium. It was not only a great success as an iconic media image but as a new stadium designed for the modern media age.

The Santiago Bernabéu

Contrary to the television aesthetic of the Munich Olympic stadium are what we might call the more visceral requirements of the live and competitive sporting event for which it would later be used, football. Better known for the intensity of its rivalry than for its sporting principles and positive media image, football has traditionally been characterised by stadiums built in the first part of the 20th Century according to the needs of industrial construction. Football was televised later than the Olympics and, until recently, was, in economic terms, the poor relation. Consequently, it is only in recent years that football stadiums have begun responding to the needs of the television age in a serious way.

One football stadium that stands out for what we may call its 'pre-television' aesthetic is the Santiago Bernabéu, home of Europe's most successful football club, Real Madrid. The Santiago Bernabéu offers an aesthetic image totally opposed to that of the Munich Olympic stadium. A prime example of Brutalism, it is a massive concrete construction that is both crude and aggressive in appearance. Taking as its only user the spectator who actually enters the stadium, it seems to have a symbolic role that is the antithesis of the easily consumable architecture of the Olympics. This is the stronghold of its team. It is a fortress.

From the outside, the aggressive nature of the architecture seems to communicate the cruel welcome waiting inside and, as with any fortress, denies any view of its interior. Inside, its steep stands, relatively close to the field of play, help in the production of an intimidating atmosphere for the visiting team. Once in the centre of the arena the opposing team can

feel trapped in an atmosphere that, on its most intense occasions, has been described in terms of the Coliseum in Rome, with the public demanding not only the defeat but effectively the destruction of the opposing team.

Inaugurated in 1947, the Santiago Bernabéu has been continually modified over the years and now has all the facilities one would expect of a modern sports stadium with close ties to the television industry: a TV studio, press and commentary boxes, interview rooms and numerous camera gantries around the pitch. This obviously reflects the ever closer relationship between television companies and football that has emerged in recent years and which Real Madrid have done more than most to exploit. Despite being at the forefront of football's relationship with the television industry, however, Real Madrid Football Club still has a stadium whose aesthetic image stems from a pre-television epoch.

Fourth Generation Stadia

Looking back at the history, Rod Sheard identifies four generations of stadiums that can still be found today. He argues that each of these generations of stadiums have, on the one hand, successively provided more and more comfort and technological facilities to their physical users and, on the other, presented ever greater spectacles to their television audience. Central to this second characteristic is the incorporation of ever more facilities for television filming inside the stadiums which have had a number of specific consequences for their design.

At its most simple level this has involved things like the need to provide multiple commentary boxes, camera platforms,

press boxes, press interview rooms and various external transmission installations. Equally importantly, it has involved the development of strategic lighting to help eliminate shadows on the pitch and to increase brightness in areas where close-ups are common, such as the dug-out and the tunnel for example. Similarly, the inclusion of technical and spatial provisions for both static and dynamic cameras, and the design of advertising hoardings which tend to be strategically positioned in relation to these cameras, has become a standard consideration for stadium architects.

All these characteristics typify the great majority of sports stadiums found in the developed world today. These stadiums correspond to what Sheard defines as the 'third generation' stadium, which involves those built in the last thirty years.⁵ However, in his overview of the evolution of stadium design Sheard emphasises that the stadiums under construction today differ in one important way. These 'fourth generation' stadiums not only incorporate the most up-to-date representational technology for television but also for the spectators inside the stadium as well.

The most obvious example of is to do with the incorporation of giant television screens inside stadiums, which show the game as it takes place. Similarly, fourth generation stadiums tend to have multiple TV screens inside executive boxes which offer continuous and simultaneous television coverage to the corporate spectator in the comfort of a private suite. Occasionally filmed and edited by teams of producers and cameramen inside the stadium itself, rather than those of the main television channels, such advances would seem to indicate a more hybrid future for the spectator of the sporting spectacle.

London

As is to be expected, the 2012 Olympic stadiums in London, in whose design Sheard has been key, also reflect these tendencies. However they do vary from his definition of fourth generation stadiums in a number of important ways. One of these is the concern for a more sustainable form of post-Games development. Designed to hold approximately 80,000 spectators during the Games, the main stadium can be reduced to a capacity of 25,000 afterwards, thus making it a building that can more easily integrate into the life of its local community once the Games are over.

Another way in which it differs from the norm established in recent years is in its environmental agenda. At least nominally, the stadium is intended to have less environmental impact than its predecessors. It does not incorporate large catering facilities that remain redundant after the event and, at least in its initial designs, was intended to involve the use of sustainable materials. The most commented example of this was its proposed 20m high hemp 'wrapping' that was to cover the entire building and thus operate as the building's external cladding system.

Although this idea was dropped quite early on in the design process, the notion of 'wrapping' the building remained. However, rather than the environmental 'wrapping' Rod Sheard had initially pushed for, it developed into a proposal for a sort of 'television wrapping', more in tune with the mediated nature of contemporary sporting stadiums. Sheard proposed that that the exterior should be used for the projection of large-scale moving images of athletics and, in particular, the games taking place within the stadium. Potentially converting the building into a giant 360-degree TV

screen, these ideas, if implemented, would take the television/sporting event relationship to a new level; the building would become home to both the live and the mediated event simultaneously.

Whatever the future of stadium design, it seems clear that the technology of television has already fundamentally changed the way in which they are designed and conceived. It has led to the creation of *spectacular buildings*, has influenced the design strategies of architects and obliged designers to incorporate a whole new range of technological facilities into their projects. In short, it has led to the creation of hybrid buildings designed for two types of experience: the live event in the stadium and the televised event at home.

Notes and References

¹ Rod Sheard, *Sports Architecture*, London: Spon Press, 2001, p. 21.

² Noelia Román, 'Atenas cambia de cara', *El País Semanal*, no. 1.430, 22 February 2004, p. 42.

³ Eric Louw, 'Olympic Communication', *Journal of International Communication*, vol. 2 no. 1, 1995, p. 4.

⁴ See Miquel de Moragas Spà and Miquel Botella (eds.), *The Keys of Success: The Social, Sporting, Economic and Communications Impact of Barcelona '92*, Bellaterra: Servei de Publicacions de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1995.

⁵ Sheard, *Sports Architecture*, p. 15.

9 / Environmental Issues in the Animated TV Series: *South Park*, *The Simpsons*, and *The Family Guy*

Silvia Ceausu and Tamara Steger

Introduction

Since environmental issues first came more fully to public attention, the environmental movement has gone through various cycles of media attention. In response, environmental communication researchers have looked into such issues as agenda setting, the framing of news reportage, and the awareness-raising effects of informative programmes. But debates about environmental issues have increasingly been influenced by the wider political context, how environmental issues are perceived by the public, by the broad storytelling developed around environmental issues. As Hansen has commented, the contest over meaning and framing has “*as much to do with communication aimed at ‘winning hearts and minds’ as they are to do with communicating science-based or expert evidence*”.¹

Framing is unavoidable, but we have to understand how frames are reinforced in order to understand the public perception of environmental issues.² A powerful but largely overlooked source of frame reinforcement are current narratives involving environment and environmentalists, especially those emanating from entertainment media. From the huge body of media products in which we are immersed, I chose the TV animated series as my focus for this essay. Although relatively new, television animation series are a fascinating genre because of their appeal to very young audiences and their abundant social and political commentary. I chose for my analysis what are arguably the three most popular contemporary TV animation series: *South Park*, *Family Guy* and *The Simpsons*. The essay considers episodes that were originally aired in 2006-2007.

I defined the scope of this research relative to the release and subsequent success of Davis Guggenheim's film on the environmental work of Al Gore, *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006). This reference point was chosen - having in mind the theory of cyclical attention given to environmental issues in the media - because it most likely represented a peak in the media attention to environmental issues as a result of the salience of climate change.³ These are the years of the emergence of Al Gore as a highly visible champion of climate change mitigation, sharing, with the UN Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in this area.

A season of a television series usually starts in the Autumn and ends in the late Spring of the following year. This is the case with *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*. I chose season 18 and season 5 respectively, both running from September

2006 to May 2007. In the case of *South Park*, the seasons start in March and end in November each year. For this reason, and because *South Park* seasons are shorter than those of the other two shows, I analysed the two seasons aired in 2006 and 2007. In total, I analysed the transcripts of 68 episodes across the three shows: 22 episodes of *The Simpsons*, 18 of the *Family Guy*, and 28 of *South Park*.

The Shows

The three animation series discussed here are quite different but have also several things in common. *South Park*, *Family Guy* and *The Simpsons* are mainly popular with male audiences aged 20-35. All three concentrate on the universe of fictitious small towns - South Park, Quahog and Springfield, respectively. *South Park* is broadcast weekly on the American cable channel Comedy Central. The animation series started in 1997 and as I write is now ready to launch its 16th season this year. The officials of the network agree it was this show that put Comedy Central on the map⁴. In addition to showing on TV, the show is streamed via its own website and partially on other websites for free. The series was created by Matt Stone and Trey Parker.

South Park describes the adventures of fourth-graders Stan, Kyle, Cartman, Kenny and their colleagues in their hometown of South Park in a language that can many times be described as offensive and rude. The show aims at offering more than just entertainment and many times episodes end with a fable summarized by either Kyle or Stan. The political importance of *South Park* is suggested also by the efforts made to define the political affinities of the two creators of the show. They have reportedly described themselves as libertarians.⁵

The Simpsons debuted on the Fox network in 1989 and has since become an iconic item in popular culture. The series is now in its uninterrupted 23rd season of social and political satire. The characters of the show are the members of the Simpson family: Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie. The creator of the show is Matt Groening. Compared with the *South Park* and *Family Guy* creators, his political preferences have gone mostly unexamined, which indicates that *The Simpsons* is much less controversial from a political point of view. The satire is directed more at social aspects and professional categories and less so to political issues.⁶

Broadcast by Fox, *The Family Guy* series is the newest of the three analysed here. When it premiered in prime-time in 1999, its 25 year-old creator Seth MacFarlane became the youngest person ever to have a network prime-time show. The characters of the show are the inhabitants of Quahog and the members of the Griffin family: the father Peter, the wife Lois and their three children Chris, Meg, and the evil toddler Stewie. The family is completed by their dog, Brian. In a way, *Family Guy* is a combination of both the focus on family life of *The Simpsons* and the daring and obnoxious attitude of *South Park*. The provoking and politically charged animation sparked many controversies, and MacFarlane has not concealed his liberal political preferences⁷.

Decoding Environmental Issues

I used different labels to code the content related to environmental issues. In this way I could establish which were the most popular environment-related topics. In total, I categorised the environmental references according to 29 codes. The *car and fuel* topic was the most popular environment-related issue. I found it 54 times in the

transcripts of the analyzed episodes. This code integrates references to hybrid cars, gas-guzzler cars, traffic, and fuel consumption, among others. Hybrids, mentioned 47 times in the episodes analysed, are also the starting point of the main plot in the *South Park* episode *Smug Alert*.

The second most used code was the one referring to *wildlife*. A great variety of wild animals are mentioned - manatees, whales, dolphins, bears, ostriches, cod, giraffe and others. In some instances, animals are given anthropomorphic qualities, especially in *South Park*. Most of the animals mentioned are mammals and/or species for which conservation efforts have been made. The danger of extinction though is mentioned only in relation to a fictitious species of fish called 'yam-yam'.

Other often-used codes were *Al Gore* (29 times) and *extreme weather* (20 times). I considered the references to Al Gore in an environmental context because despite his popularity as a politician, there are strong undertones that suggest that his popularity owes more to his involvement in climate change advocacy and the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. The extreme weather events of the episodes are mainly presented in the context of parodies of Hollywood movies such as *A Perfect Storm* and *The Day after Tomorrow*, which are connected with climate change.

The dominance of the codes *car and fuel*, *Al Gore* and *extreme weather events* confirms the position of climate change as the current environmental umbrella topic. Climate change itself is only mentioned once, but many other topics revolve around this issue. This also indicates a quite localised perspective on the current fossil fuel and climate debates:

the topic is never discussed in global terms and its global effects.

Characters

Several types of characters display environmental attitudes. In *Family Guy* and *The Simpsons* there are characters that in the course of the series have consolidated a reputation of being environmentally aware. In *Family Guy* the character with confirmed environmental attitudes is Brian, the family dog. He is not your usual dog; he's is the intellectual of the family, permanently torn between his obvious human side and his animal side. He constantly displays liberal attitudes. On many occasions he is the voice of reason in the family but also the target of irony and hostility in situations such as when he declares his atheism or when he tries to inform the others about their impact on the environment.

In *The Simpsons* the homologous character is Lisa, the eight year-old, the second child of the Simpson family. Intelligent, an overachiever, the moral compass of the family, she is permanently concerned about animal well-being. She also has very strong values and a high moral integrity. She is often willing to defend those at any cost and thus often seems preachy and self-righteous. Although she has the intellect and the values of a person well above her age, she displays many of the interests and problems specific to her cohort. In the episode *G1 (Annoyed Grunt)* Lisa is presented as a member of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), throwing paint over the fur coat of Krusty the clown - but immediately afterwards asking her victim when the next Krusty movie will appear.

South Park doesn't have a constantly environmentally concerned character. The consolidation of the characters doesn't take into account this side of the public agenda. But in the episodes that involve an environmental topic, the *ad hoc* environmentalists are the children of South Park, especially Kyle, who in the episode *Smug Alert* acts as the voice of reason and the mediator between the smugness of hybrid drivers and the hostility of the population against hybrids at the end of the episode.

Another category of environmentally-concerned character, the opportunistic environmentalist, can be found in all three series. In *Family Guy* it is Lois Griffin, the wife and the mother of the family. In the episode *It Takes a Village Idiot and I Married One*, the Griffin family discovers that Lake Quahog has been polluted by an oil company. When Lois finds out that the company is allowed to dump waste because they have bribed the mayor of Quahog, Lois decides to run herself for mayor. After she wins the election, however, she is easily corrupted herself by the company representative. Her confrontation with Brian, the moral voice of the family and the true environmentalist, is easily deflected when she offers Brian that very canine treat, a walk in the park.

In *The Simpsons*, the opportunistic environmentalists are the inhabitants of Barnacle Bay in the episode *The Wife Aquatic*. After their overfishing of the 'yam-yam' fish which led to the disappearance of this resource, they decide to find a way to earn their living without depleting the oceans. In the next scene they are shown clear-cutting the forest. Lisa Simpson, the one who tried to convince them about the benefits of protecting their environment, is left powerless. In *South Park* the adults of the town act as shallow, opportunistic environmentalists, taking up hybrids or the concern for

global warming as a result of fads or public panic. They don't really understand the environmental problems and they are willing to give up their environmental beliefs and behaviours as soon as it runs counter to their interests.

Narrative

The creators of the three animations have different political leanings. *Family Guy* leans towards a more liberal, Democratic agenda while *South Park* tends to represent a conservative perspective. *The Simpsons* has tried to avoid political partisanship and it's more difficult to place the animation on a political spectrum. Environmental concern is also integrated differently into the structure of the characters. But the narratives are in many ways quite similar. None of the truly concerned environmentalists are adults - they are children and a dog. In *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*, the characters with consistent environmental attitudes are the intelligent, cultivated and the moral guardians of their families. They also provoke hostility when they are seen as preachy. Both have their internal conflicts: Brian has to fight his animal urges, and Lisa Simpson, despite her adult behaviour and ideas, is still in many ways a child.

Because of these conflicts, Brian and Lisa are quite easy to deter from their environmental pursuits. This leaves those around them without a moral compass. In *South Park* those taking a reasonable approach to the environment are also the children. All these characters have little influence on behaviours and the attitudes of the adults. The genuine environmentalists are thus outsiders to the decision-making world of adults. Interestingly enough, Brian, the Griffin family dog, and Kyle and Stan of *South Park*, are the characters with whom, reportedly, their respective creators most identify.

None of the stories involving environmental issues has a positive outcome. Environment never wins. In *Family Guy*, Lois Griffin prefers to leave politics than continue fighting to save Lake Quahog. In *South Park* hybrid cars are abandoned and the population turns against them. In *The Simpsons*, although the inhabitants of Barnacle Bay decide to protect their marine resources, they start clear-cutting the forest. One of the important aspects of these narratives is the manner in which environmental issues are actually communicated. The message is almost always emotional; factual information has little relevance. In *Family Guy* it is the fear and panic created by Darth Vader, teenage unwed moms and the Anti-Christ in a political speech by Lois Griffin that convinces the population of Quahog to raise money for cleaning Lake Quahog, not the arguments related to pollution.

In *South Park* people are convinced to buy a car not by scientific arguments related to greenhouse gas emissions but by a song. In the *South Park* episode *Two Days Before the Day after Tomorrow*, an irrational panic is caused by the destruction of a dam and everybody assumes that the ensuing flood is the result of climate change. As the title suggests, this is a parody of Emmerich's 2004 environmental disaster drama *The Day After Tomorrow*. Al Gore is also satirised. His name is never mentioned in direct relation to climate change but *South Park* mocks him as an attention-seeking and self-absorbed politician. On the other hand, *Family Guy* presents a future with Al Gore as President in which all the major social and environmental problems in America have been solved.

Conclusion

I hope through this research to have broadened the understanding of how environmental issues are presented in popular culture by approaching a scarcely studied area, the TV animated series. The environmental topics brought up in this context touch upon several underlying issues such as corporate policies, political processes, government involvement and taxes. It is clear, though, that climate change has become the umbrella topic for the environmental movement. From the point of view of message-making, environmental communication is still perceived as having to do more with emotion, and the 'doomsday' approach, than with scientific information, which is seen as of little relevance in the little worlds of Springfield, Quahog and South Park.

For environmental communicators, the relevance of entertainment in general, and of the animated TV series in particular, lies in the stories they tell. Although politics seems to play a role in the way environmental topics are approached and integrated in the storylines, the conclusions of the stories are very similar. These are narratives of setbacks, of environmental trends fading away fast, of environmentalists having to convince and failing to do so. The upshot seems to be that environmental degradation is something which cannot be resolved and with which we simply have to live.

Those who deal with it are either idealistic, preachy liberals, or smug, snob adults who take it up as a trend and give it up as soon as it suits them better. Sincere, concerned environmentalists cannot really solve anything; they are a powerless minority, outside the mainstream, easily deterred.

In applying a comic frame to real-life events, all three series discussed involve an interplay between the subversive topics of the episodes and the need to entertain the audience. This leads to the communication of a series of equivocal messages which can be interpreted in a myriad of ways and suggests the importance, of strong links between research on content and research on audiences.

Notes and References

¹ Anders Hansen, 'Communication, Media and Environment: Towards Reconnecting Research on the Production, Content and Social Implications of Environmental Communication', *International Communication Gazette*, vol. 73 nos. 1-2, 2011, p. 7.

² George Lakoff, "Why it Matters How We Frame the Environment," *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture*, vol. 4 no. 1, 2010, pp. 70–81.

³ Katherine McComas and James Shanahan, 'Telling Stories about Global Climate Change: Measuring the Impact of Narratives on Issue Cycles', *Communication Research*, vol. 26 no. 1, 1999, pp. 30-57.

⁴ D.M. Halbfinger, 'South Park creators Win Ad Sharing in Deal', *New York Times*, 27 August 2007.

⁵ John Tierney, 'South Park Refugees', *New York Times*, 29 August 2006.

⁶ Nick Ellis, "What the Hell is That?": The Representation of Professional Service Markets in *The Simpsons*', *Organization*, vol. 15 no. 5, 2008, pp. 705-723.

⁷ Brooks Barnes, 'Fox Family Feud Over *Family Guy*', *The Caucus: The Politics and Government Blog of the [New York] 'Times'*, 20 October 2008.

10 / Aesthetics, Appropriation and Intimacy in Ballet for Post-WWWII BBC TV: Margaret Dale's *Petrushka*

Jessica Escue

Post-WII Ballet on TV

In the post-war years, the BBC was confronted with growing pressure from a changing media environment, and programming shifted in favor of more contemporary, modernist themes. With regards to ballet, large-scale adaptations for television still included Romantic classics with considerable frequency. However, BBC began to recognise the need to compete for a broader audience, and decided to repurpose arts programming through Margaret Dale's unique broadcasts of ballet adaptations. In order to gain access to a repertoire of more current theatrical works and simultaneously transcend sizeable production costs and union obstacles, the BBC initiated an annual collaborative contract with the Royal Ballet.

Audience reception of previous ballet programmes, as well as Dale's desire to cultivate a progressively comprehensive understanding of ballet on the part of television viewers, shifted BBC selections towards neo-classical ballets such as Michel Fokine's plot-less *ballet blanc* *Les Sylphides* (1909) and the Stravinsky/Diaghilev *Petrushka* (1911). The tale of a puppet who comes to life and experiences human emotions, *Petrushka* was premiered at Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. It starred Nijinsky, with a score by Stravinsky, choreography by Fokine, and sets by Alexandre Benois.

Petrushka's experimental significance, pivotal in the creation of the BBC's Ballet Programmes Department, paralleled the cultural and social reform beginning in Britain during the post-war period. The history of this ballet as a reform initiative and its appropriation by the BBC as a television event signified a move away from a reliance on the Romantic classics and reflected a desire for more complex, relevant and dramatically fulfilling ballet narratives. The success of these works also reflected the tremendous influence that contemporary theatrical dance, drama and cinema - not to mention the presence of European dance companies in London - had begun to have on television dance programming, as well as the shifting context within which BBC audiences began to engage with ballet.

BBC Deputy Director Cecil McGivern agreed to pursue a working contract with Royal Ballet during the preparation and planning for the production of John Cranko's and Charles Mackerras' comic opera *Pineapple Poll*, inspired by Gilbert and Sullivan, in 1959. The agreement would feature the Royal Ballet ensemble on a regular basis, and draw audiences otherwise regularly engaged with company performances at Covent Garden. Traditionally, the choice of ballets for

broadcast reflected the fame and familiarity associated with each, while also reinforcing the BBC's desire to retain a foundation of classical education in its relations with new and existing audiences. Acknowledgement of a need for further diversification of programming choices demonstrated the BBC's desire to not only become an institution of tasteful authority on the subject, but also to exhibit the Corporation's ability to satisfy a variety of interests, despite the view of ballet programmes as relatively inconsequential.

Truly experimental or 'minority' programming was not a priority until the arrival of BBC2 in 1964, and even then, *"Because of the cost of conversion or of new purchase, the programme content of the new channel could not be restricted either to education or to 'minority entertainment'"*¹. The BBC's collaboration with Royal Ballet was above all a means of producing successful and prestigious while encouraging ease of production and cost efficiency. As a result of a somewhat incompatible desire for classical dance programmes confronting changing views on contemporary work and competition, *Petrushka* was originally slated as the highlight of the first year of collaboration between the BBC and the Royal Ballet, but was not broadcast until August 1962.

Reforming Ballet: *Petrushka*

A relatively classical choice, *Petrushka* resonated with the audience's attraction to the experimental lighting and staging of Dale's *Les Sylphides*, while signifying a move away from the influential blueprint for ballet established by Marius Petipa in favour of the new emphasis which neo-classical ballets placed upon characterisation and stylisation in

relation to storyline. *Petrushka* has been cited as a 'reform' ballet, largely because of its removal of the central characters from the role of technical virtuosos and their re-definition as human symbols. The staging techniques in *Petrushka* ultimately function to narrow the gap between audience and character, increasing the awareness of this relationship, which in the case of Dale's broadcast suggests a relatively infinite set of possible viewers.

Petrushka has an apparent need to reconcile with his unrealised human soul that goes unnoticed by the carnival audience, but not by the ballet's audience. He acts as a mirror, forcing reflection upon the apparent humanity of the dolls on display. Thematically and choreographically, *Petrushka*'s otherness becomes the main focus of the piece through a series of parodies. The parodies magnify, rather than abandon, the heavy reliance upon pantomime to move the narrative forward, and the hollowness of the puppets allow them to display empathetic embodiment, rather than physical disembodiment.

Whereas Romantic ballets endeavoured to elevate dancers to mythical status through virtuosity and otherworldly themes, *Petrushka* oscillated between the audience's comfort with expectation in form and the sustained, unresolved tragedy encapsulating its central character. *Petrushka* not only altered the course of character expression in classical ballet, it also created a new kind of meaningful dialogue between characters and audience by forming a structured reflection upon theatrical voyeurism. Wachtel suggests that *Petrushka* "served as a modernist attempt to break down theatrical mimesis"². The affiliation of Benois and Fokine with the reform initiatives of contemporary Russian theatre highlight two important aspects of

Petrushka: “The call for a more imaginative use of theatrical space and a heightened interest in the spectator... a desire to break down traditional audience expectations”³.

The Space of Television

The ballet involves a series of four tableaux, each building upon anticipations invoked in the previous one: “*The theater audience watches [the spectators] watch the dance and it watches the dance as well. The result is that the audience is watching two ballets simultaneously. The doubling of the fourth wall causes it to disappear and unsettles spectators’ expectations about their relationship to the onstage action*”⁴. By placing these tableaux in the order in which they are posed, and simultaneously recreating another theatrical context, the apparent collision with the street carnival’s ‘low-cultural’ source anticipates Fokine’s call for theatrical reform in order to successfully reveal the truth of the real. *Petrushka* may thus be considered the first self-reflexive text in ballet history.

Questions of voyeurism are particularly inherent in the choreography through Fokine’s refocusing of the viewing eye on two different but concurrent actions: “*In one of [the ballet’s] more innovative moments, Fokine divides the stage, with two street dancers performing different choreography simultaneously*”⁵. Though Dale did not have the technology to create a truly cinematic split-screen image, she was aware of this intention in the staging of the ballet and its significant role in restructuring space and meaning. This technique also had significant implications for the varying degrees of status on stage, and therefore engaged audiences to ascribe persona to the dancers, rather than celebrate their extreme

levels of beauty and skill as spectacle. *"Fokine invented no new steps but contrived clever showcases for old ones, always building on the expressive potential latent in the classical vocabulary, freeing it from the strictures of nineteenth-century plot and structure"*⁶.

Many of Dale's interpretive techniques resonated with the reform initiatives and methodologies of *"Russia's new 'stylized' (mostly symbolist) theater"* as applied by Fokine.⁷ In particular, the division of the stage to enact simultaneous movement was translated to the division of not only space, but also depth of field, in the majority of her adaptations. Dale spoke about her exploration into the enterprises of Benois, Fokine and Stravinsky, and their influence on her production in an interview following the initial broadcast of *Petrushka*.

She commented that Fokine had written that *"the crowd was made up of individuals, each bent on their own pursuits. I thought I must not shoot it as a mass. The camera must behave like another person in the crowd ... I will treat the characters individually and where there are two things going on at once, I will adjust the scene slightly so that both can be seen. The street girls were a problem and we managed it by starting on one, moving very smoothly with the crowd to the second street girl and then we just adapted their positions so we had the two in the shot at the same time"*⁸.

At this point in her career at the BBC, Dale was aware of her role in facilitating a translation of dance to another medium. Her investigation into the visual continuity and configuration of the Diaghilev *Petrushka* indicated her intense preoccupation with aesthetic interpretation for the camera lens, as well as the characterisation of her dancers. As she

said in another interview, with *Petrushka* she had to find “a way of translating the Benois décor into television terms ... We were in to three-dimensions and perspective, an effort to present the same experience without it getting in the way of the choreography”⁹. Dale had already used circular staging in her prominent adaptations of *Coppélia* (1957) and *Giselle* (1958), including overhead shots of the corps, and dividing audience focus by positioning simultaneous action in the foreground and background. Though, never before had all of these developing techniques come together to enact such a mature and effective ballet for the small screen.

Dale’s Reinterpretation of *Petrushka*

The strong parallels between Dale’s aesthetic and that of the original 1911 *Petrushka* are striking, and the emphasis of both upon experimentation directly link the BBC adaptation to the impetus of the Russian Theater. Fokine’s stress on individuality in his treatment of the crowd scenes became a considerable priority for Dale in its relation to the camera placement and movement. She moves us quickly into the brief forty-five minute ballet by opening with a pan across the street merchant tents, directly into a cluster of men who are watching one of their own plays an accordion and performs a dance. She then introduces the street girls, the first upstage left, the second downstage right. They are distinguishable not only in their juxtaposition to the camera, but also in their quality and style of movement. One performs a series of *jeteés*, a quick jumping step, while playing the triangle. The other executes an adagio *arabesque penchée* into a split on the floor.

The incorporation of musical instruments in the choreography emphasises a carnivalesque kind of showmanship that directly contrasts with the less ostentatious performances of the puppets. The street girls and fortune-tellers populating the carnival quickly become recognisable as characters because they have more to offer a television audience than the delight of their movement series. The waist shots and brief conflicts that appear in the first section of the ballet dramatise facial expressions and details of the individual spectators in ways not possible from the stage.

In fact, the production photos of *Petrushka's* first tableau more closely resembles Dale's squarely staged village scene in her adaptation of *Coppélia*, with a traditional front proscenium set framing the action. The theatre, viewing tent, and carnival ride are here positioned at different heights along another wooden building in order to simplify the boundaries of the stage. Because Dale's sets were designed with constantly moving cameras in mind and much less emphasis upon scale, she was able to fulfill the objective of characterising each member of the crowd, no matter how brief his or her appearance.

Dale also uses the camera to establish angular views and power dynamics between characters. In the opening sequence of *Petrushka*, a drunk is poised atop the spectator booth, an architectural component of the set also foregrounded in the original production. As the man begins to fall out of the booth, a high angle perspective is established, and revisited again later during the performance of the puppets. The booth is presumably stationed at this height - the entrance guarded by a soldier - and decorated so nobly as to accommodate viewers of a higher class.

However, none of the aristocratic crowd appears to be seated there. Instead, the camera looks out over the booth across stage and audience, in order to remind us, the television audience, of the spectators watching the performance. By positioning the camera in this manner, Dale manages to resituate the focus upon the spectators, while simultaneously demonstrating visually the relationship and importance of the performers.

An even more extreme use of high-angle perspective is employed later in the ballet after Petrushka's confrontation with the Magician's image on the wall of his dark, colourless cell. After his introductory lament, the Ballerina Doll pays Petrushka a brief visit, during which he jumps about so excitedly that he frightens her away. She quickly exits, and Petrushka, apparently unable to follow her, falls to his knees, hitting his head against the doorway. He runs along all four walls, looking for an exit, then tears through the black, starry partition where a window used to be. Instead of fleeing, he falls to the ground, paralysed.

The room darkens except for an illumination of the Magician's face, and an extreme reflection from the window falls across the painting. A sharp transition takes us into an overhead shot of Petrushka lying motionless, and the camera pulls straight upward out of the box-like enclosure until it arrives at the top, panning across to the Blackamoor's cell. As a result of this extreme, angular perspective, Petrushka and the other puppets appear to be nothing more than insignificant play-things in a doll's house. The set appears as the prop it truly is, and the audience is forced to consider the constructed nature of the characters' 'reality'.

The last section of the ballet contains a series of street dances. For the first time in *Petrushka*, Dale shoots the dancers from overhead in circular formation. However, here this technique is more performative than theatrical, situated within an elaborate set and the constant introduction of new characters. In the middle of the Bearded Lady's grand finale, *Petrushka* emerges from his backstage box chased by the Blackamoor, followed by the Ballerina. The trio run several times around the curtain and into the crowd, reuniting the two as one theatrical space.

The Blackamoor strikes *Petrushka* with his sword, and he falls to the ground. As *Petrushka* slowly dies, the camera gets closer and closer, until the spectators surrounding him become a sea of indistinguishable faces. *Petrushka* takes his last breath, reaching up to the sky, as a guard drags the Magician through the crowd of concerned faces. In a swift, transitional pan, the Magician picks up *Petrushka*, who is now lifeless. As the characters in the crowd reassure one another, laughing at the convincing display, the Magician drags *Petrushka* off through the snow towards the spectator booth, his back to the camera.

Petrushka's theme begins to play, and he is resurrected above the theatre, though only the Magician can see his ghost. A series of low- and high-angle shots reveal the Magician's terrified reaction to *Petrushka's* celebration of his freedom. This inversion of visual dynamic between the Magician and *Petrushka*, and well as the individualisation and conflation of the spectators, are reflective of the several inversions of theatrical voyeurism that recur throughout the original text and powerfully characterise the ironic loss proposed by *Petrushka's* death. As his body hangs over the side of the theatre and then disappears, the final image of

the empty, snowy village implies that the Magician has also disappeared, and that through death Petrushka has regained his power and freedom from isolation and enslavement.

The avant-garde visual and narrative structure of *Petrushka*, and Dale's adherence to these symbolist reform initiatives in her innovative 1962 adaptation, foreshadowed a new kind of experimentation in television ballet at the turn of the 1960s. The striking result produced by *Petrushka's* construction of self-reflexive interpretive tensions incited a revision of theatrical convention in television aesthetics. Its broadcast designated neo-classical and modernist texts as definitive components of the BBC's growing substantiation of ballet programming, aligned with changing cultural perspectives on the possibilities of social and political freedoms.

As Mawer puts it, "*There is irony in the use of a civilizing mask of neoclassicism, including mechanisms devoid of emotion, in the face of European civilisation destroyed*"¹⁰. By highlighting *Petrushka*, the BBC moved into a more sophisticated arena of culturally critical dance programmes. It was not yet ready, however, to extend itself entirely in this direction, and ballet programmes would continue to balance experimental and contemporary projects with a greater number of the Romantic adaptations that had previously dominated the programming schedule.

Notes and References

¹ Asa Briggs, *History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom*, vol. 5, *Competition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 403.

² Andrew Wachtel (ed.), *'Petrushka': Sources and Contexts*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998, p. 35.

³ Wachtel, *'Petrushka': Sources and Contexts*, 1998, p. 34.

⁴ Wachtel, *'Petrushka': Sources and Contexts*, 1998, p. 35.

⁵ Wachtel, *'Petrushka': Sources and Contexts*, 1998, p. 47.

⁶ Wachtel, *'Petrushka': Sources and Contexts*, 1998, p. 50.

⁷ Wachtel, *'Petrushka': Sources and Contexts*, 1998, p. 42.

⁸ Margaret Dale, 'Margaret Dale talks to *Dance and Dancers*', *Dance and Dancers*, January 1963, pp. 29-31.

⁹ Margaret Dale, 'BECTU History Project: Margaret Dale', audio Interview with Norman Swallow, recorded 21 January 1992, London: British Film Institute, BECTU Archives, audiotape side 5.

¹⁰ Deborah Mawer, *The Ballets of Maurice Ravel: Creation and Interpretation*, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006, p. 185.

11 / Questions of Reception: The Iranian TV Soap Opera *Sandglass*

Teja Mirfakhraee and Fereshteh Taherinia

Speaking of Soap Opera

Television programmes try to establish preferred readings by employing different textual means or strategies. But meanings are translated on the basis of audiences' everyday life experiences. Audiences cannot be imagined as loners, they are surrounded by a set of social relationships which can greatly affect the process of making sense of textual messages. In other words the process whereby meaning is produced is related to audiences' life experiences. While audience attitudes are usually seen as a reflection of common social experiences, reception analysis underlines viewers as active individuals. In line with this approach, this essay looks at how Iranian audiences make sense of Television melodramas and how they use these meanings in their daily lives.

By means of empirical research, the essay attempts to explain the reception of Iranian Television soap operas, focusing on *Sandglass*. Iranian National Radio and Television produced 17 episodes of *Sandglass* for transmission in Autumn 2007. The show featured several melodramatic story lines. The main story was about a female gynaecologist, Mahrokh Golestan. Unable to have a baby, she employs a woman named Mahshid to bear a child on her behalf. Later, the discovery that her husband has become interested in Mahshid brings on a severe mental illness. The working-class Mahshid also becomes physically ill. Many problematic and complex issues arise.

From our research, described below more fully, a visible consensus emerged amongst our respondents and we came to the conclusion that female audiences commonly talk about soap opera texts on a regular basis, and that these exchanges are the most important process by which shared meanings about these texts are formed. As audiences talk about the stories, new meanings are shared by groups of friends that may even contradict the earlier understandings of individual members and the preferred meaning of these melodramatic texts.

Reception Analysis

Stuart Hall's *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*, first published in 1973, has had a seminal influence on Cultural Studies.¹ The essay challenges long-held assumptions on how media messages are produced, circulated and consumed, proposing a new theory of communication. This approach to textual analysis focuses on the scope for 'negotiation' and 'opposition' on the part of the

audience. This means that a 'text' - be it a book, film, or other creative work - is not simply passively accepted by the audience, but that the reader / viewer interprets the meanings of the text based on their individual cultural background and life experiences. In essence, the meaning of a text is not inherent within the text itself, but is created within the relationship between the text and the reader. Hall's model was to prove a major influence on the development of qualitative audience research in the Cultural Studies tradition.

Reception Analysis in Iran

Reception analysis is relatively new in Iran. Two remarkable doctoral theses have emerged, both focusing on women and soap opera, Jamal Mohammadi's 'Cultural Hegemony and TV' and Jalil Karimi's 'Soap Opera and Audiences'. While their final findings seem to be very similar to those from other countries, it should be noted that these projects were hampered by several restrictions. For example, since they were not able to interview participants in their home environment and observe closely how participants normally watch soap opera at home with their family, various aspects of body language and gesture were neglected and some key details were inevitably lost.

It also seems that, coming from the quantitative tradition, these investigations employed pre-constructed questions that doubtless affected the responses they obtained. Another important research contribution, on which this essay is based, was made by Fereshteh Taherinia in her MA thesis analysing the reception of popular television soap opera by

female audiences, which methodologically revised earlier research from Iran in a qualitative direction.

By using an open, qualitative method, the research was carried out in three stages. Data were gathered in an open and unstructured interview; meanwhile during interview sessions in the home environment we observed carefully the body language and gestures of the women. At the first stage we interviewed some of our participants in a very open manner allowing them to dominate the interviewing session. In the second round we held 24 face-to-face sessions and interviewed 12 women from all walks of life. The last round of interviews involved just six participants.

After showing an episode of *Sandglass*, in each session we engaged our participants in an open conversation about their life experiences and interpretations of the show. In the final stage, two large interviews were organised where our focused groups discussed their lives, along with their understanding of characters in the TV narrative. At these stages we tried to understand how text is interpreted by each of our participants. The outcome of the research underlines the importance of the social relationships in which audiences are embedded.

Participant Interactions

We chose to work with groups rather than individuals in order to understand individual participants in the wider social framework rather than atomistically. In the final stage, both groups played a very active role in arguing about *Sandglass* and what it meant for them and how they interpreted it. They compared these stories with real events in society and their practical experiences. Respondents were

able to put themselves in the place of the soap's melodramatic characters, and judged them on the basis of their own life situation. For example our participant Ma'edeh had particular views of the characters. She couldn't perceive Mahsid clearly enough, because if such a situation arose in Iran, it would happen in secret. She found the errant daughter Mahtab a familiar enough figure, but was surprised by Zohreh, an unusually kind and sympathetic character who, to Ma'edeh's mind, is all too rare in the real world.

In one of the focus groups interviews, initially, most respondents agreed that Mahshid is an unrealistic character as they also noted in in-depth and face-to-face interview sessions. For example Sedigheh said: *"Ok, It isn't reasonable! She carried the foetus in her stomach for nine months, it isn't her baby, not no, not any time! ... I couldn't believe it! ... she said choose between your death and the death of the foetus, and Mahshid chooses to die! Isn't it strange?"*

Each of the participants expressed her opinions, along with examples of her real life situations, her views of her own life situation as a woman, and how she would have acted if she had been one of the TV characters, judging them and making excuses for them. Suddenly Forozan chattered excitedly: *"She has borne many difficulties for nine months, it has been a part of her existence ... She makes sacrifices as a mother in order to preserve a baby. Why? Because of money for her sisters and brothers that are orphans! So she sacrifices herself for them..."*

Heated discussion over the meaning of texts took place where new interpretations were proposed by the women based their real-life experiences. Their social status and occupation, involving social relationships with different

people, had created a variety of cultural spaces for them too, especially in the case of the older women. They explained their experiences fluently and were able to convince the others. Shadi said: *"Maybe she wanted to commit suicide! In this case the baby is born and she died and got rid of this hard life!"* Parvaneh said happily, as if discovering the answer to a puzzle: *"Oh yeah! I think so! It is an act of suicide!"* Sedigheh added: *"She couldn't kill herself! But in this case she dies and gets rid of this life!"*

The other focus group also discussed Mahshid and her baby; one of the women, Parastoo, finally convinced the others: *"Mahshid saves the baby because of maternal love!"* Another respondent, Ma'edeh, asked her in surprise: *"Even though it wouldn't belong to her husband ... the man who hasn't any loving relationship with it?"*. Parastoo explains: *"OK, because it has fed from your blood and tissue, especially in the last months of pregnancy, the baby speaks you! It moves! ... those motions ... it feeds from your body!"* As was previously mentioned, the respondents took a new preferred meaning that differed from the first dominant meaning, although the preferred meaning was different from what the other group understood.

Notes and References

¹ Stuart Hall, 'Coding and Encoding in the Television Discourse', Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Stencilled Paper no. 7, 1973, re-published as 'Encoding/Decoding', in Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (eds.), *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 1980, ch. 10, pp. 128-138.

12 / Transformations and Reinventions in Children's Television Production

Anna Potter

The Australian Context

This essay will begin by considering key characteristics of Australian television and their impact on the broadcasting, production, funding and scheduling of Australian children's television. Australian television services include the three free-to-air advertiser-funded channels (Seven, Nine and Ten), two public service broadcasters (ABC and SBS), one dedicated children's channel provided by ABC, eight dedicated children's pay-TV channels, online retailers such as i-Tunes and the on-line catch-up facilities that are increasingly provided by all free-to-air broadcasters. I then consider contemporary UK and US broadcasting environments and their treatment of the child audience and children's programming, and contrast them with the Australian environment.

I will illustrate some of the ways in which children's TV production generally - and in Australia particularly - has been affected by transformations and reinventions in broadcasting. These transformations have led to a proliferation in services, audience fragmentation across multiple platforms, and a contraction in demand for Australian live-action drama on UK free-to-air channels, including ITV and BBC, since 2006. As a result, while there are more platforms than ever for the transmission of children's TV, there is less money available with which to make it.

In Australia the regulatory mechanism, Children's Television Standards (CTS), has provided mandated quotas for Australian children's television on advertiser funded free-to-air television since 1979. These quotas include a minimum of 32 hours of new live-action drama each year on each of the three free-to-air advertiser-funded channels. As children's live action drama is expensive to make and attracts little in the way of advertising revenue in Australia, the commercial free-to-airs have always resented these *quid pro quo* obligations to the child audience.

Longstanding regulatory supports like the CTS were designed to nurture Australian children's television and an Australian production industry. They were also considered a reasonable expectation of commercial channels which used Australia's limited spectrum for their highly profitable television operations. However CTS is now part of a television production ecology which has been transformed by technological change.

Children's Television: The Multichannel Environment

Australia has a medium-sized television system. The television services offered by Australia's existing free-to-air commercial networks were supplemented by additional new platforms for television with the introduction of pay-TV services and of digital transmission in 1995 and 2001 respectively. The advent of multi-channelling led gradually to a proliferation of dedicated children's subscription services and the child audience's drift away from free-to-air television. By 2010 there were eight dedicated children's subscription services on air in Australia, including Disney, Playhouse Disney, Nickelodeon, The Cartoon Network and the BBC's CBeebies.

According to figures published by the Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA), in 2010 children's content made up 13% of all content viewed on pay-TV channels in Australia, with sport at 10% and movies at 11%. While sport and movies are widely recognised as the drivers of pay-TV subscriptions, in Australia children's content is clearly more popular than both. The end of spectrum scarcity also enabled public service broadcaster the ABC to venture into multi-channelling, including a dedicated children's channel ABC3 in 2009.

The audience fragmentation created by this abundance of supply was compounded by the widespread availability of the Internet in Australia and of its use by children to consume media content. While the Internet provided opportunities for television distribution, the challenge for all media content producers was how to effectively monetarise their on-line offerings. As channels re-broadcast content via

their on-line catch-up players in an effort to maintain their centrality as broadcasters in the late 2000s, personalised recorders such as TiVo distributed power to the consumer by providing series record options.

As a result, DVD purchases declined, undermining what had become established from the turn of the decade as a potent funding model for production. For the commercial free-to-air, existing resentment about the enforced provision of live action drama was exacerbated by the child audience's gradual withdrawal from the free-to-air viewing space, and its selection of reality television and movies when it was watching commercial television.

The funding for the Australian children's programming that airs on Australian free-to-air services comes from several sources, resulting in private and public partnerships underpinning programme production. Once a local pre-sale has been secured from Channel Seven, Nine or Ten, their 20% investment triggers Australian government subsidies as well as providing the basis for international co-production deals and merchandising arrangements.

Government subsidies are disbursed by federal and state government agencies such as Screen Australia, the Australian Children's Television Foundation, and the Pacific Film and Television Commission, as well as by means of tax subsidy schemes such as the Producer Offset. These have all been drawn upon by children's television producers in creating projects for free-to-air TV, particularly on the commercial networks. Some \$18.6m was spent on children's television production in 2009-10, much of it due to the quota obligations associated with CTS.¹

The Fragmented Audience

In Australia as in the UK, the audience fragmentation caused by abundance of supply means that fewer children are watching commercial free-to-air television. By 2007, for example, pay-TV had achieved 32% market penetration in Australian family homes (compared to 26% in homes without children). At that time there were seven dedicated children's services available to Australian audiences, including the BBC's CBeebies. A further 24 minutes per day of children's viewing time was spent watching videos or DVDs. The child audience had also migrated on-line, with 49 minutes of its 77 minutes a day Internet usage devoted to messaging, visiting social network sites, and emailing. Forty-nine per cent of children had also watched downloaded television programmes in the previous week.²

As the child audience fragmented across several platforms the 0-14 year old free-to-air commercial audience dropped by a significant 25.5% between 2001 and 2006. While children watched more television than ever, an erosion of the free-to-air broadcasters' analogue-era dominance of their viewing patterns had occurred. In the case of the 0-14 year old segment there was a 48% decline between 4pm and 5pm on commercial TV over the 2001-2006 period. Clearly Australia's television landscape has been transformed with the arrival of VHS and then DVD distribution, pay-TV services, digital transmission, free-to-air multi-channelling, and the on-line distribution of television programmes.

Each of these developments has increased supply while fragmenting audiences. The child audience is particularly well served by the new circumstances of Australian broadcasting.

As can be seen, many children are now choosing to access their television content on-line or via subscription services, rather than on free-to-air networks. Despite these changes, Australian commercial free-to-air channels continue to play a crucial role in Australia's children's television production ecology, a role that was first thrust upon them in 1979, rather than upon the ABC.

Challenges for Public Service Broadcasting: ABC and BBC

Public service broadcaster the ABC experiences the greatest need for children's programming, but it is not bound by the demands of CTS; it can invest in less expensive programming and rely heavily on repeats when scheduling its children's content across all three of its channels. Without the resources of the BBC (there is no licence fee in Australia), the ABC cannot be the force for children's television that the BBC is in the UK. Thus, thanks to Australian government policy, the main responsibility for investing in original Australian children's television with public service broadcasting goals rests with Australia's free-to-air commercial networks, a major difference between Australia and the UK. Nonetheless, Australian producers of children's live-action drama must straddle both market ecologies in order to make their programming viable.

Although the ABC and the BBC share some Reithian principles, there are other significant differences between the two public service providers. First, the ABC's reliance on government funding means that it is more directly controlled than the BBC in the sense of being more affected by policy in the context of statutory independence. Second, regardless of the global popularity of *The Wiggles*, the ABC can never provide the kind of competition to commercial providers that

the BBC, with a revenue of £4.7 billion pounds in licence fees and revenue, is able to muster. The ABC has never had sufficient resources to become the driver of digital uptake for those who eschewed pay-TV services in the way that the BBC was in the 1990s.

Finally, the ABC has so far managed to avoid being effectively handed responsibility for the provision of free-to-air children's television as the BBC was in 2010 in the UK. This was when, for the first time, the public service broadcaster listed children's content as one of its five areas of editorial priority. In stark contrast, in Australia the channels investing in and transmitting high quality original children's programming are the commercial networks Seven, Nine and Ten, thanks to the quotas enshrined by the CTS. So in the Australian system of financing children's television, free-to-air commercial networks are crucially important in several ways, including the unlocking of subsidy resources.

This is because subsidies for children's television production are only triggered once a pre-sale to a local commercial network has been achieved. However rather than being committed to a series' success over multiple platforms, the commercial networks' first investor role is driven by the minimum investment required to fulfil their much-resented quota obligations. Thus in a potentially worrying policy lock, producers are committed to financial partnerships with investors who have reduced interest in the critical or financial success of the programmes in which they are investing.

Nonetheless, although producers have voiced concerns about certain aspects of Australia's regulatory structures - including the expensive demands inherent in quality

requirements for the drama quota - there is a deeply-held conviction that without the CTS there would be little Australian children's live-action drama. UK producers, on the other hand, can only dream of the levels of regulatory support and government funding enjoyed by their Australian counterparts.

Changes in British Television

In the UK, changing business models for the distribution of children's television have also emerged since the early 1990s. Those available in 2010 included: free-to-air advertiser funded channels, dedicated children's multichannel services provided by both public service broadcasters and subscription services, online television programme catch-up services like the BBC's i-player, and VOD via online services such as iTunes.

The proliferation of dedicated children's services on both free-to-air and subscription television began in the UK with the 1989 introduction of pay-TV and was accelerated by the 1998 introduction of digital transmission. The new television business models exist in a fiercely competitive multi-channel environment where children control their scheduling and where, for many but by no means all television providers, children are a highly sought-after audience. The proliferation of provision also means that niche audiences among children can be targeted, via gender and age profiles, by carefully branded channels.

What the abundance of supply has also meant is a contraction of audiences - and thus advertising revenue - for the free-to-air advertiser-funded channels ITV, Channel Four and Channel Five. While the hybrid public service

broadcaster Channel Four does not cater to the child audience, ITV and Channel Five transmit children's programming. ITV has a dedicated children's channel (CITV) while Channel Five caters to the child audience through its programming strand 'Milkshake'. But it is the BBC that dominates the provision of free-to-air children's programming in the UK with two dedicated children's channels, CBBC and CBeebies.

In the UK, the advertiser-funded free-to-air channels have also displayed some ambivalence towards the child audience since the proliferation in children's services. The largest of these channels, ITV, had its own dedicated in-house children's production unit in the past and spent approximately £25 million per annum on original commissions in 2003 and 2004. However the fragmentation of audiences and advertising revenue which began with the introduction of multi-channelling was compounded by the UK regulator Ofcom's decision to introduce a junk food advertising ban in 2006.

The advertising revenue calculation which forced ITV to give advertising revenue to the hybrid broadcaster Channel Four added to the broadcaster's financial woes. In 2006 ITV closed its production unit, despite the fact the broadcaster had launched a dedicated children's channel CITV earlier that year. However the new channel's low programming budget meant it relied heavily on repeats, and commissioned little original children's programming. With the provision of the dedicated children's channel CITV, ITV was then able to justify reducing the primary channel's commitment to children's programming from ten hours per week in 2005 to eight hours in 2006 and just four hours in 2007.

As changes in technology globally cause children to drift away from free-to-air television and towards subscription services, commercial free-to-airs such as the UK's ITV are conceding defeat in their traditional public service obligations, a concession accepted somewhat reluctantly by Ofcom. Children's free-to-air programming is particularly vulnerable to the upheaval occurring in UK free-to-air television, as between 2002 and 2006 children's viewing fell by a third on these channels.

The Impact on Australian TV

As the BBC and ITV reduced their commitment to Australian live-action drama, Australian producers faced an increasing reliance on distribution arrangements with other European public service broadcasters, such as ZDF. For example the German public service broadcaster acted as distributor for the Australian live-action drama series *H2O: Just Add Water*, and *Dance Academy*. The relationship between Australian producers and ZDF underscores the increasing importance of European public service broadcasters in supporting high-quality Australian children's drama, rather than the arrangements with the BBC that existed prior to 2006.

The BBC's principal competition comes from the subscription services that provide the additional children's offerings and which meant that a total of 31 children's channels were on air in December 2010. Subscription service providers Disney, The Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon are market leaders in UK children's pay-TV provision. Their schedules are characterised by repeats, 'stripped' scheduling and a reliance on animation from their parent companies in the US. Global children's channels are aware, however, that they must have local relevance to succeed in non-US markets and have

adopted two strategies to achieve this. One is to hybridise their channel content to give it some relevance to local audiences and the second to commission local productions from UK-based producers.³

Most children's subscription services channels originate in the US and are owned by a small number of American conglomerates. The US also provides models and processes for children's television that undermine Australia's traditional treatment of children as a special audience that deserves high quality programming, including live action drama provided at no cost to its viewers by commercial free to air channels. This is because, on the whole, US business models for children's programming are driven by companies like Disney whose capacity for branding, merchandising and encouraging the hybrid consumption of its products underpins the success of its children's programming.⁴

While the American Public Broadcasting System (PBS) launched *Sesame Street* in 1969 - a show which has gone on to play in 130 countries - and in spite of the fact that the 1990 Children's Television Act aims to provide US children with more educationally oriented, less commercialised television, most US children's television continues to be characterised by the need to sell merchandise, keep costs down and attract the largest possible audiences.⁵

There can be no doubt then that in Australia the commercial free-to-air channels' commitment to investing in children's television production is driven largely by the demands of the CTS. As audiences and particularly the child audience fragment across multiple platforms, along with advertising revenues and funding budgets, these free-to-air commercial channels have continued their attempts to divest themselves

of responsibility for the child audience as expressed through the commission of expensive live action drama.

Their arguments were given extra impetus by the launch of the ABC's dedicated free-to-air children's channel in November 2009. Nonetheless, the commercial free-to-air channels in Australia still have a crucially important role to play in unlocking production finance by triggering state subsidies and international sales. Thus the regulatory regime first put in place in 1979 remains critical in sustaining Australian children's television production amidst the new settlements that exist in Australian broadcasting.

Notes and References

¹ Screen Australia, *Annual Report 2009-2010*, Sydney: Screen Australia, 2010.

² Australian Communications and Media Authority, *Media and Communications in Australian Families 2007: Report of the Media and Society Research Project*, Canberra: ACMA, 2007.

³ See Jeanette Steemers, *Creating Pre-school Television: A Story of Commerce, Creativity and Curriculum*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

⁴ See Alan Bryman, *The Disneyization of Society*, London: Sage, 2004.

⁵ See Steemers, *Creating Pre-school Television*.

3. Media Identities

13 / Representations of the Non-Conformist in Consumer Society in Linklater's *Before Sunrise* and *Before Sunset*

Angela Meyer

Non-Conformism and Consumer Society

In Richard Linklater's *Before Sunrise*, a young American man and a young Frenchwoman meet on a train and spend a night together in Vienna. Nine years later Jesse and Celine meet again in Paris in Linklater's *Before Sunset*. Their connection is based not purely on physical desire, but on the content of their conversations, in the context of their lives in Western consumer society. Both Jesse and Celine express non-conformist philosophies in relation to what they perceive as being dominant ideas in Western society. They are sensitive to the paradoxes and contradictions within society and within themselves. Their personal narratives, and their conjoined narrative, can be viewed within the context of consumer society, a society with features that prove particularly fertile to their resistant dispositions.

Through these conversations, Jesse and Celine form a connection based on a predisposition to resistance and nonconformity. However, in relation to the very paradoxes of dominant ideas of the West, Jesse and Celine constantly encounter limits in enacting and perpetuating their ideals. Jesse and Celine are fictional representations of individuals creating meaning in their everyday lives within and through personal narratives. This 'autobiographical-concern', to borrow Gaviria's and Bluemelhuber's term, is fluid, and incorporates an idealised version of a past, present and future self.¹

In consumer society, according to Bauman, there is now a blurring of the line between object and subject, between commodity and consumer. Individuals have been socialised to be "simultaneously, *promoters of commodities* and the *commodities they promote*"². One effect of this blurring is that the autobiographical-concern may be made up of desires for, or a display of, items, interests and gestures that makes one seem more *valuable* to others.

In the films, Jesse and Celine are strangers to one another who have forged a rapid connection through conversations that attempt to eschew ideas of artifice and a neat commodification of self. In fact, they willingly contradict their own earlier opinions as the films progress, embracing the fluidity of their own narratives. But this blurring between object and subject still inescapably occurs, particularly as Jesse and Celine's time together is limited.

Bauman also notes, in consumer society, an increased naturalisation of obsolescence, together with a hurriedness and an anxiety over missed opportunities, "partly the urge to *acquire* and *collect* ... *discard* and *replace*"³. So the auto-

biographical-concern, which is again that idealised view of the past, present and future self, is ever-malleable, inconsistent and fluid as the desires that shape it emerge and fade in rapid succession. The desire sparked between Jesse and Celine, in these films, emerges rapidly but certainly does not fade as fast.

Some individuals possess a kind of predisposition to resistance: they are sensitive, thus possessing a heightened physical and emotional awareness, and they are also sensitive to paradox and contradiction - within society and even within themselves. While this sensitive individual is not unique to the context, consumer society is a fertile system of complex and multilayered contradictions. This sensitive disposition leads to resistance and non-conformism through attentiveness to the gap between one thing and another, as within a contradiction.

The Absurd

The absurd, Camus tells us, is born of contradiction. It *“bursts from the comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality ... the absurd is essentially a divorce. It lies in neither of the elements compared; it is born of their confrontation”*⁴. So, in the face of contradiction, for this predisposed individual, awareness of the absurd springs forth, leading toward resistance and possibly acts of non-conformism. The autobiographical-concern of the individual becomes more aligned with a non-conformist philosophy, as opposed to a normative one.

Camus also describes the difficulty of maintaining and acknowledging awareness of the absurd. He refers to the *“real effort”* of staying in the *“desert”* of the absurd, and

*"examining closely the odd vegetation of those distant regions"*⁵. We can use the same language in relation to resistance - it is a battle or a revolt, an attempted maintenance of sensitivity and insight, that constantly encounters the boundaries of of habit, illusion, reason, and hope. When the mind strays from the desert it may be via a *'leap'*, as Camus puts it, to illusion or hope. Consumer society provides much food for illusion, such as in the construction of desires. But the individual awakened to the absurd realises they had *"previously been feeding on phantoms"*⁶ and in the desert there is bread. In this sense Jesse and Celine find bread in each other and discuss the phantoms they had been feeding on.

One of the first conversations they have is about the way each was ill-fitted to their parents' ideals. This displays an early sensitivity to authoritarian contradiction, a contradiction between what the parents idealised as being fulfilling, and what the child perceived as being so. Jesse says, as a kid he *"must'a had a pretty decent bullshit detector"*. He says he always knew when they were lying to him. *"By the time I was in high school"*, Jesse says, *"I was dead set on listening to what everyone thought I should be doing with my life and then almost systematically doing the opposite"*. Celine's parents encouraged big ambitions, but practical and perceivably normative ones, that would provide an income. When she'd say she wanted to be a writer, her father would say *"journalist"*. If she wanted to be an actress he'd say *"TV newscaster"*. In their youth, both Jesse and Celine's sensitive, contradictory dispositions are evident, as are the ensuing resistances.

This conversation opens a door on to the topic of spirituality and death - Jesse's admission that he isn't really afraid of

death and Celine's that she is terrified. They have moved straight on from what they reject or don't conform to, to being very open about what they *do* believe. Confessing a childhood predisposition to resistance has led to a deeper expression and sharing of autobiographical-concern: the perception of the self in relation to death. And it is just after this that Jesse convinces Celine to get off the train with him and spend a night walking around Vienna. Sharing the sensitive-contradictory sensibility and the predisposition to resistance has created a connection and a shift in desire. It marks a new chapter in each character's personal narrative.

Desire and Consumption

In both films Jesse and Celine discuss dissatisfaction and the ever-renewing nature of desires. The dissatisfaction is there for Jesse from the beginning. He says on the train: *"you know what's fascinating about travelling around? You spend all this time trying to reach your destination, you get there, you look around, it's never exactly what you'd hoped, you head off somewhere else, and hope for something better"*. Jesse's desires for travel had perhaps been motivated by his autobiographical-concern, and then shaped by seductive advertisements and word-of-mouth, the embellishment of imagined wonders. He had hoped for experiences that would enhance the telling of his personal narrative.

Belk, Ger and Askegaard argue that once the seduction has taken place and the desire has been embellished, the individual experiences hope and longing, and if hope is not lost, realisation of the desire. What follows is *"either a boredom-initiated cycle of desire focused on a new object or a fulfilment-initiated attempt to recycle desire in order to repeat these pleasures"*⁷, as with making love to the same

partner or eating repeatedly at a favourite restaurant. In terms of travelling, the dissatisfaction Jesse experienced was this *"attempt to recycle desire"* as initiated by boredom. Unfortunately, this unfulfilling renewal has compromised the ideals of his escapist autobiographical-concern - that is, until he meets Celine.

In *Before Sunset*, an older Celine and Jesse explore deeper the idea of ever-renewing desires. Celine says she feels human when she wants something more than what's needed for basic survival needs. Desire is described by Belk, Ger and Askegaard as an *"enjoyable discomfort"*, a *"hot, passionate emotion quite different from the dispassionate discourse of fulfilling wants and needs"*. A desire *"directly addresses the interplay of society and individual, of bodily passions and mental reflection"*⁸, unlike a physiological need. Desires are social, and as mentioned, their assemblage displays an autobiographical-concern. Jesse suggests that perhaps there's a problem when those desires are associated with a sense of entitlement, to do with the way, in consumer society, we're *"designed to be slightly discontented with everything"*. His thought displays sensitivity and then resistance to the way desires can be shaped and constructed.

Celine contradicts herself in the realm of consumer desires when she talks about some time she spent in Warsaw when it was a strict communist regime. After a while her brain felt clearer and she was writing a lot more. Soon it occurred to her that she had spent the past few weeks away from her habits. She says: *"The TV was in a language I didn't understand and there was nothing to buy, no advertisements anywhere ... My brain felt like it was at rest, free from the consuming frenzy, and I have to say it was almost like a natural high"*. This displays a nonconformist attitude to

dominant ideas in consumer society which of course meets its limits once Celine is integrated back into the West. Her desires are sparked by the environment, and the '*leap*' to the illusory qualities of the commodity recurs.

But from the first to the second film we see how in some way Celine has succeeded in fulfilling desires of her younger self, through her job with Green Cross, an environmental organisation. The organisation works on small projects throughout the world where, as she says, "*things can be fixed*", such as working on a water treatment plant in India. Celine acknowledges the role of the West in the world's problems, and admits that things are not getting any better, but rather, on the whole, only worse.

But this line of work, which means Celine is not participating in the regular work and consume cycles, is an area where she has succeeded in meeting the autobiographical-concern expressed by her younger self. Environmental work also means Celine is acknowledging and working against the norm Bauman perceives whereby obsolescence and waste are naturalised. But a contradiction lies in Celine's enjoyment of the ever-renewing desire and the joys of shopping. So a non-conformist line of work meets its limits, still, in an everyday life in the West. From Celine's talk of her time in Warsaw we can see that a life without distraction and seduction from products and their advertisements is possible, but in Paris, Celine is inevitably and even pleasurably drawn back in.

Jesse has met more limits to the autobiographical-concern, particularly in the realm of relationships. When he is explaining to Celine the idea of his future self, in the first film, he says would rather die knowing he was really good at something and had excelled, rather than only having been "*in*

a nice, caring relationship". In the second film Jesse is married with a son, and towards the end of the film he admits that the relationship is stale and miserable. He tells Celine that they got married because she was pregnant and, in normative terms, it seemed like the right thing to do.

He says *"I had this idea of my best self and I wanted to pursue that even if it might have been overriding my honest self"*. Jesse was then sensitive to the paradoxical nature of his decision, his folding into the norm as opposed to staying in the difficult *"desert"*. But it seems here that the suppression of the *"honest"* self, as Jesse calls it, has been a mistake. *"We're living in the pretence of marriage, responsibility, these ideas of how people are supposed to live"*, he says.

Freedom and the Individual

The oscillation between non-conformism or *"staying in the desert"* (to borrow from Camus) and participation in normative spheres, could be examined as a power play, the individual's wrestling with their autonomy. But as Celine observes in the first film, unlike in her parents' era, what they are rebelling against is not really known. *"We still have to deal with the same shit. But you can't really know what or who the enemy is"*, she says. She is sensitive to the fact there is something to fight against. Reith says *"What is new in modern society is not the emphasis on issues of freedom per se, but rather the unprecedented emphasis on freedom as a mode of governance by and through the individual"*⁹.

There are two elements to which the sensitive, contradictory individual may be attuned with respect to this notion of self-governance. One is that their desires and personal narrative are still influenced and shaped by multiple external forces

and are susceptible to being swayed toward some more than others. Two, is that for the sensitive individual, knowing that all decisions are in *their* hands could create anxiety and a grappling for control.

Reith agrees that the culture of self-governance itself might create hypersensitive subjects, since the *"intense focus on the analysis and monitoring of their own subjective states makes individuals hypersensitive, ever alert to signs of loss of control."*¹⁰. In this case then, if freedom and self-governance are perceived as being normative, would the resistive act be, paradoxically, to take that 'leap' toward illusion? Toward a system or structure of beliefs that is in some ways contrary to freedom?

Jesse and Celine explore this, by accepting illusion, in an absurd sense, and taking the 'leap' into different spiritualities, and into romance - relationships they both later admit to serving some other purpose than contentment (as we've seen with Jesse). Spiritual explorations include a palm-reader in the first film, whom Celine wants to believe, and Jesse's admission of having thought about reincarnation and even having spent time at a Trappist monastery. These kinds of 'leap' provide structures within which individuals can align themselves, and therefore take away some of that pressure of an *obligatory* freedom, the pressure of self-governance, and the anxiety associated with an abundance of choice.

The structures of religion, or a long-term relationship, give the individual a sense of control over their narratives by contradictorily *handing over* some of that responsibility. So it is possible to argue that, in this respect, Jesse and Celine's openness to systems and structures of belief as *reactive* to the obligations of freedom *is* a way of 'staying in the desert',

due to the very nature of it being paradoxical. But these explorations have been fleeting, discarded and replaced, which brings back thoughts of Bauman's notion of naturalised obsolescence. So again, even these complex, paradoxically resistant explorations meet their limits.

The viewer is led to wonder, by the end of the second film, whether one of Celine's ideals expressed in the first film is met, a thought for the future which seems essential to her autobiographical-concern. In one scene, she goes against Jesse's opinion on relationships, which *she* perceives as a normative one for their generation, one of scepticism. Celine says she'd know when she was really in love, when she could anticipate her partner's actions - the story they would tell in a given situation, the way they'd part their hair, the shirt they'd choose.

As noted, when Belk, Ger and Askegaard talk about ever-renewing desires, they mention that when a desire is fulfilled it is not always a new object which is the focus but, to quote, can be a "*fulfilment-initiated attempt to recycle desire in order to repeat these pleasures*". This conceptualises what Celine is referring to, a fulfilling relationship where the desires *within* are ever-renewed. To succeed in resisting dominant ideas, self-governing one's way through an anxious array of choices, constructing an assemblage of desires that makes one attractive as a commodity - to succeed in resisting all this might be to find and accept that desire-renewal in one situation. It would involve the creation, paradoxically, of a structure which navigates illusion and continually renews the 'desert'. So by the end of the second film when the viewer is sure Jesse will miss his plane, satisfaction comes from the idea that this deep and renewing connection, of Jesse and Celine's 'honest', sensitive, contradictory selves, will be

possible, and that they will find ways to stay in the 'desert' together.

Notes and References

¹ Pilar Rojas Gaviria and Christian Bluemelhuber, 'Consumers' Transformations in a Liquid society: Introducing the Concepts of *Autobiographical-concern* and *Desire-assemblage*', *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, vol. 9 no. 2, 2010, pp. 126-138.

² Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, p. 6.

³ Bauman, *Consuming Life*, p. 36.

⁴ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, London: Penguin, 2005, pp. 28-29.

⁵ Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 8.

⁶ Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 20.

⁷ Russell W. Belk, Güliz Ger and Søren Askegaard, 'The Fire of Desire: A Multisided Inquiry into Consumer Passion', *The Journal of Consumer Research*, vol. 30 no. 3, 2003, pp. 341-342.

⁸ Belk, Ger and Askegaard, 'The Fire of Desire', pp. 327-329.

⁹ Gerda Reith, 'Consumption and its Discontents: Addiction, Identity and the Problems of Freedom', *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 55 no. 2, 2004, p. 297.

¹⁰ Reith, 'Consumption and its Discontents', p. 296.

14 / Nation, Religion, and Disability: Identity Politics in Bombay Cinema - *My Name is Khan*

Asma Sayed

The Bollywood Imaginary

Karan Johar's film *My Name is Khan* (2010) became an instant blockbuster in India and around the world. The story of Rizwan Khan, a sufferer from Asperger's Syndrome who is caught in the politics of 9/11 and its aftermath, raises various questions about both individual and national identity. Rizwan, originally a Muslim from Bombay, moves to the United States, where he marries a Hindu woman, Mandira, and is thrown into a whirlwind when Mandira's son, now having taken the last name 'Khan,' dies as a result of a racially motivated attack. Rizwan then travels through America seeking the President of the United States so that he may inform him that, although his name is Khan, he is not a terrorist.

His journey becomes a metaphor by which the audience comes to understand a variety of issues of post- 9/11 society, particularly the manifestation of identity. Identity politics categorically demands that difference be accepted, and supports tolerance for minority rights; but national identity is generally essentialist - an *"imagined political community"* as Anderson describes it¹ - and disregards the identity of its marginalised subjects. Traversing his identity at the crossroads of nations, religions, and disability, Rizwan raises many questions about the modern world; the film critiques the post-9/11 world, and problematises the depiction of a Muslim in America and internationally.

This essay focuses on the question of identity as represented in the film, and reveals the complexity of negotiating one's national, religious, racial, and individual identity in the contemporary world. I argue that Johar's film uses disability not only to present a disabled subject struggling physically and mentally, but also as a tool to deal with the overarching issue of terrorism and Muslim identity since 9/11. The use of a disabled subject, however, has the effect of further marginalising and 'othering' the Muslim protagonist; although the film's aim is to challenge the stereotypical representation of Muslims, I would argue that in this respect it fails, given that it is partly thanks to his disability that the protagonist finds support to prove himself innocent.

Based in Mumbai, 'Bombay Cinema' ('Bollywood') produces a total of 800-1,000 feature films yearly, more than any other country in the world.² Distributed not only in South Asia, but also other communities in the Middle East, Russia, North America, and globally, and thanks to an increased interest in the Indian cinema overall after the Oscar-winning success of

Danny Boyle's Bombay-set but British-made *Slumdog Millionaire*, the Bombay film industry has now reached a new level. Because of its ability to influence mass audiences culturally, Bombay cinema has furthered its power to create or break stereotypes. Typically, Bombay cinema has played its own not insignificant role in upholding patriarchal, nationalist, and populist views that render minorities and women as 'other'. As has been argued by many critics, Bombay cinema typically presents Muslims as 'other' and in the nationalistic fervour over the issues of Kashmir, partition, and now global terrorism, it showcases Muslims as villains, terrorists, and fanatics.³

Generally speaking, popular culture has played a role both in informing and misinforming viewers in diverse national contexts about the Arab world, terrorism, and Islam. In the wake of 9/11 Hollywood has made a number of films dealing with the question of terrorism and the 'War on Terror', notably *World Trade Center* (Stone, 2006) and *United 93* (Greengrass, 2006). The Bombay film industry, for its part, drew considerably on the aftermath of 9/11. However, while Hollywood has presented an American view of the Middle East and the Muslims, Bombay cinema has its own perspectives on Islam and has produced films on Kashmir and on the racial profiling of Indians in the West. Especially notable are the India/UK co-production *Dhan Dhana Dhan Goal* (Agnihotri, 2007), *New York* (Khan, 2009), and *Kurbaan* (D'Silva, 2009).

My Name is Khan is an attempt to rewrite the minority discourse from a Muslim perspective, and its director as well the lead actor and India's biggest star, Shah Rukh Khan, have claimed that the film is an attempt to break away from the stereotypical representations of Muslims. The film has

received numerous awards at film festivals in India and abroad. Ironically, it received unplanned media attention when Shah Rukh Khan was stopped and interrogated for two hours at a US airport as he was leaving the country after shooting the film. The film's subject matter paralleled what the majority of critics identified as the racial profiling of Khan. The film was also impacted by other bio-politics when right-wing Hindu political parties, particularly Shiv Sena, protested against the film because of Khan's complaint that Pakistani cricketers were not included in the Indian Premier League.

Representations of Disability

While Bombay Cinema is no stranger to the subject of disability as it has been explored in films such as *Sparsh* (Paranjape, 1980), *Black* (Bhansali, 2005), and *U me aur hum* (Devgan, 2008), disability has not been examined in light of the question of national and religious identity. Thus, the film *My Name is Khan* is paving the new way for representation of not the individual disabled subject, but also for the *disabled* national, and post-colonial subject. As Katie Ellis has argued, "the social model of disability as it is predicated on notions of marginalization is relevant to a postcolonial rethinking of identity, in the same way as race, gender, sexuality."⁴

Films that have dealt with the disabled subject, however, have mostly been stereotypical and have focused on personal struggle; the disabled body is mostly expected to strive against all odds and overcome the impairment. The films, by and large, "*have tended to isolate disabled characters from their able-bodied peers as well as from each other. This phenomenon . . . is reflected not only in the typical storylines of the films but also to a large extent in the ways*

*that filmmakers have visualized the characters interacting in their environments; they have often used the basic tools of their trade – framing, editing, sound, lighting, set design elements – to suggest a physical or symbolic separation of disabled characters from the rest of the society.”*⁵ If the understanding of disability within the framework of national politics has been understudied, the emphasis on “*nation and national fitness*”, as Lennard Davis notes, has nonetheless played into “*the metaphor of the body*”.⁶ In *My Name is Khan*, Rizwan’s disabled body becomes just such an image.

Running counter to the general tendency to present a sympathetic overview of disability as something to overcome, the film shows Rizwan as able, smart, intelligent, and living a normal life except for his health problems; he cannot stand too much light, sound, and bright colors, especially yellow. The fact that he has Asperger’s syndrome, as he readily tells people, only means that he acts and looks different, but that he is not ‘crazy.’ Even for Mandira his disability is not an issue when she decides to marry him. However, as the film moves forward and her son is killed in the school yard, Mandira regrets her decision to marry him for other reasons, and believes that her son could have been saved if he had not been named Khan.

In the end, it is his religion and not his disability that have debilitated the family. In a fit of anger, Mandira asks Rizwan to go to the President of the US, and let him know that neither is he a terrorist, nor was Mandira’s son. Rizwan takes the words literally and begins pursuing the President. It is during one of these journeys that Rizwan is arrested on suspicion of terrorism, and tortured. When his story is captured by a journalist, it becomes part of national media

debate, and because the Autistic Society of America and other bodies get involved, Rizwan is eventually released. However, it is here that the film complicates the issue of disabled identity, religion, and nation-space.

Minority Identities

Mandira starts following the rhetoric of the nation at large, and her second-guessing is an affirmation of the dominant discourse; she forgets that the attack on her son was racially motivated, and that both she and Khan are members of a very visible minority. However, when majoritarianism wins, ironically, minorities are pitched against minorities, and minorities do not understand when they become tools in the hands of the majority. Mandira, originally from India, is able to move beyond the religious boundaries when she falls in love with Khan as arguably, she recognises him as 'Indian' and 'brown' (here, it can also be argued that she replaces her loss of virginity and single motherhood with Khan's disability).

When tensions arise after 9/11, however, she aligns herself with a nationalist discourse which sees Hindus and Muslims as being other. Rizwan, who for Americans is a Muslim, thus becomes a Muslim in relationship to the non-Muslim world at large, which complicates and multiplies the polemics of Muslim identity in a global world. Mandira's request for Rizwan to go to the US President reiterates the social rhetoric by which a Muslim is guilty until proven innocent; the onus is on him to prove that he is not a terrorist. The film revolves around an even more basic principle than Hindu-Muslim binaries.

Instead, it emphasises that there are only two kinds of people, good and bad, a message that Rizwan has learned from his mother in the aftermath of Hindu-Muslim riots in Bombay. Rizwan has to prove that he is a good Muslim/human in contrast to Rehman, a terrorist, who operates an underground terrorist cell. Despite its message of humanitarianism and equality, the film's simplistic binaries achieve nothing beyond a reiteration of the typical ideology of the Bombay cinema that identifies Muslims as terrorists until proven otherwise.

On the other hand, to the extent that disability in the film is used to create the story of an autistic body and mind, portraying Rizwan with this syndrome, defines him *"as 'the other', in that no Muslim can quite redeem himself or even Islam unless he is mentally or emotionally challenged"*.⁷ The question that is not considered in the film is what Rizwan's fate would have been if his autism alert card had not been found by Homeland Security officials. It is ironic that Rizwan is not taken as a terrorist partly because he is disabled, and thus presumed to be unable of plotting or implementing terrorist attacks.

Thus the stereotype of disability replaces that of a terrorist. Would the message have been less credible if Rizwan Khan was not autistic? What role does a disabled identity play in framing a national, or for that matter, a global identity? The disabled self of Rizwan gives us an opportunity to re-evaluate not only notions of disabled identity, but also of national identity. The 'War on Terror' is fought on the body - literally in terms of killings, torture, body searches, frisking, and so on, and metaphorically as well.

Nation and Religion

Although the film tends to focus on the US and its treatment of Muslims, it does take into account the question of national space in a broader sense as well. For example, the Gujarati motel owner Jignesh tends to identify Rizwan as Indian, and is willing to share his own room with him, but his anti-Muslim sentiment becomes apparent in the scene wherein he runs after the people attacking his motel, armed with a gun and anti-Muslim rhetoric, and, ironically, aligns himself with Mahatma Gandhi and argues that he is different from the likes of Bin Laden. The Gujarati identity of Jignesh is of course no accident, given the history of the 2002 riots in the town of Godhra in Gujarat, but what is interesting here is that Jignesh considers the attack on his motel as religiously rather than racially motivated.

As a brown-skinned Hindu, he too, holds grudges against Muslims in general, thus identifying himself as the one who is suffering because of the actions of a *"bunch of Muslims"*. Jignesh is a Hindu nationalist who shifts his allegiance, much like Mandira, to a brown-skinned Hindu India as soon as he confronts a racial attack, and wants to disengage himself from *"those Muslims"*. As Bhabha contends, the *"problematic boundaries of modernity are enacted in these ambivalent temporalities of the nation-space."*⁸ Both Mandira and Jignesh thus complicate the national boundaries with those of race and religion.

According to Stuart Hall, there are at least two different ways of thinking about identity. He defines the first as *"shared culture"* which is *"a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial, or artificially imposed*

*'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common". It reflects " the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging, and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history."*⁹ The film thus presents a shared view of Indian-ness and also human-ness itself as Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims unite to fight for Rizwan, but it also points to the marginality within and outside of this 'Indian' space, thus creating a hegemony of nation, race, and religion. Muslims, for their part, are presented as marginalised both in India and outside.

Solutions and Resolutions

As much as a nation is created on artificial boundaries and ideological paranoia and what Bhabha calls *"arbitrary signs and symbols"*, in the film various characters' American identity is questioned on the basis of just such signs and symbols. For example, the hijab worn by Hasina, Rizwan's sister-in-law is snatched in the hallways of the university, as it not only signifies her status as a Muslim but also her supposedly anti-American identity. In yet another scene, the lead reporter of PBC television has abandoned his Sikh turban after 9/11, as is evident from an old family picture on his desk.

Outside the film, in the post-9/11 uproar, a Sikh was killed because his turban likened him to bin Laden and he was mistaken for a Muslim, as simple physical markers such as the hijab and the turban become provocative symbols of anti-national identity. As Edward Said argued, lack of understanding of these basic differences has led to the visible minority being taken as a single 'other' and thus in the wake

of 9/11, all the minorities in a way became one. While Muslim women wearing the hijab or burkha were easy to single out, any men wearing a turban, or having a long beard, or bearing any resemblance to bin Laden, became a suspect.

As the post-9/11 world became one of 'us' versus 'them', and the rhetoric of the West versus Islam further advanced the stereotyping of Muslims as terrorists, the film's repeated motto of "*My name is Khan, but I am not a terrorist*" rings out loud and clear. The culture of fear that was spread after the fall of the twin towers led to a renewed discourse of patriotism in post 9/11 America. The film ends with a positive message about American openness as Barack Obama becomes the president of the US and the world, or at least Rizwan Khan's, becomes ready to overcome the differences, and to recognise that not every Khan is a terrorist. Nonetheless, the simplistic conclusion of the film fails to acknowledge that the outcome that proves Muslims can be 'good people' and that the 'goodness' of American citizens would have been betrayed if Rizwan had not been released because of his Asperger's syndrome.

Films such as *My Name is Khan*, to use Hall's words, are "*resources of resistance and identity*" with which we confront and understand, or at least try to understand, complicated issues of identity and marginality. Bombay Cinema, with its reformist agenda, is producing many films dealing with a variety of disabilities in the hope of better informing the masses about a subject that has not been much discussed. *My Name is Khan* makes an attempt to do the same, but ultimately, we should admit, the film fails as a vehicle for resistance in that it simply recuperates the dominant Bollywood discourse and presents an essentialist view of disability.

Notes and References

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed., London: Verso, 2006.

² Manjunath Pendakur, 'In the Throes of Change: Exhibitions, Production, and Distribution', in Rajinder Dudrah and Jigna Desai (eds.), *The Bollywood Reader*, Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2008, p. 60.

³ See Ira Bhaskar and Richard Allen, *Islamicate Cultures of Bombay Cinema*, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009.

⁴ Katie Ellis, 'Isolation and Companionship: Disability in Australian (Post) Colonial Cinema', *Wagadu: A Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies*, vol. 4, 2007, pp. 184-85.

⁵ Martin F. Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation: A History of Physical Disability in the Movies*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994, p. 1.

⁶ Lennard J. Davis (ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader*, New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 9.

⁷ Belinda Marie Balraj, "'My Name is Khan and I am not a Terrorist': Representation of Muslims in *My Name is Khan*", *Journal of Languages and Culture*, vol. 2 no. 6, 2011, p. 93.

⁸ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 143.

⁹ Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in Jana Evans Braziel (ed.), *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*, Malden: Blackwell, 2003, p. 234.

15 / Australia's Colonial History and Political Present: Ivan Sen's *Beneath Clouds*

Rayma Watkinson

Ivan Sen

This essay focuses on the indigenous Australian filmmaker Ivan Sen and his 2002 film *Beneath Clouds*. There are many important elements to this young filmmaker's work and in this discussion I am interested in exploring the poetic qualities at work in this film and the way in which Sen's cinematic style and approach reveal the impact of colonisation on young Indigenous Australians. To facilitate this exploration I draw on ideas from the Italian filmmaker and theorist Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1965 essay 'A Cinema of Poetry' to exemplify the ways in which a poetic understanding of filmic space invites a deeper understanding of Australia's colonial past.

Sen was born in rural Queensland in 1972. His Aboriginal mother and German-Hungarian father separated when he

was young and Sen grew up with his mother. Sen's films explore racism and are drawn from his own experiences and that of his Aboriginal cousins. They reveal the ways in which racist attitudes continue to pervade the lives of indigenous people. The issue of identity features in all of his films and stems largely from a mixed heritage that is Aboriginal and Black, and European and White.

Sen's own mixed heritage made him uncomfortable as he was growing up. In an interview he said: "*In a way, you're in limbo. Not a part of any group really.*"¹ A feeling of belonging neither here nor there is explored and expressed by the indigenous subjects in his documentaries and the characters in his films. This is particularly the case with Lena in *Beneath Clouds* who longs for her absent Irish father. It is clearly critical to understand the importance of Sen's Aboriginality in terms of his approach to filmmaking and the formal choices he makes and in terms of the authority his heritage affords him to represent indigenous issues.

Sen studied photography before he worked as a camera assistant and sound recordist and later went on to study film in Brisbane. He is also a musician who composes the music for his own films. In 1994, he was accepted into the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS) in Sydney where he made the acclaimed short films *Tears* (1998) and *Dust* (1999). Sen is also a prolific documentary filmmaker who focuses on indigenous individuals in films such as *Yellow Fella* (2005) *Auntie Connie* (2006) and *Fire Talker* (2008). In 1995, he began the *Shifting Shelter* television documentary series which follows four indigenous youths. In an interview about his third *Shifting Shelter* series (2006), Sen said: "*I find that my documentary work feeds my drama in many different ways.*"²

Beneath Clouds is his first feature film. Sen travelled extensively through country towns searching out his cast; neither Hall nor Pitt, who play the two central characters, had acted before. The film won a number of awards in 2002, including Best Direction and Best Cinematography at the Australian Film Institute (AFI) awards, and Premiere First Movie Award and New Talent Award for Best Young Actress (Danielle Hall) at the Berlin Film Festival. Despite this acclaim *Beneath Clouds* is not well known and this is the principal reason I decided to focus on it for *Film and Media 2011*.

Beneath the Clouds

Based on his short film *Tears*, *Beneath Clouds* deals with two young people, Lena (Danielle Hall) and Vaughn (Damian Pitt) as they attempt to make their way from rural New South Wales to Sydney. The first ten minutes introduces Lena, an Indigenous teenager who has a fair complexion and blonde hair. We become aware of her contempt for her surroundings from the beginning, when Lena's school friend confides that she's pregnant. Lena replies, "*you're never going to get out of this shit-hole, you know that don't you*", and her point-of-view shots validate this description.

In the following sequence she arrives home to see her younger brother arrested for stealing cigarettes. Her Aboriginal mother and stepfather, the latter played by Damien Pitt's real father, are drinking beer; not only do they not care, but tell her that they think being locked up will do him good. After abusive exchanges Lena goes to her bedroom. She retrieves a green photo album from under her mattress and carefully turns the pages and gazes at a black-and-white photo of her white father in Ireland. She also has a postcard from him from Sydney.

Throughout the film, in quiet moments, Lena opens her album and looks at the photos and the card. She is trying to connect with an idealised notion of heritage that is remote from the harsh and lonely world in which she exists but to which she does not belong. In a later scene after Lena meets Vaughn she says she is from Ireland, and towards the end of the film, he says to her, *"you're not really from there are you?"* to which she replies *"It's where I belong"*. She looks at the photos in the album and looks up at a family photo on the mantelpiece where she is with her mother and brother. A close-up of her brother's face in the photo speaks for Lena's feelings at this moment. The next time we see her she is on a bus to Sydney. Her impoverished and bleak world is effectively conveyed through the *mise-en-scène* and cinematography. There is little dialogue in these scenes and throughout the film.

The next segment introduces Vaughn who is in a low security prison farm for young offenders. Differently than for Lena, there is no question of his Aboriginality, and his character is based on one of Sen's cousins who had been in prison. Vaughn is dark, angry and proud. In the middle of a confrontation with a *"white boy"*, he is told he has a visitor - the first time he has had one. His sister Tess is at the gate. She tells him that their mother is very ill, and that she wants to see him. (We later learn that when he was younger his mother had left him and that he had been brought up by his father.) Vaughn is dismissive and indifferent on hearing this news, and he makes it clear to Tess that he doesn't care.

In the next scene he is in the room he shares with Jimmy, a younger Aboriginal boy who asks who was at the gate. Vaughn says, *"No one"*. Jimmy asks why he never talks about his family and he replies *"I don't fucking have any, that's*

why", and tells him to go to sleep. Later, from under his mattress, Vaughn pulls out a creased photo of his mother with him and his sister when they were little. Extreme close-ups of him looking at the photo and close-ups of the photo itself effectively convey that Vaughn is troubled by the news of his mother. The following sequence consists of shots of a milk truck driving into the prison whilst it is still dark, and close-ups of Vaughn on his bed.

Friendship, Identity and Race

Beneath Clouds tracks a developing friendship through which questions of identity and racism are explored. At approximately twenty minutes into the film Lena and Vaughn's paths cross at a roadhouse. Lena's bus to Sydney has pulled in for a meal-break but while she is sick in the bathroom the bus leaves without her. As it drives off the milk-truck arrives and Vaughn hops out from the side door. Vaughn asks her for directions to Sydney; she tells him "*that way*", and he starts walking in that direction. She follows and overtakes him, saying nothing.

This is how their journey begins, with Lena in search of her father even though she doesn't know where he is and Vaughn having escaped prison to reach his mother before she dies. They don't start out as companions. Both are guarded and defensive with tough exteriors but their experiences along the way help to shift their relationship. From the beginning Vaughn assumes Lena is white and while she doesn't pretend to be so, she doesn't correct his view during their journey. However, it is important to note that Lena does not deny her indigenous identity. Her escape is more from an impoverished and uncaring existence that has little cultural heritage to offer.

Another way in which identity and race feature is through the reactions of the different characters Lena and Vaughn encounter on the way. Lena's Aboriginal heritage goes unnoticed and her path is easier for that, whereas Vaughn's is obvious and he is treated with suspicion and avoidance. An example of this occurs shortly after they first head off toward Sydney when a white woman pulls up to give Lena a ride but drives off the moment Vaughn runs up to the car as well. From the beginning of the film there is the persistent presence of police and the cruising police cars create an ongoing sense of surveillance. Furthermore, Vaughn's predicament is complicated by the fact he is on the run. Sen himself knows this hostile environment all too well, for while he can drive around on his own without raising suspicion, he gets pulled over when he is with his darker cousins. The 'open road' is in fact a surveillance zone where indigenous Australians are concerned.³

Two sequences towards the end of the film exemplify these issues. Lena and Vaughn receive a lift from a kindly older landowner who had seen them earlier. They feel safe in his Mercedes and it is the first time they relax and actually doze off. It is also the first time Vaughn shows any hint of regard or gratitude. His general stance against white people - "*you stole this land*" - is shifting after journeying with Lena. And, she too, has to deal with the racism she witnesses when travelling with Vaughn. In the car scene Lena's perspective seems to be changing through her point-of-view shots as she regards the scenery from the car's window and then the images of Ireland in her photo album on her lap.

After their ride Lena and Vaughn walk along a road. There's banter between them and they are clearly enjoying each other's company. They come across an imposing cliff face.

Throughout the film a strong sense of emotion is conveyed via the landscape and nowhere is it more so than at this moment, as Vaughn tells Lena a story of a hidden history of this place: *"It's pretty, hey? My pop, he used to tell me about that place. The farmers chased all the blackfellas up there. They just shot them and pushed them off"*. This is a poignant scene in the film not only for the knowledge that such a beautiful setting harbours such a brutal history, but also because it is clear from their exchange that Lena and Vaughn carry a huge burden that is both personal and political, and is a legacy of Australia's colonial past.

An imaginative, memorial mood imbues this scene. The cliff face is near the town of Boggabri in Northwest New South Wales and is known as Gin's Leap. A tourist sign near the site tells a different story about two young Aboriginal lovers referred to as 'Romeo' and 'Juliet'. The girl had been promised to an elder, but she ran away with a young man from another tribe; chased by her people, they jumped to their deaths. This scene provides a strong sense of the key elements of Sen's filmic style, particularly in terms of cinematography and editing, the use of close-ups and wide shots, and his handling of the natural *mise-en-scène*. Although the dialogue is sparse, a rich and deep emotional world is communicated cinematically. The effect is heightened by the remarkable performances of newcomers Hall and Pitt.

Pasolini and the Cinema of Poetry

The ideas in Pasolini's essay 'A Cinema of Poetry' enable a deep understanding and appreciation of Sen's film. Before becoming a filmmaker Pasolini was an established writer and poet and he applied literary understandings to his study of

the cinema. One application that has a place in this discussion is the literary technique of 'free indirect discourse'. In a novel, this refers to an uncertainty on the part of the reader as to whether it is author or the character who is speaking. The nature of this discourse is double-faced: it is distinguished by the fact both the author and character speak at the same time. There is a duality at work whereby one cannot, with certainty, assign a point of view.

Pasolini applies this literary concept to the cinema by arguing that "*direct discourse corresponds to the point-of-view shot.*"⁴ He sees a way to have a free indirect shot in which the director manages to express his or her own vision through that of the character. Within this doubling lies the potential to capture within a single shot the point of view of the author and of the character, envisaged by Maurizio Viano, following Voloshinov and Bakhtin, as a Janus-like figure that obliges the reader to acknowledge the subjective nature of all objective narration.⁵

This concept applies to *Beneath Clouds* - for example, in the scene where Lena is gazing out of the car window at the scenery and then at her photos of Ireland, which look increasingly similar. It is a striking moment for the viewer, but it raises the question of who is actually seeing this similarity. Is it Lena's point-of-view, or Sen's, or both? The viewer is invited to think about the blending of these scenic sites, and perhaps to think about questions of belonging at this stage of the journey and the film.

Pasolini saw cinema as "*a fluid reproduction of reality*" whereas "*immobilizes me in front of the various manifestations of reality (a face, a landscape, a gesture, an object), almost as if they were motionless and isolated in the*

flow of time."⁶ Cinematic reality represents images that are a part of the world but also make it impossible for Pasolini to consider them to be natural: "*Either it consecrates them or it desecrates them violently, one by one.*" There are images in *Beneath Clouds* that can be seen as 'consecrated' in this way: the close-ups of Lena's and Vaughn's faces, and the landscape shots that recall photographs where one has time and is invited to contemplate the depth of the image.

What Viano calls "*the language of physical presence*" is important here. It is "*part of the language of action, because things, by the mere fact of being there, act upon the subject.*"⁷ This is evident in the landscape of *Beneath Clouds*, especially in the critical scene when Lean and Vaughn encounter Gin's Leap. The mountain 'acts' upon them and reveals the weight of the burden of Australia's past on young Indigenous people in the present. What we witness here is an understanding of 'reality' as something that Giuliana Bruno, discussing Pasolini, has called "*the site of interaction of historicity and the social text with the language of film.*"⁸

Pasolini's approach to self-expression, as Gino Moliterno has observed, "*was never merely a matter of aesthetics but always opened onto the social and political.*"⁹ Pasolini was concerned with the writing of reality, but the author of that reality had to be factored in as well. His ideas help to appreciate the significance of Sen's own history in relation to his cinematic storytelling. In *Beneath Clouds*, there is a direct correspondence between the character of Lena and Sen's own experience as a child of mixed heritage who was "*not a part of any group really*". Sen's film blends the identities of the filmmaker and his characters as they explore the ways in which Australia's colonial past continues to impact on the

present in a cinematic style where poetry and politics are inextricably entwined.

Notes and References

¹ Gary Maddox and Ivan Sen, 'Realm of the Senses', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 May 2002.

² Ivan Sen, 'In Conversation: Ivan Sen Talks to Dan Edwards about His Latest Documentary, *Shifting Shelter*', former Australian Film Commission Website, 2006, now at <http://afcarchive.screenaustralia.gov.au>.

³ Tony Birch, 'Surveillance, Identity and Historical Memory in Ivan Sen's *Beneath Clouds*', in Scott McQuire and Nikos Papastergiadis (eds.), *Empires, Ruins and Networks: The Transcultural Agenda in Art*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005, pp. 185-201.

⁴ Pier Paolo Pasolini, 'The Cinema of Poetry', in Louise K. Barnett (ed.), *Heretical Empiricism: Pier Paolo Pasolini*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, p 176.

⁵ Maurizio Viano, *A Certain Realism: Making Use of Pasolini's Film Theory and Practice*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, p. 94.

⁶ Pasolini, 'Quips on the Cinema', in Barnett, *Heretical Empiricism*, pp. 226-227.

⁷ Viano, *A Certain Realism*, p. 34.

⁸ Giuliana Bruno, 'Heresies: The Body of Pasolini's Semiotics', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 30 no. 3, 1991, p 32.

⁹ Gino Moliterno, 'Pier Paolo Pasolini', *Senses of Cinema*, no. 23, 2002.

16 / Foreigners in their Homeland: Documenting Conflicted National Identity on the Football Field

Lea Mandelzis and Alina Bernstein

Documentary Film, Sport and National Identity

A major conflict in Israeli society exists between Israel's Jewish majority and Arab minority. It is expressed in the political arena and, less frequently, in public discourse in the two communities. Amidst the desire for change, public discourse that exists reflects historical undercurrents, mutual fear of threats, stereotypes and prejudices. One of the ways of grappling with these issues is through documentary film. If the production of documentaries about the Arab-Israeli conflict serves as a key platform for national politics, this is certainly the case with documentaries focusing on football and national identity.¹

In 2004, for the first time since the establishment of the State of Israel, an Arab soccer club, Hapoel Ichud Bnei Sakhnin,

(henceforth Bnei Sakhnin) won the Israel State Cup for soccer. For the Arab-Israeli community it marked a political victory in a war of a minority against the majority, which stimulated a mixture of reactions and was followed by the production of several film and television documentaries. Thus essay examines the narrative of two such documentaries that deal with the Bnei Sakhnin club as a metaphor for the complex and problematic status of Israel's Arabs.

Documentary films have gone through many metamorphoses, and today the objective of most of them is to be experiential, not merely informational. In the past two decades of documentary filmmaking, there seems to be increasing openness to dealing with minority identity issues and the self-ascription of minority groups. This openness is tied to a sociological and cultural turning point that occurred in the 1980s, and increasingly in the 1990s, as national ideologies began to lose their power and were replaced by a focus on the private sphere and the concept of multiple identities.

It has been argued that the relationship between football, nationalism and the state moves along the tension between an integrative typology and a protest typology. The integrative typology of football is a vehicle for creating and promoting national solidarity, perceived as contributing to unifying the population and the polity or the nation, framing sports as a collective endeavour and epitomised by the presence of Presidents and Prime Ministers at Championship Finals.

The protest typology of football maintains a strong association with concepts of national identity, and does not view football as just a game for the masses – rather, football is viewed as a vehicle of social and political protest that seeks to change the existing social order. In the context of Israeli football, the question of integration and/or protest constitutes a reference point that serves as a framework for addressing the tension that exists between the identity of the Arab sector within Israeli nationality as a state.²

Documenting Bnei Sakhnin

The films chosen were shown on prime time Israeli television in 2006: *Sakhnin, My Life*, the work of Jewish Israeli filmmaker Ram Loevy, and *Hardball*, by Israeli Arab director Suha Arraf. The two followed the team and its fans in the 2004-2005 season and tell the stories of Israel's Arab minority through the lens of the Bnei Sakhnin saga. Other films on the subject include, most notably, two documentaries produced from an external point of view, i.e. directed by non-Israelis - *We Too Have No Other Land* (Kessel and Klochendler, Israel, 2007) and *Bnei Sakhnin: After the Cup - Sons of Sakhnin* (Alexander H. Browne and Christopher Browne, USA, 2009).

Ram Loevy, a native-born Israeli Jew and one of the 1993 Israel Prize Laureates, is among the most prominent directors of political and social cinema in Israel, attempting to remind Israelis of what they like to avoid. Documentaries and feature films by Loevy both deal, for the most part, with marginal populations, social inequality and the Jewish-Arab conflict. Suha Arraf is a Christian Arab born in Western Galilee. She has won prizes in Israel and internationally, including the Montréal World Film Festival 2004 Grand Prix Award for *The*

Syrian Bride, co-written with director Eran Riklis. Her documentaries and feature films deal with Arab men and women in the State of Israel - both within Israel and in the Territories. Arraf's perspective is sensitive and personal but not without a sharp and critical perspective on the Arab society of which she is a part.

If the documentary genre enables texts to be complicated, unresolved and uncertain, then in the films under analysis Loevy and Arraf present a complicated texture, weaving between hope and despair and exploring the tension between football, national identity and 'multi-existence' (namely additional layers expanding the meaning of co-existence).³ Thus two different narratives are created: the narrative of Arab football in Israel, and the national narrative of Israeli Arabs.

Following the principles of narrative analysis in general, the research sought to identify the role of the narrators, the nature of the films' plotting, and the use of repetitive motifs and tropes. We sought to understand the overarching message within the story and to locate the juncture where a particular subject or topic provides an overall interpretive insight into the narrative or which pinpoints secondary voices that are expressed as isolated textual units. The overall story was broken down by the researchers into isolated units that were examined and subjected to content analysis according to the norm in the social sciences in general, and mass communications research in particular.⁴

Breaking the story into separate units revealed a number of components repeated in both films: the presence of Arab communities on the map, concentrated as they are in the north of Israel; the description of the situation in the city of

Sakhnin; the saga of Bnei Sakhnin taking the State Cup; the Bnei Sakhnin football team's fans and the construction of the Doha stadium in Sakhnin and its significance; the outbreak of violence in the Israeli Arab sector in October 2000, which began as a demonstration of solidarity with Palestinian violence that erupted with the outbreak of the *el-Aqsa Intifada*; and the recollection of another violent incident on what Palestinians commemorate as Land Day 1976.

National 'Multi-existence' and 'Non-existence'

While it would appear that the catalyst for producing the films was Bnei Sakhnin's winning of the State Cup, in fact, the films themselves revolve around the team's faltering attempts to keep its place in the 2004/05 League and within the broader Israeli narrative. Even though the films show Israel as a country that enables 'multi-existence' through football, the very idea that social integration can develop this way is challenged by both filmmakers.

Throughout her film, Arraf deploys the loaded Israeli expression "*We're on the Map!*", which originates in the Jewish-Israeli sports world. At the beginning of the film, Arraf says that "*those who succeeded in putting the city on the map are no other than Sakhnin's football team*", and in saying so she marks the dialectic between the experience of Arab visibility that winning the National Cup brought and an expression that 'belongs' to the Jewish-Israeli sports world.

A journey over the geographical map of northern Israel takes place twice in Arraf's film, and constitutes proof of the presence of Israeli Arabs "*on the map*". At the beginning of the film, a red line traces her travels, weaving through a number of Arab communities in which a similar visual

structure repeats itself: shots of empty streets, large groups of people sitting tensely watching a football game, while Arraf's camera pans the faces of the viewers, a witness to their roars, applause and prayers, their tense faces and their elation at every goal scored and disappointment at every goal missed.

The second time, Arraf makes her way through various Arab communities, describing the events of October 2000. Each time the red line stops, viewers see a mass of Arabs throwing rocks at the Israeli police and border patrol forces whose response is to fire rubber and live bullets at the demonstrators. Thus Arraf positions the tension of the football story and the events of October 2000 *"on the map"*, literally and figuratively. The fast pace of this road trip builds a tension between the fact that there are many Arab communities in Israel, and the need of the Arab public to demonstrate its visibility - through football and then through violent insurrection.

Loevy presents the 2004 State Cup play-offs in which Bnei Sakhnin played Hapoel Haifa, noting this was *"the first time in the history of the Jewish state that an Arab team played in the Cup Final"*. From this loaded declaration, marking football as an integrative tool and a source of belonging, Loevy moves to the story of the city of Sakhnin. Loevy puts Sakhnin on the map of northern Israel in a verbal and visual description which emphasizes deprivation: *"Most of [Sakhnin's] lands were appropriated, there's no industry, no public parks, minimal welfare services, the unemployment rate is among the highest in Israel."*

Loevy presents the grim socio-economic circumstances from which the Bnei Sakhnin team emerged as a winner, and

points a critical finger at discriminatory national politics from which the narrative of Israel's Arab minority operates. Arraf, in her film, turns her camera inward to the Arab minority's experience of invisibility, and uses the text as a critical tool to castigate her own society for being satisfied with experiencing a fictitious visibility through football.

Between the Sounds of Fireworks and Gunfire

Loevy chooses to show the sight and sound of fireworks, the faces of rejoicing fans and the shining cup, all of which are then replaced by the sounds of gunfire and warfare, and he presents an IDF tank injuring Palestinian demonstrators in Rafiah on the day after the winning of the Cup. Loevy thus adds another tier to the complexity of Israeli-Arab identities that bonds them with the realities of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Arraf links the tension in contemporary realities by tying the victory celebration on the football field to events in October 2000, as a struggle that exists between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority in Israel.

In both documentaries, the juxtaposition of fireworks and weapons is brought out through two episodes of violent clashes between Jews and Arabs accompanied by footage dedicated to expressing the pain of bereaved parents. Abed Abu-Salach, a resident of Sakhnin whose son was shot by Israeli security forces in the course of the October 2000 clash, appears in the film after a league match in which Bnei Sakhnin beat Betar Jerusalem 4-1. He embraces a Jewish fan named Amram Goldin, whose son was killed in a Palestinian suicide bombing in 2002. Loevy thus presents viewers with a hopeful view of relations between Jews and Arabs. As the two hug one another and kiss each other goodbye, Salach

says, *"It's the same anguish, it's the same elation"* as if to underscore the relationship reciprocity between them.

Arraf introduces Faraj Ganaim, a resident of Sakhnin whose son was also killed in October 2000. He appears in a demonstration, holding a poster of his bleeding son, next to Abu-Salach and together with a handful of other people. After a few words about the injustice done to Israeli Arabs in October 2000, Arraf moves to one of the demonstrators, who explains the poor turn-out for the demonstration, saying there is an important football match that day. As in Leovy's film, Ganaim and Abu-Salach begin to talk about the game as if it is a life and death issue: *"Victory in this match will decide our fate"*, says Ganaim.

Arraf matches this with the pictures of the dead young men covered in blood. This editorial decision locates the metaphorical life of football as a fateful matter, side by side with the October 2000 events that robbed the two sons of their lives. The proximity that Arraf creates, between the 'hope' of football and the despair caused by the violence turned on them and their sons, underscores the tension between the fireworks and the sounds of gunfire. It seems that Arraf is seeking to express her despair at the way football dazzles the eyes of her people, preventing them from dealing with the frustrating realities around them.

Both filmmakers deal with the argument that football is an instrument to suppress national protest by Israeli Arabs. While Arraf does so through criticism of her own Arab community, Leovy makes this point through censure of the Jewish State and national politics in Israel. Tamir Sorek, a Jewish sociologist who offers his opinion in Leovy's film, says that among the Arab public there is an accusation that

football is harmful to the Arab sector's political struggle against inequality, against state appropriation of Arab land and against unequal budgets for development. Sorek, who studied Arab football in Israel, claims that generations of Israeli governments have provided financial support to Arab sports in order to suppress Arabs' national consciousness and struggle, and the saga of Bnei Sakhnin embodies the problems of conflicting national identities that are inherent in Jewish-Arab relations.⁵

Arraf touches on the accusation of suppression through football only once, through a discussion among some of men, including Ganaim, in which they raise ideas of a conspiracy after the events of October 2000: it had been "decided" that Sakhnin *"would be allowed to win the National Cup and be elevated to the top [of the Israeli sports world] and thus redirect the attention of the Arabs, and they would forget the dead"*. The direct discussion of whether the Israeli government uses football as a vehicle to suppress national protest does not lead Arraf to condemn the country; she berates her own community who have forgotten the dead. She argues that they were forgotten because of football, positioning the argument next to a point in the discussion when a bereaved father states: *"Our memory is alive"*. It seems as if the claim that football has become the tranquiliser to deaden national protest prompts both filmmakers to turn their focus to the hope and despair of the fans.

The Fans

Arraf's film is studded with many sentiments voiced by fans that underscore her claim that the Arab football public is

obsessed with winning; that *"the fate of Sakhnin hangs on the game"*; and that *"it's not just a game, it's more than football, it's a matter of identity, to be or not to be"*. One of the most extreme claims in the film equates Bnei Sakhnin's victory with the Muslim victory over the Christians in 1187: *"Arabs in this country rejoiced twice in the past centuries"*, says one of the fans, *"on the day Saladin expelled the crusaders and the day Sakhnin won the National Cup."* Arraf's text brings in many voices exclaiming about the importance of football and, through them, explores the meaning, in Arab society, of football, that transforms an athletic achievement into a historical-political watershed event: an Arab victory over the Jews.

In contrast with Arraf, Loevy presents the possibility of 'multi-existence' through two key Bnei Sakhnin fans: Awani Shahin, an Arab man, and Adi Gross, a Jewish woman. The two believe that football can be an instrument of integration among peoples: *"If this leads to a tiny bit of fraternity, that's good for me"* says Awani, and Adi Gross echoes that fraternity by declaring her love for the Arab team. The optimistic declarations of the two are placed in proximity to scenes from the *el-Aqsa Intifada* of 2000-2005 - the second time in the history of the State of Israel that the Arab population west of the River Jordan engaged in violent opposition to Israel, the First Intifada having taken place from 1987 to 1993. We witness clashes between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians as the film juxtaposes the positive footage of friendship and coexistence with scenes that underscore the deep political rifts between Jews and Arabs in Israel. It leaves the task of interpretation to the viewer.

Loevy features the Arab fan Awani, an intelligent and liberal person who seeks peace. But the filmmaker also deliberately

shows him in his butcher's shop as he cuts up meat with a bloodied knife while talking about the possibility of a close and loving relationship between Jews and Arabs. Thus Loevy juggles the image of the threatening Arab and the peace-seeking Arab who symbolises the possibility of ethnic diversity. Another way in which Loevy plays with the image of Arab menace is through the personage of a masked Arab fan at the beginning of the film who takes off the mask at the end to reveal a smiling face. Loevy delivers a critical message regarding the deeply rooted images within Israeli society of the menacing Arab by unmasking this stereotype.

In her critique, Arraf also shows Arab fans who are hostile to Jews. There is, for example, Yusuf Azazama, a fan who declares *"ever since I've attended matches, I'm a super-racist"* as he cuts open a watermelon on which he has carved the words *"Jewish terrorists"*, adding that he must express what is inside him, even at the risk of imprisonment. Arraf also presents the mutual hostility between Jews and Arabs through the game between Beni Sakhnin and Betar Jerusalem (a club with a reputation for being Right-wing and racist) in a sequence in which fans of the respective teams hurl insults at each other from the stands prior to the game. Arraf, perhaps because she herself is Arab, doesn't shy away from presenting the racist side of her own community.

In essence, Arraf opts to present the fans through a protest typology rather than an integration typology, and criticises her own people, charging that their world is narrowly circumscribed by the world of soccer. She ends her film with the realization that, in terms of identity politics, *"the ball is in another court"*. Loevy by contrast, transmits a message that is based on an integration typology that exists only on the playing field, but not in society or in government policy.

Society and government machinery have yet to give the Arab minority equal standing beyond the soccer field. Loevy, having come full circle, concludes his film by repeating the protest that opens it: "*When the State of Israel will be democratic, our children will learn about this game [of Bnei Sakhnin and the State Cup] in their history books*".

Notes and References

¹ See Dan Shadur, 'Stop Filming and Go Feel Potatoes', in Maayan Amir (ed.), *Documentally: Articles on Israeli Documentary Cinema*, Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers and the New Foundation for Cinema and Television, 2007, pp. 119-125.

² See Amir Ben Porat, *Bil'adi, Bil'adi*, Tel Aviv: Bavel Publishers, 2000; Amir Ben Porat, *Football and Nationality*, Tel Aviv: Resling Publishing, 2003; Amir Ben Porat, 'To Respect the Anthems: Nationality and Ethnicity in Sport', In Yair Galili, Ron Lidor and Amir Ben Porat (eds.), *On the Playing Field: Sport and Society at the Beginning of the Third Millennium*, Raanana: Open University of Israel, 2009, pp. 145-180.

³ See Amir, 'Introduction', in Amir (ed.), *Documentally*, pp. 11-16.

⁴ On narrative see for example R. Tuval-Mashah and G. Spector-Marzel, 'Narrative Research: Definitions and Contexts', in Tuval-Mashah and Spector-Marzel (eds.), *Narrative Research: Theory, Production and Interpretation*, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Mofet Institute and Magnus Press, 2010, pp. 7-42.

⁵ Tamir Sorek, *Soccer Fandom and Citizenship in Israel*, Middle East Report, vol. 37 no. 245, Winter 2007, and Sorek, *Arab Soccer in a Jewish State: The Integrative Enclave*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

17 / *Little Mosque on the Prairie*: Interfaith TV through Malaysian Eyes

Nur Kareelawati Abd. Karim, Norazirawati
Ahmad, Ainurliza Mat Rahim, Muhammad Yusuf
Khalid, and Roslizawati Mohd. Ramli

Background

Malaysia is blessed not only by ethnic diversity but also by diversity of language, culture and religion. Since independence in 1957, with the exception of the tragic ethnic clashes of 13 May 1969, Malaysians have lived in relative harmony and stability. Where religious identity is concerned, some 60% of Malaysians are Muslim while the other 40% profess a variety of faiths, including Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Although Islam has been declared by the Malaysian Constitution as the religion of the Federation, Malaysians are free to practise their chosen religion in peace and harmony. In managing plurality in Malaysian society, cultural integration has been adopted over assimilation. Malaysians not merely tolerate each other but also embrace and celebrate diversity.

Since 9/11 the subsequent bombings in London, Madrid, Bali, and Mumbai, people of various faiths, cultural backgrounds and nationalities began to search for the true meanings and teachings of Islam. Following these terrorist attacks, interfaith initiatives began to thrive, particularly in the West, through a variety of means. In Malaysia, on the other hand, interfaith affairs would stay behind closed doors to avoid any clashes and tensions within multiracial and multireligious society. Interfaith dialogue, for instance, has always been the subject of special interest groups, held in a private and controlled atmosphere.

Interfaith relations in Malaysia have been sadly disturbed, however, following recent incidents in which Muslims protested the construction of a Hindu temple in a Muslim neighbourhood; attacks on churches in Kuala Lumpur in response to the use of the word 'Allah' by the church group; the emergence of an anti-Islam and anti-Muslim (Malay) web log; and the arrest of a young boy for tossing red paint over a *surau* (small mosque). If overlooked, clearly these incidents may recur and cause further damage to inter-faith relationships.

Government aspirations to unity, understanding and tolerance within Malaysian society through the concept of '1Malaysia'. As essential components of 1Malaysia, interfaith tolerance and inter-civilisational dialogue are highly encouraged by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Najib Razak. On its way to becoming a developed nation, Malaysians – and Muslims in particular – clearly need to be more open and critical in approaching people of other faiths in a quest for common ground.¹ What then is the true degree of tolerance amongst Malaysians themselves?

In the light of interfaith tolerance and understanding, television sitcom – which functions as an agent of entertainment, education and socialisation for many viewers - seems to be the medium with the most obvious ability to close the cultural gap and to promote better understanding of people of different faiths. How then would Malaysians perceive *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, a TV sitcom that has never been broadcast in Malaysia? And how are these audiences sharing the meaning of interfaith tolerance and understanding as depicted in the show?

Religious Tolerance in *Little Mosque on the Prairie*

Little Mosque on the Prairie (2007-2012), a sitcom created by Zarqa Nawaz, was produced by WestWind Pictures for Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). The series reflects a negotiation of multicultural social space on TV by Nawaz, an English-born Muslim woman who grew up in Toronto. It is based on her experiences as a Muslim in the West whereby the mosque is a really important part of her life². The series captured our attention after being recognised in the West as a ‘multicultural’ television sitcom.³

The show is set in the imaginary town of Mercy, Saskatchewan, a small town in Canadian prairies. A small yet devoted Muslim community has settled there, headed by community leader Yasir Hamoudi, a local building contractor. He is married to Sarah, an ex-Christian who converted to Islam by marriage. Their daughter, Rayyan, is a doctor and a devout Muslim who wears the *hijab* and is labelled by some as a feminist. The newly hired ‘Young Imam’, Amaar Rasheed is a Canadian-born ex-Lawyer, educated in the Middle East, who came to Mercy from Toronto to replace Baber Siddiqui,

a former Imam who was deemed too extreme by many in the Mercy Muslim Community.

The local diner is run by Fatima Dinssa, a Nigerian Muslim who is strict about her religion but more moderate in her cultural values. Fred Tupper, a local radio host is another character who aims to tarnish the image of Islam and Muslims in Mercy. The Muslims in Mercy co-exist with their Christian neighbours, sometimes harmoniously and occasionally not. Reverend Duncan Magee, however, welcomes Muslim neighbours, especially if their presence will enhance the social and economic fabric of the community and his parish.⁴

The pilot episode, *'Little Mosque'*, introduces a space in the local church rented by Yasir Hamoudi, a Muslim contractor who transforms the space into a mosque for the local Muslim community. Audiences are introduced to the concept of religious tolerance from Muslim and Christian perspectives. Episode 1 addresses efforts towards religious tolerance on the Christian side. When Reverend Magee explains to Joe (an average white guy who is traumatised by seeing Muslims perform congregational prayer in the 'church'), Magee calms Joe by saying: *"they are Muslims, they pray five times a day"*. In a further illustration of Magee's tolerance, instead of being angry at Yasir - who didn't tell him about the true purpose of renting the space in the church - Magee makes some amendments to their Lease Agreement: *"This is the new lease that reflects the true nature of your 'multipurpose' activities ... but if you plan to build a bowling alley, give me a heads-up"*.

Researching Audience Response

In a seminal paper from the early 1970s Stuart Hall argues the need to study the process of 'decoding' television in both semiotic and ideological terms.⁵ Hall categorised audience responses to media into three categories: the *dominant hegemonic* position, which refers to audience interpretations that are corresponding with the meaning encoded in the text and cultural order within which a media industry is assumed to operate; the *negotiated* position, which refers to acceptance of the general view encoded into text, but via the negotiation of disagreements with specifics; the *oppositional* position, which refers to a situation where the preferred meaning is rejected by the audience members. These foundational conceptions of the plurality of audience responses to media text became the simplified theoretical basis for our interpretation of interfaith television through Malaysian eyes.

Whilst quantitative methods can provide statistically useful data, it is qualitative methods which can often shed light upon non-measurable factors influencing understanding and behaviours. Quantifying audience reception and shared-meaning would give us little insight into the conscious decisions that precede the observation of factors such as cultural and religious upbringing that lead audiences to such decisions. Therefore, focus group interviews would be the best approach towards in-depth understanding of audience reception and ways in which audiences interpret environment, symbol, ritual, social structures and functions. The focus group, as Barbour points out, is well placed to explore people's perspectives on issues to which they have previously given little thought.⁶

The samples for this research were selected from 19-25 year-old university students living around Nilai and Seremban, Malaysia. The first group consisted of three young men and three young women, all of whom shared similar attributes - Malaysian Muslims, with an Islamic educational background, who enjoyed watching English-language television sitcom. The second group consisted of four young men and two young women from the Seremban Christian Youth Association. Though the number of group seems quite small, there is obviously no norm or ideal in this area.

In terms of the number of participants of each group, it is perfectly possible to conduct a focus group discussion with three to four participants. Indeed, three or four participant may be preferable.⁷ A focus group with similar characteristics may place the researcher on firmer ground in relation to making claims about the patterning of data. Therefore, the selection of informants for both focus groups was purely based on their shared cultural identity as Malaysians, and with a religious educational background.

The two-hour focus group interviews took place in the technically sophisticated Family Therapy Laboratory at the Islamic Science University of Malaysia on 15 April 2011. The use of a TV sitcom like *Little Mosque on the Prairie* episode 1 as audio-visual stimulus enabled us to break the ice and allowed us to raise the difficult and sensitive issues of interfaith understanding and tolerance. Audio-visual stimulus is known to be “a well-established tool in survey research but can also work particularly well in a focus group setting, which has added advantage of eliciting comments about the specific aspects of similar but different scenarios that would give greater cause for concern or merit another response”.⁸

Differential Decodings of Interfaith TV

We found that informants read, interpret and construct sitcoms seen through all three decoding positions by Hall - *dominant*, *negotiated*, and *oppositional*. Overall, the Muslim and Christian groups were equally clear in their interpretation of several items highlighted in this study. Two elements were considered most significant here: religious symbolism (the slanting cross seen behind the Imam) and interfaith tolerance (the building of the mosque in the old parish hall). The Muslim group followed what we might call a 'dominant' reading of the slanting cross. As Muslim 3 said, *"That cross at the back in my opinion shows that Islam respects other religions. The creator of the show did not keep away or remove the cross but left it there untouched"*.

Christian informants, by contrast, offered what we would call an 'oppositional' reading of the slanting cross as something that they could not accept. Whoever uses the church should store the cross properly. Christian 1 said: *"I think the cross would have been there upright. Because it is a church and it is impossible to see a cross put down. In my life I have not seen the cross put down before. I am not sure but I think it is wrong anyway"*.

Christian 6 opined: *"I think that is wrong. First of all it is the church we have to respect that. Wherever you go, you have to respect that place. Even it is an office or not ... The cross is being put down like that is wrong ... They should leave things as it is although they are just renting the place or whatever they are doing ... Because firstly it is the church and they are renting it so the important thing is that don't spoil anything"*

to me if we were going to promote inter-religious through this sitcom, I think that slanting cross is not right”.

Where the question of interfaith tolerance focussed on the question of the mosque in the old church hall, the Muslim Group operated what we would call a ‘dominant’ reading. Muslim 1 thought that: *“The scene of praying in the church is normal. For example, the opening of the historic city of Constantinople by Sultan Ahmad Al Fateh. When he gets to conquered the city, he prostrated before God inside the church, with pictures, a gold cross and candles that was still burning. This showed his religious tolerance”.* Muslim 4 said: *“the creator of the sitcom just wanted to show that Muslim can pray anywhere”.*

The Christian group again saw things according to an ‘oppositional’ perspective. Christian 1: *“in Malaysia I will doubt any Muslims will actually come and pray at all ... Because you see they have their mosque in Malaysia and there is no reason for them to attend church. One or two might have the idea but the Muslim community would have objected it ... Surely even we as the minority wouldn’t pray in the mosque”.*

The study shows a higher degree of interfaith tolerance amongst the Malaysian Muslim youth group than in the Christian group, particularly concerning items related to the symbol of the cross, and the definition of places of worship, the ‘church’ and the ‘mosque’. These interpretations and reactions are closely related to the relationship of these young people to their cultural and religious upbringing. As Malaysians, they have a common national identity, but as religious believers raised with different religious backgrounds

they occupy different positions from which to decode interfaith issues as portrayed in *Little Mosque on the Prairie*.

Notes and References

Acknowledgement

Many thanks to the Centre for Research, Islamic Science University of Malaysia (USIM) for the consent and endless support to our research initiative *Audience Reception of Interfaith TV Programme: A Qualitative Approach on Malaysian Muslim and Christian Youth*. We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the Dean of the Faculty of Leadership and Management, Dr. Mohd Rushdan Mohd Jailani, Mr Gerald Victor Richard Joseph and Mr Sami Salama Hussen Hajjaj from INTI International University Malaysia (Laureate International Universities), who have lead the project to success, and to Mr. Mohd Sazirul Fitri Saad, who made the focus groups possible. Finally, very special thanks to all the members of the Seremban Christian Youth Association and Muslim youth of the Faculty of Leadership and Management for their dynamic cooperation during the focus group sessions.

¹ See Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, 'A Comparative Analysis of Asian values and *Islam Hadhari* in Malaysia', *Jurnal Kemusiaan*, 2010, no. 15, pp. 11-22.

² L.-A. Goodman, 'CBC has High Hopes for *Little Mosque* but Creator Hoping it Gets Laughs', *National Post*, 18 December 2006.

³ S. Cañas, '*The Little Mosque on the Prairie*: Examining (Multi) Cultural Spaces of Nation and Religion', *Cultural Dynamics*, vol. 20, 2008, p. 195.

⁴ Here we are indebted to the solid account of the series provided by 'Huggo' for *The Internet Movie Database*.

⁵ Stuart Hall, 'Coding and Encoding in the Television Discourse', Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Stencilled Paper no. 7, 1973, re-published as 'Encoding/Decoding', in Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (eds.), *Culture, Media, Language*:

Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 1980, ch. 10, pp. 128-138.

⁶ Rosaline Barbour, *Doing Focus Group Research*, London: Sage Qualitative Research Kit, 2007.

⁷ See J. Kitzinger, J. and R.S. Barbour, 'Introduction: The Challenge and Promise of Focus Group Discussions', in Barbour and Kitzinger (eds.), *Developing Focus Group Research: Politics, Theory and Practice*, London: Sage, 1999, and J. Seymour, G. Bellmay, M. Gott, S.H. Ahmedzai and D. Clark, 'Using Focus Groups to Explore Older People's Attitude to End of Life Care, *Ageing and Society*, vol. 4 no. 22, 2002, pp. 517-26.

⁸ See Barbour, *Doing Focus Group Research*; J. Finch, "It's Great to Have Someone to Talk to": *The Ethics and Politics of Interviewing Women*, in C. Bell and H. Roberts (eds.), *Social Reasoning: Politics, Problems and Practice*, London: Routledge, 1984, pp. 70-87, and A.J. Umaña-Taylor and M.Y. Bámaca, 'Conducting Focus Groups with Latino Populations: Lessons from the Field, *Family Relations*, 2004, vol. 3 no. 53, 2004, pp. 261-72.

18 / Representations of Czech and Slovak Cultural Identity in Contemporary Films and Comics

Erika Grendelová

Memories of National Identity

In small nations like the Czech Republic or Slovakia, whose national identity was literally invented through language, it has been very important to differentiate yourself from others, to identify oneself as a member of a European nation, but one with its own history, memory and stories. In these stories, memory plays a vital role. Re-creating and re-constructing the past and the present is a never-ending process. Remembering has been a key to survival for many cultures. One means or process by which remembering can be achieved is through narrative. As Lewis and Sandra Hinchman remind us, *“our existence is powerfully shaped by recollections of the past and anticipations of the future. It is through narrative that a culture organizes and intrigues its understanding of reality”*¹.

These kinds of narratives take many forms. Whether verbal or visual, they have one thing in common – they legitimate the existence of the community and become cornerstones for understanding of the particular culture. In the Czech and Slovak lands, narratives play an important role in people's lives from the early beginnings. Fairy tales are a part of the culture. As nations with a short history as independent countries, it has been very important for Czech and Slovak people to recognize their uniqueness so that they will be able to cope with the trauma of WWII and post-war experiences related to Communism.

Myths and legends serve as cornerstones or important turning points in history which tell us a lot about the past and also the present. People often turn to mythological and legendary heroes when they are unable to find these representatives of their own identity in real life. Returning to history has become an important theme in Czech and especially Slovak films and comics. Therefore, we often find themes connected to life in Czechoslovakia after WWII, in a return to the rustic lands where such legends are still alive. Slovak films like *Bathory: Countess of Blood* (Jakubisko, 2008), *Janosik* (Adamik and Holland, 2009) and *The Legend of Flying Cyprian* (Cengel-Solcanská, 2010) and the comics linked with these figures offer representations of our living past, however dim and distant it may seem.

Remembering and Forgetting

The authors of these works had different visions of the lives of these legends. Juraj Jakubisko, in his film about Countess Elizabeth Bathory, tries not to picture her as the greatest murderess in Slovak and Hungarian history - accused of

torture and murder of probably more than 3,000 young female victims - but as an intelligent woman struggling with intrigues and jealousy. The basis for this completely new approach to the legend was speculative, since during the real process with the countess there is no evidence for these most grave accusations. The highwayman Janosik is portrayed in both comics and film as a morally good and fair man who tries to help the poor. We are reminded in many ways of the superhero comics, especially from the point of view of storytelling, the use of colour, and the visualisation of the main character. It means that Janosik is idealised not only through his deeds, but also, crucially, through his appearance.

Memory involves not only remembering but forgetting. Forgetting brings to the surface new speculations, and therefore new re-tellings of famous narratives. After so many years, some features have of course become more important than others; the narrators ignore some facts and they are willing to forget others so that they can find new ways to tell the story. Such transformations are very common in cultural memory. The protagonist, for example a highwayman, can merge with the traditional heroic archetype with the result that the highwayman's historical and distinguishing features gradually disappear.

We may therefore consider these new approaches to the stories and to the re-creating of history as expressing an intention to legitimate cultural identity and to form certain ideals or models which could help prove the uniqueness of the nation. At the same time, forming new archetypes might be viewed as an ego problem. Derrida, for example, compared forgetting the truth to a denial of responsibility, as marking the disappearance of inter-subjective truth and as a

phenomenon of the ego.² Therefore, a blood-obsessed countess, a highwayman's good and also evil deeds, and a monk whose life is covered by a veil of mystery, these are just old myths in new clothing, encoding in themselves not only the fears and anxieties, but also the wishes and desires, of the nation.

The Experience of Trauma

Another rich source of identity narratives in Czech and Slovak culture is bound up with the experience of traumatic situations. In this case memory works as a mechanism suppressing traumatic stresses and forgetting or willingness to forget is a form of alleviation. However, this particular Pandora's Box could not be closed forever. Another connection with the past which can be identified in contemporary Czech and Slovak sequential art, especially film, is provided by the modern myths and narratives of WWII and post-war trauma. This is a particularly difficult history, as Fulkova, Tipton and Ishikawa remind us:

"The legacy of trauma from WWII and post-WWII experiences still pervades Czech society, politics and culture. While other European nations have well-defined resources devoted to alleviating the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) war causes, Czech lands still have to identify this as a necessary. Totalitarianism in Czechoslovakia shortly after the end of WWII replaced one trauma with another. The Communists adopted Nazi techniques to create unqualified fear and mistrust of colleagues, family and friends. In 1968, within a very short time after the fall of Nazi regime and Communist take-over in 1948, another occupation by Soviets took place. Most Czech families suffered some kind of personal trauma.

Opportunities to deal with traumas and their manifestations in the socio-cultural, civic and personal spheres of life were suppressed.”³

This tumultuous history has begun to be represented in many Czech and Slovak films, as in for example Marek Najbrt's *The Protector* (2009), about a couple's troubled marriage and the tragic impact of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia. The title is based on a word play: a protector can be someone who takes care of someone, or also the head of protectorate (in this case Czech lands during WWII). The film dramatises serious themes with a certain sense of irony and humour. Trying to find the answer to questions of heroism cowardice, this film is also dealing with typical Czech and Slovak nature and identity problems. How far you can go to protect someone you love, how much you are willing to lose, and how much courage you have are other themes of the film.

Similarly, an insight into the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia is provided in Vaclav Kadrnka's *Eighty Letters* (2011). This film was based on the director's personal memories and on correspondence between his parents. The story takes place in Czechoslovakia in 1987. The father has left his own country for England and the mother and her son are also planning to leave the country to be reunited with him. The story is viewed from the boy's perspective as, in the course of a day, he gets a glimpse into the world of adulthood, and about the struggles of his family to stay together. The recollection of memories, and the family as a focus for identity formation, are among of the main themes of the film.

New Forms of Fantasy

Beside these identity stories based on the play of memory, there is another group of culturally marked narratives. People struggling to find representations of their identity in the present, disillusioned with the past and still unable to see a future, tend to escape to their own dream world. This type of fiction fuses together their memories and fantasies. What is interesting about memory is not only its ability to forget but also its power to merge with fantasy and imagination, creating illusions of time and space. Strange connections, anthropomorphism and encounters with different objects and creatures are typical of this type of narrative. The Surrealists' and Dadaists' ideas of chance and coincidence, irrationality and imagination can also be traced in the Czech and partly also in Slovak cultural experience.

An empty city in the comic-book *Stereorama* (Palibrk, Bendáková, Chaushova and Bermejo, 2009), moving and talking objects that have lives of their own in Branko Jelinec's graphic novel *Oscar Ed* (2008), the childlike fantasy and playfulness of the work of Lela Geislerova - these are just few examples of the ways in which worlds have been combined, encoding something culturally marked, something that cannot be found elsewhere. The small worlds presented here become deformed and distorted mirrors of universal memories collected by the culture over the centuries. Thus the creation of new worlds might help to provide a metaphor, a new language for communicating problems deeply rooted in the cultural memory of particular nations.

An unusual example of a work dealing openly with identity issues is Jelinek's graphic novel *Oscar Ed*. The main character,

Oscar, has no specifically recognisable features. In the story Oscar became lost in his childhood nightmares which have suddenly proven to be real. Not knowing anything about his parents and even about himself he is heading towards a future where the terrible consequences of his actions await him. Visions, nightmares and a surreal world have changed him from a selfish creature into a being constantly trying to answer the question of his own identity. He has a name, but still he does not know who he really is.

In this environment, talking objects are commonplace, and no one is puzzled by Oscar's strange appearance. The vividly creative imagination behind this comic might be traced back to the surreal small worlds of filmmaker Jan Svankmajer. There are also comics by women artists like Lela Geislerova or Aneta Bendakova, whose graphic novels add another viewpoint to these narratives of identity. Their imaginary worlds are full of formal play, vivid colours and rich fantasy mixed together with the everyday. Here we may trace the influences not only of the Czech Dadaists and Surrealists, but also of the colourism and playfulness of folklore, and even of contemporary Czech graffiti and street-art.

Notes and References

¹ Lewis and Sandra Hinchman, *Memory, Identity, Community: The Idea of Narrative in the Human Sciences*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997, p. 1.

² Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Co prinese zítřek?*, Prague: Karolinum, 2003, p.90.

³ Marie Fulkova, Teresa Tipton and Makoto Ishikawa, 'Through the Eyes of a Stray Dog: Encounters with the Other', *International Journal of Education through Art*, vol. 5 no. 2, 2009, p. 114.

19 / Questions of Social and Personal Identity in Soviet Cinema of the Seventies and Eighties

Lesia Kulchynska

‘Civic’ and ‘Personal’ Identity

During the Stalinist period the private life of Soviet citizens, as is well known, was a largely undeveloped subject where the cinema was concerned. The theory of the ‘integral personality’ was dominant for the cinema of that period. It implied that the positive film hero should be a person totally subjected to the state; no distinctions between private concerns and the needs of state should be represented. The reason for such an aesthetic strategy is quite obvious. Intense industrialisation and the accelerated development of the state economy demanded tremendous human resources, so that Soviet citizens were meant to invest as much time, energy and enthusiasm in the state and its affairs as they could. There was no space left for private concerns and interests.

In the course of time, as the pace of development slowed, and the era of stagnation began, the need for such extensive human investments in the State decreased. And this was exactly the problem: the free personal space now available to Soviet citizens had nothing to fill it, thanks to the scarcity of cultural, social, career or simply consumer possibilities in the Soviet society of so-called 'mature socialism'. In this situation private (and inner) life becomes one of the crucial issues for Soviet cinema, which was now tasked with countering growing social dissatisfaction by contributing to the creation of a suitable system of private values and achievable personal goals.

Quite significantly, during the period between the mid-1960s and the early 1980s, a whole range of films with the words 'private' or 'personal' in the title were released, two of which - *The Private life of Valentin Keziajev* (Averbakh and Maslennikov, 1967), and *Private Life* (Raizman, 1982) - are discussed in this essay. The genre of melodrama also flourished at that time, and a large number of articles covering issues to do with the representation of private life in Soviet films were published.

Let's consider, for example, *The Private Life of Valentin Kuzyaev*, a film which is typical for the period in the way it treats notions of character and personality. If Stalinist cinema (as well as the films of the early 1960s) deals mainly with the social or civil dimension of the character (social status, work achievements and citizenship are its main characteristics), here these characteristics are totally ignored, and attention is completely focused on that aspect of a character which is seemingly devoid of any social definition and is instead highly 'personal'.

The Media and 'Personality'

The film tells the story of Valentin Kuziajev, who is invited on to a TV show. The show is dedicated to the thoughts of modern Soviet youth. At the beginning of the film we see a TV reporter addressing various questions to young people on the street. Among these is Valentin. He is asked if he uses a diary to record his thoughts. Lying, he answers yes. But the reporter is interested in his answer and Valentin is invited to the studio. To prepare himself for the show he is given a questionnaire with a range of questions concerning his personal life. The questionnaire is entitled "*If not a secret*". He is supposed to think over his answers and then come to the studio to share his thoughts on them.

The questionnaire, which addresses some intimate aspects of his personality, is designed to reveal his true self beyond any social definitions, a request for the true 'substance' of his personality. During the film we observe his attempts to answer the questions in order to prepare himself for the TV performance. His first reaction to the questions is one of anxiety. "*What am I going to tell them, I don't have any thoughts*", he tells a friend. At first he attempts to guess the right answers, he even asks his friend, who is supposed to be more intelligent than him, to answer the questionnaire so that he can just repeat the answers.

But gradually we see how, in his search for answers, he gradually becomes more introspective. He also starts a diary and commits to paper some intimate moments of his life. One of the crucial moments in the film is when Valentin is rehearsing his TV appearance in front of a mirror. At first he tries to find an appropriate pose, but eventually he shrinks

into himself. And this is what the film encourage us, the viewers, to do. We are encouraged to reflect on our inner self, which is suggested as a core of our identity (as distinct from the social roles we are used to playing).

A very similar scene with a mirror occurs in *Private Life*. The film tells the story of a retired manager of the big factory. This is the story of the man who was totally subjected to his social role, whose whole life was completely devoted to his civil obligations. So when he retires, he finds himself in a kind of vacuum. His mission in the film is to discover his personal identity beyond the social domain. The solution is provided by his son. While the protagonist accuses his son of idleness, his son (as a representative of the modern generation) accuses his father of not knowing how to deal with free time. He proposes that "*When you are seemingly doing nothing, at this very time your soul works*". And this is indeed the recommended way out for the citizen who is devoid of the possibility of social or civil action: an inner space should be revealed, where 'inner action' is possible, designed to discover your true self, or to create your personal identity.

In the final scene of the film the former factory manager looks at himself in the mirror. As in the previous film, he first tries to live up to his proper image as manager until through a series of close ups we finally see him staring into his own eyes. His 'soul' starts to work, and the film reaches a happy conclusion. Such are some of the changing symbolic structures of Soviet society. While in the Stalinist period and even in the Khrushchev era the execution of civil obligations was declared to be the baseline for personal fulfillment, now civil space is regarded as a space devoid of stimulus. Civil identity as well as civil or social activity is now deprived of its crucial former status.

Public and Private Space

Quite significantly, during this period the term 'personality' becomes a predominant concern where audiences and critics are concerned. Soviet films of the 1970s and 1980s reveal that the field where 'personality' can truly manifest itself, where personal value can be most fully achieved, is private life, the space of interpersonal relationships – based largely on love, friendship and family relationships. Intensity of inner life, which is suggested as a space where condition for happiness and personal fulfillment should be sought, is now measured mainly through the intensity of libidinal investments in private relationships.

An extremely popular film of the period (and still among the favourites in the post-Soviet era) is *Office Romance* (Ryazanov, 1977). The film tells the story of love between the manager of the factory (again) and one of her subordinates. The lesson of this story is that in this couple the unassuming employee with no significant social or career achievements, but who gives all his life to his children and his friends, is the one who enjoys complete personal success. This modest man with a generous heart represents the real value of intense private life.

His mission is to reveal this value to the successful factory manager, who at the beginning of the film represents an inferior and miserable person completely subjected to her work and civil obligations and totally blind to the worth of human relationships (she judges people only by their civil or career achievements). His life strategy will be adopted by her at the end of the film; one of the consequences of her turn to

personal happiness is that her attitude to her duties becomes much more carefree.

We can find a similar ideological logic in *I Wish to Speak* (Gleb Panfilov, 1977) but here articulated much more sharply. The heroine of the film is the mayor of the small city, devoted to her duty and keen on ways to improve people's lives. This could have been treated as a celebration of her virtues, but the point is that the film starts with the scene where her son accidentally kills himself. So in this context her life, so full of civil achievements, is seen as a tragic failure, because her careless attitude to her own family led to such terrible consequences.

She has failed in her maternal duty - much more important than her duty as mayor. The death of her son functions in this narrative as an indisputable marker of her wrong choice of priority. Here we might also refer to *Private Life* where, similarly, the socially successful manager of the factory, devoted as he is to lofty civil ideals, is shown in his private life to be a careless and cruel husband and father and, in fact, a most unhappy person (until he dares to change his outlook).

So the lesson of these films is quite clear. It is no accident that all the protagonists we have mentioned, marked by some personal lack, unfulfilled in private life and therefore devoid of happiness, belong to the higher class of Soviet society. Obviously enough, the benefits their social position provides are not available to the majority. Leaving aside the question of the impact that social conditions obviously have on private lives, Soviet cinema is clearly implying here that in the private sphere success can be achieved entirely on the basis of one's inner efforts. This form of success is promoted

as the most important; private life rather than the outer world is confirmed as the field crucial for personal happiness and fulfillment.

Romantic Love and Family Relationships

Love at His Own Choice (Mikaelyan, 1983), also extremely popular today, is highly symptomatic in this context. The film tells the story of the two typical representatives of Soviet society, a girl who works as a librarian and lives with her mother (since she cannot afford her own apartment) and a former football player who works at the plant. The social conditions of both are quite poor. Their jobs are lower-paid, routine and uninteresting, with no perspective for personal and career progression; their life possibilities are also quite narrow. What the film actually shows is a recognizable picture of the dull and monotonous everyday lives of citizens with few options for self-fulfillment.

As we might guess from the title, the film offers a strategy of auto-suggestion. Seeing no perspectives in their lives and being close to despair, the two main characters (who don't even find each other attractive and are only united by their mutual dissatisfaction with their lives) decide to fall in love with each other using a form of psycho-training. And it actually works. They manage to fall in love, and in the process they also discover inner resources which enable them to also come to terms with their routine jobs as well as with their living conditions in general. So the message is clear: a properly arranged private life makes a person completely satisfied. And to arrange one's private life, all that is required is a degree of inner effort and a strong will.

The protagonists of all these films, as well as viewers, are then destined to discover at some moment the crucial role of private life. In *Private Life* the turning point in the narrative, when we understand that the protagonist is starting his evolution into a loving father and a person aware of the worth of his family, is an episode when he dares, quite contrary to his civic ideals, to use his ties and personal authority as a former manager of the factory to promote his son, finding him a better job at the factory.

Moral Compromises

I wish to speak, in the few episodes from the heroine's private life - designed to demonstrate her careless attitude to the needs of the people closest to her - shows a family member accusing her of refusing to use the opportunities her official position gives her to assure their well-being. What is being suggested here is that private life as the most important sphere of life is worth some moral compromises. The highest duty is to take care of the people closest to one, and in this case the end justifies the means (in this case not quite legal means).

In the same vein, when the heroines of *Office Romance* and *Love at His Own Choice* discover the value of private life and start to make efforts to arrange it, they immediately turn to the services of the black market to buy some fashionable and attractive clothes which are not available in the legal shops. That is to say, in discovering the priority of private life, they also discover the hidden (in being not quite legal) possibilities by means of which Soviet society could offer to arrange it. These films suggest another vision: through the perspective of the values of private life, a much wider range of

alternative possibilities and strategies are to be seen, which are officially unacceptable and invisible from the 'civic-conscious' point of view.

After the Khrushchev era, with its call for general social transformation, the following period of 'stagnation' is defined by an acceptance of the impossibility of any radical structural changes. While the needs of people were constantly growing, the economy and the state itself were not able to respond satisfactorily. The only way of dealing with growing social dissatisfaction was to allow people, so to speak, to help themselves.

The structural gaps in state management were meant to be somehow made up by alternative and officially illegal strategies invented by the citizens themselves. So the strategy of the cinema (as the most powerful public medium) was to establish a vision confined to the private horizon, and therefore to encourage audiences to compensate for their dissatisfaction, caused by the structural lacks of social and economic reality, at the private and personal level. And the official discourse drops a friendly hint that for this purpose all affordable strategies (including those which are illegal) could be called into play.

4. Narratives of Gender

20 / Stardom and the Movie Magazines: The Case of Jacqueline Kennedy

Oline Eaton

The First Lady and the World of Gossip

Truth is tenuous, especially in gossip magazines, where the gulf between what is reported and what is real is often actively ignored. Jacqueline Kennedy knew this well. When a friend worried that she was too public a figure, she waved his concern away like a bad smell, saying: *"They're still on the fanciful embellishments. The essence is still untouched."*¹ In America alone, there were approximately 40 movie magazines circulating in any given month during the 1960s and 1970s. During every month of those two decades, Jackie would appear on the cover in a significant percentage. In doing so, this housewife who never starred in a movie single-handedly changed the criteria for fame.

Long, long ago, back in the dark ages before *US Weekly*, the movie magazines reigned supreme. A special breed of gossip rag that the film studios cunningly created in the 1920s as a publicity tool, the movie magazines spent their first decades offering puff pieces on film stars. But, because it is often hard to make money being nice, in the late 1950s, the tone of their coverage took a salacious turn towards the cocktail of glamorous lives, naughty headlines and provocative photographs that tantalise us today. As a genre, gossip magazines engender little loyalty and the industry has always depended upon news-stand sales to an extraordinary extent. To this end, movie magazine editors rushed to find celebrities who exercised broad appeal and would hold the public's interest over long periods of time.

For one star to be on a magazine's cover for three months in a row was considered excessive. Jackie would change that. Much as popcorn kept movie theaters afloat after the advent of television, so Jackie Kennedy salvaged the movie magazines. She never starred in a movie but she featured in the movie magazines to such an extent that in 1962, *Variety* enthusiastically hailed her as the "*world's top box office femme*."² Jackie was always presented as an ideal wife and mother, the perfect 'Lady of the House' and the prevailing editorial policy of all of the movie magazines was then geared to regularly feature the well-mannered First Lady alongside "*any lady or gentleman of the screen and television who misbehaved*."³

Taylor and Burton

Among the ladies and gentlemen misbehaving at the time, Liz Taylor was queen bee. Thus, despite the absence of any legitimate connection, Liz and her then-husband Richard

Burton would become Jackie's magazine relatives. Ultimately, the Jackie-Burton-Liz triangle pervaded the national consciousness to such an extent that it created among magazine readers a Pavlovian response to the three principal players. According to Irving Schulman:

*"If new photographs worthy of inclusion at deadline were not to be had, art directors arranged jigsaw cutouts for Jackie-Burton-Liz, and in a very short time indeed a national conditioned response was established. Purchasers who saw a photograph of Jacqueline Kennedy would think immediately of Elizabeth Taylor and what she was doing; conversely a photograph of [. . .] Elizabeth Taylor would conjure up an image of Mrs. Kennedy."*⁴

The Jackie-Liz connection would become so integrated into popular culture that in the Hollywood biopic of Aristotle Onassis, *The Greek Tycoon* (Thompson, 1978), the Jacqueline Kennedy character is named 'Liz Cassidy'. During the Kennedy administration, the couples served as simple foils for one another - the Burtons' racy exploits served to highlight the Kennedy elegance, while Jack's and Jackie's *élan* served to suggest, by contrast, the imputed decadence of Burton and Taylor. In Autumn 1963, the question of the Kennedys' "*Marriage & Taste*" versus the Burtons' "*Passion & Waste*" was of such critical social import that *Photoplay* gave it major coverage in its November 1963 issue.

Editors could not have created more profitable characters to mash-up. Women loved to hate 'Liz', an actress who seemed constantly on the brink of personal disaster; they simply loved Mrs. Kennedy. It was the perfect mix. Jackie and Liz presented two entirely different versions of femininity, with

Jackie the woman everyone should aspire to be, and Liz the woman no woman would want to become (never mind the fact that Liz seemed to always be having a great deal more fun).

Jackie and Liz

This dichotomy is nowhere more vividly exemplified than in the 1962 magazine *JACKIE and LIZ*. The commemorative opens with a page that explains the editors' reasons for comparing the two women: *"They shine in completely different constellations and exert a completely different emotional and moral effect upon us... To compare them ... [is] a way for us to examine the natures of the stars we create, and in the process discover something about ourselves."*

A headline confirms the binary contrast between the two women: Liz is *"A Warning To American Women"*, whilst Jackie is *"An Inspiration to American Youth"*. Jackie is *"Woman of the Year"*, *"Mistress of the Washington Merry Go-Round"*, and *"First in the Hearts of Her Countrymen"*. She *"Keeps Her Man Happy"*, is *"Surrounded by Love"* and only *"Leaves Her Home for Service"*. In very stark contrast, Liz is the *"Sensation of the Year"* and *"Star of the Roman Scandals"*. *"A Woman Without a Country"*, she was *"Caught in the mad Marriage-Go-Round"* and *"Surrounded by Fear"* she faced *"A Threatening Tomorrow"*.

JACKIE and LIZ posits Jackie as a shining paragon of virtue. In contrast, through *"unsavory Taylor-Burton headlines, the shabby stories of shabby lies, of multiple marriages, infidelities, divorces, broken homes, displaced children"*, Liz had *"steered her sex toboggan down a dangerous run"*⁵. This

was a message that was no doubt not lost on readers whose own marriages might be lacking “the fire of passion” and women who might be tempted to follow Liz’s less traditionally feminine example.

Collectively, the reports imply a rivalry between the two women for the heart of America. When Jackie, allegedly rankled by Liz’s affair on the *Cleopatra* set, didn’t attend the movie’s Washington premiere, *TV Radio Mirror* rushed to declare it: “THE DAY JACKIE ‘SLAPPED’ LIZ!”. In this article, published in the September 1963 issue, prudish Jackie frowns upon Liz’s amorous exploits, and Liz’s doings appear spectacularly more whore-ish when contrasted with Jackie’s puritanical restraint. Liz’s indiscretions were startling by contemporary standards, but she appears downright depraved beside the apparent sanctity attributed to Jackie.

This would all change. With Jackie’s marriage to Onassis the rivalry would continue to dominate news-stands but the headlines would grow increasingly sexual and provocative: “*America’s Two Fallen Queens*”, “*One Night with Jackie’s Husband makes Liz’ Dream Come True*”, “*The Night Onassis Turned to Liz*”, “*Jackie Disgraced as Ari Boozes it up with Liz in Public Bar*”, “*Two Desperate Women Gamble All*”, “*Liz’ Premarital Honeymoon Plans Involve Jackie’s Husband!*”.⁶ The magazines manipulated photos and gossip to suggest romantic intrigues, clandestine meetings, and unorthodox sexual proclivities. The couples appeared to change partners nearly every month and though Burton and Jackie may never have held hands, thanks to wily editors and *découpage*, on countless magazine covers they appeared to do so.

Private and Public Identities

Jackie's very appearance in the movie magazines suggested a massive shift from their original function as an advertising vehicle for motion picture stars. Both Liz and Jackie were exaggerated icons, but Liz, an actress, was in fact selling a product - herself and her films. Because Jackie had nothing to hawk, her life itself was turned into a movie for the public's entertainment. By the early 1960s, it was playing out on news-stands all across the country.

Gradually, the differences in the unique relationships readers developed with both women would become more apparent. Liz's fulfilled a number of roles for those who read about her: *"Taylor's early appeal as a life performer was her willingness to expose her private sexuality, first with Fisher and then with Burton, and to provide a voyeuristic charge for those who read about her. Her later appeal, when she was no longer a sex symbol, was her willingness to expose her dysfunctions as melodramatic entertainment: her ballooning weight and subsequent diets, her drug problems, her vexed marriages and romances, her various illnesses."*⁷

As Liz continued to expose herself, her audience demanded more, however, their interest was underpinned by a streak of cruelty. Liz made for interesting reading, but readers were not rooting for her. In contrast, in the case of Jackie, they were. Readers were tantalised by what Jackie withheld, and her adamant refusal to reveal herself or her private life created a vast expanse of ignorance that proved fertile ground for wildly speculative assertions and implausible fantasies. It also changed the way fans related to the stars they were reading about.

Because Jackie refused to participate in the tabloid pageant, the gossip magazines reached out to readers - inviting them to select a wedding dress for Jackie's second marriage, to suggest a hairstyle, and to pass judgment upon her hem lengths. In a manner prescient of today's *American Idol*, the movie magazines fostered the public's sense of interactivity in Mrs. Kennedy's life, while also creating the sense that her lifestyle was, in some respects, attainable.

After her second marriage in 1968, *Motion Picture* even invited readers to vote to "BACK JACKIE" as if their support would have a real effect upon the new Mrs. Onassis. It has been argued that in American culture, Jackie acted as a *tabula rasa* on to which everyone from little girls to frustrated housewives could project their fantasies of glamour and romance. I would argue that she was the opposite: an ordinary woman who was 'just like us'. Yet, within tabloid culture, Jackie heralded a new age in which a housewife could become a superstar.

Notes and References

¹ Edward Klein, *Just Jackie: Her Private Years*, New York: Ballantine, 1998, p. 183.

² Jay Mulvaney, *Diana and Jackie: Maidens, Mothers, Myths*, New York: St. Martin's, 2002, p. 12.

³ Irving Shulman, "*Jackie!*": *The Exploitation of a First Lady*, New York: Pocket Books, 1970, p. 70.

⁴ Shulman, "*Jackie!*", p. 72.

⁵ Fannie Hurst, 'Marriage & Taste', *Photoplay*, November 1963, p. 78.

⁶ *Motion Picture*, February 1969; *Movie Life*, October 1972; *Movie Mirror*, October 1969; *Screen Stories*, August 1972; *Screen Stories*, September 1970; *TV Radio Talk*, September 1974. The insistent capitalisation has been reduced for ease of legibility, as with the previous quotations from *JACKIE and LIZ*.

⁷ Neal Gabler, *Life: The Movie – How Entertainment Conquered Reality*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998, p. 165.

21 / Postfeminist Representations of Prefeminist Times: *Mad Men*, Nostalgia and Self-indulgence

Katixa Agirre

Perspectives on Postfeminism

The American TV drama series *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-) is set in the early 1960s in the offices of Sterling Cooper, a Madison Avenue advertising agency. The series takes place during a crucial decade in the recent history of the United States, a time of economic growth, baby boom and Cold War. With the thriving advertising business as a backdrop, the series focuses on relationships between the genders on the verge of a significant transition that will lead to a redefinition of gender roles.

Although there appears to be little agreement about the way in which the show represents gender issues, I would like to argue that a postfeminist perspective underlies *Mad Men's*

depiction of the early 1960s. The postfeminist spirit allows a self-indulgent sentiment towards our current situation, which, compared to the unjust world of *Mad Men*, seems a much better time to live in. But at the same time, the series tends to mourn the prefeminist world - especially its glamour, coolness and simplicity – and tries to lure the viewer by means of its nostalgia.

Previous television dramas such as *Ally McBeal* (Fox, 1997-2002), *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004) or *Desperate Housewives* (ABC, 2004-2012) have all been the subject of postfeminist analysis. The particularity of *Mad Men* is that the fiction is not set in a postfeminist moment but in a prefeminist era. Once liberated from the spatial, temporal and visual layers that varnish this glossy show, *Mad Men* can offer an acute reflection on our current situation, bringing us back to the world of the 21st Century.

However important it may be for cultural analysis, there is little agreement on what postfeminism really means. It can indicate a backlash against feminism as well as a more developed, integrated and sophisticated way of feminism for the 21st century. Although the term has been traced back as far as 1919, it resurfaced in the early 1980s, and has since been widely used by the media to either claim, applaud or warn about the end of feminism.

According to an early usage of the term, postfeminism would refer to an active process by which the feminist gains of the 1970s and 80s have been naturalised, or undermined.¹ While the backlash calls for a return to the traditional gender values, postfeminism would simply conclude that the goals of feminism have been happily achieved and therefore, feminism is no longer necessary.

In recent years postfeminism has been reconsidered within the academy, and has started to be associated with an instrumentalised 'third-wave' feminism, or as a feminism assimilated and adjusted to the patterns of popular culture. While some aspects of feminism are included in the postfeminist discourse – for example, self-agency, female bonding – others are excluded, notably activism and a clear political agenda.

Postfeminism is a trace of feminism which has survived in a very particular context: the intersection of mainstream media, consumer culture, neo-liberal politics, postmodern theory and last but not least, feminism itself. I believe that it is in this intersection that we can find a common ground to address it. Postfeminism is a depoliticised left-over of feminism, but considering it as anti-feminist overlooks *"how much something about feminism has instead saturated pop culture, becoming part of the accepted, 'naturalized,' social formation"*.²

Mad Men as Time Machine

Mad Men is a time machine, taking us back to a very particular moment, the beginning of a pivotal, almost mythical decade in the history of the United States. The show begins in March 1960 on the first day in office at work for young secretary Peggy Olson. The episode is entitled *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*. Office manager Joan Holloway tries to show her the basic chores: how to dress, how to treat the male executives, how to use an IBM typewriter.

"It looks complicated" she tells Peggy, *"but the men who designed it made it simple enough for a woman to use"*. If we expect a wink from the experienced manager to the rookie

secretary, we will end up being disappointed. There is no irony in Joan's words, this is not a joke to relax the neophyte: there was actually a time when women themselves could think that. Manhattan, 1960: oblivion reigns.

Men congratulate themselves because they have everything: a job, a wife in the suburbs, a mistress at the office. Only some women feel there is something wrong. Peggy's discomfort grows steadily under the office boys' advances on her. Betty Draper, wife of protagonist Donald Draper, feels restless and her hands go numb for no physical reason. The viewer knows what is going on, the characters do not. The historical context - the Nixon-Kennedy election night, race riots, Marilyn Monroe's death and the assassination of JFK - all figure in the fiction and play a substantial role in the narrative strategy of *Mad Men*.

A profusion of period objects and meticulously designed costume work as historical markers as well. But there are certain details of the show that appear to be there not only to recreate the historical context, but most notably to act as *markers of differentiation* between *then* (the diegetic era of the drama) and *now* (the period in which the show is produced and received). The accentuated abuse of alcohol and cigarettes - especially by pregnant women - is only one of these shocking markers of difference. Child battering, lack of environmental awareness, racism and, most notably, sexism loom large amongst the others.

Oddly enough, the people of Sterling Cooper, working for Nixon, do not know that Kennedy is going to win the presidential election. When talking about the Vietnam War in the episode entitled *The British are Coming*, one employee of the agency tries to calm down a colleague: "*they're hardly*

drafting anybody", he says. The first reaction of the contemporary viewer might be one of amusement. The second reaction, however, is one in which we recognise the distance between ourselves and that not too far-off time. The gap between the characters and ourselves is not only intellectual but also moral. We do not only know *more*, but we know *better*. Or so we are invited to think.

The early episodes of season 1 are entirely devoted to show us how mean, cruel and negligent men – and women too – were in the period. Peggy's first day at office is a rough one. All the men are entitled to harass her and when she complains to her mentor Joan, the experienced manager advises her to enjoy it while it lasts, because she is "*not much*" after all. As a preparation for her new career, the secretary goes to a gynaecologist and the doctor prescribes the pill while smoking and sermonising about the perils of "*abusing*" the contraceptive.

Rachel Menken does not merit much better treatment, despite being a businesswoman and a client of the agency. Don Draper fails to shake her hand and when the client turns out to be too demanding, the adman leaves the meeting room exclaiming that he is "*not gonna let a woman talk to me like that*". From episode one, the idea is delivered clearly: we are so different nowadays. We do not slap our children, or our neighbour's children – as they do. We do not dump rubbish in the woods – as the Drapers do. We do not smoke on planes, or workplaces – as they compulsively do. We do not treat women as pieces of meat – as they all do.

Retrovision: Nostalgia and Pastiche

The portrayal of the 'bad old days' could work as a condescending reminder of how well we live after the 'big awakening' of the second wave of feminism. The feminist movement can be seen as something urgent in the early 1960s - ridiculously obvious from where we are standing - but at the same time as a victory already achieved. This self-indulgence perfectly matches the postfeminist ethos as well as a very postmodern, tongue-in-cheek attitude. But, as a reviewer of the first season argued "*Mad Men* flatters us where we deserve to be scourged".³ The markers of differentiation scattered across the fiction render the problem of sexism distant and leave little space for consideration of the problems today.

Robin Veith, the Executive Story Editor of *Mad Men*, has argued against this delusion: "*The truth is that a lot of these moments that seem period and horrible for women come directly from experiences that I and the other women writers have had in our lifetimes*".⁴ Perhaps the postfeminist moment we are living only allows us to bear that truth when it comes disguised in skinny ties and vintage dresses. It is not only that we bear or tolerate sexism and other forms of discrimination present in *Mad Men*. We also enjoy that world entirely. Time dislocation is the key to this experience.

We can deal with and even aesthetically enjoy the gender injustices of the early sixties because we are at the same time reminded that sexism is something of the past. The time setting becomes an alibi, an ironic vantage point, or, as Rosalind Gill has put it "*a way of 'having it both ways', of expressing sexist or homophobic or otherwise unpalatable*

sentiments in an ironised form, while claiming this was not actually 'meant'."⁵ Or, as in the case of *Mad Men*, while claiming this is really something we have got over.

There is a distinctly postmodern approach to the past in *Mad Men*, a kind of a retrovision whereby the historical context is a dynamic resource "*for exciting stories and poetic, morally uplifting untruths*".⁶ In postmodern fiction, as Linda Hutcheon argues, "*there is a deliberate contamination of the historical with the didactic and situational discursive elements*". This contamination is the outcome of a self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs, what she calls "*historiographic metafiction*".⁷

The opening credits of *Mad Men* suggest from the outset that things are about to change for men and women. A graphic animation of a businessman enters an office. Suddenly everything starts to dissolve: the man loses grip and starts falling from a skyscraper. The fall is accompanied by the numerous adverts covering the building. Most of them are women's products and tell us about a powerful, new target: the new woman.

But relax, we are told. The fall was just a bad dream; suddenly the man is again in his office, relaxed, enjoying a cigarette. The reign of the white male is still in force. That is what *Mad Men* is about: the pleasures of white male hegemony just before its decline. This opening credit sequence has the virtue of merging the two eras of *Mad Men*: the Hitchcock-like graphic design and music on the one hand, and the iconic 9/11 falling man on the other. That is, the innocent, almost naïve late fifties /early sixties and the traumatic experience with which the 21st Century began.

References to the present are linked to an implied knowledge of the contemporary viewer. The show clearly plays the game of nostalgia, and does it through the use of pastiche. Pastiche of period costumes, vintage cars and household objects; exquisitely selected music; cinematic images from the sixties (not only Hitchcock, but also Sirk and Wilder), intertextual references to books, musicals and ads of the time; literary winks (Cheever, Capote, Plath). The strategy would seem to match Fredric Jameson's theory of the postmodern nostalgia film as empty pastiche with no critical impulse.⁸

Cracks in the Façade

However, for Hutcheon the nostalgia of postmodern fiction suggests instead that there is no directly and naturally accessible historic 'real' for us today: we can only know and reconstruct the past through its traces, its representations. The meticulous representation of the past, the conscious choice of those more glamorous looks, costumes and objects, can easily work as fascinating yet empty images, as Jameson would put it. The show is nonetheless intelligent enough to show us the cracks in this glossy façade.

In the episode entitled a *Night to Remember*, Betty Draper does her best to prepare a dinner party for her husband's colleagues. She is hugely disappointed to find out that she has been used as a guinea pig for some clients. When the guests are gone, she finds the strength to confront Don about his infidelities. She spends the following night and day, still in her superb party dress, drinking, chain-smoking, mourning, and searching her husband's pockets.

We see the make-up smudge and disappear, the hair lose its flip and the dress get wrinkled and ruined. The real drama

behind the disguise is stressed at the end of the episode, when we get to see the other two female lead characters (Joan and Peggy) undressing after a hard day. They both look vulnerable and deeply hurt. Just two episodes before, in *Maidenform*, we saw these three characters dressing up in the morning, putting on the masks which will help them survive one more day. Sometimes, as now, the mask slips and the reality of being a woman in the 1960s is revealed.

Mad Men makes possible a simultaneous sense of nostalgia and conflict. The pastiche conjures up a wonderfully represented dream past that eventually becomes a nightmare. The viewer is invited to enjoy prefeminist times while being reminded the justice of its fate. In *The Long Weekend*, Joan's outburst "1960, I'm so over you!" reminds us of how women are ready to move on, and men are anchored in the past. In fact we hear Roger saying explicitly "God, I miss the 50s" and a CBS executive confessing that he misses the blacklist, all in the same episode, *The Benefactor*.

Peggy's promotion reinforces the teleological idea of the fall of men and the rise of women suggested by the opening credits. Major changes are announced from the beginning. By the end of Season 4 it is already 1965. Five years have passed since we saw Peggy Olson enter the Madison Avenue building for the first time. Now she is a copywriter, but her progress - promotion to copywriter, a pay-rise, an office of her own - are all achieved during Seasons 1 and 2. In 1960 Peggy is the first female writer at the firm since World War II; in 1965 she is still the only one.

Other women trying a better position at the agency, such as Joan, are simply ignored by their male bosses. In the personal sphere things are similarly hopeless. Betty's empowerment

leads her to divorce adulterous Don Draper, but only to marry much older Henry Francis, another example of a patriarchal model of masculinity. Joan's 'proper' marriage entraps her in a cage in which she even has to put up with rape. And Don Draper abruptly breaks up with girlfriend Dr. Faye Miller - his intellectual and emotional peer - and announces marriage to his new young secretary, Megan.

Mocking the viewer's expectations is one of the features of postmodern fiction, but in the case of *Mad Men* this is caught up with issues over realism. With expectations met and the narrative arc complete, by 1965 we should be witnessing a total defeat of the WASP man and a significant awakening of women, black people and even homosexuals. But *Mad Men* steps back, suggesting that ideas about an imminent and successful social uprising were far too optimistic.

The drama's initial emphasis on showing us the differences between now and then gets parodied when the characters do not react as they were expected to do. That is so because our knowledge is limited by what our era and culture would allow them to know. Sexism, by instance, is only dangerous when it is naturalised as an invisible structure of everyday life. Roger Sterling, after a heart attack, laments his poor health: "*Did everything they told me. Drank the cream, ate the butter. I get hit with a coronary*". Perhaps *Mad Men* is inviting us to think how many of the things we consider just, appropriate appear so simply because we are too tightly bound to our present, to our current circumstances.

The postfeminist spirit, even with its ambiguous, uncertain position towards feminism, allows this kind of reading, since a postfeminist sensibility might also be a "*potential breeding ground for emancipatory discourses*".⁹ When the markers of

differentiation end, the cracks of the nostalgic portrayal are revealed and the characters show us that they are simply products of their times, this is when *Mad Men* asserts its value as a mirror held up to the contemporary world.

Notes and References

Acknowledgment

The research on which this essay is based was funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain, Project I+D+I CS02009-13713-C05-02.

¹ See Angela McRobbie, 'Postfeminism and Popular Culture', *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 4 no. 3, 2004, p. 256.

² Ann Braithwaite, 'Politics and/of Backlash', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, online, no.5, 2004, p, 19.

³ Mark Greif, 'You'll Love the Way It Makes You Feel', *London Review of Books*, vol. 30 no. 20, 23 October 2008, p. 16.

⁴ Quoted in Sady Doyle, 'Mad Men's Very Modern Sexism Problem', *The Atlantic*, online edition, 2 August 2010.

⁵ Rosalind Gill, 'Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 10 no. 2, 2007, pp. 147-166.

⁶ Deborah Cartmell, I.Q. Hunter, and Imelda Whelehan (eds.), *Retrovision: Reinventing the Past In Film And Fiction*, London: Pluto Press, 2001, p. 2.

⁷ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, New York and London: Routledge, 1988, pp. 92, ix.

⁸ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, especially ch. 9, 'Nostalgia for the Present', pp. 279-96.

⁹ Fien Adriaens, 'Postfeminism in Popular Culture: A Potential for Critical Resistance', *Politics and Culture*, online, no. 4, 2009.

22 / Visual Pleasure in Pakistani Cinema

Wajiha Raza Rizvi

Cinema as Gendered Medium

Pakistani films, like those from cinemas across the world, reinforce patriarchy and its values by emphasising pre-existing patterns of female objectification via the gaze. According to Mulvey, these patterns are *“already at work within the individual subject and the social formations that have moulded him ... Film reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretations of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle ... the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form”*. The male viewer is fascinated with *“the image of his like set in illusion of natural space, and through him gaining control and possession of the woman within the diegesis”*¹. In the cinematic order, as in the overarching social

order which it reflects, men have various orders of power (on screen as well as in the auditorium), whilst women are to a degree powerless and objectified.

In the early days of Pakistani cinema, the attitude to films was somewhat puritanical. The early films promoted the norms of the civilised, Urdu-speaking elites of Delhi and Lucknow through social narratives which have been eclipsed by the vulgar comedy, 'dirty' dancing, and charismatic Punjabi villainy of the last three decades. These changes reflect an increasing dependence on cheap consumerism.² The early Pakistani films promoted the legendary *chhooi-mooi* girl who surrendered herself to the desires of the male viewer.

The *chhooi-mooi* girl has been replaced by the fragmented exhibitionism of the contemporary 'rain dancer'. These bold and beautiful women have superseded the stereotypical symbols. They fulfill the needs of logos (father) and tokos (son) in subservience of the deep rooted norms of a culture.³ Their creators claim that their films meet the needs of the common man: *"those judging and criticizing Lollywood have no right to take away the happiness or pleasure of a man on the street whose only avenue for entertainment and thrills is to watch a film in the cinema"*⁴.

The Evolution of Pakistani Cinema

Pakistani films are often romantic musicals that embrace crime and action as necessary ingredients of plots. The finest of the earlier films, such as Kardar's *Jago Hua Swera* (*The Day Shall Dawn*, 1959), failed at the box office because of a lack of good songs, while music and choreography have made blockbusters out of shoddy yarns. The original formula

constructed plots of *hijr* and *visaal* -meaning separation and unification of male and female protagonists - aiming for a happy ending. It juxtaposed serene images of dancers with spiritual pieces of master musicians. Serenity was achieved through powerful *mise-en-scène* and the play of light and dark on soft faces and fragmented bodies of women wrapped in religiously respectful costumes which yet accentuated the feminine physique. Consumerism was reflected in highly fashionable and trendy wardrobes that were designed to appeal to both the female and male audience.

In Islam the male audience is denied the right to such appeal, gaze, desire, and consumerism. These wardrobes were thus reflective of Islamic values and culture only because they provided 'cover'. The dancers were often shown practising Islam in their personal lives. As Islam does not support dance, music, and the gaze, the disparities and dichotomies of personal conduct and professional choices were justified through the depiction of hardships and social realities. The audience, caught between Islam and entertainment, was lost in serene but in fact complex images of human interaction. The complex treatment of the life of a dancer reinforced everything concerning patriarchy, gaze, religion, and culture in one's private space. The dancer had an audience inside the story space as well as in the cinema.

Both serenity and Muslim costumes have disappeared behind bold and beautiful images of free women, often referred to bluntly as 'dirty dancers'. These women return and command the gaze, but are no longer recognised for the quality of their performances. The *élite* disown this dance trend, yet these images remain provocatively popular; as Kazi says, "*These films are a public acknowledgement of private desires.... [and*

play an important role] *in diffusing some of the frustrations in a society with feudal, legal and religious restrictions*"⁵. She is hinting at typical social, economic, and political problems that were always present in Pakistani society, but mounted when everything concerning entertainment was banned in Pakistan in the 1970s.

Pakistan: the 1970s

The 1970s military *régime* used Islam to terrorise the nation and maintain and prolong its sovereign control. The trio of dirty dancer, vulgar comedian, and ruthless Punjabi villain were partly born in reaction to General Zia-ul-Haq's state terrorism. The fake hero of Urdu cinema disappeared along with the *chhooi-mooi* girl, but the song and dance formula evolved to fit the needs of the exhibitionist dirty dancer, vulgar comedian, and bucolic villain who fought the establishment. These stories were boldly set against the social and religious agendas of a regime that exploited the emotional sensitivities of ordinary people by using religion to gain control of the populace.

The exploitation of the public strengthened patriarchy by intermixing education, entertainment, and religion. According to Kazi, General Zia imported "*a rigid interpretation*" of Islam and Islamic values "*from the Middle East and post-revolutionary Iran which attempted to replace the more porous South Asian style of Islam. More and more women started wearing the Irani/Middle Eastern style of hijab [veil] rather than the south Asian 'dupatta' or head covering and 'burqa'. More men have beards and kifafa or Arab head covering, creating a boring homogeneity in a richly diverse cultural context*". The diversity was evident in urban and rural settings that were inequitably affected by Zia's

brand of Islam, in which religion became a political weapon. These strategies in turn affected Pakistani media.

The society was susceptible to earlier cinematic fashions because the *chhooi-mooi* girl covered up her body, unlike the exhibitionist women of the latter period. The earlier female icon allowed objectification, while the latter bears has greater apparent power but is in fact a still more enticing subject for the male gaze. She may appear to be a powerful subject in her own right, but her filmic representation involves a still higher degree of objectification than in the case of her predecessor. This wronged woman is subservient to a patriarchal system which uses culture and religion to justify the construction and consumption of these images.

Gender Representation since the 1970s

The post-Zia female icons signify resistance to oppression in cinema and popular art. These women, as Kazi comments, are proud of their bodies, sexually active and open with their emotions. The disparity between reality and representation can be understood in terms of film as a medium that gives a kind of breathing space to both artists and audience. As Kazi suggests, *"The stories, although presented in a heightened reality, are in fact reflective of real problems and desires ... The stylistic device of lifting these stories to an above-reality level allows the privacy to acknowledge they exist without feeling publicly challenged"*.

The darkness inside the theatre gives the viewers subjective control of their lives, decreasing the sense of powerlessness against the culture around them. In the wider society women are used to denying their real feelings in subservience to the symbolic order. The departure of films from reality sorts out

their emotional crises by releasing tension. In Kazi's opinion, women look to cinema in order to identify with the representations of free women who *"ride horses and motorbikes, dance in public, reveal themselves as lovers, prostitutes, seductresses; express their love, run off with lovers, drink, smoke, show a lot of their bodies, take bloody revenge on their rapists, know martial arts, use guns, and talk back!"*. In other words, they return the gaze, exercising their subjectivity and denying the objectification of a *chooi-mooi* girl.

Families and social codes in general appear inferior to their personal happiness. They are caught up in stories of wronged and desirable women who marry men of their choice against the will of their families. According to Kazi, Pakistani filmmakers *"have great compassion for problems faced by women, by the underdogs of society – the poor and powerless. They are not morally judged. The prostitute is seen as a misunderstood woman; the bad girl who smokes and dances in clubs is shown often as a woman driven by an unjust society"*. Thus, unlike society at large, cinema does not judge them morally, but instead owns their weaknesses and justifies their actions, values, and conducts as human and noble.

Nonetheless, it is men who define these roles for women. In the end, role-reversal attempts like Rangeela's *Aurat Raj* (1979) are rare; the stereotype predominates. Male protagonists are involved in action around female characters. Women are at the heart of the films, yet without real agency. Men as true bearers of subjectivity guard them as objects. Plots follow male agendas and lines of action. Rhythm and tempo develop to depict male pursuits of riches and females. Physically stronger, they run the show and protect their

women from perceived evils, while women remain constrained to the display of their softer side.

If sexual expression is the domain of hookers, national and regional cinemas reflect inconsistency in their treatment of female protagonists and prostitutes. Urdu cinema uses courtesans; Punjabi cinema relies on 'dirty dancers'; Sindhi women appear liberal; women in Pashto films fully command their agency. These images do not conform to the social reality of the North West Frontier, where women on the streets are disapproved of - along with the entertainment values of modernity - by conservative Muslims.

Men and women are still struggling for new roles as modernity creeps in. The dancing heroes of yore have disappeared, while females have to a certain extent transformed into free women. The bonding between couples reflects manlier, romantic men and sexually expressive women. The changing decades reflect the departure of *chhooi-mooi* girls and the arrival of bold and beautiful women as protagonists who only played the roles of antagonists in earlier films. Confusingly, these bold images of sensuous, seductive women offer a contrast to real women, who, increasingly, dress conservatively.

Notes and References

¹ Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, vol. 16 no. 3, 1975, pp. 6-18.

² For a fuller history, see Mushtaq Gazdar, *Pakistani Cinema 1947-1997*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997.

³ Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', 'The Father of Logos' from 'Plato's Pharmacy' and '*Différance*', in David H. Richter (ed.), *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007, pp. 930-931.

⁴ Omar R. Quraishi, 'Lights, Camera, Action!', *Dawn* (Internet edition), 19.12.04.

⁵ I am indebted to Durriya Kazi's unpublished manuscript 'Portrayal of Women in Pakistani Cinema', University of Karachi, 2006, which is the source for the remainder of my quotations from this author.

23 / Cinematic Stardom, John Wayne and the Post-WWII Western

John White

Stardom, Myth, Society

Films and other cultural expressions are involved in negotiating a society's passage through the tensions and contradictions of the age. Myths serve to delineate a society's dominant ideological perspectives and work to resolve tensions threatening the in-place hegemony. In post-war America a range of groups are flagging the possibility of withdrawing the passive consent they have given to an earlier social order. Returning servicemen, women at work and in relationships, young people and oppressed minorities are increasingly confident in voicing their dissent. The construct of the American star 'John Wayne' can thus be seen as an attempt to re-shape and re-establish a formerly accepted and dominant 'truth'.

The configuration and re-configuration of John Wayne's post-war image within film was not simply, as it was in *The Alamo* (Wayne, 1960) for example, a conscious attempt to bolster dominant social values that were felt to be under increasing pressure. What follows, then, begins as a reflection on Wayne's performance and star image as expressed in post-WWII Hollywood Westerns, particularly *Red River* (Hawks, 1948), *The Searchers* (Ford, 1956), *True Grit* (Hathaway, 1969) and *The Shootist* (Siegel, 1976), before ending on a more polemic note.

For reasons that have been well-documented, conservative values and beliefs were increasingly questioned in post-war America. Within this challenge an essential national myth focused on the legend of 'the Frontier', and embodying the concept of 'rugged individualism', was being questioned from a range of political perspectives. The resulting social trauma is embodied and publicly displayed in the dislocations, uncertainties and flux of contending values found in the performances of Wayne (real name Marion Morrison). The ending of *Red River*, for example, attempts to suddenly resolve tensions that have been building through the film. The audience is momentarily comforted but, ultimately, unable to escape the earlier image of the menacing older man who has determined to kill his son.

In *The Searchers*, as well as being the hero who restores order, Ethan Edwards is a dark, troubled and disturbing character who relentlessly hunts down his niece over a period of years in order to kill her. In *True Grit*, wearing his reactionary credentials like a sheriff's badge, Rooster Cogburn is a perfect fit for Wayne's media-constructed star image; but, Cogburn has impaired vision and remains an outsider in the mould of Ethan Edwards. He, too, has no

family and no 'home' to which to return. The filmmakers play with Wayne's media persona: the only space this rabble-rousing Commie-basher is given approaching 'home' is the back-room of a shop owned by a '*Chinaman*'. *The Shootist*, for its part, operates as a Hollywood genre film only in order to allow reconsideration of the legend of Wayne as star to take place. The legend is reinforced and enhanced but also questioned, re-ordered and realigned within a 'changed world'.

The Post-War Western

In very broad terms, central characters in Westerns as a whole after 1945 begin to have more doubts and uncertainties than was previously the case. They also begin to display darker aspects of their make-up even as they fulfill the role of the 'hero'. Good and evil (and justice and injustice) can no longer be seen in such comfortably black-and-white terms by filmmakers and their audiences. The producers of Westerns begin to offer an extended variety of ways of seeing and understanding the West. A confident vision of the grand sweep of American history as an inevitable, onward march of progress is lost. Central characters are increasingly darker, more troubled individuals, unsure of their role, place and function in relation to the community.

Westerns in this period tend to move into towns, into urban and domestic spaces where light and shadow, props and costume, shot composition and angle, tell of fraught personal relationships and inner struggles that reflect changing social contexts. These films are increasingly incorporating, knowingly or unwittingly, elements of the emerging genre of *film noir*. The darkness at the end of Ford's *Stagecoach*

(1939) entirely engulfs Wellman's *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1943), for example. "No longer a place of expanse and possibility, the Frontier began to appear as a dead end", as Drew Casper comments.¹

In this troubled context a group of early post-war Westerns show potentially strong characters who are confused about how they should take action.² In the opening to *My Darling Clementine* (Ford, 1946), Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday watch a performance of Hamlet's soliloquy, 'To be or not to be', an archetypal consideration of whether, how and when to take action. In *Angel and the Badman* (Grant, 1947) Quirt Evans (Wayne) is able to leave behind a gun-fighting past. He is reformed by a woman's love but less expectedly by the love of a pacifist Quaker family, and is defended by an upright lawman, Wistful McClintock (Harry Carey), who concludes the film's 'debate' with, "Only a man who carries a gun ever needs one".

Fathers and Sons

Red River provides a problematic fit between Wayne's star image and the character being played. To the public, Wayne embodied the Western legend of the honest, upright, straightforward cowboy; but here he plays Tom Dunson, a man with an obvious darker streak to his character. By the end of the film Wayne has been restored to his former star image by a sudden transformation but it feels like an awkward attempt at reassuring us that all is well with the world. The film concludes with a fist-fight between Wayne and Montgomery Clift (Dunson's adopted son, Matt) that moves from a brutally realistic attack on the younger man to a classic, light-hearted Western, saloon-style brawl. The resolution phase of the narrative has attempted to very

suddenly resolve the extreme tensions that have been carefully developed throughout the rest of the film. Clearly, the father-son relationship is a strong archetypal image of conflict but here in 1948 it is operating within a specific society at a specific historical moment.

Sons confronting fathers is a source of tension in a series of post-war Hollywood films. And it may be that in the dislocation between Wayne's star image and the character he is playing social tensions within contemporary American society are revealed. Matt (Clift) notes that Tom (Wayne), although he hides it, is scared because for the first time he is up against something (i.e. a changing world) that he cannot see as an embodied oppositional male. Groot (Walter Brennan) notes in voice-over: "*Tom had changed: he'd always been a hard man, now he was harder*" A case of men returning from war, an older generation unable to understand change?

Ultimately, such interpretations are too simplistic. They do contain some truth but the mythic status cultural representations are capable of embracing means that *Red River* would operate just as powerfully as the allegory of a father attempting to deal with the unseen forces of economic collapse in 1930s America. What is demonstrated is that in certain circumstances fathers can displace violence on to their sons. Maybe this needs to be explored psychologically and with regard to the fact that Wayne as star often exists in relation to the absence of a female partner (or is awkward in potentially romantic relationships). In this film and in *The Searchers* he is the nominal father-figure who is unable to sire his own children (who is therefore, in a sense, impotent) but instead in both cases adopts an orphan.

History and Race

With 'Indians' set against homesteaders and Wayne playing the hero, the basic elements of *The Searchers* might suggest it is likely to present a simplistic interpretation of the American West. What emerges is something more complex. The film moves towards a re-evaluation of Hollywood's version of 'Wild West' history appropriate for the changing post-war world. Initially the representation of Native Americans is as threatening, brutal savages set in binary opposition to home-making, peace-loving white folk. However, although Ethan Edwards (Wayne) and the Comanche chief, Scar, are constructed as diametrically opposed foes it is the strong similarity between them that is at least as important to the film's dynamics. The Native American has literally been scarred by his experience of the clash of civilisations. Together, Ethan and Scar could represent a past that needs to be purged so that the future can be shaped by a new generation.

The way in which Martin (the adopted son) and the homesteaders need Ethan as a protector has often been commented upon, but it is the younger man who actually rescues his adopted sister and kills Scar, leaving Ethan with only the opportunity to re-emphasise his repressed brutality by (as the film implies) scalping Scar. Martin displays the same tenacity in trying to find his sister as his uncle/'father' but with the difference that he is driven by the motivation to save life rather than to take life. Ford denies both us and Ethan, the old-style hero, the classic final 'shoot-out'. The emerging new liberal hero, Martin, kills simply, off-screen and of necessity.

He rejects the racism not only of Ethan but of his fiancée, Laurie, who demonstrates the deeply ingrained nature of prejudice; and he reacts with simple, compassionate humanity both to the plight of white women driven insane by their experiences at the hands of 'Indians' and to the massacre of women and children by the 7th Cavalry. By contrast, Ethan in blind hatred shoots out the eyes of a dead Commanche so that, as the deranged but knowledgeable Moses explains, his soul should not enter the spirit world, and manically slaughters bison so that the tribes should not be able to feed themselves. The viewer of 1956, when Wayne was at the height of his popularity, is placed in the uncomfortable position of having to reject the values embodied in the character played by the iconic star. Until that is, in a melodramatic reversal paralleling the conclusion to *Red River*, Ethan lifts Debbie into the air and says they should now go 'home'.

True Grit may display something of the historic West, but equally it presents something of America in the late 1960s, when there is growing social unrest created particularly by the Vietnam War and increasing African-American militancy and when conservative values and beliefs are contested. The idyllic world (or myth) at stake is made apparent from the beginning as we open with a view of a homestead in a green valley with mountains in the distance. In this film, as heroic as the young Texan marshal La Boeuf (Glen Campbell) may be, he is ultimately not up to dealing with the presence of evil in the world in the way that the "*one-eyed fat man*", Cogburn, clearly is. The black hat and shirt and red necktie we initially see Cogburn wearing (and the *noir*-ish shadows across his face and eyes at various points) suggest his darker side.

He may need help from La Boeuf – who indeed saves his life at one point - but there is no doubting that Wayne is the hero. He embodies a ruthless determination to bring about 'justice', and a foundational instinct to support the victim against the aggressor. This makes Cogburn a perfect fit for the star image of Wayne. The eye-patch worn by Cogburn, however, suggests he is unable to see everything clearly. In an ironic reversal of his media image, Wayne is given lines belittling Texas and Texans, and therefore attacking values at the ideological heart of his personal version of American patriotism.

During the 1960s and 70s, American filmmakers emboldened by the shifting political currents of the period begin to view the American West in a more detached, analytical manner. And this enhanced reflexivity is found even in such an obvious Wayne star-vehicle as *The Shootist*. If Wayne here indeed plays "*the honourable gunfighter out of place in the largely cynical modernity of the days following the death of Queen Victoria*"³, much more to the point is the fact that the old construct of 'Wayne' himself is out of place in the largely cynical modernity of the 1960s and 70s.

Social tensions within the contemporary period are played out in the characters Wayne plays after the war. Yet, the matrix of 'Wayne' is not an unproblematic expression of a dominant ideology working to deny the legitimacy of alternative or oppositional ideologies. It is too easy to see Wayne's presence as simply a powerful means of reinforcing dominant right-wing ideas. Wayne as star operates as a site of struggle. In films like *The Alamo* and *The Green Berets* (Kellogg, Wayne and LeRoy, 1968), where he has additional creative control, Wayne (desperately) continues to assert the value of the heroic male and American nationalism in the

face of growing youthful opposition and setbacks in American foreign policy; but in other films there is more to Wayne's star image than this allows.

In Wayne's post-WWII films there are recurring strategies for dealing with that which is perceived as 'evil' or 'uncivilised', and we might like to reflect on these in relation to current US foreign policies. The key tactic is to 'take out' those who are seen as leaders of any 'axis of evil', like Scar but also like Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin) in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (Ford, 1962), and to cross borders in order to do so if necessary as in *Rio Grande* (Ford, 1950). On each occasion these actions are extra-judicial. Tom Doniphon (Wayne), for example, describes his killing of Liberty Valance as "*cold-blooded murder*" before adding "*but I can live with it*". *The Searchers* is interesting in that it posits a further possible tactic when faced with what your society sees as 'evil', and that is the 'final solution'.

Notes and References

¹ Drew Casper, *Postwar Hollywood: 1946-1962*, Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007, p. 342.

² Scott Simmon, *The Invention of the Western Film: A Cultural History of the Genre's First Half-Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 230.

³ Phillip Drummond, 'The Shootist', in Ed Buscombe (ed.), *The BFI Companion to the Western*, London: Museum of the Moving Image, 1991, p. 299.

24 / Fear of the Sexual Gaze in the Boxing Genre, 1930-1959

Amanda J. Field

The Hollywood Boxing Genre

Throughout the classic Hollywood period, the boxing genre was consistently popular. Across the three decades from 1930 to 1959, over 150 feature films were released with boxing at the heart of the story. They came from all the major studios, from the independents and from the 'Poverty Row' studios such as Monogram and Republic. A number of long-running B-movie series, such as those featuring the Bowery Boys and Maisie, included a boxing-themed release or two, and the genre even had its own dedicated series, based on Joe Palooka, a character from a popular newspaper cartoon-strip.

Boxing films were not just the province of the Bs: the genre attracted some top stars, including James Cagney, who starred in *Winner Take All* (Del Ruth, 1932) and *City For Conquest* (Litvak, 1940); John Garfield in *They Made Me a Criminal* (Berkeley, 1939) and *Body and Soul* (Rossen, 1947); Kirk Douglas in *Champion* (Robson, 1949); Errol Flynn in *Gentleman Jim* (Walsh, 1942); and Paul Newman in *Somebody Up There Likes Me* (Wise, 1956).

During much of this period films were governed by the Production Code, which regulated what could be shown on screen, and although studios were frequently asked to tone down the level of brutality in fight scenes, there was one aspect of the films that the censorship regime could do little about: the male stars spent much of their time on-screen semi-naked. The rigours of the Code meant that exposed flesh could only be shown when motivated by the plot, or when dealing with 'natives' (which is why it was acceptable to show Paul Robeson half-naked as Bosambo in *Sanders of the River* in 1935).¹

Even in these circumstances, there was a dividing line: action shots were acceptable, but lingering shots of a passive body were not. In this essay I will show that a great deal of 'lingering' nevertheless went on in boxing films of this era - and that there was an overt display of the male body designed to attract the sexual gaze of the female members of the audience (and, unspoken, the male members of the audience too). But I will argue that in tension with this, there was also a fear of sexualisation, something which is noticeable in the way the script, the cinematography, or the direction seeks to distract or neutralise the gaze.

Sexualising the Boxer

In terms of the sexualisation of the boxer's body, that is the display of the body beyond what was required to depict realistic action in the ring, let us look at two examples, starting with Errol Flynn in *Gentleman Jim*. This was a Warner Brothers biopic of boxer Jim Corbett, a period costume drama set in Los Angeles in the 1880s, at the point when the Queensbury Rules were just being introduced into boxing. Flynn plays the part of Corbett, who rises from humble bank clerk to world heavyweight champion of the world when he beats the great John L. Sullivan.

From the outset it is clear that it is Flynn's body that is the focus of the gaze, not that of his female co-star Alexis Smith, who remains cloaked in Victorian flounces and frills while Flynn's body is gradually and titillatingly stripped of its clothing. Flynn begins by sparring in his bank clerk's suit at the Olympic Club, works out in long leggings and vest, then fights bare-chested and even, at one point in an illegal dockside match, falls into the water, climbing out soaking wet to resume the fight, in a scene which is clearly designed to call attention to, and sexualise, his body.

A comment from a small boy among the ringside spectators at one of his early fights underlines the point: "*Mummy*", he cries. "*Why doesn't daddy look like that in his underwear?*" Flynn's sexual appeal, as Flynn's biographer David Bret implies, was to male and female viewers, and the studio cannot have been unaware of this.² His star persona, with his reputation for womanising and wild parties - he was actually in court answering a charge of statutory rape when this film was released - helped inform his sexualisation in *Gentleman Jim*.

What perhaps saved the film in the eyes of the Production Code was that Corbett is as much a figure of fun, for his arrogance, vanity and hubris, as he is an object of the lustful gaze. Kirk Douglas, as anti-hero Midge Kelly in *Champion*, is the object of a similarly conflicted gaze, but here the conflict is between his beautiful body and his repellent character. *Champion*, made as an independent in 1949, tells the story of penniless drifter Midge Kelly, who rises to become world champion but dies in the ring after successfully defending his title.

Douglas joked in his autobiography that he was the only man in Hollywood who had to strip to get a part, and certainly there are many low-angle shots of his body in the ring, leaning against the ropes, as he awaits the beginning of his fights, and in scenes at his country training camp, his body shot so that it looks almost superhuman. Outside the ring, however, the display of his body becomes more problematic. When he dances with Palmer, his manager's wife, at a nightclub, he is suave and sophisticated, seemingly unfazed when Palmer asks him "*did you know you had a beautiful body?*".

How did that line get past the censors? Simple: Palmer is a sculptor and is presumed to have a professional rather than lustful interest in his body at this point. Back at Palmer's studio, he poses, bare-chested, on a plinth, the camera at a low angle looking up at his body, which is lit with a golden glow. This time there is no 'action' to shoot - just his passive body - and, as if aware of his objectification, Kelly becomes angry, stepping down from the pedestal and violently twisting the clay head of the maquette that Palmer is modelling.

The Boxer De-sexualised

In many boxing films, however, it seems that the studios were caught between overt sexualisation of the boxer's body and working to *de*-sexualise it. They did this in two main ways. The first method was what could be called distraction or deflection techniques, constantly cutting away from fight-scenes to show comic reaction-shots of the crowd. This might be understandable in comedic boxing films such as the *Palooka* features and two-reelers, or Marin's *Ringside Maisie* (aka *Cash and Carry*, 1941), but it is present even in dark melodrama.

In *They Made Me a Criminal*, for example, the climax is the fight between Johnnie Bradfield (played by John Garfield) and Gaspar Huthek. This is a crucial fight, not just because Bradfield wants to win, but because he is on the run, wanted for murder, and at the ringside is the policeman (played by Claude Rains) who has been tailing him, convinced he's the fugitive. All he really knows about Bradfield is that he's a southpaw (a left-handed boxer), and much of the tension of the fight comes from the fact that, in order not to be identified, Bradfield is fighting *right*-handed - and taking a beating.

Despite the darkness of the mood, the scene has constant cutaways from the action to show the Dead End Kids in the stadium audience, feinting with their fists in imitation of what's happening in the ring, and a Grandma Rafferty knocking off the hat of the man seated in front of her - shown not once but again and again. Arguably the purpose of these cutaways might be to limit the level of brutality shown on screen - but I sense a nervousness on the part of

the studios in respect of any sustained images of the half-naked fighters.

The second way of de-sexualising the body was through seeking to neutralise its erotic power. This is sometimes done by feminising the fighter, sometimes by constructing him as a wild animal or a primitive creature, and sometimes by portraying him as childlike, his bodily urges something that cannot be helped. An example of feminisation is represented by the lead character in Mamoulian's *Golden Boy* (1939). Italian-American Joe Bonaparte, played by William Holden in his first screen role, has to choose between boxing and playing the violin for a living - between brute masculinity and a sensitive femininity. The dialogue makes this explicit as a choice between the values of the jungle (the body), and the values of the nuclear family (the soul).

In some of the shots where the son agonises about this choice, the nuclear family is present not just in the figure of his father, but in the presence of an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, part of the Holy Family, on the wall behind them. As Leger Grindon observes, "*In order to cultivate his soul, the boxer must take on attributes associated with the female*"³ and that is exactly what eventually happens in *Golden Boy*. I would argue that these attributes help prevent Joe's body being defined too uncomfortably the object of the sexual gaze. (We might note that the musician/boxer dichotomy is also later used in other films including *Kid Nightingale* (Amy, 1939), *Here Comes Mr. Jordan* (Hall, 1941), *The Joe Louis Story* (Gordon, 1953) - and, with a slight twist, *City For Conquest*).

The Boxers as Primitive

Fighters are often compared, visually or in the dialogue, to animals, something that makes them somehow not responsible for their sexuality, and therefore less threatening. They are primitives whose sexuality is shown to be just a basic urge that will be trained out of them once they evolve. In *The Harder They Fall*, for example, Robson's account of the exploitation of fighters, Toro Moreno, played by Mike Lane, is billed as "*The Wild Man of the Andes*", a "*Goliath*", a "*strange throwback to the giants of prehistoric time*". He begins his professional boxing tour in California because, as Eddie (the investigative reporter played by Humphrey Bogart) says, "*they like freak attractions out there.*"

As if to underline the 'King Kong' analogy, all the camerawork in *The Harder They Fall* works to emphasise Toro's size, with low-angle shots that make him tower above everyone else. Similar animal or primitive, analogies appear in *The Set-Up* (Wise, 1949), when the rather sinister manager, Mr. Roberts, says "*I like fighters better than horses*", thus categorising both as dumb animals, and in *Kid 'Monk' Baroni*, Leonard Nimoy's first film (Schuster, 1952), in which he plays a disfigured fighter who is told his face is "*positively atavistic*".

Toro Moreno also has a childlike quality, something that is emphasised again and again in the boxing genre to defuse and rationalise the fighters' greedy desire for money, sex, drink, food and expensive clothes. Fighters are portrayed as simple-minded and docile: as one of the managers in *The Harder They Fall* says of his charge: "*he couldn't even go out and buy a pair of shoes without me*" and when, as Joe

Palooka comes round from a knockout punch in *Palooka* (1936), he calls out for his mother. When Charley Davis hits the big-time in *Body and Soul* he expresses childish joy at the luxuries of his new world, parading in front of the mirror in his new overcoat, and - in a scene reminiscent of Tony Camonte bouncing on the bed in *Scarface* (Hawks, 1932) - expressing a delight at the built-in bar in his apartment.

The Boxer and His Handler

Many fight films include scenes in the dressing-room - indeed, some films, including *The Square Ring* and *The Set-Up*, barely emerge from the dressing room at all. Here where fighters lie prone on the couch, clad just in their shorts, and have their bodies massaged. Their passive position has the potential to objectify their bodies, but the nature of the 'handler' (I'd suggest the name of this role is very significant because it harks back to the animal analogy) mitigates any possible homoerotic qualities the scene might have. Instead, the boxers have become like children, having their wounds tended by a parent-figure.

In Dearden's *The Square Ring*, made for Britain's Ealing Studios in 1953, the handler is Danny, played by Jack Warner. Danny's 'motherly' qualities are exhibited through the physical contact he has with the boxers and through the way he witnesses almost none of the fighting himself, trapped in the dressing room waiting anxiously for the boxers to return 'home'. The motherly analogies can be extended to the clothes he wears - for example, a shawl-necked jumper which softens his appearance - and the domestic actions he undertakes, such as sweeping the dressing-room floor with a broom. Intimate touching of the boxers' bodies, therefore, has become neutralised.

I am not arguing that these decisions, by directors or cinematographers, were necessarily conscious. Clearly they were aware of the restrictions of the Production Code, but I would suggest that their only conscious de-sexualisation of the boxer is in the way his relationship with women is portrayed. In most fight-films of this period the narrative pits the love of the 'good woman' - usually the childhood sweetheart - against the lust of the glamorous gold-digger.

Boxers and Women

Whereas the gold-digger makes no secret of her worship of the fighter's body - in Tennyson's 1939 British film *There Ain't No Justice*, the *femme fatale* Mrs. Frost actually licks her lips as she watches the boxer in the ring - the 'good woman' cannot bear to see him fight, covering her face, while the gold-digger screams "*kill him!*" from ringside. The audience is clearly meant to side with the 'good woman', the moral force in the boxer's life, and implicitly, therefore, we are asked to side with a romantic perspective rather than a lustful gaze.

Of course, not every half-naked male fighter is the potential object of desire. Sometimes their bodies are on display only for ridicule, such as Charlie Chaplin's body in his *City Lights* (1931), and Harold Lloyd's in McCarey's *The Milky Way* (1936). Lloyd plays Burleigh Sullivan, a weedy milkman who is mistaken for a fighter and begins a career of fixed fights. Much is made of Lloyd's body, which is the very opposite of what a boxer's body is expected to look like. At the country retreat where Sullivan trains, the usual tropes of the genre are parodied.

As Sullivan runs joyfully to the training ground, the trainer's girlfriend compliments him on his appearance: he is wearing

oversized baggy shorts held up with braces over his naked and under-developed chest, and, of course, Lloyd's trademark spectacles. Delighted by her praise, Sullivan runs on, leaping a hedge only to land in the pond and arriving at the practice ring soaking wet. The 'gaze' is thus drawn to his body in exactly the same way that it would be to Errol Flynn's wet body in *Gentleman Jim* where he falls from the ring into the dock - but with very different results.

Notes and References

¹ Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 146.

² David Brett, *Errol Flynn: Satan's Angel*, London: Robson Books, p. 126.

³ Leger Grindon, 'Body and Soul: Structure of Meaning in the Boxing Film Genre', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 35 no. 4, 1996, p. 61.

25 / Mohamed Saad, el-Limby and the Popularisation of the Masculine Code in Egyptian Cinema

Koen Van Eynde

Mohamed Saad el-Limby

This essay is part of my research on the representation of men and masculinities in contemporary popular Egyptian cinema. I analyse one specific male type, based on his uniqueness in Egyptian films as well as in society. The type was invented for the cinema by the actor Mohamed Saad, one of the highest earning contemporary Egyptian actors. It is difficult to know his precise worth, but reports run as high as 15 million Egyptian pounds (approximately £4m) per film. He is extremely famous and people from all walks of life know of him. He comes from a popular neighborhood in central Cairo and this background is built into the el-Limby character.

Mohamed Saad first appeared in films in the 1990s. His breakthrough, however, was only in 2000 when he was cast in the role of a little scoundrel called el-Limby in Abdullah's *El Nazer*. He himself proposed a specific way of depicting the character – with a speaking disorder, a little bit slow-witted, terrible dress-sense, and continuously drunk or on drugs – which delighted the public but was heavily criticised by reviewers. This is how the el-Limby character was born and within two years his film *El-Limby* (Ehsan, 2002) had topped the box office charts - which he would continue to do for several years to come.

Saad's movies belong to a particular kind of slapstick comedy. He started his acting career in a period during which Egyptian cinema has witnessed a growing number of Gulf country-sponsored commercial comedies which were thus adapted to a new and more conservative morality. Lately, this 'moral' cinema is often referred to as 'Clean Cinema'. Mohamed Saad considers himself to be a proponent of this 'Clean Cinema'¹, a trend that started in Egypt in the 1980s, although the name was not applied until the end of the following decade. 'Clean Cinema' avoids the three 'hot' topics: politics, religion, and sex.

Mohamed Saad's films are generally a-political and, although all his characters are Muslim, the films do not discuss Muslim-Christian relations. Being 'clean' thus comes down to a specific attitude towards women in his films. He is never seen in erotic scenes, he is not even together with women in situations which might arouse suspicion or provoke the audience. But, as we will see, this 'moralistic' interpretation of cinema can still provide quite provocative material in the case of el-Limby, not the least through cross-dressing,

references to homosexuality, and ridiculing his own 'masculine' behaviour.

The Masculine Code

And so, what is the 'masculine code' created by Mohamed Saad? What is his place in Egyptian society and how do his films relate to the audience? Can the audience identify with and recognize certain characteristics and aspects of the el-Limby character? If so, how do they identify with the character? How was he able to expand the character and make it popular? To answer these questions I will first look at how el-Limby is presented as a man within Egyptian society, which role he takes on and which role he sees himself in, as well as his particular attitude towards the people surrounding him. Drawing upon the work of Cynthia Freeland for my analysis of the film's gender ideology, I will try to explain the character's popularity.²

As we will see in this account of Mohamed Saad's characters, they look similar to how el-Messiri describes the Egyptian 'ibn al-balad' (literally translated as 'child of the country' or the Egyptian 'Average Joe'). El-Messiri describes 'ibn al-balad' as *"alert, intelligent, quick-witted, masculine, jovial, independent and extrovert"*.³ This description is parodied in the movies, and an analysis of those movies can offer thus insights into what Mohamed Saad and his characters think about idealised notions of masculinity. I understand parody here as Judith Butler has defined it: *"gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin"*.⁴ It is thus through a study of parody that we can also come to conclusions about what this upheld origin is thought to be.

The first impression we get of el-Limby, as I have mentioned, is that of a poor man, badly educated, either drunk or on drugs, and with no taste in clothes or accessories. Furthermore we quickly understand he comes from a lower social class and that he is stripped of any power or, literally, identity: he is not in the possession of any identification except for a membership card from a local sports club. In all his films there's a constant showing off his otherwise unattractive body. Central to his parody of the male body is the importance he places on facial or body hair.

The most obvious account is in *Katkout* (Awad, 2006), where the eponymous protagonist sports a thick moustache and whiskers. Katkout is from Upper-Egypt, an area where a man's moustache represents a man's honour – at least according to the film. So when he is forced to cut his beard, he gets hysterical to the point where he even takes off his shirt and trousers so that the barber can at least do a thorough job. He calls his hair "*ras arrujuli*", or the '*apex of masculinity*'. It is an exaggerated scene, which adds to the comedy, and the sense of parody is strong.

Katkout here is imitating something which isn't actually there, the image of a 'real' man. His parody of masculinity and manliness is also emphasised through the contrast between his extreme interest in his moustache as symbol of honour and his cowardly behavior earlier in the film when the village elders decide his fate. The purpose is to restore the honour of two rival families, a fate from which Katkout runs away. These two opposing scenes show the importance placed on outer appearances and the business of hypocrisy when it comes to so-called 'masculine behaviour'.

Marginalised Masculinity

Most of his characters are placed on the margins of Egyptian society. In this sense he takes a fatalistic and pessimistic view of the world around him. This is made clear from the first moments of *El-Limby*, when he is walking home drunk. We hear a police siren and the camera zooms in on his face, showing us the fear in his eyes. This is actually a very recognisable scene for many young Egyptians, since many indeed experience fear of the authorities, especially the country's poor, once they leave their protected neighborhood. Other encounters with authority are also shown in a negative light, for example when el-Limby is locked up, in *Do You Remember?* (Ehsan, 2003), or when Karkar's authoritarian father tries to kill him during his wedding night at the beginning of *Karkar* (Ragab, 2007).

The narratives are constructed in a way that emphasises el-Limby's uselessness. He is only moved to start working when potential threats pop up, as when Naim wants to reclaim his money or in the case of the bachelor who is interested in marrying el-Limby's fiancée. The projects he undertakes are not actually based on his own ideas and are also not initiated by him: the Sharm el-Sheikh bicycle project is his mother's idea, as well the one involving the sale of sandwiches in the street. Working as bodyguard for a Tunisian belly dancer is his friend's idea. And doing his reading and writing exam is a demand made by his fiancée before they can marry. Even the wedding itself, which he at first seems to be in control of, is subsequently put on hold by his father-in-law and his fiancée Noosa. It is finally his mother and Noosa who agree together on the wedding details, while

el-Limby himself is permitted no right to intervene – he is even sent outside while the two women agree on the details.

Saad's characters still consider themselves, however, to be very manly men. In the tradition of the '*futuwwa*' films, el-Limby is a kind of vigilante, the protector of the neighborhood, known but also feared by everyone – or at least that is what he is trying to accomplish.⁵ He carries around a knife and acts tough around people weaker than himself. But when he is confronted with other men in a fight, he either runs away or the fight is conveniently cut short. When he does pretend to get into a fight, he always takes off his shirt. (I have been told by viewers that this does not only mean he is showing off his body; it is rather a way of not getting his shirt dirty or torn during the fight so that he can put it back on afterwards and hide the fact that he got beaten up.)

Violence towards women is shown in most of his films except for *El-Limby* and *Do You Remember?*, his two first movies with the main character called el-Limby. In the later films Saad's characters emphasise violence towards weaker men and towards some women as part of his development of his desired masculine image. It is done in a comedic way however, which confirms our impression of el-Limby as a coward. Yes he can be cocky and tough towards people he perceives to be in a lesser position than himself, but he repeatedly runs away from every real challenge facing him. Nevertheless, the fights are always intended to be funny. In this way the fights not merely demonstrate his violence towards women or weaker persons, what is stressed is his inability of dealing with people in general. These violent scenes moreover confirm his understanding of masculinity as a performance and expose its constructed nature. He is only

performing and acting tough, thinking it makes him look more masculine. But in reality he is simply trying to cover up his fear.

A telling scene in *Karkar* takes place on Karkar's wedding night (but this time at the end of the film). He manages to marry both a man (dressed up as a woman) and a woman, respectively his cousin and his niece. During the wedding night both are terrified, but the director emphasises the (real) woman's fear through swift camera movements and Dutch angles. In the end, the woman's father helps her out by striking Karkar unconscious. An Egyptian friend interpreted this scene as follows: *"The loud music and unstable camera show that the director might consider a woman unable to defend herself from the mad Karkar. That is also why nobody entered the bedroom to 'save' Karkar's cousin, while the girl's father did enter and pulled Karkar away from her."*

The Appeal of el-Limby

The first films were widely accepted for many reasons. He not only proposed a new character to Egyptian cinema, he also broached some previously tacit social concerns with his new and comedic style. He also did this in a way sympathetic to the audience; after all he was a good guy ending up in unfortunate situations. Furthermore, he incorporated in his films lots of references to Egyptian popular culture (such as for example songs by the popular singer Umm Kulthum) as well as references to recognisable characters in society.

In these comedies Mohamed Saad is offering us subversive images of men; references to homosexuality are plentiful in all his films; and quasi-erotic belly dancing is indispensable

for all his characters. He is criticising the lack of support from family or authorities in accomplishing the goals which have been put in place for him by that same society: providing, procreating, and protecting. Although trying several times for a job, he always ends up unemployed, which means that he is unable to get married. All these elements are widely recognisable, as Mohamed Saad himself well understands: *"There's a little bit of el-Limby in every Egyptian man."*⁶

Being marginalised in society, his characters aim to mimic what they see is a successful 'brand' of masculinity and maleness. He does this often through violence towards people he thinks he can handle, but shows us at the same time his cowardly attitude exposing his actual lack of power. In these films it becomes clear that society is pressing men, including el-Limby, to assert their masculinity through power, to be in control, which he simply cannot manage to do, for the reasons already discussed. His characters are a re-styling of the concept of *'ibn al-balad'*, parodied and ridiculed at times, but nevertheless upheld as an ideal for Egyptian men. Since his characters and their personalities are highly recognisable, viewers can identify partly with them. The sense of recognition which many viewers experience as they watch el-Limby and his playful dalliance with the male image is an important feature of their popularity.

Notes and References

¹ See Ahmed Farouk, 'Lan Atanazal 'An el-Limby (I won't give up el-Limby)', *Al-Shorouk*, 7 July 2010, p. 15.

² Cynthia A. Freeland, 'Feminist Frameworks for Horror Films', in David Bordwell and Noel Carroll (eds.), *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Theory*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996, p. 205.

³ Sawsan el-Messiri, *Ibn al-Balad: A Concept of Egyptian Identity*, Leiden: Brill, 1978, p. 54.

⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd ed., New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, p. 188.

⁵ On the 'fatuwwa' films, see Lizbeth Malkmus and Roy Armes, *Arab and African Filmmaking*, London: Zed Books, 1991, pp. 101-102.

⁶ Mohamed Saad in Farouk, 'Lan Atanazal 'An el-Limby', p. 15.

5. Ontologies

26 / The Cinematic Image: From Phantasmagoria to Constraint

Ted Hovet

Early Projections

*"The projection room ... is hung with portentous black on exhibition evenings ... The effect of these sombre draperies ... [is] horribly impressive, and one's sense of the supernatural is heightened when a figure suddenly springs into his path, acting and talking with a vigor which leaves him totally unprepared for its mysterious vanishing. Projected stereoscopically, the results are even more realistic ... and a pleasing rotundity is apparent. Nothing more marvelous or more natural could be imagined than these breathing, audible forms with their tricks of familiar gestures and speech."*¹

W.K.L. Dickson wrote this account of a projected motion picture in 1895. What interests me is not the accuracy of

Dickson's description - after all, he makes claims for features that were simply not feasible at the time - but the specific qualities that he attributed to a projected movie. In 1895, of course, no one really knew whether projected motion pictures were viable as mass entertainment, or what exactly they might look like to an audience. So Dickson, in his fanciful description, draws on characteristics of projected entertainment that already existed. In particular, he infuses motion picture projection with the qualities of phantasmagoria.

Phantasmagoric entertainments, which emerged on a large scale in Europe in the late 18th century, employed effects like mobile lantern projectors, hidden screens, and sound effects to shock and disorient the viewer. Dickson's vision of motion picture projection includes many phantasmagoric features: a curtain that disguises the mechanism of projection, a supernatural atmosphere in a darkened room, and figures appearing, changing, and disappearing in a sudden manner. He is thus attributing to motion picture projection the same mysterious and otherworldly qualities associated with phantasmagoric entertainments.

Dickson was certainly not the only one to borrow phantasmagoric terms to describe motion pictures. What is the notorious 'train effect', for that matter, other than a variation of a phantasmagoric effect? If some audience members may have believed that a moving train in early projected motion pictures could come right off the screen, perhaps they were responding to experiences with phantasmagoric manipulations of images that grew or shrunk rapidly and, at times, hovered over the audience. Whether a genuine experience or an invention of those eager to promote the new medium - and probably it was both -

publicity about the train effect linked motion picture exhibition to the phantasmagoric tradition of mysterious images running rampant in darkened rooms.

This use of phantasmagoric language to describe early motion pictures, however exaggerated or fanciful, set up an expectation about cinema that it still strives to meet in the 21st Century. Specifically, this expectation (one now carried over to other screen-based visual media like TVs and computers) drives us to believe - or to want to believe - that the motion picture image can transcend the limitations of a two-dimensional image that remains stuck on a flat screen.

The shock and disorientation caused by a phantasmagoric experience comes not simply from its content (though ghouls and demons were quite popular), but from the illusion that its images floated free from the boundaries of any screen or structure that could safely contain them. In this sense the current trend toward 3D cinema echoes Dickson's supernatural figures and the Lumières' uncontainable train. More than a century after Dickson's account, cinema is still trying to live up to the phantasmagoric experience that he imagined.

But for most of its history motion picture projection has not been in any sense phantasmagoric. Thus the experience of viewing a movie has always carried with it an undertone of disappointment because it hasn't lived up to its expectations. As early as 1896 the London *Daily News*, investigating the new 'cinematograph', finds that: "*it shows us a series of phantom realities - sombre in colour, painfully and wonderfully silent*" and concludes that it "*carries us back to that simple-minded London of sixty years ago, when a diving-bell and diver in a fish-pond were an instructive diversion.*"²

To this reviewer, motion pictures, far from being futuristic, appeared to be sixty years out of date. While some could make themselves believe that these moving projections in a darkened room took on life-like, multi-dimensional qualities, others were distinctly unimpressed with these small, flickering images confined to a little rectangle on the wall.

The Standardisation of Display

Given the obvious interest in phantasmagorical projection from the very beginning, why were motion pictures two-dimensional? Was it merely a technological limitation, or did other factors encourage this new medium to remain in two dimensions rather than three, to settle for the natural rather than the supernatural? Were motion pictures, in fact, a taming of projected effects, a way to contain, control, and (most importantly) package images in a relatively safe and simple form? To address these various pressures early promoters of motion pictures developed two strategies that still profoundly influence our experience and expectations of cinema today.

First, they asked the public to wait patiently for significant improvements that were just around the corner. C. Francis Jenkins, for instance, assured those reading his 1897 guide to motion pictures that *"There are now pending in the Patent Office two applications, each of which will greatly enhance the beauty of these pictures. One is designed to produce stereoscopic effects, and the other to give the colors of nature."*³ Similar predictions abounded in the early years of the medium. Though these claims may appear preposterous in retrospect, the industry has always promised improvements that are on the near horizon.

Consider, for instance, the buzz surrounding the filming of *The Hobbit* at 48 frames per second, which promises more life-like images and to make viewing 3D images more comfortable. But as recently as April 2011 the director Peter Jackson admitted that there may not be many theatres that will be able to show the film in 48fps, and assures us that it will look fine on the standard 24fps.⁴ Like Jenkins in 1897, the industry today asks us to wait patiently for future effects that will somehow free the image from its current limitations.

Second, the early motion picture industry moved to standardise the display of motion pictures in a remarkably rapid and thorough manner. Far from exploiting phantasmagoric possibilities, the industry quickly established a system of technical specifications in filming, printing, and projecting that resulted in a highly conservative method of display. These standards confined the motion picture image to single, rectangular borders with a fixed ratio of 1.33:1. The area covered by that rectangle could vary depending on the distance from projector to screen, and at the point of filming the rectangular area could be masked or split into other shapes, but the outer borders and the ratio never altered. The boundaries or 'frame' of motion picture projection, unlike phantasmagoric lantern projections, would always be clear, measureable, and fixed in one stable location.

In describing this method of display as highly conservative I am referring in part the intentional elimination of variation within a complex system in order to efficiently mass-produce a single item that maximised its value in terms of economic exchange. This fixed standard of display helped to smooth the path to the worldwide distribution of motion pictures.

The ubiquitous establishment of this standard, though, left some commentators feeling that technical and aesthetic factors had been short-changed in favor of commercial expediency. An article published in 1908 complains about this pointedly: *"It is remarkable that the standard adopted by Edison in these Kinetoscope films should have been so strikingly adhered to. Various improvements were made at a later date, the Biograph for instance employed a much larger film and Lumière subjects ... were universally acknowledged to be much superior to the Edison standard product, but in the early days of the trade Edison's name was everything and any suggestion that his model should be departed from permanently would not be listened to, with the result that the [standard] ... has become so general that it could not be modified without extensive alterations in existing machines."*⁵

Defining Exhibition

Such *"extensive alterations"* were hardly an economically viable option. Instead the industry moved to a highly rationalised vision of projection that contrasts sharply with the supernatural, phantasmagoric mysteries of Dickson's projection room or the rumours of the Lumières' runaway train. Further, these two strategies of display, the establishment of a single gauge and the creation of expectations for future improvements, established the normal and 'natural' way of viewing a motion picture. Together they constructed a powerful rhetorical assertion about what motion pictures were and what they could become that operated apart from any specific content of the images.

In the words of Lawrence Prelli, *"displays are rhetorical because the meanings they manifest before situated*

*audiences result from selective processes and, thus, constitute partial perspectives with political, social, or cultural implications.”*⁶ The ‘partial perspective’ of motion picture display is especially evident when contrasted with the display of phantasmagoric images. Tom Ruffles’ description of Etienne-Gaspard Robertson’s phantasmagoric displays in 1790s Paris features details that once again echoed in Dickson’s early vision of projection:

*“Robertson introduced black backgrounds to the images so that they stood out in the darkness, not having borders that would show them to be pictures. This also made it impossible to judge distances, upon which the illusion of the apparitions’ approaching and receding depended. Since the screen was not let down until after the house lights had dimmed, it was impossible for the audience to provide a frame of reference for the images, which seemed to float in the air.”*⁷

By contrast, motion picture display, though also taking place in a darkened room, had clear borders that made evident the status of its images as pictures. In fact many early motion picture exhibitors actually put gilded frames around the projected image, as in the famous advertisement for Edison’s Vitascope. Motion picture images, instead of floating in the air phantasmagorically, were displayed on a wall like a painting. This method made the frame of reference clear (and literal), while eliminating any potential disorientation on the part of the viewer. This careful framing of the motion picture image functioned rhetorically to define the medium and distinguish it from other forms of visual entertainment.

Early motion pictures could be viewed in a wide range of venues - opera houses, fairgrounds, variety shows, travelling exhibitions - that reflected the volatile status and uncertain

future of the medium. But wherever a motion picture was viewed, its method of display (with the exception of a few short-lived experiments) remained precisely the same: the static rectangular borders with fixed dimensions 'hung' on a wall. I would argue that this careful, conservative framing was crucial to the effort to legitimise motion pictures - and to increase their economic viability.

Though comparisons to phantasmagoria generated mystery and excitement, comparisons to a framed painting hanging on a wall evoked something safe, something easily understood and reproduced, and something cultured enough to escape associations with more disreputable or transient forms. The consistency of display also made it relatively easy to modify existing venues and, eventually, to create ones dedicated to motion picture exhibition. After all, every film and every machine used to show film had - much to the dismay of the author of the piece I quoted earlier - the same specifications for display. All that was needed was a flat, stable, and reasonably light and clean surface that the stationary viewer could quietly observe. No longer would motion picture display be compared directly or indirectly to other forms of projection, it would be measured against its own clearly defined standard.

The Rhetoric of the Rectangle

Even something as simple as the rectangular shape of the borders of the motion picture image functioned rhetorically. In the decade or so preceding the development of motion picture exhibition, strong efforts were made in both still photography and magic lantern shows to eliminate circular framing and masking in favor of the rectangle or, as it was often called at the time, the oblong. John Hodges, speaking

to the Royal Photographic Society in 1895, insists that *"Squares, circles, domes and ovals will rarely be found suitable.... Eccentricity of any kind should be avoided, oblong openings will be found to best suit the majority of subjects."*⁸

Why this emphasis on the rectangle? In 1894 the *British Journal Photographic Annual* explains that *"we use a rectangular form because, being conventional, it attracts the least attention and the spectator is unconscious of the boundaries. The arrangement or composition of every picture should be such that its boundaries should not be felt to be restricting, and there should be such interest within the confining lines that the eye feels no desire to wander, and the mind no wish to inquire of what else the world was composed."*⁹ In short the rectangle functioned rhetorically to position the image in an unambiguous space that draws the viewer's undivided attention, shutting out any distraction or mystery. The frame becomes not only standardised, it becomes invisible.

One of the main functions of emerging industry organisations such as the Society for Motion Picture Engineers was to create specifications to ensure an unquestioned adherence to this standard. In an address to the meeting of the Society in 1916, W.B. Wescott confidently states: *"Set a standard for the picture on the screen, and the precision limits of all your important standards are determined."*¹⁰ In other words, the technical specifications of the entire industry were built around "the picture on the screen," that simple stationary rectangle beyond which the image, and eventually the story, never strayed. All content must fit into this predetermined display.

One can watch motion pictures in any number of venues and platforms today, but its display has changed very little in the vast majority of viewing experiences (other than the wider rectangle that became standard a half century or so ago). Yet the recent rise of 3D projection, a trend that already seems in danger of once again falling out of favour, shows the persistence of that simultaneous expectation for something that transcends that fixed standard.

Motion picture display thus rests on a paradox. However strict and consistent its standards, it always leaves open the possibility of developments that will allow the image to smash through those limits like the Lumière train. From the earliest predictions of colour and 3D in the 1890s to the anticipation today of more frames per second - and more and better 3D - cinema still leaves open the possibility of a phantasmagoric experience that it never fully delivers, and which, as Dickson knew very well back in 1895, it has many reasons not to.

Notes and References

¹ W. K. L. Dickson and Antonia Dickson, *History of the Kinetograph, Kinetoscope, and Kinetophone* (1895), New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2000, pp. 15-18.

² 'This Morning's News', *London Daily News*, 16 March 1896, p. 5.

³ C. Francis Jenkins, *Picture Ribbons: An Exposition of the Methods and Apparatus Employed in the Manufacture of the Picture Ribbons used in Projecting Lanterns to Give the Appearance of Objects in Motion*, Washington: H.L. McQueen, 1897, p. 23.

⁴ 'Peter Jackson Answers: Why 48 FPS for *The Hobbit*?', www.the-hobbitmovie.com, 26 April 2011.

⁵ 'Then and Now', *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly*, vol. 3 no. 81, 1908, p. 729.

⁶ Lawrence Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006, p. 11.

⁷ Tom Ruffles, *Ghost Images: Cinema of the Afterlife*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004, p. 21.

⁸ John Hodges, 'Lantern Slide Making as an Art', *The Photographic Journal*, vol. 20 no. 3, November 1895, p. 62.

⁹ 'Why Adopt a Rectangular Form of Picture?', *The British Journal Photographic Almanac*, 1894, pp. 809-10.

¹⁰ W.B. Wescott, 'Precision, the Dominant Factor in Motion Picture Machines', *Transactions of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers*, no. 2, 1916.

27 / The Interface between Live Action and Animation in Contemporary Film

Ling-Yuan Fabia Lin

Introduction

Digital has become commonplace in the filmmaking process. As observed by Lev Manovich, this has brought back manual construction in contemporary cinema, and made cinema, the once indexical media technology, no longer clearly distinguished from animation.¹ In fact, from the beginning of the invention of the cinematic apparatus, experimentation with the interface between live action and animation has been a crucial impetus for the evolution of cinematic language. The extraordinary blurring of these two opposing yet at the same time interrelated manoeuvres thus has a deep impact on the aesthetics of cinema. This essay proposes that subjectivity is an effective trope for investigating the formal manipulation of the integration between live action and animation, and that the blurring between the two can be examined by the construction of subjectivity in contemporary hybrid works.

To validate this, the essay first examines three aspects of the development of live-action/animated hybrid experimentation to see how the issue of subjectivity is underlined in integrating these two media: the switching of subjective vision in pre-cinematic times, the subjectivity expressed by self-figuration in early hybrid films, and the montage of subjectivity. It then draws on two contemporary hybrid works to examine how filmmakers reflect on hyper-realised subjectivity by using the integration of live action and animation as an artistic device.

Subjective Vision in Pre-Cinematic Times

Devices like Phenakistiscope, Stroboscope and Zoetrope emerged along with numerous discoveries to do with the capacities of the human eye. They were firstly devised as scientific instruments and then quickly became mass entertainment. As indicated by Jonathan Crary, they are inextricably dependent on a new arrangement of knowledge about the body – the normalisation and subjection of the subject.² On the one hand, the optical experiences these devices manufacture are clearly disjunct from the images used in the devices, and thus they manifest a rupture between perception and its object. On the other hand, these devices show a dependence on ‘subjective vision’, a vision which relies on the observer’s physiological capacities. It turns the passive observer into the *producer* of forms of verisimilitude at the same time.

Under these circumstances, what ‘realism’ means in the 19th Century apparently marks a departure from the idea shaped by Empiricist or Positivist practices. What it actually leads to is a radical abstraction and reconstruction of optical experience, the kind of ‘realistic’ effect produced by devices

like the stereoscope rather than photography. Photography breaks with the philosophical stand underlined by most 19th-Century optical entertainments. It abolished the fixed viewing position claimed by the optical toys, and made the new camera an apparatus fundamentally independent of the spectator. Therefore, in terms of the subjectivity of the viewer, photography and pre-cinematic optical toys present a dialectical relation of inversion and opposition. This relation formed a part of the inception of cinema, and is still embodied in cinema when it is understood as 'photographs plus animatic apparatus'.

The Animated and the Animator in Early Films

According to Donald Crafton, animated cinema could not have existed before cinema came into being around 1895. What he has emphasised is that the pre-history of cinema and animation are inseparable.³ The term 'live-action' does not figure in many dictionaries, and where it does, the definition is often of a dependent nature. For example, *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines 'live-action' as "*of, relating to, or featuring cinematography that is not produced by animation*". On this account it is by contrast with 'animation' that the definition of 'live-action' can be established as the non-exercise of animation.

Early animations, as Crafton has pointed out, could be characterised by the operation of 'self-figuration', a tendency of the filmmaker to interject himself into his film. This is manifest in the world's first two true attempts at animation, Stuart Blackton's *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* (1906) and Emile Cohl's *Fantasmagorie* (1908). Both of them begin with the artist's hand at work. In general what the live-action hand does in these films are two things: to make or to erase

drawings, that is, to give or to cancel life. Through the intervention of the artist's hand, the knowing play with surface and depth, and the setting up of simulation and situation, early animators revealed the derivation of life on the screen. The animator plays the role of an almighty hand, an omniscient god, teasing out creation from his pen. Meanwhile, these drawings are unwilling to be passive creatures only, they resist, oppose, striving to earn their own existence and independency.

The Fleischer brothers' 1920s hybrid cartoon series *Out of the Inkwell* continued this strategy in a much more deliberate and elaborate way. One of their earliest works, *Tantalizing Fly* (1920), is the culmination of the interweaving of the flesh-and-blood and hand-drawn worlds. It starts with an animator sitting drawing a cartoon of a clown. A three-dimensional fly (a model) comes to rest on his paper and starts to harass both the animator and the clown. Both of them are irritated. The clown asks for the animator's pen and draws his own 'creature' to lure the fly.

Their attempts to get the fly are all in vain. Exasperated, the clown tears the paper and hides in the crevice. The animator picks up the paper and turns it around to expose the clown, who soon transfers into an ink-drop and slides down the page into the inkwell. The fly blindly follows, and the animator can finally capture the annoying insect. Such self-figurations were popular in the early days. They invested early animated films with a degree of reflexiveness which speaks of the subjectivity and autonomy of the drawn figures, and presented a kind of 'class struggle' between the animator and the animated.

The Montage of Subjectivity

Montage is a key 20th-Century method for creating artificial realities, the fundamental basis of fictional films. Manovich points out that temporal montage was especially privileged by film technology and film theory, while montage within a shot was encouraged by electronic video technology to realise modernist collage. When it comes to computer technology, the spatial dimension, which was never made much of in pre-digital time, becomes common and favoured. Therefore Manovich asserts that, in the digital era, the use of 'spatial montage' opens new possibilities as well as a new challenge for film practice and film theory.⁴

However, in the sphere of the live-action/animated hybrid, there is still another kind of montage often seen, that I will call montage within a character. This kind of montage involves the juxtaposition or blending of heterogeneous movement and figuration into one character. It often leads to confusion about the character's material or existential identity. Techniques here include old rotoscoping, pixillation, and motion capture - very popular in contemporary digital cinema. The earliest method of creating montage within a character in hybrid works was rotoscoping. It is a technique that allows animators to add film footage of human movement into drawn sequences, frame by frame.

It was first seen in the Fleischers' *Out of the Inkwell* series. While designed to produce a more life-like or naturalistic motion, the effect created by rotoscoping is an uncanny simulation of life and motion, human and non-human, and often brings about an eerie impression, giving the character an intriguing sense of existence. The audience cannot

comprehend its movement and performance, as well as its life-likeness, at the same time. It forces us into an awareness of both live action and animation, and renders the character's expression more perceptible.

The technique of pixillation is an inversion of rotoscoping, where live actors are imbued with frame-by-frame movement, making it a combination of photography and frame-by-frame animation. Giving life or spirit to lifeless people could produce a kind of bewildering liveness/lifelessness. It is therefore a somewhat paradoxical method and is often used to create compelling and eerie effects, as seen in the films of Norman McLaren, the Bolex Brothers, and the Brothers Quay. Both rotoscoping and pixillation are very suited to the expression of the existential states of estranged or alienated subjects.

The newest approach to montage within a character involves motion capture. Character is created by motion capture not only a seamless blending of the graphic and the photographic, but also a through a mixture of time-image and movement-image. This was never achieved by older technologies of montage within a character. But to simulate a human being is always controversial. The failure of the world's first full-CGI feature film, the Japanese-American co-production *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (Sakaguchi and Sakakibara, 2001) caused the demise of its production company. The poorly designed storyline is often blamed, but the peculiar quality of its leading character Aki Ross, the first photorealistic CGI heroine, also made a contribution.

Mori's 'uncanny valley' hypothesis – that when human features look and move almost, but not exactly, like natural human beings, a negative response occurs on the part of

human observers - has been repeatedly cited to prove that a truly realistic three-dimensional computerised human character is not feasible. As a result, a pseudo-human being becomes the best option, which can bring the capacities of the computer into full play without provoking criticism.

The success of the pseudo-human characters in *Avatar* (Cameron, 2009) confirmed again that the quest for the truly realistic CGI human being, as seen in *The Polar Express* (Zemeckis, 2004) or *Beowulf* (Zemeckis, 2007), is illusory. These weirdly realistic computer human beings, integrating machine vision (motion capture technology) and the animator's craft, are simultaneously being and not being the live actors they simulate. We might say that they are dead and alive at the same time. They certainly hold a strong potential to provoke issues concerning the feelings of existence and identity, but this dimension does not seem to attract many contemporary filmmakers yet.

Hyper-Realised Subjectivity

As Manovich notes, digital compositing presents a strong sense of anti-montage aesthetics, in which the combination of heterogeneous elements shows no intention to establish contrast, complementarities, or dissonance between them. This is a world characterised by culture theorists as a world of hyper-reality, where "*a cultural artefact is perceived as an improved copy, more 'real' than the original*".⁵ This is a process, where, as Virilio has suggested, our world and our lives effectively become 'cinematised' or 'mediatised', and our sense of reality increasingly becomes confused with a pervasive 'reality effect'.⁶ Instead of suggesting with Baudrillard that the real has simply disappeared and been replaced by simulacra, Virilio wants to call attention, as

Telotte summarises, to “a kind of abdication that marks the postmodern world: how we have increasingly allowed that ‘reality effect’ to stand in for the real”.⁷

For live-action/animated hybrids, not surprisingly, the dominant aesthetic - featuring photorealistic, seamless compositing, and harmonised, fantastic realism - simply reflects how we mix fear with desire, and the attempts to secure ourselves in an illusive world. This is a world described by Jameson as characterised by the “*decentering*” of the subject and the “*waning of affect*”, where human feelings are “*free-floating and impersonal and tend to be dominated by a peculiar kind of euphoria*”.⁸ In this case, how does a filmmaker respond to it on the strength of the integration of live action and animation?

An example of this comes from Canada in the form of Chris Lavis’s and Maciek Szczerbowski’s *Madame Tutli-Putli* (2007), which won the Best Short Film prize at Cannes in 2008. One aspect of excellence is its powerful visual blending of live-action and stop-frame animation. Intending to give puppets some “real soul”, the duo came upon an idea that had not been used by pre-digital precursors – tracking human eyes on the faces of stop-motion puppets. The eyes were so well blended with the head, giving the heroine an extraordinary realism. However, a disturbing feeling is also present here, subtly stimulating the viewer’s perception of what indeed it is to be ‘human’.

Another more radical example is the Japanese TV comedy series *The Fuccons* (Tokyo Channel 12 TV, 2004-), which features a family of Americans living in metropolitan Japan. The series is notable in that all of the characters are played by mannequins with perpetually frozen postures and facial

expressions. The only scene in the whole series that is animated is when little Micky Fucon imagines that he is a skilled dancer; he dances so vividly and nimbly that this scene becomes even stranger than all the uncanny mannequin stills. It could be argued that such absurdity is a form of continuation or even an elaboration of hyper-realism. Yet in a sense the absurdity actually renews the hyper-realist impetus by asking certain questions about the operations of performance and montage on the construction of moving images; and also about the human-like character in digital time.

Through its use of mannequins *The Fuccons* reminds us of the uncanniness of a human-like character, and so helps to recover the source of that originally startling effect which in the passage of time has been overlaid by the veneer of familiarity. Both *Madame Tutli-putli* and *The Fuccons* use the confrontation between live action and animation as an artistic device to create an effect that I would call 'de-realisation'. If hyper-realisation is an effect to make people feeling so real to the unreal world, then the de-realisation is in contrast to make people feeling unreal to the real thing. Maybe the peculiar effect of the simulacrum of hyper-reality actually lies in the derealisation of the whole surrounding world of everyday life. And the two works simply signify a possibility to reflect on the very hyper-realised subjectivity.

Hybrid works are now everywhere. Not only Hollywood blockbusters, but independent filmmakers and multimedia artists are enthusiastic about using digital technology. Obviously putting multi-source elements together is a primary tendency in so-called postmodern culture. Yet do we integrate live-action footage with animation only because it is so easy and common now? How can we make it work in a

postmodern context? The answer depends on how we see the interface between live action and animation as an artistic device. This essay has argued that one of the categories the interface between live action and animation prioritises is the issue of subjectivity. In the digital era, I am proposing that an exploration of the tension between hyper-realisation and de-realisation could provide an effective strategy for filmmakers to use in order respond to this issue.

Notes and References

¹ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, p. 295.

² Johnason Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990, p. 17.

³ Donald Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film 1898-1928*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982, p. 6.

⁴ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, p. 157.

⁵ Jaap Kooijman, *Fabricating the Absolute Fake: America in Contemporary Pop Culture*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008, p. 10.

⁶ Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, New York: Semiotext(e), 1991, p. 34.

⁷ J.P. Telotte, *Animating Space: From Mickey to 'WALL-E'*, Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2010, p. 7.

⁸ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991, pp. 15-16.

28 / The Cinematic Representation of Memory in the Autobiographical Documentary

Jill Daniels

The Autobiographical Documentary

In this essay I explore the cinematic representation of memory, trauma and identity in the autobiographical documentary, with reference to my 47-minute film *The Border Crossing* (2011). I inscribe the depiction of my own self through autobiography in this film within questions about the use of cinematic language. There is general awareness of a growth in autobiographical filmmaking in recent years, films that place the filmmaker at the heart of the work. Most of these films deal centrally with the filmmaker's difficult life, often within his or her family and other intimate personal relationships, in an effort to discover and represent a contested sense of identity.

I will argue, however, that there are broader possibilities for autobiographical filmmaking. The questions I will explore in this respect are: How does the filmmaker negotiate the representation of subjectivities when including autobiography within a film? How does the placing of the autobiographical self in the work complicate how the film represents, and refers to, the real world? Further, in relation to my film, which forms could be utilised when attempting to specifically represent traumatic events?

Many theorists and filmmakers have viewed the autobiographical documentary film as problematic because, as Michael Renov says, *"the domain of non-fiction was typically fuelled by a concern for objectivity, a belief that what was seen and heard must retain its integrity as a plausible slice of the social world. How else to persuade viewers to invest belief, to produce 'visible evidence' and even induce social action?"*¹ It was the American documentary makers Richard Leacock, D.A. Pennebaker, and the Maysles brothers, together with the proponents of direct cinema including Frederick Wiseman, who shunned subjectivity in the elusive search for objectivity. Reflexive strategies appeared in documentary in America and elsewhere, partly as an oppositional response to the claimed verisimilitude of documentary realism.

An important component of reflexivity as a filmic strategy is the demystification of the filmmaking process, thus drawing attention to the ideological position of the film itself and that of the filmmaker. This means on a formal level these types of films allow an extension of the possibilities for documentary cinema to represent reality. Autobiography brings one closer to an acknowledgement that the exploration of subjectivity and reflexivity provide richer possibilities for the cultural

exploration of the social world than documentary realism allows. In *The Border Crossing*, I set out to utilise and locate my own experience to help answer questions about problems in the cinematic representation of traumatic memory and identity. Placing my subjective experience at the heart of *The Border Crossing* enabled me to act freely in developing filmic strategies for representing traumatic memory and violence in the real world.

The knowledge and experience of my own subjective memories provide a rich source of direct material to draw upon. As Alisa Lebow asks, “do we call up our cultural ghosts, or do they call on us? Is not the latter likely, where in the process of being called upon (to represent, to represent ourselves, to represent ourselves in certain ways, using certain, very specific tropes), we are interpolated into the body of (cultural) knowledge we think of as our (contested) self?”² To achieve the ability to confront my own history and memories of trauma and violence with the degree of distanciation to enable me to represent it, however, has taken the full 35 years that have passed. Loss, mourning, powerlessness and mistrust do not disappear, but in my case they have subsided to the point where I am able to engage with my unreliable memories and to represent them and their unreliability.

The Border Crossing

The Border Crossing is set in the Basque country. In a short pre-credits sequence consisting entirely of stills, my voice-over explains that the intention of the film is to attempt to discover the precise location of the border crossing where I encountered a man driving a silver car. I point out that I can no longer remember clearly which, of several border

crossings between Spain and France, was the one where I sat one dark night 35 years ago in the doorway of a small hut, smoking endless cigarettes while waiting for a lift. In representing the original journey, I placed this element as a sequential spine to run through the entire film. It is a re-enactment, a performative element where a young woman, Siân, represents my earlier self. Siân had previously appeared in my documentary *Small Town Girl* (2007), a longitudinal study of three young girls growing up in two small towns in the UK. Siân is shown as becoming increasingly troubled by difficult sexual relationships and drug and alcohol dependency.

In the pre-credits sequence the choice of Siân for the role in *The Border Crossing* is explained over two different frames of her from *Small Town Girl*. My voice and Siân's intermingle to recount narratives based partly on the text of an unfinished short story written soon after my experience of a sexual attack in the Basque country. This text is shown in the pre-credits sequence. The voice-over narration also includes reflections of my search to find the correct location of the border crossing; my memories of real or imaginary events from my past; recollections of my life in London as a young woman working in a photographer's studio; car journeys taken as a child; and hitch-hiking through Spain with a young boyfriend.

The film is framed by two identical static camera shots of me (unidentified) walking across a wide pedestrianised bridge. In the first shot I walk away from the camera and in the second shot I return towards, and past the camera and out of shot. In the background of each shot a tiny girl dressed in pink stands at the railings and looks over the bridge and in the final shot she runs across the bridge away from the camera

and out of sight as the film ends. The figure of the tiny girl acts as a metaphor for freedom and innocence.

Siân's first filmed appearance in *The Border Crossing* shows her hitch-hiking in a quiet road. She languidly waves her arms at passing cars until a car stops and she gets in. In a city street she emerges from a different car and in different sequences throughout the film she walks through the city and outlying suburbs until at night she arrives at a border crossing, where she waits for a lift. Meanwhile an unnamed man, whose face is unseen, appears in several shots driving in the rain at night. Their paths eventually appear to meet and as the car continues its onward journey on a dark country road, we assume that Siân is in the car. In the closing section of the film Siân spends the night alone in a hotel room in a state of shock before she leaves the room and a final shot of her shows only her feet walking out of the hotel and out of shot.

In the realist documentary element the film interweaves the narratives of Aitziber and Maria. Aitziber is a Basque nationalist woman, who describes being kept incommunicado and tortured for five days by the Spanish Civil Guard with the full knowledge of the Spanish State. Maria is a middle-aged photographer, whose niece died in a car she was driving. Maria's father was sentenced to death in the Spanish Civil War, a sentence later commuted to two years' imprisonment. These narratives and the observational filming of Maria's daily life are framed by sequences of nationalist marches in Spain and France in support of prisoners held in prisons spread throughout Spain, and a militaristic procession commemorating a Spanish victory over France 400 years ago.

Realist documentary generally represents events as they are taking place, or characters recall to camera events that took place in the past. This strategy is followed in the representation of Aitziber, Maria and the marches and procession. Maria talks about her philosophy of life and her memories of her earlier life. Aitziber describes in detail to camera an account of her torture. Between her bursts of narrative, Aitziber, in silent static shots, looks at and away from the camera and smiles, appearing uncomfortable and embarrassed.

Performativity

I chose to represent subjectivities in *The Border Crossing* through the combination of performance and documentary realism because of the impossibility of an authentic documentary representation of my experience of a traumatic event. However, this strategy does not take into account the fact that traumatic memories are generally unreliable and inconsistent, and therefore it is necessary to utilise other means to achieve a measure of authenticity. This juxtaposition may appear to contradict the preconceived idea of what documentary films should look and sound like.

However, in his work on the autobiographical documentary Jim Lane points out that, "*autobiographical documentaries have revealed an array of formal possibilities [...] that have changed our attitudes about what a documentary should look and sound like.*"³ Stella Bruzzi points out the value of performativity as a strategy: "*the performative documentary uses performance within a non-fiction context to draw attention to the impossibilities of authentic documentary representation. The performative element within the framework of non-fiction is thereby an alienating, distancing*

device, not one which actively promotes identification and a straightforward response to a film's content".⁴

The use of performativity in *The Border Crossing* thus creates a useful method for discourse around the cinematic representation of subjectivities in the interests of a metaphorical representation of past and present. It allows the camera and microphone to record an impressionistic landscape of sound and image to build a mosaic of exterior space that elides with an imagined space of the past to occupy the fertile space between documentary and fiction.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is also at the heart of the making of all autobiographical documentaries. Reflexivity heightens our awareness of *The Border Crossing* as a construct because in addition to the depiction of my own self as one of the subjects of the film, I am also, in another aspect, the filmmaker. This means within the filmic discourse I am enabled to ask questions of Maria and Aitziber in my role as the filmmaker engaging with documentary realism and the filmmaker/subject of my own narrative of memory and identity.

Catherine Russell believes that these three layers of voices add richness to the work of the autobiographical filmmaker, and another form of identity when she describes how the *"three 'voices' - speaker [in voice-over], seer and seen - are what generate the richness and diversity of autobiographical filmmaking. In addition to the discursive possibility of these three voices is another form of identity, which is that of the avant-garde filmmaker as collagist and editor"*.⁵ As Lane argues, the representation of the self in film complicates how

non-fiction films represent and make reference to the world and therefore, *“autobiographical documentaries use reflexivity not to eradicate the real as much as to complicate referential claims.”*⁶

Thus the utilisation of Siân as a character representing my younger self, is not at odds with the formal stylistic strategies of documentary realism present in the rest of the film. By representing more directly my own history and self in this work, it has enabled me to explore the representation of trauma and memory in the contrasting subjectivities of my own self with the selves of others and to delve deeper into the representation of history and violence in the Basque country. Mica Nava believes that this kind of work always emerges from the author’s embeddedness in a specific configuration of inextricably intertwined historical, cultural and psychic narratives.⁷

In regarding myself as a contested self, with a fragmented sense of identity, I have made choices about which particular aspects of my fragmented identity I represent in this film. The mode of representation for my autobiography is further complicated by trauma. I am not representing just any autobiographical event in my life but specifically one of violent trauma. This will, and must, affect the way in which I choose to represent my own self. Janet Staiger has argued that it is impossible to represent trauma in more traditional narratives because it leads inevitably to a fetishism of the event: only *“anti-narrative nonstories of the literary (post) modernist kind are able to represent such traumatic events; the anti-narrative form of representation is not totalizing and permits mourning to occur.”*⁸

The sexual attack anticipated through much of the film in voice-over, for instance, does not take place on screen or through voice-over. I do not attempt to represent it, as in accordance with Staiger's view I believe it to be impossible to represent it without fetishising it. In *The Border Crossing* I work with several interwoven, non-linear narratives containing aspects of trauma and violence. I utilise imagery to create an impressionistic collage of images and sounds that represent past and present. This becomes in effect, anti-narrative. On occasion the image may even appear to contradict what is being described by the voice-over.

For example, in one shot Siân's voice-over describes a boy touching her lightly on the thigh as he walks past her, with the implication that all the men in this city are sexual predators. However in this shot a cheerful young boy is seen approaching the camera waving to us as he passes by. His appearance is non-threatening. This disparity may at first appear puzzling. However, the use of narrative through the voice-over and imagery is utilised not to achieve a literal representation of the voice's description, but to draw attention to the fact that alongside the narrative elements unfolding on the screen in the present, they also invoke a past which no longer exists in the present.

In discussing the methodology of the representation of memory in autobiography, David MacDougall argues that *"the encounter with visual images demands more of us than the mental facility that language has given us. There is a specificity and obduracy to images that defies our accustomed habits of translation and summation ... if we are to gain new knowledge from using images, it will come in other forms and by different means."*⁹ Therefore it is not by talking or writing that I am able to deal with these problems

within the world of the film to solve them, but through working on the film itself, with its complex structure of sound, image and temporality.

The filmmaker negotiates the representation of subjectivities when including autobiography within a film to bring one closer to an acknowledgement that the exploration of subjectivity and reflexivity provide rich possibilities for the cultural exploration of the social world. The placing of the autobiographical self in the work complicates and enhances how the film represents, and refers to, the real world. I have shown that by utilising autobiography, performativity and anti-narrative in my film *The Border Crossing* I have explored the incorporation of strategies that avoid the fetishisation of trauma in representing traumatic events.

Notes and References

¹ Michael Renov, *The Subject of Documentary*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004, p. xvii.

² Alisa Lebow, *First Person Jewish*, Visible Evidence Series, vol. 22, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, pp. 141-2.

³ Jim Lane, *The Autobiographical Documentary in America*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002, p. 4.

⁴ Stella Bruzzi, 'The Performative Documentary', in Bruzzi, *New Documentary*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2nd ed., 2006, pp. 185-6.

⁵ Catherine Russell, *Experimental Ethnography: The Work of Film in the Age of Video*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999, p. 277.

⁶ Jim Lane, *Autobiographical Documentary in America*, pp. 17-18.

⁷ Mica Nava, *Changing Cultures: Feminism, Youth and Consumerism*, London: Sage, 1992, p. 1.

⁸ Janet Staiger, 'Cinematic Shots', in Vivian Sobchack (ed.), *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television, and the Modern Event*, New York and London: Routledge, 1996, p. 40.

⁹ David MacDougall, *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 2.

29 / The Virtual and the Vacuous in Literary and Media Fictions dealing with 'The Communication Society'

Paul Grundy

Perspectives on 'The Communication Society'

The term 'Communication Society' - and with it the broader notion of the 'Age of Information' - often reflect a vision of a quantitative utopia where social relations are concerned, one which asserts that more communication equates with a better life. Discussing what he calls "*the communication Utopia*", French sociologist Philippe Breton, for his part, highlights the adverse effects of this principle, such as the erosion of social lives by over-mediation. He also portrays the Internet as a quasi-religious information cult and shows how the cybernetic ideal of free-flowing communication has become little more than a decoy for advertising.¹ This rather bleak appraisal is balanced by Breton's compatriot Gilles

Lipovetsky, who observes an enhancement of creativity thanks to digital technology.²

Like Breton, Lipovetsky is concerned at the growing significance of individualism and consumerism, but gives credence to the diversified communication which digital technology allows. He focusses on 'screens' as a means of creating, not destroying, social bonds. Both these outlooks find representation in a number of literary and cinematic fictions. Those discussed here - by novelists Isaac Asimov, J.G. Ballard, Thomas Pynchon, and Philip K. Dick, and filmmakers Ridley Scott, John Woo, Paul Verhoeven and Woody Allen - explore the themes of virtuality and vacuousness as key issues involved in ideas about the 'communication utopia'.

Virtuality is integral to the communication utopia because the latter promotes interaction without physical contact. The fiction under review often associates it with isolation and stagnation, but not exclusively. Whereas 'vacuous' usually means 'devoid of matter' or 'lacking intelligence', in cybernetics the absence of interiority is a virtue, since the upkeep of networks outweighs the romantic ideal of inner life. The universalist principle of 'interior-less' humanity, defended by Wiener and Turing in the 1940s, emphasised the importance of the act of communication over that of its content.

Far from encouraging a literal vacuousness, this relegation of interiority expressed a pacifist ethos based on transparency. Yet, as Breton points out, Wiener's vision came with a warning: if communication became a sales commodity, the entropy it was supposed to combat would become even more destructive. It has now become just that - a sales commodity - not just through today's glut of gadgetry, but

more broadly, through capitalism's use of communication to cultivate emptiness in the consumer.

Representations of Virtuality

In a good number of fictions, virtuality and vacuousness contribute to a strong sense of foreboding. With the help of Breton and Lipovetsky, this essay assesses the visionary quality of the works but also asks which alternatives they imagine, if any, to the hollow hegemony of communication. Cybernetics envisaged the global, communicating being, detached from any biological or racial identity. In Asimov's novel *Naked Sun* (1957), this process is taken literally, via the immediate separation of children from their parents. All communication occurs at a distance, thanks to holographic technology called 'Stereovision'.

Education takes place in isolation. Physical presence is repulsive, while love is non-existent. Far from extolling the educational virtues of new technology, Asimov depicts virtuality as a contributory factor both in the deterioration of human relations and in the stagnation of culture. Creativity is stifled. Just as society is dehumanised, art is limited to abstract forms. Hence Elijah Baley, the detective from Earth sent to solve a murder on a supposedly peaceful planet (Solaria), can only conclude that human sentiment has disappeared and that most reasons for living are lacking. As early as the 1950s, Asimov represented Breton's worst fears.

J.G. Ballard's treatment of virtuality in his short story *Intensive Care Unit* (1977) is less clear-cut. Whereas the plot offers condemnation (a family accustomed to interacting only via television screens descends into savagery when actually meeting), the narrator's vision is intriguingly

nuanced. Screen-based communication is related to “an immense increase in the richness of human experience”. Virtuality is lauded for the “liberating affectlessness” it affords, including “a truly guilt-free sexual perversity”³. Taken literally, this stance echoes Lipovetsky’s recent assertion that “the more our world becomes immaterial and virtual, the more we witness the rise of a culture which values sensualization, eroticization and the hedonisation of our existence”.⁴

It also typifies the sheer undecideability of Ballard’s story regarding screen culture. Here virtuality is not only hedonistic. If it is simultaneously so tragic and compelling it is because watching the other on a screen provides the very detachment required for love to exist: “Only at a distance could one find that true closeness to another human being which, with grace, might transform itself into love”.⁵ Are we therefore to cheerily imagine a union of love and new technology? Possibly, but never without the nagging sense that virtuality has been over-praised to be better condemned, as the fatal denial of carnal and barbaric instinct. The violence of the family’s physical encounter supports this apprehension.

Paul Verhoeven’s *Total Recall* (1990) further highlights the psychological unpredictability of virtuality. The clients of Rekall, a company that implants memories of virtual vacations, are invited to choose some unlikely destinations and roles. The protagonist’s inability to distinguish between real and virtual worlds evokes an obvious complication, one which anticipates the mental disconnection video gamers may experience. (We may well think of the online game *Second Life*, which blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality to such an extent that players are known to try to buy

fictional currency with real money.)

Total Recall also imagines today's on-line consumer, faced with an abundance of choices without the ability or inclination to sort through them. Indeed, the very theme of the virtual holidaymaker (vacuous too, for the latter's brain is only 'filled' by the purchase of experience) is an apt way of imagining the confused intellectual tourism of Internet browsing. This visionary dimension is encapsulated by the title of the short story of 1966 by Philip K. Dick on which the film is based – 'We Can Remember it for You Wholesale'. While the idea of remembering for someone can be associated with the Internet (as an external back-up for human memory), the term 'wholesale' relates virtuality to commerce.

Behind Dick's portrayals of intellectual starvation and the subsequent hunger for ephemeral pleasure lies the notion of control and standardisation. This fear is crystallised in Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) - based on Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* - when Tyrell says of the replicants his corporation manufactures: "by giving them a past we can control them better". Here the replicant is surely a metaphor for the vacuous human, while the imaginary 'past' signifies virtual experience. Through Tyrell, Dick hints at what good allies virtuality and commerce are in the moulding of avid but isolated consumers who, as Breton would confirm, are restricted rather than liberated by communication.

Representations of Vacuousness

Among the representations of the vacuousness born from quantitative communication, Thomas Pynchon's is

emblematic. In his 1966 novel *The Crying of Lot 49*, Oedipa Maas attempts to comprehend her appointment as executrix of a millionaire's estate. Her quest only brings an information overload which leaves her more confused. The narrative mimics an increase in mental disconnection which is proportionate to the proliferation of networks. The author was already preoccupied by the sort of quantitative communication exemplified by today's social networking sites which, in keeping with the 'interior-less' communication ideal, stress a sense of constant exchange rather than depth.

This very tendency is illustrated by Pynchon via an anecdote about a postal network called Yoyodyne. As Mike Fallopian explains, "*To keep it up to some kind of a reasonable volume, each member has to send at least one letter a week*". Having nothing particular to say, some members attach bricks to their letters to add weight, echoing today's custom of file attachment. The emptiness born of superfluosity is illustrated by a letter sent to Mike: "*Dear Mike, it said, how are you? Just thought I'd drop you a note. How's your book coming? Guess that's all for now. See you at The Scope*".⁶

Woody Allen's 1983 film *Zelig* also exploits the comic potential of vacuousness. Here Leonard Zelig's media-hyped 'Chameleon Man' embodies detachment from ethnic identity in the interests of greater communication. Leonard loses his Jewishness and becomes an American Mr. Average. By integrating into multiple environments, he unwittingly turns into a global socialite with unlimited media visibility. His chameleonism is reminiscent of Breton's account of cybernetic man as a "*manipulable, transferable being*" who is the "*supersensitive individual antenna of a new collectivism*".⁷

The result is one of Allen's definitive mixed blessings, for Leonard's sensitivity equates to psychotic illness: *"Devoid of personality, human qualities long since lost in the shuffle of life, he sits alone, quietly staring into space, a cipher, a non-person"*. This malaise of emptiness reflects a general failure of values on which the media prey in order to sell more products, as illustrated by the Chameleon Man paraphernalia. In a world where economic liberalism is deployed behind the *"shop window of communication"*, empty messages are sold to the masses.⁸ Hence the scene where a customer is interviewed in a barber's shop. Taken in by the media campaign, he longs to be Leonard. Yet Leonard is *"devoid of personality"*. Here Allen is incisive: 20th-Century Man is good at exchanging information, but has ceased to think for himself.

In John Woo's film *Paycheck* (2004), adapted from Philip K. Dick's short story of 1952, Michael Jennings is a reverse engineer who sells his memory along with his ability to improve on rival technology. As a seller of brain-time - his memory is erased after each contract - he embodies vacuous opportunism: *"What's to know? 20 hours a day in a clean room ripping off one guy's idea for a computer, selling it to somebody else. My memories are basically highlights. It's good, it's a good life. The stuff you erase, it doesn't matter"*. Motivated by the trappings and by strong sensations (*"The last thing I remember is driving in Spain in the Aston Martin"*), Jennings finds himself in the classic Dickian dilemma of not remembering who his girlfriend is.

Beyond Dystopia

While the critique of virtuality and vacuousness emanating from these visionary fictions largely rings true today, few

symbols of resistance are offered. Breton indeed warns us not to expect such alternatives because of a void in criticism regarding communication, arguing that the latter only reproduces *"the ahistoricity of which the communication utopia is itself a carrier"*. We may add that the artistic deployment of deconstruction and undecideability – Philip K. Dick's parallel existences, Allen's chameleonism, Ballard's equivocity – only compounds what Breton calls the *"extension of the domain of the arguable"* within the *"ambient relativism"* of postmodernity.⁹

One of deconstruction's cornerstones, spectrality, offers ways of challenging established truths, particularly in the ethical vein of deconstruction Derrida calls 'hauntology'¹⁰. But Zelig's subversive condition as time-travelling *"non-person"*, while in tune with such avenues of thought, is ultimately derisory in the wake of communication's own irresistible spectrality. More optimistically, the scarcity of symbols of resistance in these works renders those which are offered more precious. They are represented by the ideals of love and creativity and complemented by Ballard's representation of the durability of cinema. In short, they arise from the victory of substance over emptiness.

Whereas Pynchon and Asimov depict affect-less societies, Allen and Woo offer salvation through Hollywoodian romantic convention. In *Zelig*, love is triumphant. The cure for Leonard's vacuousness comes not through science, but the *"unconditional regard"* of his shrink, Eudora Fletcher. As the narrator declares, the cure is a *"remarkable creative victory"*, a *"triumph for aesthetic instinct"*. A similar antidote is prescribed in *Paycheck*, whose hero's redemption can only be achieved through some form of compensation for his deleted memory. This involves re-connecting with his lover

and understanding what to do with the envelope of odds-and-ends he has been given instead of his salary. The contents are so apparently banal that only creativity can give them meaning. The meaning Jennings retrieves saves his life and provides the film's happy ending.

The Durability of Cinema

Ballard's evocation of the durability of cinema throughout the explosion of screen culture suggests a further victory for creative resistance. The narrator's impressive knowledge of film technique suggests a potential for more widespread artistic practice. Rather than becoming *blasé*, he is sensitive to the subtleties of image culture. In fact his whole family revives cinematic reference in daily life: *"I relished the elegantly stylized way in which we now presented ourselves to each other - fortunately we had moved from the earnestness of Bergman and the more facile mannerisms of Fellini and Hitchcock to the classical serenity and wit of René Clair and Max Ophuls, though the children, with their love of the hand-held camera, still resembled so many budding Godards"*.¹¹

Hence Ballard's story anticipates the very phenomenon Lipovetsky calls the *"cinematisation"* of society. Cinematisation invites divergent interpretations. We may consider today's mass recourse to video as a degradation of cinema dictated by the desire to film everything, including private or trivial situations. This is Lipovetsky's *"narcissistic and obsessive Cinemania"*. Alternatively, cinematisation refers to an improvement in aesthetic sensitivity thanks to digital technology: *"I film therefore I am: from now on, within every person inclined to leisure, an artistic desire lies dormant and within every individual lies a filmmaker"*.¹²

In both Lipovetsky and Ballard, the durability of cinema - not least through its ability to exert its influence through other media - is relevant to the overcoming of the adverse effects of communication. As a purveyor of stories (content), it counteracts isolation and emptiness. Lipovetsky underlines cinema's status as the most universal form of storytelling - one which awakens passions in all people - arguing that despite the Internet's challenge to physical ritual (going to the cinema), a communion still takes place around the story itself.

Ballard echoes this through his evocation of a couple's virtual courtship. They start 'going out' together, sharing the same films on TV, the same theatres and concert halls - but separately and apart, within the virtual comforts of their respective homes. In fact, in both 'Intensive Care Unit' and *Zelig*, cinema is equipped to resist adversity, Allen's chameleon metaphor referring not just to Leonard Zelig but to the versatility of cinema itself. From these two fictions, we may extrapolate that if cinema can adapt to the hegemony of communication, so too can society.

While Breton's misgivings about virtuality and vacuousness are endorsed in the fiction I have selected, there are justifications for Lipovetsky's allowance for social adaptability. Although no unequivocal assessment of communication society arises from this cross-over between fiction and sociology, virtuality undeniably features as an ally of vacuousness, affect-lessness and commercial manipulation. Unsurprisingly, therefore, for Lipovetsky, video gaming is an indefensible by-product of the digital age. Another is invasive surveillance, which is also part of the hijacking of the cybernetic utopia. In the post-9/11 era, the mantra of 'more transparency' in the interests of 'better

security' has been re-packaged in the interests of even greater consumption. Here, Philip K. Dick's apprehensions about the loss of privacy appear less paranoid by the day.

Notes and References

¹ See Philippe Breton, *L'utopie de la communication: le mythe du village planétaire*, Paris: La Découverte, 1997, and *The Culture of the Internet and the Internet as Cult: Social Fears and Religious Fantasies*, Duluth: Litwin, 2011.

² Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy, *L'écran global: culture-médias et cinéma à l'âge hypermoderne*, Paris: Seuil, 2007.

³ J.G. Ballard, 'Intensive Care Unit' (1977), in *Myths of the Near Future*, London: Vintage, 1999, pp. 197, 199.

⁴ Lipovetsky and Serroy, *L'écran global*, p. 292.

⁵ Ballard, 'Intensive Care Unit', p. 204.

⁶ Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*, London: Vintage, 2000, p. 35.

⁷ Breton, *L'utopie de la communication*, p. 12.

⁸ Breton, *L'utopie de la communication*, p. 140.

⁹ Breton *L'utopie de la communication*, pp. 91, 89.

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, Abingdon and New York: 1994, p. 10.

¹¹ Ballard, 'Intensive Care Unit', p. 202.

¹² Lipovetsky and Serroy, *L'écran global*, pp. 322, 323.

30 / Wikileaks on Film?

The ‘Movie Thought’ Approach

Robert S. Watson

Introducing ‘Movie Thought’

‘Movie Thought’ is a simple audiovisual shorthand for filmmakers and witnesses who desire a quick and accurate record of people's actions on one page. It is much faster than standard screenwriting or shot-listing - a feature screenplay is a slow 100 pages, whereas the same key ideas written in ‘Movie Thought’ notation occupy 1 to 1.5 pages. The simplicity and precision of ‘Movie Thought’ aids film scholars who work with a wide range of student filmmakers, journalists and social observers. Often their film education faces three barriers: poor technical resources, poor English language skills, and non-audiovisual thinking. Overcoming these, low-cost ‘Movie Thought’ is handwritten on a page or a whiteboard: computers are redundant. Students with poor

written English but strong audiovisual understanding are supported by the simple, graphic system of 'Movie Thought', which also distinguishes audio.

In order to demonstrate 'Movie Thought', the 2011 international drama surrounding Wikileaks is examined and created for the screen. Wikileaks has attracted the interest of several filmmakers, including Steven Spielberg, and Bill Condon's *The Fifth Estate* (2013), starring Benedict Cumberbatch as Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, was the first film on the subject to appear as this essay was awaiting publication. The drama is very much in the public domain. Many facts are open to researchers who desire to organise a documentary or fiction about corrupt institutions and their whistleblowers. This information is collected in order to construct a documentary or a fiction film – the research involved is similar. High-speed 'Movie Thought' facilitates both: it collects illustrations for a fictional ethical theory, and it collects and sequences witness accounts for a documentary.

Creating Character

'Movie Thought' helps the fiction filmmaker protect real people such as Assange by inventing character names. Each individual is assigned one name only, such as JULIAN. Thereafter the character is sketched as a unique capital initial, such as J. The J is imaginatively 'viewed' as a picture, figure or marker, rather than 'read', as one reads the letter J. The capital letter stands out graphically on the page, as a character stands out on screen. For audiovisual filmmakers who are challenged with poor written English, the opportunity swiftly to record characters with single capital letters allows them to focus on actions rather than names.

Film research usually attaches approximate ages to its main characters. In JULIAN's case, if our story investigates recent actions, the character is first written as JULIAN (40). 'Casting' the age of film characters encourages scholars to contemplate human embodiment and individual lives. 'Movie Thought' emphasises the embodied visuals of the screen – essential qualities that might be forgotten in English prose.

Research into Wikileaks reveals more dramatic, even horrific, characters, such as a Swedish politician accused of war crimes. In order to fictionalise the accused, he is notated as 'C', or as any letter distinct from J. The abbreviation distances a powerful politician who is responsible for war crimes, and frees the project as an artistic work that explores human ethics and actions. News photographs of C reveal his approximate age as (40). Later, when expanding the ordered list of 'Movie Thought' items into a 100-page screenplay, the final, expanded names for C and J are written. But while the actions of the movie are being invented, quickly distinguishing and sketching these figures as C and J accelerates the process.

According to news reports, C kidnapped vulnerable and innocent war refugees, and handed the refugees to American soldiers who supervised their torture in Egyptian prisons. Research reveals that, upon repatriation to Sweden, the Swedish government paid compensation to its victims. In uncovering these actions, more people are sketched into the drama. We might sketch these *dramatis personae* as: R for refugees, S for US soldiers and T for Egyptian torturers.

English prose has the facility to abstract, generalise and even mislead others about vague actions whereas film actions are usually photographed as very specific, concrete, focused and

obvious acts. Similarly, 'Movie Thought' actions are camera-ready. A news report stating "*American agents rendered Sweden's refugees*" is very vague. 'Movie Thought' requires the filmmaker to research and construct visual details by asking the question: "What does this action look like?"

Research and development reconstructs the *places* of action. In high-speed 'Movie Thought', each scene is rapidly and unambiguously grounded with an underline. "airport" is swiftly noted as a scene. Notice that scenes are not capitalised, only characters. This allows the user of 'Movie Thought' to view all capitalised figures, J, C, S, T, R covering the page as on-screen occurrences of the characters. Underlines distinctly ground each imagined scene: airport, cell and plane. The three scenes and their *dramatis personae* are sketched in less time that it takes to picture the inhabited scenes: "airport CSR. plane SR. cell STR."

Having swiftly sketched three scenes, we need to be precise about people's actions in them. Film actions are written in the present tense in both screenplays and 'Movie Thought'. The statement "*American agents rendered Swedish refugees*" is vague and past tense. "*Rendered*" could be depicted as any one of thousands of cruel actions. 'Movie Thought' asks filmmakers to translate such vagueness into singular, concrete actions. In translating vague prose to visual 'Movie Thought', the filmmaker is forced to visualise details. For example, "*At the steps to an unmarked private jet, outside an aircraft hangar at Stockholm airport: C (40) nods to an African-American male agent S (25), in a suit and dark glasses, who padlocks a leg chain to the handcuffs of a bearded Middle Eastern man R (40) in diapers and orange tracksuit.*"

For the purpose of rapidly sketching these two actions, *nods* and *padlocks*, the researcher need only write: "hangar C=S(25) padlocks R(40)." Later, the entire movie is recalled. All key cast, actions and scenes are precisely written: hangar, rather than airport; the precise action "padlocks," rather than "renders", "kidnaps" or "handcuffs"; and the ages of S and R are also recorded. In 'Movie Thought', the equals sign "=" is read sideways as the SMS text symbol for open eyes, "=". "Open eyes are *pictured* "="." "C=S" translates as "C looks favourably at S."

C's 'war crimes' sequence continues. Mindful that eye-lines are essential in screen performances, and US soldier S also looks favourably " =," on the Egyptian torturer T in the third cell scene: "hangar C= S padlocks R. plane S scissors R. cell S= T sodomises R." Precise action strings are involved. The action verb "scissors" indicates the American practice of cutting off prisoners' clothing with scissors, whilst "sodomises" indicates the Egyptian military practice of sodomising prisoners with electric batons.

In 'Movie Thought', abstract ideas are placed in curly brackets - as in "{accused Swedish war criminal}" - to quarantine them from everything in a writer's notes that is ready to record. For example, perhaps an early student draft of the airport scene is written: "hangar C is a war criminal who is with S and R." An editor, producer or mentor would bracket the un-photographable generalisation {war criminal} and remove the pictorially redundant "is a" and "who is with." The photographable scene is viewed: "hangar C {war criminal} S R".

C, S and R are already sketched in the student draft, which makes the phrase "who is with" pictorially redundant, but

{war criminal} is retained and bracketed. The term is crucial to the ethics of the story, yet its curly brackets suggest a need to do more research and translate the generalisation into film actions. In this case, the abstract idea of {war criminal} is translated to four screen actions: "views favourably in the eye line" or the high-speed " =," along with "padlocks, scissors and sodomises."

Narrative Evolution

Returning to the *Wikileaks* research, Swedish politician C is connected to Australian cyber journalist J via another Swedish politician-lawyer, the figure P. In August 2010, J visits Stockholm on a *Wikileaks* charity business trip. During this visit, two women A and B express their "love" for J. Lovers A and B invited J into their respective beds on different nights. Unknown to J, B is intimately connected with both Sweden's military and its police.

B's police friend F urges B and A to press charges of rape upon J. The charges are dismissed and thrown out of court by female Swedish magistrate M. At this point, war criminal C's close colleague, P, intervenes politically. P reinstates the rape charges and escalates the prosecution of J to a transnational warrant inside the American alliance. P demands J's arrest and deportation by English judge E.

In our film, after C has war refugees R sodomised and raped, C's political and legal partner P does not prosecute C for war crimes, despite ethical Swedes calling for C's prosecution. Instead, C is welcomed by his military and political allies in the US. C emigrates to America, thus escaping the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. Through such actions, we see that politician-lawyer P has one set of standards for his

political partner C, and another set of standards for his political enemy J. J has not sodomised and raped imprisoned innocents, nor profiteered in Swedish-American military electronics shares. Rather, J attracts the hypocritical justice of US, Swedish, UK and Australian allies and their competitors Q, as focused in characters such as P, E and Q.

'Movie Thought' helps with the degree of detail all of this requires. Take the earlier sentence: "Lovers A and B invited J into their respective beds on different nights." Filmmakers do not consider this prose statement easily photographable. The timing of actions - "during this visit" and "on different nights" - requires a chronology. Chronology in film is marked with time-code, in minutes, or script page numbers. Below, a six-minute fictional sequence is enumerated. Time is also marked night, "n", and day, "d." Exterior e and interior i are shown.

1. hotel n A takes J's hand. A leads J to bed
2. J A {make love}
3. d A kisses J. J leaves.
4. hall J lectures CROWD: (witness protection). hall J B(hi).
5. B e B gives J keys. B leaves. B i J enters. B n J sleeps.
6. B enters, undresses and snuggles against J.

'Movie Thought' can also fill across entire lines, thus illustrating a movie on one page. Notice a CROWD appears in minute 4. They listen to audio dialogue. Audio is always differentiated in round parentheses; J speaks about (witness protection) and B says (hi). Filmmakers and lawyers differentiate and privilege *what is enacted* from *what is spoken*. What is said *about* someone is, in law and film, hearsay. What is acted upon, in law and film, is privileged as fact. In 'Movie Thought', this distinction - which underlies the

audiovisual medium - is strictly distinguished by audio parentheses.

Minute 1 opens at night n. It is not until minute 3 that daylight d appears in the fiction film. Day continues into minute 4, set inside a hall, with two key scenes: J lectures on (Wikileaks witness protection) to a crowd. In the second hall scene, lover B says (hi) and introduces herself to J. In minute 5, or screenplay page 5, a key is exchanged outside a place called B e. Underlined B means B's usual place, not person B. Exterior is distinguished by underlined e. Outside her apartment, B gives J a key, then she leaves. Cut to the interior B i, which J enters. Cut to night time, n: J sleeps in B's apartment. In story minute 6, B comes home and climbs into bed with J.

Practicalities

Using 'Movie Thought' notation, the filmmaker gradually sets out all the audio motion picture ideas for a complete movie in one to one-and-a-half pages. After jotting down these actions and scenes as they are first imagined or researched, the usual next step is to re-order the scenes in the desired sequence of the final story. Because all the key scenes, characters and actions exist on one sheet of paper, 'Movie Thought' helps to overcome writer's block. Moreover, hours are not wasted at the editing bench, re-searching dailies. Nor are weeks and months lost, pounding the keyboard, as the impassioned writer chases red herrings and wild geese into a blank screen.

Carrying a sheet of paper, folded around a pen or pencil, the filmmaker or witness is free to travel unobtrusively in streets and places where a smart phone or laptop attracts suspicion,

theft or assault – and requires electricity. In film schools, 'Movie Thought' on paper is particularly useful in story meetings. Team creativity relies on mentors who listen, record and offer filmmakers immediate, timely, audiovisual feedback and feedback. In the real time of the pitch, only key thoughts are minuted on paper - a full and accurate record of what has been imagined for the screen, along with any concept notes in curly brackets.

When student writers in story meetings ramble in prose, mentors may abbreviate and bracket. If a writer rambles "J's lover B is intimately connected with Sweden's military and police," 'Movie Thought' notes: "B {military, police}" and, at the appropriate time in the story meeting, the vague terms are queried: "Who are B's military and police connections? Who makes contact, in what scenes?" "What dramatic interactions take place?" "When do the scenes occur in the 100-minute movie chronology?"

Listening to a pitch, and recording it in real time on a sheet of paper with 'Movie Thought', each line is usually of the form: "place CHARACTERS concrete verb" with an occasionally line of bracketed audio (key dialogue, music). If the form "place A *interacts with* B" is not recorded, the glaring lack of screen thought raises questions: Where are we? Who is in A's scene? What are they doing? What does A see? In what time order? The writer's answers are jotted quickly, and a realisable screen story flows at the pace of thought.

6. Interactions

31 / Consuming Bollywood in Portugal

Inês Lourenço

Bollywood and Portugal

Among western cosmopolitan fashion trends, India emerges as a central reference, and its popular cinema has an important role regarding the construction of neo-Orientalist representations of Indian society. Focussing on Portuguese society and culture, I intend to analyse the role of Bollywood Cinema in the process of essentialising and exoticising India. Through anthropologically oriented research that focuses on data collected among consumers of Indian cinema in Portugal, this essay points out some aspects concerning the attraction of Bollywood and its effects on a public which, unlike the Indian Diaspora, has no other relation to India. India has always seduced the European imagination and the Portuguese in particular experienced an early fascination

with the sub-continent. The old Orientalism in which representations of otherness were grounded seems to arise in other areas within the context of globalisation and of new Portuguese cosmopolitan forms of identity.

The consumption of Indian cultural references has become common in Portugal, as in other European contexts, expressed in the growing demand for products such as film, literature, cuisine and clothing. The public for these cultural products finds them increasingly available in a market that some authors refer to as 'Indo-chic'.¹ In this context, the circulation and consumption of Indian cultural products can be understood as the promotion of a new Orientalism, recasting old ideas from German Romanticism, and exoticising India and its cultural references. The consumption of cultural goods traveling from the third to the first world is caught up in a Eurocentric logic that invariably endows them with exotic features.²

The consumption of Indian film songs by non-traditional consumers in the United States, for example, is illustrative of the exoticisation of cultural goods from the Third World. The consumption of Indian film songs in the United States is a process in which the management of cultural difference is essential, as Chan points out: *"If exoticism, as decadent objectification, is an inappropriate response to cultural difference, a universalism that relies on abstraction is unrealistic because it presumes that there exists a clean way to consume commodities across that difference"*³. However, this purity will not be found except when there is a cross-cultural consumption that occurs in an equal exchange. Cultural difference can thus be ignored or dealt with by the cosmopolitan consumers of the exotic.

My previous research on the Hindu Diaspora in Portugal allowed me to notice the impact of the dynamics of consumption of Indian products among the population originally from India, as well as the negotiation of identity that this kind of consumption in Portugal generated between these communities and the surrounding society. This research allowed me to understand how this kind of consumption is used to negotiate ideas of authenticity and cultural belonging, particularly among women.

As regards the Indian diaspora, many authors have reported its role in the process of globalising Bollywood alongside its central role in constructing diasporic and South Asian identities.⁴ Hindi cinema has taken an international dimension associated with the diasporic phenomenon: Bollywood is nowadays a global cinema and an increasing retort to the hegemony of Hollywood, an emerging power symbolised by the appearance of superstar Aishwarya Rai on the cover of *Time Magazine* or on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, teaching her host how to wear a sari⁵.

The Audience in Portugal

The visibility of the Indian presence in Portugal, particularly in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area and also in Oporto, is recent, although many communities have been established in this country for nearly three decades. Cultural activities that bring together people of Indian origin and other sectors of the Portuguese population generate mutual intersections, and as in other contexts of the Indian Diaspora, influence the 'consuming India' phenomenon. The consumption of Indian cinema, and particularly Bollywood, is coupled with the consumption of other associated cultural products: food,

clothing, Bollywood dance, and the increasingly famous Bollywood parties.

At the beginning of the 21st Century *Cinestúdio 222* was the only venue where Indian films could be watched in Lisbon. After this cinema closed, the traditional Sunday showings of of Bollywood releases, the informal sales of DVDs and the increasing availability of TV satellite and cable channels amongst communities of Indian origin emerged to address this gap, whilst leaving access to Indian cinema even more difficult for the Portuguese public in general. Thus fans of Indian cinema overcome these barriers by perhaps finding an alternative on the Internet or by buying films abroad, revealing many of them to be excellent *connoisseurs* of the vast universe of popular Indian cinema.

In addition to the population of Indian origin (Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Catholic), who mostly have direct access to this universe, the popularity of Bollywood also extends to groups of immigrants from former Portuguese colonies in Africa, who used to watch them in Africa, where Indian communities were settled. Some of the films indeed closely resemble African productions, such as those of the Nigerian cinema. The third group, with whom this project is centrally concerned, is a group with no connection to India - only one of my interlocutors had travelled there - nor with the diasporic communities resident in Portugal.

The impact of the Brazilian soap opera *Caminho das Índias* (*India: A Love Story*, Rede Globo, 2009-), and A.R. Rahman's music for Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) have inspired some Portuguese to watch Indian movies. That is what Indian vendors refer to, their sales strategies mainly based on Internet blogs. However, most of the interlocutors

refer to a personal and independent event that triggered their interest in Indian cinema. These were the most varied, the most frequently cited being the contact with Bollywood soundtracks and documentaries related to India. It is also important to note that there was a period of screenings of Indian films in Portugal in the 1970s that has influenced a generation and some of their descendants.

Researching Film Consumption

To better understand the process of consumption of Indian cinema in Portugal, as well as its associated social uses, I began a search for followers of this type of film, a majority being found on the Internet through specialised blogs on this topic. I conducted informal interviews to take stock of my interlocutors' film preferences, and to understand, above all, the reasons that had prompted a deeper knowledge of this kind of cinema. I could then analyse the symbolic constructions of India to which these gave rise.

Finding the participants of this project spread over different parts of the country, I resorted to a multi-situated ethnography, and geographically extended the compass of my research, which had originally intended to focus only on the city of Lisbon. The empirical data collection included, in addition to informal interviews, some visits to establishments selling Indian films, the collection of information from vendors, and attempted contact with potential fans of Indian cinema. The research also involved the viewing of a selection of films, according to the main choices of the participants.

The anthropological research conducted so far highlights some interesting points concerning the interest in Indian cinema in Portugal. The main elements of attraction are

music and dance, followed by the emphasis on cultural and religious elements (predominantly Hinduism, whereas other religions often appear stereotyped). The importance attached to the expression of feelings, and also a certain *naïveté* that emanates from these films, greatly pleases their audience, along with the colourful sense of cultural difference which they transmit.

The transformations that Bollywood film dance and music have undergone in various places outside India originate in turn *“new affective and identificatory practices”*⁶. In this sense, the transformation of film music and dance in a commodity consumed by a non-traditional audience is an process of exoticisation. It is in this neo-Orientalist frame that consumption of Bollywood film songs occurs in contemporary popular culture.⁷ The encounter with the exotic - and necessarily with the other - through consumption will certainly have interesting results. As Chan says: *“It is not simply an extension of the commodification and consumption of the exotic other, though it is certainly both of those. More importantly, it suggests a desire to encounter the exotic other outside the terms of difference, that is, on the level of abstraction”*.⁸

In the second phase of this research I intended to determine which parallel consuming habits associated with India these people may have. Here, the ones who point out cultural difference as attractive also cultivate tastes associated with India that are part of their daily routine, such as food, dance, clothing or spiritual practices. If there is indeed a drive towards abstraction where cultural difference is concerned, the participants’ diversity in this study allowed me to find a different attitude from the previous one, albeit on a smaller scale. Some of the interlocutors stated that their taste for

Bollywood film does not extend to other Indian cultural elements. Besides music, hardly inseparable from the film, some of the participants in this study did not reveal other interests related to Indian cultural references.

Some justify it by sheer indifference, others precisely by cultural difference. In the latter case, poverty and underdevelopment in general - particularly expressed by the lack of hygiene - restrict the interest in India only to the cinema and film songs. Cautioning the risk of generalisation, and highlighting the existing counter-narratives, we could say that Indian popular cinema represents, for most of the Portuguese viewers, India itself, even with images and cultural constructions often turned more essentialised and exotic, framed in a process of neo-Orientalist fascination.

Beyond Eurocentrism

The main fascination with Asian cinema includes a concern for the aesthetics, forms and narratives that seem to have revitalised Hollywood. Films like *Moulin Rouge* (Luhrmann, 2001), *Chicago* (Marshall, 2002), and hybrid films like *Monsoon Wedding* (Nair, 2001) have increased the visibility of South Asians in Western popular imagination and have made Bollywood movies and music familiar/exotic for the non-Indian audience, even if, of course, they are unfamiliar with the complex reality of South Asia. On the other hand, In spite of the success of epics such as *Lagaan: Once upon a Time in India* (Gowariker, 2001), and of hybrid films like *Monsoon Wedding* and *Bend it Like Beckham* (Chadha, 2002), Western audiences may be interested in films that confirm their own nostalgia for traditional imagery, where cultural differences are valued in a Eurocentric frame:

"It is not clear, however, that Eurocentric viewers know quite what to expect from these passing allusions to Bollywood in dominant media; armed with their long-standing Orientalism and their contemporary benevolent compassion, many may be quite surprised by their experiences at the theaters ... the binary of tradition and modernity, mini-skirted and designer-clad characters, and palatial homes with their colonial and Orientalist images of dust and poverty or chaos and terror. Expecting images of Indiana Jones, the British Raj, or the Kama Sutra, these viewers may not welcome more recent films such as the four-hour nationalist 'LOC' ('Line of Control'), or the romantic comedy set in New York, 'Kal Ho Naa Ho', with homophobic comic relief".⁹

The audience for Indian cinema in Portugal is increasing, coupled with the growing visibility of India and its diasporas, and also with a cosmopolitan fashion that drives consumption of India in different ways. For most of these, Indian cinema, particularly its most popular and commercial versions, offers its audiences fantasy, new versions of *The 1001 Nights* with special effects equivalent to Hollywood and it also gives, according to those who watch them, the possibility of travelling to distant, exotic and unknown places.

This fantasy is found in film narratives based on stereotypical, romantic and Orientalist representations of India. The neo-Orientalism that lies behind this phenomenon, however, is managed by the new cosmopolitan subjects who, according to Novak, are in a process marked by the *"ambivalence, distance, confusion and contingencies of globalism"*. Exoticism and fantasy grounded in past relations of power and domination are renewed by the circulation and re-mediation of Asian representations, demonstrating how

cultures and identities are reconstructed “*even as they spiral away from singular politics of culture identity*”¹⁰.

Notes and References

¹ See Padmini Mongia, ‘The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality’, in Padmini Mongia (ed.), *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: a Reader*, London: Arnold, 1996; and Saadia Toor, ‘Indo-Chic: The Cultural Politics of Consumption in Post-Liberalization India’, *SOAS Literary Review*, vol. 2, 2000.

² See Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins*, London: Routledge, 2001.

³ Edward Chan, ‘Food and Cassettes. Encounters with Indian Film Song’, in Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti (eds.), *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p.280.

⁴ See Jigna Desai, ‘Bollywood Abroad: South Asian Diasporic Cosmopolitanism and Indian Cinema’, in Gita Rajan and Shailja Sharma, *New Cosmopolitanisms: South Asians in the US*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 118.

⁵ Aswin Punathambekar and Anandam Kavoori, ‘Introduction’, in Punathambekar and Kavoori (eds), *Global Bollywood*, New York: New York University Press, 2008, pp. 1-3.

⁶ Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti, ‘Introduction: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance’ in Gopal and Moorti (eds.), *Global Bollywood*, p.280.

⁷ Richard Zumkhawala-Cook, ‘Bollywood Gets Funky: American Hip-Hop, Basement Bhangra, and the Racial Politics of Music’, in Gopal and Moorti (eds.), *Global Bollywood*, p. 309.

⁸ Edward Chan, ‘Food and Cassettes’, p. 280.

⁹ Jigna Desai, ‘Bollywood Abroad’, p. 121.

¹⁰ David Novak, ‘Cosmopolitanism, Remediation, and the Ghost World of Bollywood’, *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 25 no. 1, 2010, p. 42.

32 / Visual Literacies in South Africa: The Challenge for Media Education across the Curriculum

Alan Taylor

Personal and National Perspectives

My essay has very modest ambitions - to provide some insights and questions to the challenges of implementing a stronger dimension to Media Literacy teaching and learning in contemporary South Africa. I begin with a very general overview of what I think are salient aspects of the terrain before moving on to indicate some concerns for the immediate and long term future. At its core will be an unraveling of data that I have generated from my own place of teaching and learning - the Film Programme - in what used to be the Pretoria Film School, then the Motion Picture Academy - of the newly formed Tshwane University of Technology. My work is grounded in what I believe to be a solid and well-articulated account of what Media Literacy actually is (and certainly what it is not). I belong

to a pedagogic tradition that promotes the more critically engaged use of 'old' and 'new' in support of participatory citizenship as a norm.

In his 2010 Address to the nation, President Zuma made the following observations on South Africa's 17th year of freedom ahead. About 81% of the country is electrified; the murder rate has declined by 8.6% in the past year; close to 15 million South Africans obtain social grants from the State; the establishment of a 9 Billion rand job fund over the next 3 years will finance new job-creation initiatives; in the area of media development, there will be a switch-over to digital, and jobs will be created in manufacturing, packaging, distribution and installation during the coming period.

Finally, in the area of basic education: *"this year"*, said Zuma, *"is Triple T - teachers, textbooks and time. We reiterate our call ... that every child has a textbook on time ... we will continue to invest in teacher training, especially in maths and science"* and that teachers *"must be at school, in class, on time, teaching for at least seven hours a day"*. The emphasis throughout the speech was, therefore, on job creation for a new generation - and their demanding parents and guardians - who now expect delivery, not just of basic services, but of the jobs that will fulfil their hard won qualifications.¹

Educational Developments in South Africa

We should remind ourselves that the Departments of Basic and Higher Education were founded just two years ago. The National Curriculum Statement aims *"to develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa. It seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled,*

*compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen"*². Concrete goals include an aggressive increase in FE colleges and related vocational training, and further advances in HE participation - it stood at 12.9 % in 2000, rising to 16.3% in 2007.

The Department of Basic Education's Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign was launched in February 2008, a 6.1 billion Rand initiative intended to enable 4.7 million South Africans to achieve literacy by 2010. The aim of this project is to invite *"those adults who missed out on their schooling and who cannot read or write, to join one of about 20,000 literacy classes that will be held all over South Africa."* The Campaign's website emphasises that the programme *"requires voluntary support from a wide range of people ... who will assist in establishing learning sites ... help recruit literacy volunteer educators ... and work with them to recruit learners"*.³

According to the programme, illiteracy across languages has been estimated as Tswana at 9%, Pedi at 12%, Sotho at 7%, Zulu at 29%, and Xhosa at 20%. The Operational Plan of 18 July 2007 had the following targets: to *"alphabetize 4.7 million adult illiterates by the end of 2012"*; to have UNESCO declare South Africa a territory free of illiteracy; and to meet the Dakaar Promise to reduce illiteracy by at least 50% by 2015. According to the December 2009 project update, the total number of papers submitted was 450,097 from 148 coordinators. The project timeline says that we should be now already be in the Stage 3 'Mop Up' Phase, which was to complete the programme for the last remaining 360,000 illiterates.

If we are to further contextualize that overview with one other, it is of course the brutal fact that according to 2009 official

figures, 2.9 million people were living with HIV and AIDS in South Africa. According to the South African National HIV Survey of 2008, almost one in 3 women between 25 and 29 and over a quarter of men between 30-34 are so situated.⁴ At this point it is worth stating the obvious: the crucial link between reading for information and saving your life is in such circumstances a powerful motivating factor in advancing media literacy skills across these and all population demographics.

Media Education

The case for Media Education in South Africa has not been overlooked. UNESCO has a visible and concrete footprint in areas of Teacher Training for Media and Information Literacy. The UNESCO Media and Information Literacy Curriculum provides model syllabi to guide the training of teachers new to the profession - including learning outcomes for trainees and literacy competencies.⁵ Indeed, courses in ITC adhere to the UNESCO competency standards for teachers. And we should not overlook the good work by colleagues at the University of Pretoria who hosted the UNESCO workshop in Media and Information Literacy for teacher training in November 2009.

Isolated initiatives are also emerging that branch out to industry. The 2009 workshop on Gender and Media Literacy at the Journalism and Media Studies Department of Stellenbosch University, for example, was an attempt to extend such competencies into the radio industry. And Fidelia van der Linde from the same institution has made vital moves to introduce a specific media literacy module within the journalism curriculum. Similarly, the newly emerging CLAIM ('Everyone Can Learn to Access and Interact with Media') provides pilot multimedia toolkits aimed to promote and advocate for media literacy and education.

However, looking for a Media Studies course at national school level, we will find it only in that in a corner of the English Language National Senior Certificate Examination. The two-and-a-half hour Higher Grade Paper 1 of 2010 has a dedicated section entitled 'Visual Literacy and Language'. The five questions invite responses based on a five-frame 'Mama Taxi' Cartoon. All questions refer only to issues of language use. No question probes into the actual visual nature of the given narrative - frames, sequence, shots, composition, or points of view.

The two-and-a-half hour Higher Grade Paper 2 of 2010 is divided into sections such as Comprehension (article analysis); Language (textual study of an advertisement); Cartoons (one example provided is from 'Garfield'); Style and Textual Editing (inviting a critical analysis of a newspaper article). All media under scrutiny are therefore print-based. All of this has led me since January this year to make tentative steps towards understanding the media literacy background of those students who have chosen - and been accepted into - the country's leading Higher Education institution exclusively dedicated to the training of South Africa's film and television personnel.

The Tshwane Film Programme

The Film Programme at the Tshwane University was formed in 1971 as the Pretoria Film School by acclaimed Film Director Jamie Uys. It is the oldest - and some would say the most prestigious - training ground for future film and television crafts people in Sub-Saharan Africa. (It was founded, we should remind ourselves, a full five years before South Africa had a television system.) It was formed when access to its equipment and lectures was exclusively White. Today it is part of what has become since 2004 the Tshwane University of Technology. The

curriculum is very much as agreed with the Council of Higher Education. Students cover the all-too familiar range of practical approaches to filmmaking, from sound to scriptwriting, producing to editing, before specialising in Year 3. Theory classes are mandatory across all years and advance from 'South African Cinema' to 'Cinema of the Mavericks' and 'Independent Cinema'. It is what I teach and call the 'Spinach' Course: if you have to do it, then it must be bad, and there is always lots of it.

All students must attend an interview. There is a university admission quota that promotes the inclusion of non-White students to reflect national population spread. A significant number of these are female. The vast majority of students advancing into Year 4 are White. Black students at this level - at least this year and last - are an exception. The programme employs a number of part-time lecturers, one of whom, Director Ntshveheni Wal-luruli, gained his MA from New York's Columbia University in the 1980s. The Programme has just recently employed its first full-time Black lecturer. And she (another first), like me, is a foreigner - from Lesotho. Competition for students, and for those parents able and willing to pay, emerges from primarily independent institutions in the commercial sector in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

As might be gathered, the daily round in Tshwane is far from ordinary. The pedagogic challenge has its own very unique social, intellectual and logistic shape. My engagement with the eager students, the curriculum and the varying nature of set assignments has prompted of late an interest in asking exactly who we are teaching, or, should I say, who might be learning from us. Where, for example, do we recognise and set our common zones of proximal development? So, mindful of the broad contextual field that I have outlined, specifically the scope and depth of formal Media Education at school level, in

2011 I set about a quick and easy questionnaire which posed four core questions for all students across all groups.

School-Level Media Education

Approximately how many TV programmes or films did you get to (informally) analyse during your previous schooling? Results from 36 students of the Year 1 cohort revealed how 13 had no such experience, 10 had little, 13 had some and 3 had a “great deal”. *What range of facilities were available in your school to support Film and Media Education?* Staying with the Year 1 cohort, 11 answered “none”, 14 declared “little”, 6 indicated “some” and, again, just 2 claimed “great deal”. Such facilities, it turned out, were available primarily for the recording of drama productions. Video equipment was invariably used in this instance to record the productions. *How many and what formal school examinations have you previously undertaken in film, media?* The Year 1 cohort recorded 22 (none) and 7 for both “little” and “some”. *Do you think that the previous school syllabus prepared you adequately for your current university study in film and media?* The resounding response to this final question was clear: 22 of the 36 students declared “none” for this question.

The results of the Year 1 cohort were duplicated across Years 2, 3 and B.Tech years. An overall picture can be gained from results of the final question in the accompanying table. One response - from a Year 2 student - is noteworthy: *“Of the four high schools that I’ve attended in South Africa, not even one exposed or prepared me for film studies”*. In many respects these outcomes are also uncomfortably reflected in the interviews which each prospective student must attend prior to acceptance on the course. Questions designed to tease out accounts of teamwork are met largely with baffled confusion, or

accounts from either the church community service or the sports field.

	Number of students	None	Little	Some	Great Deal
Year 1	36	22	2	8	4
Year 2	27	18	2	7	0
Year 3	24	22	0	2	0
B-tech	12	10	0	2	0
Total	99	72	4	19	4

Figure 1: Reported School Preparation for University Film Course

If the results of this insight are anything to go by, there is clearly much to be considered, revised and updated. If looking back is difficult enough, projecting ahead, however, is sobering: as I left South Africa in 2011 news headlines suspended the recent count of killings of the police (currently 68) to concentrate, however briefly, on the grim findings of the recent national literacy and numeracy study. Prompted by results from last year's matriculation exams, the study was the country's first of its kind, involving up to six million pupils from Grades 1 to 7. In the February 2011 study, the national average performance in Grade 3 for literacy was 35%, and 28% for numeracy; nearly 70% of Gautang's Grade 3 students can't read or count.⁶ New targets have been introduced: 60% for literacy and maths by 2014.

Ways Forward

Needless to say there is much work to do. Three areas need urgent attention. First, the profession of teaching itself needs its own branding makeover. This will involve questions of money, status, and futures. Second, more pertinently, the national examination system needs to advance more fully the core principles of Media Literacy as they are emerging at university level and in teacher training. Third, while consumers are galvanised by the prospect of digital technologies in the home, government must advance the scope and depth of IT cultures in schools and communities, as shored up by appropriately trained teachers and their curriculum managers. President Zuma's emphasis on textbooks is both noteworthy and unfortunate.

None of this is really new. In a specially commissioned July 2008 Teacher Education Review from the Shuttleworth Foundation in association with the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, the concluding points draw upon working examples from Guinea, Israel, Botswana and Oxford. They suggest a constructivist model of teaching that involves taking prospective teachers out of the 'content' box - revising their own understanding of what teaching actually is; the need for lengthy reflective processes to help towards new teaching/learning paradigms that move on from teacher's own sometimes awkward and questionable schooling experience; and the acquisition of new models of learning by teachers-as - learners in what we value as communities of practice.

I can only leave the discussion with a story that could serve as a parable of South Africa today - about the nature of its notable investments and its ideals, but also about the ways in which, at important plot points, they just fail to meet their intended

targets. My walk to work takes an hour through North Pretoria suburbs, across open rail tracks, over motorway junctions and through concrete underpasses. On a sunny Thursday morning before my departure to Europe I was cornered for the first time by a bike cop.

As is usual in that part of the world, it is assumed I am Afrikaans so his first words to me had to be quickly adjusted to English. *"You should not be here!"* he yelled in the underpass of a busy cross-section. *"You can be mugged here!"* "Oh", I said. *"But I feel safer walking. My students get mugged in their cars here!"* *"You see I am trying to do my best"*, he finished, revving up the bike as the lights turned. As he adjusted his dark glasses and turned his gears I pointed to the dusty ground: *"Of course if you stayed here, nobody would be mugged!"* He nodded, smiled. And before I got to the other side of the road he had sped off into the far distance.

Notes and References

¹ For the full text of President Zuma's 2011 'State of the Nation' Address, see <http://www.info.gov.za/events/2011/sona/index.html>.

² *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R-9 (Schools)*, Pretoria: Department of Education of South Africa, nd, p. 8.

³ From the Campaign's website at www.kharigude.co.za.

⁴ Figures from 'AVERT: AVERTing HIV and AIDS' at www.avert.org.

⁵ See the 'Media Literacy' section of the 'Media Development' area of UNESCO's 'Communication and Information' project at www.unesco.org.

⁶ *Report on the Annual National Assessments of 2011*, Pretoria: Department of Basic Education, 2011.

33 / Fan Film and 'Legitimate' Culture: YouTube as a site of Para-adaptation

Costas Constandinides

Para-adaptation

The aim of this essay is to introduce a new concept, which I name 'para-adaptation'. A description of adaptation studies is no longer restricted to the 'film of the book' paradigm. In my book *From Film Adaptation to Post-celluloid Adaptation* I attempt to offer a working rhetoric that looks at processes and examples of adaptations, which are New Media objects. I partly describe post-celluloid adaptation as "*the transference and transformation of media content from a traditional media form to the diverse vernacular of a new media form.*"¹ While the word 'vernacular' here describes the non-medium-specific qualities of digital media, or the confusion of boundaries which leads to new ontological considerations, on another level it also suggests the emergence of forms and practices that operate in parallel to traditional and official media production centres.

Yet it seems that the centre benefits from this vernacular cultural database, as there is an evident trading of ideas. For example, David Lynch is an auteur who effectively undermines his status through experimentation with new technologies or tools. His experimental animated short *Industrial Soundscapes*, accessible on YouTube, is in a way a statement similar those which various unknown artists or users share on YouTube, communicating or displaying their basic knowledge on how to use digital tools to create images and sounds. According to Burgess and Green's study of YouTube, "*in many of the most popular user-created videos there was a noticeable focus on video as a technology, and on the showcasing of technique rather than of artistry.*"²

Similarly, Lynch, while revisiting a familiar iconography, tests the technique rather than the artistry of new media. The 'auteur' becomes an 'amateur' in order to experiment with elements that may not immediately elevate his aura as an established artist. On YouTube this attempt acquires a new identity as it is not immediately recognized as a David Lynch work, and the comments posted indicate a diversity of responses which break away from the traditional vocabulary deployed in pseudo-intellectual ghettos. According to the authors the site promises that "*talented but undiscovered YouTubers can make the leap from their 'ordinary worlds' to the bona fide 'media world'*"³ and this becomes evident from a number of cases which are exploited by 'legitimate' media industries.

Moreover, a number of young film directors tend to adopt elements which 'simulate' low quality recording or online practices such as v-logging in order to transform their characters and their space into something that is more immediate and intimate in an attempt to rediscover

cinematic realism. Looking at ‘mumblecore’ films, and specifically *LOL* (Swanberg, 2006), Aymar Jean Christian argues that the film is “*emblematic of the YouTube generation ... examination of the film will reveal what cinematic intimacy and connection look like in a digital age.*”⁴

Post-celluloid adaptation is a concept that intrinsically denies a fixed understanding of adaptation in the digital era. The fan video or vernacular creativity as adaptation is a case study that I do not explore in my book, but I briefly discuss this as an area for further research within the broader field of adaptation studies. Thus, in this essay I attempt to explore this possibility by introducing the term para-adaptation as a basic concept or model that may allow an intellectual/scholarly engagement with fan videos.

Even though I use the word ‘intellectual,’ in a sense this study demands a fan-scholar approach so as to try to understand creative response and the process of writing about creative response as a language, which does not only demonstrate levels of media literacy, but also shapes a political dimension similar to the ‘para-cinema’ of the 1970s. I should clarify at this point that the case studies I am briefly visiting here are not para-adaptations of Jane Austen’s novels or Shakespeare’s plays, even though a quick search on YouTube will not disappoint those looking for remixes and deviant interpretations of the classics.

YouTube and Para-cinema

While YouTube has been widely studied as a site of participatory culture, this essay seeks to initiate a discussion which examines the site’s content from a different perspective. This needs to develop from a re-examination of

the terms 'para-cinema', 'para-textuality' and 'adaptation', since this type of fan activity has a direct dialectic relationship with practices that are relevant to the above terms. These activities can be called 'para-textual' because they are in a direct dialectic relationship with mainstream media; in other words, they form part of a network which refers back to a central media product or cultural language. They can be 'para-cinematic' because they are parodies of and reactions to mainstream media created with a low budget or no budget. They are 'adaptations' because they translate and appropriate popular media iconographies into a vernacular cultural language: fan or Youtuber activity shapes a new 'in-between' stylistic practice - home video meets film genre, or desktop movie-making meets MTV.

Users are increasingly becoming more sophisticated viewers through their interaction with media and it may be even argued that the avant-garde cinema of the digital era is to a significant extent the vernacular creativity uploaded on YouTube. However, this cultural material is informed by 'legitimate' visual culture in a way that the connection between official and unofficial is not a one-way communication. Burgess and Green highlight repeatedly the fact that YouTube *"is further complicated by its double function as both a 'top-down' platform for the distribution of popular culture and a 'bottom-up' platform for vernacular creativity. It is variously understood as a distribution platform that can make the products of commercial media widely popular ... while at the same time a platform for user-created content where challenges to commercial popular culture might emerge."*⁵

Undeniably, unofficial or illegitimate narratives are currently 'exploited' by traditional mainstream culture and by the work

of established filmmakers like Ridley Scott or Quentin Tarantino. The latter's filmography is directly related to para-cinema (if not being para-cinema in itself), a concept primarily describing forms of exploitation cinema, coined by Jeffrey Sconce. According to Sconce, para-cinema is "*a counter aesthetic turned sub-cultural sensibility devoted to all manner of cultural detritus.*"⁶ The main difference here is that Sconce talks about a para-cinematic audience that *consumes and feeds* this sub-culture, whereas here I aim to lay the foundation for a discourse that takes into account a para-cinematic culture *produced* by the audience.

Sconce notes that "*the caustic rhetoric of para-cinema suggests a pitched battle between a guerilla band of cult film viewers and an elite cadre of would-be cinematic tastemakers. Certainly, the para-cinematic audience likes to see itself as a disruptive force in the cultural and intellectual marketplace.*"⁷ The para-cinematic vernacular creativity on the other hand, while seemingly 'acting' or 'performing' as a disruptive force, still entails an inherent desire to attain maximum attention rather than to consciously build a discourse that safeguards its existence in the margins. However, vernacular creativity on YouTube needs to be classified within the context of para-adaptation as it is not an easy task to problematise YouTube's, and in effect vernacular creativity's potential for disruption.

Burgess and Green pose a set of crucial questions that need to be addressed before labeling para-adaptation's politics as narcissistic. These are: "*who gets to speak, and who gets the attention; what compensations and rewards there are for creativity and work; and the uncertainties around various forms of expertise and authority.*"⁸ What also needs to be addressed is to the extent to which this para-cinematic

culture contributes to the development of sophisticated and basic media literacy practices and to the appreciation of trash by elitist film festival networks. In other words, trash is not only trashing the academy, but it also trashes other spaces and institutions which traditionally adopt a more 'old-school' policy as regards content.

Para-textuality

Para-textuality refers to the verbal and other productions that surround the main text. The official website of a film or a TV show is simultaneously a para-text and a form of adaptation as the media content is transformed to be expressed in a different medium that enables the viewer to interact with content. In a post-print and essentially post-celluloid world, para-textuality may describe examples such as the expanded DVD format, and the official website. The official website is in many cases reinvented as a super-para-text that uses different narrative devices and signifying systems to communicate information about the concept and the production of a film, which essentially exemplify the database logic of the Internet and renders the main text itself as incomplete. The amateur videos on YouTube, which claim a relationship to a familiar or central cinematic culture, are essentially forming the unofficial or uncontrolled logic that informs the function of a super-para-text.

The Hollywood parody *Zombieland* (Fleischer, 2009) is informed by the key texts of the subgenre and also by numerous fan-based responses to the genre. It presents this list in no particular order and creates a sort of an ironic meta-narrative, which functions as the personal survival guide of one of the main characters. Here are two of the rules that pop-up in the film: "Rule #3 Beware of Bathrooms";

“Rule#31 Check the Back Seat”. Viewers are never informed about all the rules, but I presume that this is deliberate as the zombie fan is invited to complete the list, taking on the role of an absent co-expert on zombie outbreaks.

Numerous DIY videos based on Zombie films and even on a series of Zombie survival books written by Max Brooks, one of them entitled *The Zombie Survival Guide* (2003), exist on YouTube. This trading of codes that currently shapes the look of zombie films across the globe and across media platforms seems to be faithful to a logic that permeates contemporary horror films, a logic that understands and reads both the filmmakers and the fans as experts on the pleasures of horror. This awareness of horror film fans as super-literate media experts has turned zombie films into a display of meta-cinematic playfulness, which is enhanced by statements of deliberate artificiality and imperfection.

This trend is heavily influenced by fan creativity and the raw effect that amateur or semi-professional equipment produces. This is evident in the way recent zombie films are promoted as they give emphasis on an amateurish recording of the action. A good example of this practice is the promotional material created for Romero’s film *Diary of the Dead* (2007). Meta-cinema is thus not just cinema about the making of cinema, but cinema which is already of cinema.⁹ However, contemporary Zombie films such as those discussed here do not only ‘perform’ cinema, they also perform the possibilities and raw qualities of digital images as they are explored on the net by amateur creators, thus rendering zombie films as an amalgam of ‘bad’ effects, point of view in video gaming, and DV realism.

Trashing the School Classroom

The conventions of zombie films labelled as examples of para-cinema or exploitation cinema are currently being introduced in a school in the US as Media Education material. In the performing arts class at Seneca Valley Middle School in Harmony, Pennsylvania, students are asked to explore the different stages of making a zombie film. The students produced a number of 'making of' videos and also created a short zombie film as the final result of their exploration of the genre. There are several videos based on the subgenre of zombie films, but in this case the elements of the zombie film contribute to a rather different learning environment, which is more controlled and perhaps more conservative.

It seems that para-adaptation may itself be a problematic term since the example in question is not a product marked entirely by autodidactic processes to master the elements of a sub-cultural iconography. Still, the project of the students maintains a para-textual relationship to the specific paradigm of popular culture as it claims a linkage to this genre. The project is not a para-text in its narrow sense but contributes in the shaping of an unofficial super-para-text enabled by YouTube and characterized by creative commentaries and non-controlled responses to traditional mainstream narratives.

The field of adaptation studies can be enriched by the study of such random and uncontrollable exchanges of cultural databases as they entail an anti-authorship spirit, which in turn points to the potentials of rearrangement and remixing. Media industries are of course attempting to control this logic, but at the same time the fan is being empowered to

participate more actively in the making or consuming of a central product. On another level, the institutionalisation and legitimisation of Media Literacy (a process which is largely autodidactic for the time being) may be read as a process that aims to master a practice which essentially becomes richer with the very act of 'naïve' or 'bad' creativity.

I do not wish to negatively evaluate media literacy policies, on the contrary, I am a supporter of digital and social media inclusion, but it seems that para-adaptation will at some point be described in the same way as Sconce's description of the para-cinematic community: "*an 'educated' perspective on the cinema.*"¹⁰ This new arena of vernacular creativity, even though it may momentarily be a para-practice, it still brings to the fore a set of challenging and fascinating questions about the theory of adaptation studies and its future.

Notes and References

¹ Costas Constandinides, *From Film Adaptation to Post-celluloid Adaptation: Rethinking the Transition of Popular Narratives and Characters across Old and New Media*, New York and London: Continuum, 2010, p. 26.

² Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009, p. 52.

³ Burgess and Green, *YouTube*, p. 23.

⁴ Aymar Jean Christian, 'Joe Swanberg, Intimacy, and the Digital Aesthetic', *Cinema Journal*, vol. 50 no. 4, 2011, p. 122.

⁵ Burgess and Green, *YouTube*, p. 7.

⁶ Jeffrey Sconce, 'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style', *Screen*, vol. 36 no. 4, 1995, p. 372.

⁷ Sconce, 'Trashing' the Academy', p. 372.

⁸ Burgess and Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, pp. 10-11.

⁹ Bruce Isaacs, *Toward a New Film Aesthetic*, New York and London: Continuum, 2009.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Sconce, 'Trashing' the Academy', p. 375.

34 / Documunity: A Collaborative Online Video Project

Jeremy Weinstein

The Collaborative Internet

Filmmaking has always been a highly collaborative process. For most of the 20th Century filmmaking and video production was confined to the realm of professionals, requiring expensive equipment for both capture and editing of the moving image and specialised knowledge to operate. Nowadays, however, mobile phones are equipped with video cameras and computer editing software is readily available, easily enabling amateurs to create videos. In addition, filmmakers use the Internet to distribute video content quickly and efficiently via sites such as YouTube and Vimeo, so that the efforts of amateurs can be easily broadcast to a large audience.

While there has been a noticeable growth in video production over the last five years, the increasing numbers of people connected to the Internet has also led to the phenomenon of 'mass collaboration'^[1].¹ The continued success of mass collaborative production such as Wikipedia and the open source software movement (OSS) has demonstrated that the Internet can magnify and enhance the collaborative efforts of the few by creating ways that allow the many to participate. The question that the Documunity project sets out to answer is, in what ways can the techniques used in existing online mass collaborative projects be applied to the filmmaking process, and to what effect?

Many have theorised that the distributed network enables new modes of production and communication. Some of the earliest pioneers of the Internet, such as Englebart and English, foresaw that the computer would help develop procedures and methods for working individually and cooperatively.² This revelation allowed Licklider and Taylor to understand the power of networked computers for the purpose of communication and, as a result, the potential for collaboration.³ Other theorists indicated that the essence of the new communications medium was to establish community and connect remote users.⁴ These ideas were reiterated by many other theorists.⁵

In his seminal work *The Wealth of Networks*, Yochai Benkler suggests that the networked environment enables new ways for disparate people to adopt radically decentralised, cooperation strategies because it makes possible "*a new modality of organizing production: radically decentralized, collaborative, and non-proprietary; based on sharing resources and outputs among widely distributed, loosely connected individuals who cooperate with each other without*

*relying on either market signals or managerial commands. This is what I call 'commons-based peer production'."*⁶

Benkler's concept of 'commons based peer production' is an expansion of McLuhan's idea that consumers would become producers, an idea advanced by Alvin Toffler's notion of the 'Prosumer', and Axel Bruns' assertion that the Internet blurs the traditionally distinct roles of user and producer into a hybrid 'produser'.⁷ The 'produser' is at once a user and a producer of content and along with the myriad of others can both create and consume simultaneously. Both the 'how' and 'who' of content creation point to a user-generated, open and cooperative process of online content creation that uses the network as the vehicle for collaboration. If filmmaking is essentially collaborative and the network is a site of collaboration, then what projects have capitalised on the power of the network in the filmmaking process?

Collaborative Development

Filmmakers have also tried harnessing the power of the many to the earlier development stage. Ellis's *Snakes on a Plane* (2006), starring Samuel L. Jackson, is a Hollywood film that used the social network to generate and test ideas as well as build an audience prior to the launch of the film. Fans were able to interact with the producers of the film, suggesting plot ideas and commenting on versions of the script. (While the process may have been seen as a success in terms of interactivity, however, the film was not successful commercially, costing \$33 million and generating only \$62 million in gross box office receipts.) A notable recent example of a story being written by the crowd, but unfinished at the time of writing, is Tim Burton's 2010 project to construct a story using Twitter. The idea is based on a

writing exercise, derived from Surrealism, known as the *cadavre exquis* (the 'exquisite corpse'), in which each participant writes the next line of what is thus a collaboratively written story. *The World of Stainboy* (based on a series of short films by Burton under the same title, 2000), involves a selection of lines tweeted for inclusion in the story.

Another form of collaboration involves micro-financing a film with small donations from a large number of investors. One of the most prominent micro-financing sites, 'Kickstarter', attracts crowd-sourced funding for any creative idea. At the time of writing, one such documentary film is *We Are Many* (Amirani, 2013), which had raised \$79,444 from 518 backers, a figure which in fact constitutes 113% of the budget originally proposed. Another example is the site 'Pozible', which claims to 'crowdfund creativity' and caters to Australian filmmakers. It currently has nearly 230 projects seeking funding. Finally, the Finnish web site 'wreck-a-movie' invites filmmakers to post movie ideas in the hope of garnering support from other artists within the community. (The experience of visiting the site, however, reveals that there is a very large number of projects to choose from, each with just one or two people working on them, which runs somewhat counter to the idea of harnessing the power of the many).

Collaborative Production

One of the best examples of harnessing the power of the network was *Life in a Day* (Macdonald *et al*, 2011), based on a partnership between the American filmmaker Ridley Scott and YouTube. This documentary project sought to document the world as it was on 24 July 2010, chosen for the

date's symbolic reference to '24/7', a common colloquialism for 'all the time'. The project commenced by inviting the YouTube community and anyone else who wanted to participate to upload raw, unedited footage recorded on the date in question. The response was overwhelming: over 80,000 participants contributed more than 4,500 hours of footage. Participants undertook this task on the understanding that director Kevin Macdonald and his editor Joe Walker would use the footage to construct a traditional documentary of life on earth to be screened in cinemas. The eventual 90-minute film had its premiere, with many a fanfare, at Sundance in January 2011.

Since the success of *Life in a Day* there have been a number of other attempts, including Kyle Ruddick's *One Day on Earth* (2012), a vision of the world on 10 October 2010 created from the contributions of volunteer filmmakers from across the globe. *The 11Eleven Project* (Lauren, 2012) attempted a similar thing on 11 November 2011. The *Life in a Day* project was an instance of crowd-sourced production, where the production stage of the filmmaking process was opened to the masses via the digital network. It was not, however, the first instance of such praxis. Two earlier, less successful attempts were *Awesome; I Fuckin' Shot That* [sic] (Yauch, 2006), the film of a 2004 Beastie Boys concert created from footage recorded by fifty camcorders distributed to audience members, and *Humanity* (2008), a short film assembled by Spike Lee for Nokia from 4,000 user contributions shot on mobile phones.

Another form of crowd-sourced production occurs in the case of *Mapping Main Street*. This ongoing project sets out to highlight the sheer variety of Main Streets that exist in the United States, despite politicians' desire to summon up an

homogenous vision of the entire nation as a simplified 'Main Street'. This specific instance of mass production requires participants to contribute finished films rather than raw unedited films. The individual films then act as scenes in the broader documentary on the diversity of towns and places in the United States. The advantage of this form of filmmaking is that a visual conversation can emerge around the broader themes of the documentary. The disadvantage is that the end product/s are unconstrained, making viewing the piece in its entirety an extremely difficult task. There is also no guarantee that the essence of the project is clearly conveyed to the audience.

In terms of the post-production aspect of the filmmaking process, the best example is Brett Gaylor's *RIP: A Remix Manifesto* (2009). Gaylor's 'Open Source Cinema' project invited willing participants to remix certain scenes from the film, some of which ended up in the final film. For the most part, however, participants had access to the finished film, with no opportunity to be actively involved in the process of making the documentary. Rather, they were only able to remix the footage for fun. Yet even in this model each user becomes an individual editor rather than the editing process being made available to a group.

Collaborative Post-Production: The 'Documunity' Project

All the examples I have used have had one editor, or a small co-located team of editors, meaning that current work-flows require the crowd to operate on either side of the editing bottle-neck. What is lacking in the editing phase of the filmmaking process is an open and collaborative platform that allows multiple participants to share not only the raw footage but the various edits as well. Is it actually possible for

films to be edited in a collaborative way? This is what the 'Documunity' project endeavours to test. It is this model of video editing that most closely aligns with Benkler's notion of 'commons-based peer production'.⁸

When it came to designing the Documunity site lessons from the collaborative projects previously described obviously needed to be incorporated. The most significant lesson was learned from 'wreck-a-movie'. To avoid the issue of a thousand members posting their own ideas and not collaborating with each other, the decision was taken to make the site project-focused, perhaps concentrating on just one project at a time. The view was that participants might form communities around given topics and ideas, and work together on a project rather than doing their own thing. While individual users do have a profile page, the intention was to use it to help analyse who was doing what, rather than a private place to edit their own video.

Another key design element was the decision to make the collaborative process on Documunity asynchronous. This decision was taken for two reasons. First, because asynchronous editing is a standard process film and video editors currently engage in by making a version of a scene, or sequence and presenting it to the director for discussion. The aim of Documunity was to replicate the 'versioning' process on a larger scale, with more editors. The advantage of versioning is that reverting to an earlier instance of a documentary is effortless, providing additional flexibility for the editors to return to earlier ideas or for other editors to take a new direction based on earlier edits. The second reason for choosing asynchronous editing was because simultaneously editing a time-based project would mean that adding or deleting content in the first part of the time-line

would have a ripple effect to those working on the latter part of the time-line, potentially disrupting their work. It was for these two reasons that Documunity adopted a process of asynchronous editing.

The final decision was to determine which specific video editing package would be used as the core of the Documunity site. The first requirement was that the editor be open source, both for financial and ideological reasons. The number of possible editors was thus reduced to six, only one that handled its own media, which meant media could be uploaded directly to the site. This was an attractive feature because it meant that users could nominate different types of copyright licenses and privacy settings for the uploaded media. It also allowed additional analytics to be performed to gain a deeper insight into the specific needs and requirements of collaborative video editors. The editor chosen was created by Kaltura.

The next phase of the Documunity project is to test these principles and to determine how the platform is used. Running a number of trials with different group sizes will test the assumptions within the site and allow users to provide feedback. The first trial will be small and self-contained, with no more than ten participants, working for no longer than a month to co-create a mini documentary with a maximum duration of five minutes. This initial trial will be used to assess the workflow and assumptions about how groups of people might collaborate on video editing. The information gained from the trial will be used to make improvements to the site. Once the changes have been incorporated another trial will commence, with larger groups co-creating longer content. At the completion of the second round of trials conclusions will be drawn about the ways in which people

can usefully collaborate on the task of video editing and areas requiring further research will be highlighted.

Notes and References

¹ Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, London: Atlantic Books, 2008, p. 1.

² Doug Englebart and William English, 'A Research Center for Augmenting Human Intellect', in American Federation of Information Processing Societies, *Proceedings of the December 9-11, 1968 Fall Joint Computer Conference*, Washington: Thompson Book Co., 1968, Pt. 1, pp. 395-410.

³ Joseph Carl Robnett Licklider and Robert Taylor, 'The Computer as a Communication Device', *Science and Technology*, vol. 76, 1968, pp. 21-31.

⁴ See, for example, Roy Rosenzweig, 'Wizards, Bureaucrats, Warriors, and Hackers: Writing the History of the Internet', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 103, 1998, pp. 1530-1552, and Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000.

⁵ See, for example, Michel Bauwens, 'Class and Capital in Peer Production', *Capital & Class*, vol. 33, 2009, 121; Henry Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*, New York: New York University Press, 2006; Charles Leadbeater, *We-Think: Mass Innovation, Not Mass Production*, 2nd ed., London: Profile Books, 2009; Pierre Lévy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*, Cambridge: Perseus Books, 1997.

⁶ Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 60.

⁷ Marshall McLuhan and Barrington Nevitt, *Take Today: The Executive as Dropout*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972; Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave*, London: Collins, 1980; Axel Bruns, *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life, and Beyond: From Production to Produsage*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008.

⁸ For details, see www.documunity.com. On other projects discussed, see www.11Elevenproject.com and www.mappingmainstreet.com.

35 / Young People's Preferences in Respect of Information Design: Research Findings from Spain

Ana Isabel Bernal Triviño

Young People and the Media

This essay presents a new view of online design, news and youth. The Internet is becoming the main source of information for today's youth. However, its use is linked to the quality of its presentation, its design. This research confirms the visual impact of online media design and shows how young people perceive the design of news websites. Simultaneous with the growth of the Internet in developed countries, a new generation of users has arisen. The Internet has the potential to become the main source of reference for this generation. Young people have grown up in parallel with the introduction of the new technologies.

And so how is this change taking place? Why are young people opting for online as opposed to any other medium? If young people can get information free of charge on the radio or television or through free newspapers, why go to an online medium? My thinking is that, in addition to the content, the online medium has to have some specific design elements that attract this particular audience. Are they really satisfied with the design of the websites? Is there something about the design that might put them off?

There is a substantial literature on young people and the media.¹ The visual awareness and training of young people is very different from those of the generations that preceded them. Internet, networks, games and mobiles are the key elements of their environment. There are also studies of the design of news websites. Spanish researchers have conducted researches about it, but focus on content analysis and the elements of the design.² Another group is involved with experimental research. The most important example here is provided by the EyeTrack studies conducted by the Poynter Institute since 1990.³ EyeTrack research captures and analyses the eye's gaze, its fixations and movements. There is also further important research on the reading of print and online news, the credibility of online news, and the design elements of print newspapers⁴.

We can deduce a number of points from the research cited. Young people tend to demand speed and constant action from the Internet and videogames. They process information at great speed. According to the EyeTrack study more text was read online (77%) than in broadsheet (62%) or tabloid (57%) formats. The difficulty of reading the computer screen is certainly an issue: the need to read from computer screen can cause eye-strain. Short paragraphs, *sans serif* fonts, and

bold style are highly valued. Video material should be of high quality and take little time to load.

Objectives and Design

The overall objective of the research was to focus on information design, and the advantages and disadvantages of online news, with reference to young people's media preferences. There were two phases: one qualitative, and one experimental. The research was conducted from October 2008 through May 2009. Because this subject is relatively new and insufficiently studied, we decided to conduct a qualitative investigation in order to outline the characteristics of online design.

Prior to the experimental phase, there was a qualitative phase in which young people's preferences in respect of information design were sought. About 50 Spanish university students were interviewed for this phase, using a semi-structured interview. An exhaustive list of the specific elements they cited was drawn up, based on their qualitative answers. The experimental test which followed was based on the most cited elements.

Where the experimental test was concerned, participants fell into two categories: a control group and an experimental group. Each group contained 366 people, but the function of each group alternated between each test. The subjects were randomly selected. Our questionnaire contained thirteen tests, with one or two questions in each, about one specific element (font, photo, video, colour, etc.) The students had to grade the design or the elements of certain home pages and news sites on a 1-10 scale. The independent variables for the page overall were the number of photos, size, color, and the

use of video; and as for the text, its family (*serif/sans serif*), style, and color. This was the hypothesis: the experimental group (which viewed better design) would give more points to the elements analysed, compared with the control group.

Website prototypes were designed using the independent variables. We developed a set of 24 online stories. Each group viewed the same design, the same media and content, but with only one change: the presence or absence of one element or several. So, there were two different versions of the same story; each version included identical information, but the design and story structure differed. A multiple regression analysis was used to establish the outcomes. The results were controlled by sex, level of study and also by four testing controls to control the tendency to score in some cases, of plus or minus. This method tends to normalise arbitrary or random responses. The analysis was processed with a programme for quantitative analysis (SPSS) which is standard in this type of work.

Qualitative Findings

Our respondents stated that the design of a website was important, provoking different responses. If the design attracts their attention, they are more likely to read the news while surfing the Net, and will spend more time on it. On the other hand, when they are searching for specific news, design comes second in importance to content. So, in this case, the content is more important than design and they spend more time on it.

The elements which attract their attention to the page are colour, style of font (preferably *sans serif*) and paragraphing. These elements improve readability on the computer screen.

They recognise the value of colour for attracting and differentiating content and other elements, and the use of headlines or sub-headings to improve understanding and facilitate a brief reading.

Regarding the characteristics of online newspapers, multimedia made them attractive, fostering curiosity and improving understanding. Users also mentioned that audiovisual elements reinforce the credibility of the news. They liked the additional documentation available because it makes the news more complete. For them, interactivity is an area of opinion and entertainment, but they are unsure of its usefulness and sometimes think it is a waste of time because they go to the Internet precisely to find information quickly. To share opinions, they preferred the social networks.

Users preferred reading online to print because the digital medium is adapted better to their lifestyle and because they can consume the information when they wanted with a variety of multimedia elements available, such as audio and video. Possible disadvantages mentioned include the intrusive presence of advertising, technical problems and the difficulty to read on screen. If these problems occur frequently, they tend to end the session.

Experimental Findings

With these key elements, we were able design the experimental phase. The objective was to identify the variables for the design assessment. There were 12 tests and two groups of participants. We began with a control test. The two groups viewed the same home-page. The difference was not significant, because the scores were very similar, 5.65 (experimental group) and 5.67 (control group).

Here is a sense of some of the outcomes as we tested the hypotheses drawn from the qualitative stage of our research. For example, Test 2 involves a homepage with four photos, and another one without them. The control group valued more 6.01 the design with more photos, compared with 4.48 in the experimental group. Test 6 was focused on typography. The experimental group saw a story with *sans serif* fonts and the control group with serif fonts. The experimental group gave an average of 6.50 to the *sans serif*, compared to 5.53 in the control group.

Test 9 involved the color of the text. The design with the text in grey was assessed at 5.93 points, and the design with black text with 6.03. There seems to be a preference for black text, but the difference in results is not significant. In Test 10, the control group viewed a design with a direct access to video and the experimental group the same image converted into photographs. The results show that experimental group gives the video 6.96 points, compared to 5.44 for the photographs.

Summary and Conclusion

For young people, photos and videos are the primary form of visual impact when reading the news. It is thus essential to include an audiovisual component for the news - at a minimum, one photo and one video. If the news has more than one photo, young people are more interested. Young people prefer photos in news on home-pages; a story with two or three photos, preferably in colour, attracted more attention than other stories with fewer photos or without photos. Where video material is concerned, they prefer this to be directly accessible from the page they are currently

reading. While they're reading on-screen, they prefer easy-to-read typefaces. In this respect they prefer a text with *sans serif* fonts, presented in brief paragraphs which are separated by white space.

To summarise, the results of the test reveals that multimedia elements are more important than verbal elements in this context. That is, on the Internet the impact of the image is superior to that of text where young people are concerned. We found a significant association between multimedia elements, *sans serif* fonts, and clear-cut design. To sum up, clearly the generational change is affecting Internet media. Results such as these should be analysed by media companies and by educators, because these are the citizens and consumers of today and tomorrow.

Test	Students group A (score)	Test	Students group B (score)
1. Home Page with 4 photos in the headline news	6.01	Home Page without photos in the headline news	4.48
2. News with a gallery of photos	6.62	News without a gallery of photos	5.47
3. News with a b&w photo	4.98	News with a colour photo	6.00
4. News. Some text in bold	7.25	News. Some text in bold	6.94
5. News. Text with <i>sans serif</i> font	6.50	News. Text with <i>serif</i> font	5.53
6. Home Page headline news in <i>sans serif</i> font	5.84	Home Page with headlines in <i>serif</i> font	5.48
7. News starting with a big photo between headline and text	6.66	News without a big photo between headline and text	5.64
8. Home Page: headline news with video	6.96	Home Page: headline news with photo	5.44
9. Text in grey font	5.93	Text in black font	6.03
10. Home Page with photography in mainly headline news	6.51	Homepage without photography in mainly news	5.29
11. News with direct video direct (viewed on the same page)	7.64	News with indirect video indirect (watched it on another page)	5.33
12. News with two videos	7.57	News with only one video	6.82

Figure 1: Test Results

Notes and References

Acknowledgment

The research on which this essay was based was funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spain. Project: I+D+i: CS02009-13713-C05-02.

¹ For a selective chronology of research in this area, see Patricia Greenfield, *El niño y los medios de comunicación: los efectos de la televisión, videojuegos y ordenadores*, Madrid: Morata, 1985; Diego Levis, *Los videojuegos, un fenómeno de masas*, Barcelona: Paidós, 1997; Nicholas Negroponte, *El mundo digital*, Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2000; David Buckingham, *Crecer en la era de los medios electrónicos: tras la muerte de la infancia*, Madrid: Paideia, 2001; Giovanni Sartori, *Homo videns: la sociedad teledirigida*, Madrid: Taurus, 2002; Andréu López Blasco, *Informe Juventud en España 2004*, Madrid: Instituto de la Juventud, 2005; and Piermarco Aroldi, 'Comportamiento infantil: Consumo mediático y cultura del consumo', *Telos: Cuadernos de comunicación e innovación*, no. 73, 2007, pp. 85-92.

² José Ignacio Armentia, 'Últimas tendencias en el diseño de los ciberdiarios españoles', *Congreso de Periodismo Digital: Presente y futuro de la comunicación digital*, Zaragoza: Asociación de la Prensa de Aragón, 2007, pp. 48-68; Ángeles Cabrera, *La prensa online: Los periódicos en la WWW*, Barcelona: Edit. CIMS 97, 2000; Ramón Salaverría, *Cibermedios: El impacto de Internet en los medios de comunicación en España*, Sevilla: Comunicación Social Ediciones y Publicaciones, 2005.

³ Steve Outing, 'Eyetrack III: What News Websites Look Like through Readers' Eyes', www.poynter.org, 2004.

⁴ Mario García, *Diseño y remodelación de periódicos*, Pamplona: EUNSA (Ediciones Universidad de Navarra), 1984; Armentia, 'Últimas tendencias en el diseño de los ciberdiarios españoles'; Jin Yang and Padmini Patwardhan, 'Determinants of Internet News Use: A Structural Equation Model Approach', *Web Journal of Mass Communication Research*, no. 8, 2004; Daniel Tena, 'Una nueva propuesta metodológica en torno a la investigación científica sobre los medios impresos: El Estado Estético', *Zer: revista de estudios de comunicación*, no. 6, 1999.

7. Transgressions

36 / Mythic Vampires and Sexual Allegory in the Cinema

Emma Anne James

Vampire Histories

Sex and death link all vampire myths and fiction across cultures and throughout history. Vampires, like gods and ghosts, seem to be integral to how humans understand the world. In almost every society the vampire appears in some form - as the *kasha* of Japan, the *lamiae* of Greece, the *bhuta* of India, the *lobishomen* of Brazil and, of course, the vampires of Britain and America. It is a common misconception that the vampire myth started in Eastern Europe and was then popularised by Bram Stoker in *Dracula* (1897). In fact vampires date back to the beginning of recorded history: there are references to the *ekimmu* and the *labartu* in Babylonian mythology, for example.¹ The vampire lives on in modern culture. In film, literature, video games,

television, music and graphic novels the vampire is regularly deployed as a powerful symbol and metaphor.

A wider consideration of storytelling, particularly in modern film, reveals that it is very often based either on what we want (fantasy, wish fulfilment, escapism), or on what we fear (fear, horror, catharsis). It is not surprising then that a character or being who encapsulates both desire and fear simultaneously should be utilised by modern creators of fiction. What is surprising is how little the fundamental ideas have changed over time. Modern blockbusters have as much in common with the myths of ancient cultures as they do with current affairs. The vampire has always been an ambiguous figure, a being who both terrifies and liberates his victims. However, one change that has recently occurred is that the majority of representations of vampires are now sympathetic.

Vampires in fiction now try to live among humans, with humans even, rather than in lonely graveyards, forests or castles. The vampire has always been the 'other', which is a source of both fascination and fear. In early myths they were a product of sexual or religious transgressions, for example *gaya* were created when funeral rites were not conducted properly and *mulo* were children conceived through incest. In later adaptations they symbolised sexual, cultural, ethnic and social otherness. Dracula and his descendants Lestat and Spike personify all these differences. However, in an ironic, post-modern age where traditional values are routinely questioned the dark other is both attractive and easily identified with, and is even able to become the hero.²

Innocence, Sexuality and Death

In many myths it is children, with their purity and innocence, that are the favourite prey of vampires. The *lamiae* or *mormos* in Roman and Greek culture, as well as the *aswang* of the Philippines, fed off children. The reasoning behind these legends is fairly easy to see; infant mortality rates were very high and quite often the cause of death was inexplicable. This obsession with purity extended to virgins, whose blood was also desired by vampires and other monsters in myths and legend. In *Dracula* Lucy transforms from a chaste young maiden to a rampant seductress when she is bitten by a vampire. Though Arthur, her fiancé, is tempted by her in this state he knows she is now truly a monster because she wants to have sex with him. There is a very obvious continuation in the modern horror film - in the teenage slasher film, for example, it is the virgin who survives at the end. Sex and death are not only linked in the horror genre, they can equate each other.

The vampire represents temptation, sin and physical knowledge. In films such as *Let the Right One In* (Alfredson, 2008), *Twilight* (Hardwicke, 2008), as well as in Joss Whedon's TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Fox, 1997-2003) and Alan Ball's *True Blood* (HBO, 2008-), the human protagonist begins the narrative as a virgin and either loses her virginity to a vampire or becomes sexually aware because of them. The promotional material for these 'monster' movies strikingly suggests that these could easily just be human couples, albeit very attractive ones. This is not a new idea. In Keats's poem *Lamia* (1819) a young man marries a beautiful foreign girl and then gets eaten on his wedding night, while in *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 1*

(Condon, 2011) Bella's wedding night is also violent, though not fatal. In another version, the *lobishomen* of Brazil not only take the blood of women, but also raise the female sex drive. The *True Blood* series offers a different take on this idea: if a person drinks the blood of a vampire then he or she becomes highly attracted to them in sexual terms.

There is also a more complex loss of innocence when humans and vampires are represented together on screen: vampires are shown to be superior to humans, they are immortal, exceptionally strong, and often possess supernatural powers and senses. As Blayde and Dunn point out in a discussion of *True Blood*, humans are to modern vampires what other animals are to humans – pets or food.³ This can be seen at the moment the human hero either meets the vampire, or is alone with them for the first time, with the vampire looming over them, watchful and tense. The framing and positioning of the actors is reminiscent of predators and prey in nature.

This predator-prey relationship is unsurprising considering the consistent link between vampires and animals in myth and fiction; some vampires fear animals, more usually they are portrayed as having the ability to control them or even transform into them. Until recently this meant that vampires, for all their power and strength, were more beast than man. The current representations of vampires as beings who are not only superior to humans physically but who can also experience the world more intensely and feel much more deeply, however, blurs the line, questioning human dominance and even the human/animal distinction. The ultimate conclusion to this is realised in Michael and Peter Spierig's *Daybreakers* (2009), a film that envisions a society ruled by vampires who farm most of the remaining humans for blood.

Love, Fear, and Immortality

The line between fear and love in these relationships is very thin. Indeed, the two are so interlinked that when Francis Ford Coppola came to adapt *Dracula* (1992) he seemingly could not decide whether his film should be a romance or a horror film. These dual emotions are represented skilfully in *Let the Right One In*. Though Eli and Oskar are both pre-pubescent and thus not sexually involved, the contrast between their tender friendship and platonic romance and Eli's darker nature is highlighted throughout the film. Eli is framed in two shots in almost exactly the same pose but doing very different things. In the first shot he is embracing Oskar from behind, in the second shot he is holding on to a woman's back and feeding from her throat. In both these shots Eli has his arms clutched around the human's shoulders, his mouth on the back of their neck and his eyes looking down. The line between his representation as a child and as a monster is blurred; he is both loving and frightening.

In another scene Eli has sneaked into Oskar's room at night. The scene is domestic and tender, in some ways it could even appear post-coital. Oskar and Eli lie naked and are cuddling, intimately and lovingly. But even in this scene the wallpaper in Oskar's room is made from a forest design and so nature looms over them, a reminder of Eli's more animalistic side. His hand on Oskar's bare arm seems somewhere between a clawing action and a caress. This is Eli at his most human and yet a hint of the predator lingers. A final, shocking, example underscores the vampire myth's preoccupation with the ties between youth and age, between mortality and immortality. We are shown Eli's true face, which is two hundred years old. The aged face starkly emphasises the fear of death

underlying the fascination with vampires. The temptation is not only of the flesh, but also of the spirit; to live forever even at a terrible cost is enticing to most people. The cinema can control time, can make a mortal stay young and beautiful forever, and it is still, even in these cynical times, a type of magic. It is not surprising that one of the earlier attempts at narrative filmmaking would be based on vampires, *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922). Seventy years on, Coppola also draws this parallel in his *Dracula* (1992): the cinema and the vampire are both hypnotic and immortal.

Otherness, Acceptance and Attraction

In *Let the Right One In* Oskar is attracted to Eli partly because of his own dark side, his fascination with serial killers, his fantasies about killing the bullies who torment him. Similarly, Buffy is attracted to Angel in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* because he understands the darkness she sees all the time and must fight. In *True Blood* a large part of Sookie's desire to be with Bill is because although she is a telepath she can't read his thoughts, but she can be herself. For these human characters the attraction to vampires is based on a wish to be accepted, to have the darkness inside them understood.

This wish is also at the heart of many of the myths, for example the *sabbat* or Black Mass performed by witches was believed to reverse everything, to turn order into chaos⁴. It was supposedly the ultimate blasphemy and terror for simple, Christian peasants. However, perhaps it was a desire for chaos, to break social boundaries, that was as much a driving factor in these myths as much as fear and superstition. Becoming a vampire, or becoming a vampire's lover, is entering into a deal with the devil, and it promises a life outside the norm, free from social constraints. Is this also

the attraction for modern audiences, to see darkness, sexuality and immortality made real?

One of the first vampires in popular Western fiction was based on Lord Byron. 'The Vampyre', a short story by John William Polidori, Byron's doctor and former friend, features Lord Ruthven, a barbed portrait of Byron himself. Edward Cullen in *Twilight* is the perfect Byronic hero for more recent times: handsome, aloof, arrogant, disdainful, an outsider or outcast, aristocratic (or at least of old blood, refined tastes and rich), mysterious, hiding a guilty secret, possibly cursed and dangerous, but in a seductive way.⁵

Twilight reinforces this in several ways. Edward is frequently seen watching, which emphasises his position as an outsider, on the edge of society. However, unlike most Byronic heroes, or indeed anti-heroes, he is very moral and controlled. He is in fact the first ever vegetarian vampire, entirely distant from the historic legends of blood and terror, as critics have been quick to point out. Edward's fellow vampires in the *Twilight* universe are far less moral than he is; not only do they eat humans, but they actively enjoy hunting them. Here the connection to predators recurs; even Edward and his family must hunt, though they choose to kill beasts not humans. It would seem that even in a film aimed at teenage girls, which is firmly rooted in the romance rather than the horror genre, the demonic vampires of myth are still a powerful influence.

Vampires have been seen as mythical monsters who mainly served the purpose of explaining anything that happened after death that was abnormal. They also allowed humans to channel their darkest feelings and desires so that vampires became the embodiment of everything society and everyday life did not allow. They were murderous, sexually deprived,

animalistic, powerful, free. They became so popular in fiction because they were exotic, the ultimate 'other'. In film and television they still provide escapism and identification, but more than that they represent the past.

Their appeal is not only that they are a walking metaphor for uninhibited sexuality and power over life and death. The vampire characters are also a conduit to the past. Much is made of this in *True Blood*: the local history club want to hear Bill's memories of the Civil War, and there are flashbacks to Eric Northman's human life as a Viking over a thousand years ago. However, in a more general sense vampires represent something ancient and deeply rooted in our collective culture. They remind us that though we may have built cities and cinemas we still have the same primal fears and desires, and the vampire plays on both.

Notes and References

¹ See Kevin Jackson, *Bite: A Vampire Handbook*, London: Portobello Books, 2009, p. 7.

² Andrew Delbanco, *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1996, p 3.

³ Adriadne Blayde and George A. Dunn, 'Pets, Cattle, and Higher Life Forms on *True Blood*', in George A. Dunn and Rebecca Housel (eds.), '*True Blood*' and *Philosophy: We Wanna Think Bad Things With You*, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, 2010, p. 40.

⁴ Wayne Bartlett and Flavia Idriceanu, *Legends of Blood: The Vampire in History and Myth*, Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2005, p 112.

⁵ Kevin Jackson, *Bite: A Vampire Handbook*, p. 188.

37 / Hercule Poirot as Transmedia Figure: Investigating the Detective's Transition from Television Fiction to Computer Games

Serena Formica

Introduction: Television's Poirot

For almost a decade-and-a-half, actor David Suchet has been impersonating Hercule Poirot in the ITV television series *Agatha Christie's Poirot*. Suchet first appeared as Poirot on London Weekend Television's *The Adventure of the Clapham Cook* (Bennett, 1989). The episode was well received, and the rest is history. Christie had disliked the majority of the actors who had interpreted Poirot, but Suchet received the approval of Agatha Christie's grandson, Matthew Prichard, who regretted that Christie had not lived to see him as Poirot. After the immediate success of the series, LWT producer Brian Eastman decided that the 100th anniversary of Agatha Christie's birth on 16 September 1990 was a good occasion to broadcast the first feature-length episode, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*.

The thirteenth series, launched in Summer 2013, is due to conclude on 13 November 2013 with a version (Macdonald, 2013), of Christie's final novel, *Curtain: Poirot's Last Case*, by which time all her work featuring the detective will have been brought to the television screen. The definitive Poirot, Suchet features on the official Agatha Christie website (www.agathachristie.com) and on the covers of the Adventure Company Computer Games *Murder on the Orient Express* (2006) and *Evil Under the Sun* (2007). (The trilogy also includes *And Then There Were None*, 2006). What then happens when the detective who has already been adapted from the crime novel to TV drama is reincarnated yet again within the interactive world of the computer game?

The Detective and the Reader

In his analysis of narrative in detective novels, Peter Hühn argues that one of reasons for the success of detective novels is the connection between the author (of the crime) and the reader (of the crime's story).¹ In any classical detective novel there are two stories. The first is the story of the crime, which is 'written' by the criminal who leaves false clues in order to disorientate the investigators. The second is the story of the investigation, in which the detective must discern between the false clues (left intentionally by the criminal) and the true clues (which the criminal is unaware of having left), in order to be able to re-narrate the first story. Each of these two 'texts' has a different meaning, and also has multiple narrators.

One narrator is the author of the novel, who usually deputises his/her function to the 'individualised narrator'. This is the detective's friend and assistant, the 'Watson' of

the novel, whose role is to chronicle the course of the detection. The detective, according to Hühn, is both reader and narrator. He is the reader of the first story, and towards the end of the book, when the mystery is revealed he also becomes its narrator. In reconstructing the first story, the detective becomes the writer of the second story, the story of the investigation. Bringing Hühn's argument forward, I argue that the reader on the one hand is encouraged to identify with the detective who holds the key to solving the criminal's story, but, on the other hand, is also in competition with the detective, and therefore cannot identify with him completely.

The audience of the TV series is in a position at the same time similar and different. The readers of the books, in fact, can only rely on their imagination in creating their own image of the detective, based on the description given by Agatha Christie. However, the presence of a flesh-and-blood person on the screen acts as a diversion in the identification process. Audiences can no longer create their own Poirot, because they are presented with Poirot as represented physically by David Suchet. The identification process, therefore, becomes more complex. This may have two perhaps opposing outcomes. On the one hand, it may result in an increased competition with the detective, a sort of renewal of the textual contract described by Hühn. On the other hand, it may lead to a 'sit back and relax' attitude, dominated by the pleasure of watching Poirot solve the mystery and restore a sense of social justice.

Suchet uncannily embodies Poirot's ability to pierce suspects to the core with his gaze. Poirot's gaze towards the camera is held beyond the viewer's comfort zone, and an interesting shift occurs. The spectator finds himself at the receiving end

of that investigative gaze, and is, for a brief moment, forced *to identify with the suspect* to whom that gaze is directed. This experience, while brief, creates uneasiness because it determines an unexpected shift in the identification process. Those spectators who have chosen to identify with Poirot, have to shift their identification from the detective to the suspect and have to endure Poirot's penetrating gaze; since among the suspects interviewed by Poirot there is the criminal, the spectator, at least once in each episode, *becomes* the criminal. The spectators who have chosen to identify with the detective have a first-hand experience, as it were, of the detection process. They become co-writers of what Hühn calls the 'second' story, the story of the investigation. Yet, they can only vicariously experience the feelings of a satisfactory resolution to the crime, because they are not active agents, but remain spectators sitting in a living room.

The Game and the Player

It is reasonable to speculate that when confronted with a computer game based around a mystery, the spectator-turned-player would have the expectation to become a first-hand writer of the 'story of the investigation'. This would be possible by identifying with the detective in actual fact rather than vicariously. In 2006, the Adventure Company approached David Suchet asking him to voice Hercule Poirot in their game version of Christie's 1934 novel *Murder on the Orient Express*. What better opportunity, for the player, to write the story of the investigation than in the very persona, as it were, of the famous Belgian sleuth?

The computer game's creators, however, were to frustrate such expectations. Instead of allowing the player to *become*

Hercule Poirot, moving around the computer screen with Suchet-like features, the game writers introduced a new character to the storyline, train company employee Antoinette Marceau, a crime buff and a huge fan of Poirot's. The director of the train company, Mr. Buc, gives Marceau the task of assisting Poirot in all his needs while on board the train. If successful, she will land a promotion, otherwise she will remain a secretary. In letting the player impersonate the new character - as opposed to Poirot - the aim of the game is to outplay Poirot. However the freedom given to the avatar is limited, to the extent that the player feels like a secretary to Poirot.

As in the novel, during the first night of travel the Orient Express is stopped by an avalanche. In the game, Poirot falls off the bed and injures his ankle, which takes him, at least physically, out of commission; from this moment Poirot remains in bed. The following morning Rachett's body is discovered, and Poirot asks Marceau to help him in the investigation, launching the following challenge: *"You will need to use your own little grey cells as much as Poirot, and in the end we will see if the little student of crime is ready to graduate. Refuse, and I will guide your investigation much more. Either way the crime it will be solved. It is an important decision that you must make now, before we proceed. I will not ask again, do you accept?"*

This challenge should represent the turning point of the game, when the real investigation begins. However the player remains frustrated because his task is in effect limited to leg-work. This is a third-person point-of-view game, with a linear narrative which progresses mainly through cut-scenes (scenes or sequences which unfold without the control of the

gamer). The progression of the narrative during game-play depends on the questions Marceau puts to the suspects, and on the extent to which Poirot is satisfied with the clues gathered. If he is satisfied, the game may progress; otherwise, the avatar has to resume its tiresome task of clue-searching. This type of game-play is not very challenging for those players who are used to more action-based games, but it may be entertaining for the fan of the television series.

The player inhabits what Hühn calls the second part of the story. The avatar has the task of uncovering the unintentional clues that the criminal has left and of making sense of them. However, the player is soon frustrated because, while s/he is allowed to carry out the first part of the task (uncovering the clues) s/he is denied the second part, the uncovering of their meaning, which is left to Poirot. Despite all the clues gathered, the player is, ironically, clueless as to their meaning as are the police in the novels and the TV versions.

While the idea of putting the player in competition with the detective has potential, the limiting way in which this has been put into practice is one of reasons for the game's mixed fortunes. Another reason for the scant success of the game - among web reviewers - is the addition of a third solution to the two proposed by Poirot in the book. The first and second solutions mirror Agatha Christie's book. In the proposed third solution the character of Pierre Michel is not who he claims to be. He is in fact Mr. Perkison, one of the original kidnappers of Daisy Armstrong.

At this point in the narrative, the game includes another variation: Perkinson refuses to kill Daisy, and his own daughter is killed by Cassetti instead. Perkinson and his wife kidnap Daisy and raise her as their own daughter. He then

assumes Michel's identity in order to get revenge on Cassetti. I argue that the game's writer has added this third solution to reward the player with a surprise ending, in the form of a cut-scene in which Daisy Armstrong is reunited with the members of her family. After a satisfactory conclusion, Poirot, clearly moved, embraces Marceau. This outcome is very different from the ending of the ITV drama version (Martin, 2010), in which Poirot is everything but the relaxed and composed character of the game. As King argues, cut-scenes constitute rewards for the player at the end of a long and challenging period of game-play, and often, end-of-game cut-scenes have a spectacular nature. However, there are no special effects in the game that could justify the inclusion of a third solution and the related cut-scene.

Adaptation and Its Discontents

When I started researching the representations of Hercule Poirot across different media, I envisaged different case-scenarios in which the player may receive pleasure in playing a game adapted from a Poirot novel. The player could be Poirot or play alongside him. In the first case, s/he would have the pleasure of impersonating one of the greatest detectives, in the second case, s/he could be in competition with Poirot and try to arrive to the solution first. However, my research and my game-playing experience suggest that this is not enough. As King argues, players also need to have an impact not only on the outcome of the game, but also on the narrative.

Describing his experience with the computer game, Suchet remarks: *"I thought originally ... I was going to come in, do the accent, and ... do all the variations for the game so people have the choice of what to do, where to go ... I was surprised*

when I got the script that in fact, I am in the game, I am leading the game, it is my investigation ... Therefore it's more similar [to playing Poirot on television] than I ever thought it would be, and from that point of view, I really enjoyed it".²

With this statement, Suchet regains the character of Poirot. However, what satisfies Suchet is a source of frustration for the player. In computer games, in fact, it is the player who is supposed to be in charge, not the computer. Suchet's remark that he is leading the game equals, for the player, the computer being in charge of both the narrative and the outcome. King points out that computer games have a "*pre-set narrative that is built into the fabric of the game*", but that narrative is also "*created while playing and is always happening*"³. What Suchet fails to understand is that the imposing presence of Suchet/Poirot in *Murder on the Orient Express* ultimately becomes an obstacle to the enjoyment of the game itself.

At the outset I also assumed that the fact that Poirot was bedridden meant that the player could derive pleasure by shifting the identification from the detective to a more personalized avatar. Such satisfaction would mirror the pleasure of the viewer in entering into competition with the television detective. However, I argue that the avatar's lack of control on the game narrative is a missed opportunity. In video games, to have control is fundamental, and any impact on the game narrative would have compensated for the lack of action sequences in the game.

To some extent, the game maintains the ties to the original text and introduces variations that concern not only the representation of Poirot but also the narrative. In fact, the game intervenes with what Hühn calls the story of the crime,

and this is the biggest innovation introduced. On paper, the game presents a major change to the detection process in comparison to the book and to the television and cinematic adaptations. While the reader and spectator are vicarious living-room detectives, the player is the leader of the detection process. Or is he?

Denying the gamer the chance to play Poirot in *Murder on the Orient Express* represents, in my view, an error of judgment. (This is corrected, however, in the second game of the trilogy, *Evil Under the Sun*. Nonetheless, the excitement is, once more, partly undermined by the fact that in this case Suchet does not voice Poirot). Ultimately, while the TV film gives audiences the pleasure of experiencing a different Poirot, the game is, in effect, a missed opportunity. It works well as an addition to the Poirot franchise, but it does not succeed as a game in its own right.

Notes and References

¹ Peter Hühn, 'The Detective as Reader: Narrativity and Reading Concepts in Detective Fiction', *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 33 no. 3, Fall 1987, pp. 451-466.

² David Suchet, interviewed in The Adventure Company's short film introducing the computer game, *Agatha Christie: 'Murder on the Orient Express'*, 2006.

³ Geoff King and Tanya Krzywinska (eds.), *Screenplay: Cinema/Videogames/Interfaces*, London: Wallflower Press, 2002, p. 23.

38 / The Narrative Image and Critical Reception of the 1970s Vigilante Thriller

Tom Edwards

The Vigilante Thriller

This essay considers the condemnatory and heavily ideological critical reactions to a cycle of US vigilante thrillers from the 1970s. The cycle includes *Straw Dogs* (Peckinpah, 1971), *The French Connection* (Friedkin, 1971), *Dirty Harry* (Siegel, 1971), *Death Wish* (Winner, 1974) and *Taxi Driver* (Scorsese, 1976). A common accusation was that the films were 'fascist', made by 'fascists', or liable to encourage 'fascism' in the film audience. This was not a label that was necessarily rejected by all the film-makers - certainly Sam Peckinpah enjoyed baiting reviewers and interviewers with a series of abrasive, and often, contradictory statements - but the consistency of this criticism highlights an anxiety in the critical reactions about the meanings of these films and, on closer inspection, the meanings of the violence they portray.

Although the critical writings are an important reaction to the texts, discourse analysis reveals a series of inconsistencies and contradictions in their assumptions about the ways in which a film can be watched. Rather than relying on these critical responses alone to guide us in terms of spectator reaction, we should instead be analysing what Ellis terms the 'narrative image', "*an idea of the film [that] is widely circulated and promoted ... the cinema industry's anticipatory reply to the question 'what is this film like?'*".¹ It is important to investigate how this element of para-text fixes, or aims to fix, the spectator's experience, since the narrative image is also essential in fixing the modality of the film text. Following Hodge and Tripp, 'modality' is being used here in the sense that it "*concerns the reality attributed to a message*".²

This has specific implications for the reception of film violence, and it is the understanding of violence that I wish to concentrate on in this essay. These distinctions were missed by contemporary critics, who ignored the concept of modality, tended to see film violence as a singular issue, and recycled basic tropes about the effect that film violence might have on the audience. Despite the consistency of the critical reaction to these films, the narrative image of each film suggests a range of spectator positions. The desire to elide these films on the part of contemporary critics, on the other hand, signals a wish to simplify the spectator experience and ignores the shifting relationship that a spectator can have in relation to several connected but different texts.

Critical Reactions: The Politics of Violence

Even a cursory glance at the American and British popular press reaction to these films reveals two central concerns,

both of which are linked to the possible effect of the films on the audience and the wider implications for society. The first concern, highlighted more by the American critics than the British, is the suggestion that these films convey and promote a fascist sensibility. The second concern, which is present on both sides of the Atlantic, concerns the portrayal of violence. This is often linked to a perceived increase in the amount of violence being portrayed in film, the explicitness of the violence, and the sense that the films in question encourage the spectator in turn to be violent.

Pauline Kael's critical reaction to the films exemplifies the general tone of the reviews. For Kael, *Straw Dogs* is a "*fascist work of art*"³ that presents the "*triumph of a superior man*". *Dirty Harry* is a "*right wing fantasy*" that attacks "*liberal values*" and draws out the "*fascist potential*" of its genre⁴. *The French Connection*, for its part, features "*the latest model sadistic cop*"⁵. Gareth Epps draws wider conclusions from *Straw Dogs*, *The French Connection* and *Dirty Harry* such as "*it has been obvious for a long time that American filmmakers are unable to deal with the politics of the left in any recognizable way*"⁶.

These films, he suggests, are symptomatic of a wider right wing tendency in Hollywood. He adds that "*recent American films have begun to show a frightening sophistication in at least one area of politics - the half-world of sadism and authoritarianism which is the breeding ground of the fascist mentality*". The accusation that the films are characterised by 'fascist' ideology betrays an anxiety in the reviewers towards the shifting political landscape in America through the 1960s and into the 1970s.

The effects of the Vietnam War on the collective American consciousness cannot, of course, be ignored. However the shifts in civil rights movements, crime and policing are also important here. The elements that were picked out from these films and directly linked to fascism included the representations of masculinity, race and violence. From a didactic point of view, however - and many of these reviews and reactions were written in a didactic mode - there is a recurrent flaw, namely an inability to define exactly what fascism is. Its recurrent use as a blanket term in reaction to these films shows a remarkable inconsistency in its application, and also a sense that the word is being used as a short-cut, a way of marking a text as unacceptable, with no underlying understand of the word and its political/philosophical application.

Critical Reactions: Violence and Spectatorship

If fascism is one recurrent way of condemning these films, the other anxiety that emerges is the meanings and implications of violence in the films. As has been noted elsewhere, the depiction of violence in American cinema changed radically in the 1960s and 70s. There are various reasons for this, including the influence of non-American films, and the eventual dissolution of the Hays code. More important perhaps was the shift in the representation of violence on television where, from the shooting of Lee-Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby to the reports from the front line in Vietnam, violence was being shown more often and more explicitly.

Of course this form of violence, presented in news programmes, has an inherently high modality despite its mediated nature. In this atmosphere of a shifting depiction of

violence, combined with a greater perception of violence in society through rising crime rates and civil unrest, the implications of watching - and more importantly *enjoying* - film violence became a point of anxiety for contemporary critics. The reviews of *Taxi Driver* generally avoided the same ideological criticism as the other films and one wonders if this is linked to the potential audience for such a film. Kael suggests, in reviewing *The French Connection*, that “Audiences for these movies in the Times Square area and the Village are highly volatile. Probably the unstable, often dazed members of the audience are particularly susceptible to the violence and tension on the screen”⁷. It is clear that a strain of elitism has entered the critical reaction here.

The New York Times felt the need to send reporter Judy Klemesrud to a theatre to gauge reaction to *Death Wish*, asking “What do they see in ‘Death Wish’?”. Klemesrud interviewed audience members and “Three mental health professionals” in the course of her quest.⁸ I think it’s important here to highlight the suggested opposition in that headline – “they” are clearly not “us”, “us” referring to those sophisticated enough to read the *New York Times*. Across many reviews and articles on both sides of the Atlantic there is a clear fear concerning the possible impact of a text on a supposedly less sophisticated audience.

These reactions were not without their contradictions. Charles Barr, for instance, noted the differences between the British critical reaction to *Straw Dogs* and *A Clockwork Orange* (Kubrick, 1971).⁹ His conclusion, that the reaction differed because of the way in which violence was presented by each film – for example, by the use of telephoto lenses in *Straw Dogs* compared to the use of wide angle lenses in *A*

Clockwork Orange - signals the inconsistency in the criticism of films marked as violent.

Stylistic distinctions are then critical, Barr argues, for understanding the ways in which the films operate: Minute-for-minute, *A Clockwork Orange* contains more instances of violence than *Straw Dogs*, but *Straw Dogs* does not allow the spectator the luxury of remaining distant through the use of the wide-angle lens. The fear of what *Straw Dogs* implied for cinema and the audience nonetheless moved thirteen British critics to write to *The Times* to decry the film's certification, expressing their "revulsion" at the film and its marketing.¹⁰ In other reactions we see a clear perceived link between the film text and possible audience reaction (*The Guardian*, for example, felt strongly enough to send a reporter to New York to examine how *Death Wish* was inspiring American traditions of gun ownership).

The underlying fear in many of the critical reactions was that the audience, having watched the film, would themselves become vigilantes. That the critics themselves didn't burst out of auditoria and beat up some muggers seems to have escaped their attention. Moving away from the discourse concerning the supposed effects of film violence we also encounter an inconsistency among critics to accurately differentiate between different types of violence, an inability to recognise the difference between the nature of the act being represented, and the method of its representation.

Modality and Narrative Image

The elision that the contemporary critics made between these films ignores the importance of the narrative image in conditioning the modality of the spectator's engagement.

Even if we acknowledge the polysemic nature of film texts and their para-texts, dominant themes from the marketing of the films suggest ways in which the spectator is primed to watch and respond to a text. The narrative image tells us the frame of mind in which a spectator receives a film; this in turn suggests a level of modality in which the spectator will receive the film violence. To suggest that all film violence can be measured the same way is to ignore the differing modalities of films. In short, not all film violence is equal.

The decision the spectator makes about whether to watch a film will often rest on several factors. One of the key elements is the marketing and promotional material of the film. When examining these for each film we see that they suggest several different ways in which to receive and understand the violence of the films, something typically ignored by the critics. We may thus conceive of the spectator as having a personal and private relationship with a film that takes place within the cinema, but we should also acknowledge that the spectator's experience of the film begins with several para-textual factors that help condition their subsequent experience.

Take, for instance, the use of violence in the poster imagery for the films. *Straw Dogs*, whose central image is a close-up of Dustin Hoffman with one lens of his glasses broken, signals violence, but also the effect of violence on the protagonist. *The French Connection* uses a still of 'Popeye' Doyle shooting a suspect in the back as its main image. *Dirty Harry* concentrates on the persona of Clint Eastwood (but also the duality between the two main characters), while *Death Wish* uses the image of Charles Bronson. *Taxi Driver's* central image, of a lost and isolated Travis Bickle posed in front of a

New York street scene locates an alienated figure in a world of degradation.

This image for *Taxi Driver* places the spectator in a very different relationship to the violence of the text than the other posters. By not signalling the violence but concentrating on the alienation of the protagonist (in effect hiding the violence), the poster prepares us for a film where acts of violence, when they do occur, have greater weight. The casting of De Niro (still relatively unknown at this point and thus 'absorbed' by his role in the film), and the setting of the film in real areas of New York, confer a high modality.

This is reinforced by the presentation of the violence in the film. This is not expected in the same way as in an Eastwood or Bronson film, where violence is an inherent part of the experience. Indeed the marketing of both *Dirty Harry* and *Death Wish* so connects the characters to their actors as to create a direct intertextual link to their other films. In these circumstances film violence becomes a ritualised part of the cinematic experience. *The French Connection*, however, with its concentration on reality, linked to the oft-repeated information that the film was based on real events, suggests a higher modality for the film violence which it contains.

We are watching here a reproduction of real violence, not the heightened and stylised violence of an Eastwood or Bronson film. The ritualisation in *Dirty Harry* and *Death Wish* confers a lower modality on the violence, which has become part of the expected generic formula of the text, an inevitable and unsurprising element. Through its enigmatic title and ambiguous central image, on the other hand, *Straw Dogs* denies the spectator a secure sense of how violence will operate in the film.

Generic Contexts

The explicitness (or lack) of generic context creates other issues here. It has been noted, for instance, that both *Dirty Harry* and *Death Wish* bear relation to the Western film, in casting (the stars of both had previously appeared in successful Westerns), iconography and structure. Perhaps the relocation of the generic elements to a modern day location, stripping away the mythic trappings of the narrative, creates this discomfort around the violence.

The recognition of Western genre conventions in the narratives of *Dirty Harry* and *Death Wish* may confer a different level of modality than a film such as *Taxi Driver*, which has a less clear generic definition. The ritual of genre, the procession of structural and iconic elements, reminds the audience that what they are watching is a structured creation – when it runs true to form, the text offers much reassurance but little by way of surprise. This, I would propose, effectively lowers the modality.

Too often film violence is taken out of the context of reception. Film violence occurs within several frameworks, including the textual implications of narrative and genre. The narrative image of a film is explicit in its attempts to set up these elements for the spectator. Thus the debate about film violence should be embedded in not only the referential and aesthetic components of film violence, but also in analysis of the place that violence has within the contextual, para-textual and textual experience of the film. For contemporary critics of these films however, socio-political concerns of the day outweighed the specifics of the textual/para-textual experience.

Notes and References

¹ John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video*, London: Routledge, 1982, p. 30.

² Bob Hodge and David Tripp, *Children and Television*, Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1986, p. 104.

³ Pauline Kael, *Deeper into Movies: The Essential Collection, from '69 to '72*, London: Marion Boyars, 1975, p. 398.

⁴ Kael, *Deeper into Movies*, p. 385.

⁵ Kael, *Deeper into Movies*, p. 316

⁶ Gareth Epps, 'Does Popeye Doyle Teach Us How to be Fascist?', *The New York Times*, 22 May 1972, II:15, p. 1.

⁷ Kael, *Deeper into Movies*, p. 316.

⁸ Judy Klemesrud, 'What do they see in *Death Wish?*', *New York Times*, 1 September 1974, II:1, p. 5.

⁹ Charles Barr, '*Straw Dogs*, *A Clockwork Orange* and the Critics', *Screen*, vol. 3 no. 2, 1972, p. 23.

¹⁰ Fergus Cashin, John Coleman, N. Hibbin, Margaret Hinxman, Derek Malcom, George Melly, T. Palmer, J. Plowright, Dilys Powell, David Robinson, John Russell Taylor, Arthur Thinkell, and Alexander Walker, 'From Mr. Fergus Cashin and Others', *The Times*, 17 December 1971.

39 / Sympathy for a Serial Killer? The Case of *Dexter*

Joanna Ioannidou

Engaging *Dexter*

Dexter is a popular American television drama (Showtime, 2006-2013) that centres on the life of Dexter Morgan (played by Martin C. Hall), a forensic blood spatter analyst for the Miami Metro Police Department by day - and a serial killer by night. In spite of the horrific implications of Dexter's secondary identity, it seems not only that a sympathetic reading of Dexter is possible but it could be argued that viewers are largely encouraged to side with this partly negative and rebarbative character. Using a cognitive approach on emotional reactions to fiction, this essay analyses Dexter's character, focusing on the elements that allow for a sympathetic reading. We know that each member of the audience brings a series of different life experiences, which produce different responses. However, although one

cannot predict the viewers' precise emotional response to the character of Dexter, one can certainly trace the elements in the character's construction that aim to evoke sympathy.

Emotional states have both a physical and a cognitive dimension. The physical dimension is a sensation or a feeling resulting from a cognitive process, which evaluates the situation that cues the emotion. For instance fear is identified as a series of bodily sensations, such as increased heart rate or shuddering, which are cued when a situation is perceived as threatening. This cognitive process of evaluating the situation is based on various schemata.

A schema can be roughly defined as "*a network of the interrelated elements that defines a concept for some individual.*"¹ Put differently, schemata are mental sets of information that represent aspects of the world. Consequently, it can be inferred that schemata are also used in the process of analysing the information that may lead to an emotional reaction. For instance, one will experience fear in the event of a truck coming towards one; this feeling is based on the knowledge of the truck schema, which among other things characterises the truck as dangerous to humans.

The same process applies to emotional reactions towards fictional narratives and their characters. In other words, audiences' emotional reactions towards fictions can similarly be defined as physical reactions that are the result of a cognitive process, which is triggered by a stimulus (in the fictional world), and based on information available from various schemata. Specifically in relation to emotional reactions towards characters, Murray Smith defines what he calls the structure of sympathy, involving three stages during which emotional engagement takes place.²

In the first two stages, recognition and alignment, audiences gather information about the characters. In recognition, this information consists of visual and linguistic cues that concern the construction of the character as a unified person (an individualised and re-identified person in the course of the plot), whereas, as alignment refers to the audiences' placement in relation to the characters, the information gathered relates to characters' actions, thoughts and feelings. At the third and final stage, allegiance, the audience develops a moral and emotional engagement with the characters by assessing the traits that have been associated with them.

It is important to stress that this assessment does not usually rely on a universal set of standards that can also be applied to real life situations, but the traits are largely judged in relation to the situations the characters experience and in comparison to traits assigned to other characters in the narrative. The stage of allegiance is the one where the emotional reactions are actually developed. If the character traits that are assigned to a character in the stages of recognition and alignment are deemed desirable or at least favourable through the process of assessing them, a sympathetic response will be produced.

Recognition and Alignment

Naturally, one cannot treat the beginning of each episode as the recognition stage either, as the first scenes of each individual episode are not constructed as an introduction to the show. However, in the case of *Dexter* the opening credits can be seen as a recognition stage, as not only do they set the tone of the series, but they also introduce Dexter to the viewers. All in all, opening credits convey essential

information about the genre, setting and characters of each show (or film) and, particularly in television, they help distinguish each programme from its predecessor. In the case of *Dexter* the opening sequence centres on the main character and reveals essential information about him. The credits open with a close up of a mosquito, which Dexter swats without even opening his eyes. Then, the opening sequence continues with a series of fragmented and disorienting close-ups of both Dexter and his morning routine.

Although Dexter's routine is not intrinsically different from that of most viewers, there is a sinister feel to his everyday actions. For instance, in an extreme close-up, a large knife cuts an orange in slow motion, and juice sprays out. The action is familiar, and has probably been performed by the majority of the viewers, but the extreme close-up, together with the unusual framing and the rapid editing, render the action sinister. As all of Dexter's morning routine is presented in this manner, the everyday acts of preparing breakfast, shaving and dressing resemble a murder scene; ketchup drops on a white plate look like blood, putting on a shirt resembles being smothered by a sheet, and the tying of shoelaces perhaps resembles a garrotting. Because Dexter's routine has this sinister feel, his character can be read as rather ambiguous: he appears to be normal on the surface, but at the same time he seems menacing.

The stage of alignment, in which the audience acquires information regarding Dexter's thoughts, feelings and actions, can reinforce or possibly alter the first impression, as the initial schemata associated with the character may be revised, or even rejected, based on later information. As *Dexter* has been airing for five seasons (and is still running), it

is impossible to analyse every instance of alignment in order to explore how a sympathetic reading of Dexter is made possible. So, one must focus on the most important elements that might elicit a sympathetic response. For example, how did Dexter become a serial killer?

In Support of Dexter

As a child, he witnessed the vicious murder of his mother, and was left at the murder scene (a storage tank) bathed in her blood, crying for days. Dexter's murderous urges (to which he refers as his 'Dark Passenger') are presented as the product of this extremely traumatic childhood experience. Although audiences may wonder whether Dexter could have grown into a different individual after such a traumatic experience, seeing the event themselves (in black and white flashbacks) and hearing Dexter's recollections of that night throughout the first seasons (as he slowly remembers what happened to his mother and is then haunted by that memory) make Dexter's crimes appear almost understandable and, therefore, allow for sympathy towards him to be developed.

In other words, by stressing that his murderous nature is something that was inflicted on him by a very intense childhood trauma, the show aims to mitigate part – if not all – of the responsibility Dexter bears for becoming a serial killer. As Dexter's urges are the product of a childhood trauma, viewers can develop sympathetic feelings towards him – even whilst condemning his actions. The show tries to make Dexter's killings appear justified, and thus open the way to a sympathetic reading of his character, not only by presenting his dark urges as the result of an intense childhood trauma, but also, by stressing the fact that his

victims are not on the whole innocent law-abiding members of the community but are murderers themselves. There are a few cases when Dexter kills people who are not murderers, but a discussion of how these killings are justified does not fall within the scope of this essay.

Dexter's foster father Harry, a police officer, became aware of Dexter's murderous urges while Dexter was still a teenager, and tried to channel such urges towards other killers who have managed to avoid formal punishment. Harry teaches Dexter to abide to a code, a set of principles and standards that guide, control and restrict Dexter's actions so that his urge is used 'for good'. The selection of his victims relates Dexter's character to a long line of anti-heroes in film (Clint Eastwood's San Francisco detective Harry Callahan in the *Dirty Harry* cycle, for instance, who bends the rules in order to make sure that justice is served) and television, where the leading characters of shows such as Freilich's *Dark Justice* (1991-3) and *Knight Rider* (Larson, 1982-6; Larson/Andron *et al*, 2008-9) enforce their own kind of justice. This association aims to portray Dexter more as a vigilante and less like a serial killer.

Vigilantism taps into the anxiety sparked by the fear of rising levels of violence taken together with the disbelief in the power of the justice system to catch and punish criminals. When police forces and the legal system are not considered enough for justice to be served, the idea of someone taking the law in their own hands seems rational. It follows then, that Dexter's killings can also be perceived as rational, as his victims are murderers who have gone unpunished; according to Thomas Leitch, one of the ways in which American films disavow violence is precisely by presenting it as justified in rational terms.³ *Dexter* follows suit by associating violence

with motivations that seem rational, and thus allowing for Dexter's violent behaviour to seem more acceptable or even welcome. "*Way to take out the trash!*" a fan cheers during a fantasy sequence in the final episode of Season One; or in the words of Douglas Howard, Dexter's murders "come off as a kind of public service, a bizarre, psychopathic waste management of society, if you will".⁴ From this perspective Dexter can appear sympathetic: despite his killings, he is not a serial killer with irrational motives, but someone who can be seen as a protector, perhaps even a kind of hero.

Another aspect of Dexter's character construction that allows viewers to feel sympathy towards him involves looking past his dark impulses and his murderous actions. One can see Dexter as a rather ordinary and likeable character. At the beginning of the series, Dexter is presented as rather monstrous, largely because he claims to be unable to experience human emotions. However as the series progresses, Dexter's beliefs, regarding his inability to feel, are revealed as false, as his actions contradict his statements. As Dexter's character develops, viewers watch him become a reliable brother for his adopted sister Debra, develop true feelings for Rita, and grow into a caring father.

Although in the voiceovers - which can be seen as Dexter's thoughts, and therefore are most likely perceived as truthful and uncensored statements - Dexter advocates his monstrosity, his actions allow viewers to see him as someone who (at least partly) resembles themselves. Additionally, many of the concerns and fears Dexter expresses through the voiceovers are also rather understandable, as they are things that the audience can identify with. For instance, Dexter expresses his fear of never finding someone that can accept him for what he truly is on

many occasions, a fear that is probably shared by the majority of the audience. All in all, as Dexter exhibits ordinary emotions, he is facing ordinary fears and is dealing with ordinary concerns, he becomes a character viewers can relate to, even though part(s) of his persona are rather unfamiliar to them.

Defining Villainy

We should also consider the role of his main 'adversaries'. Every season has a main 'villain', who becomes Dexter's focal point. The Ice Truck Killer, Lila Tournay, Miguel Prado, the Trinity Killer, the Barrel Girl murderers - all these characters are portrayed as irrational, unjustified and malevolent, aiming to create a clear-cut distinction between them and Dexter, which would allow the audience to see his character as more sympathetic. Since characters are evaluated in relation to the fictional world, if Dexter appears to be in possession of positive traits in comparison to other characters, then viewers will be more prone to find him sympathetic.

It follows then, that as the main villains are almost exact opposites of Dexter, his character will appear more sympathetic. In contrast to Dexter's murders, for example, the criminal acts committed by these characters have no redeeming qualities. These characters are presented as killers of innocents, so there is no way for their actions to be read as anything else but acts driven by the need for satisfaction of a sadistic desire. Dexter's own actions appear almost benign by contrast. Or, as Dexter himself says in Season Five: *"Despite having considered myself a monster for as long as I can remember, it still comes as a shock when I am confronted with the depth of evil that exists in this world."* These

'monsters' also invite sympathy towards Dexter in another way.

Despite being so completely immoral that in the end they become antipathetic, *Dexter's* main villains (with the exception of the Barrel Girl murderers) initially offer the illusion that Dexter could find in them a true companion. However, the promise of a connection these characters bring is destroyed when Dexter realises he has to kill them. Precisely because none of them has a moral code, they are extremely dangerous and sooner or later Dexter has no other choice but to include them in his list of victims.

"My search for connection always ends in blood," Dexter admits, and the audience is invited to feel for him. As through subjective access viewers know how much Dexter yearns for a connection, killing the people that could make it possible, elicits sympathy, as it is the most difficult thing he has to do. As Dexter time and time again chooses to do the right thing, despite the fact that this choice condemns him to a life of solitude, he becomes almost a tragic figure and a significant degree of sympathy is evoked for his character.

Addressing the Audience

Even though, as Paul Kooistra has reminded us, we do not ordinarily make heroes out of serial killers⁵, Dexter does manage to evolve into some form of hero and enables for the audience to feel sympathy for him. One has to admit that some traits associated with his character are unsettling, but there is something appealing about him as well. Maybe not all viewers see this appeal, and probably some people will find the show appalling. However, Dexter's character is clearly constructed in a way that can gradually elicit a

sympathetic reaction. The show never tries to hide the fact that Dexter is a murderer and it is even clear that, although he does not get a sense of satisfaction from inflicting pain, he does feel calmer after taking a life.

But, at the same time a series of redeeming traits are associated with Dexter. His traumatic childhood experiences, his choice of victims and his comparison with the show's main villains aim to lessen the impact of his murderous actions and present them as understandable, rational acts. Also, his association with vigilantism almost justifies his crimes and transforms him from a serial killer to a protector, so that viewers can develop sympathy towards his character without feeling that by doing so they are siding with an irrational, dangerous criminal.

At the same time, his relationships with the other characters (especially his family), in combination with his truly ordinary desires and fears (such as the fear of loneliness), allow for the audience to relate to aspects of his character and encourage a sympathetic reading in spite of his dark side. All in all, although parts of his character remain alien to the viewers, Dexter is associated with many traits that make him extremely familiar and justify his dark actions, so that the audience is invited to root for him and even forgive him.

Notes and References

¹ Jennings Bryant and Steven Rockwell, 'Evolving Cognitive Models in Mass Communication Reception Processes' in Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann (eds.), *Responding to the Screen: Reception and Reaction Processes*, Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1991, p. 220.

² Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion and the Cinema*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

³ Thomas Leitch, 'Nobody Here But Us Killers: The Disavowal of Violence in Recent American Films', *Film and Philosophy*, vol. 1, 1994, pp. 75-76.

⁴ Douglas Howard, 'Introduction: Killing Time with Showtime's *Dexter*' in Douglas Howard (ed.), *'Dexter': Investigating Cutting Edge Television*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010, p. xiv.

⁵ Paul Kooistra, *Criminals as Heroes: Structure, Power and Identity*, Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989, p. 21.

40 / Somalis, Somali Pirates and Foreign Powers: Media Identities in BBC Online News

Lyndon C. S. Way

Introduction

Piracy off the coast of Somalia has recently gained the close attention of the media. Piracy dates back to ancient times and although it is periodically suppressed, it has never been eliminated or solved. Pirates have mainly been the unemployed, the poor and criminals. Its attraction is financial gain, not love of country or other ideological reasons. Ideal conditions for the growth of piracy include economic hardship, lawlessness and opportunity. These conditions describe Somalia since the 1991 collapse of governance. However, news stories about piracy rarely represent these conditions and their root causes, which inevitably involve powerful foreign interests. Instead, discourses about the effectiveness and legitimacy of foreign interests predominate. This essay analyses a number of these news stories after examining events leading up to the latest upsurge in Somali piracy.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used here to consider news stories from the BBC website covering piracy off the coast of Somalia from January 2008 until June 2010, a period in which the coast of Somalia became the world's worst area for piracy. One hundred stories were randomly collected. In the tradition of CDA, I have carried out a separate detailed analysis of six stories which are representative of the whole sample, though all stories are considered and referred to throughout this essay.

In CDA, linguistic and grammatical choices in texts are analysed as these allow the analyst to reveal the broader discourses being drawn upon. The aim of CDA is to reveal what kinds of social relations of power are present in texts both explicitly and implicitly. It asks what kinds of inequalities and interests texts might seek to perpetuate, generate or legitimate. Analysis of the BBC website news stories reveal just such a perpetuation of social relations in progress.

The analysis draws mostly on van Leeuwen's approach to the way 'social actors' and their actions can be classified, categorised and re-contextualised.¹ Here, basic lexical choices are considered. I examine such issues as who does what to whom in verbal utterances, and where and how participants are positioned in sentence construction. The analysis is supplemented by an historical contextualisation of events in Somalia and Somali piracy. According to Wodak's "*discourse-historical approach*", this enables analysts to "*detect and depict the disfiguring of facts and realities*" through a process of historically contextualising texts.²

Foreign Interference

Foreign interests are partly responsible for Somalia's current status as a failed state which has led to it becoming a pirate-friendly area. Somalia has seen outside interest throughout its recent history. In the late 19th Century, European powers began their scramble for Africa, one prize being the Horn of Africa and Somalia. Though leaders at this time were critical of British interference, Somalia had relations with the Ottomans and the Germans. Between 1920 and independence in 1960, Somalia was governed by either the British or Italians in line with their geo-political regional policies.

But independence did not mean an end to outside interference. By the mid-1960s, Somalia had formal military relations with the Soviet Union, industrial funding from China and support from Italy for its expatriate citizens, while the United States sent substantial military aid to Somalia's hostile neighbour Ethiopia. In 1977 the Soviet Union transferred its interests to Ethiopia and by 1980 Somalia was transformed into a Western client with American weaponry and advisors.

Since 1991, Somalia has been at war internally. Even still, outside powers continue to influence events. In 2002, despite the formation of a temporary government, lack-lustre support by the international community, including non-recognition by the US, weakened its authority and internal support. The Transnational Federal Government (TFG) was established in 2004, being widely supported by the West and America in particular. In the 2000s, with a weak TFG, Ethiopian troops with American backing (including the CIA) were responsible for driving out Islamists such as the Islamic Courts Union.

Since January 2009, an African Union peace force has been in Somalia. 2009 also saw a new transitional Parliament and President. Despite these latest moves, Al-Qaeda is providing advisors to the Islamist militant group Al-Shabab, while the US, UN and other African and Western countries are backing the TFG and supplying arms. This interference is not necessarily for altruistic reasons: as Menkhaus observes, *"Outside actors are working hard to tip the scales in favour of their Somali allies"*.³

The History of Somali Piracy

As with piracy in general, Somali piracy has gone through three major stages. The first begins with a spate of small-scale attacks on vulnerable ships in the early 1990s, when foreign fishing trawlers and vessels looking to cheaply dispose of hazardous waste took advantage of Somalia's rich and unpatrolled waters. Angry Somali fishermen armed themselves with rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles and began firing on foreign trawlers, who responded likewise. The second historical stage sees piracy increase to the point where it effectively chokes the flow of seaborne commerce. Since 2005, the number of Somali pirate attacks has increased dramatically, as has the size of vessels and ransoms demanded, evolving into international organised crime.

In the third historical stage, we see a determined response from a variety of pirate-hunting navies. In Somalia, this has taken the form of NATO's Combined Task Force 150, launched in 2002, the EU's NAVFOR launched in 2008, the US-led Combined Task Force 151 and war ships from Russia, China, Indonesia, India, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Despite the impressive number of

nations involved, this response is tentative and reactive with only approximately 16 ships patrolling an area two-thirds the size of Europe.

There is much scepticism about the response and motivations behind these military interventions. Some believe the EU has something to prove, the NAVFOR operation being the first under the auspices of the European Union, while it has also been suggested that suggest the larger international response *“has more to do with navies seeking to use anti-piracy as a training exercise, an opportunity to improve co-ordination with other navies, and a justification for their own budgets at a time when naval operations have been less central in the Global War on Terror.”*⁴

‘Us’ and ‘Them’

Though many of the headlines in the wider sample emphasise pirate activities, such as *“Pirates seize N. Korea tanker crew”* and *“Somali pirates hijack two ships off East African coast”*, within stories they are de-emphasised. Two lexical strategies used to de-emphasise and treat pirates as an ‘out-group’ involve the basic naming process. In almost all circumstances, pirates are named collectively as simply *“pirates”*, *“the pirate group”*, *“those groups”* and *“new pirate suspects”*. This strategy allows writers to homogenise all pirates, making it easier to treat them as an enemy. This is complimented by the strategy of not personally naming pirates, treating them *“as distant ‘others’ rather than as people ‘we’ have to deal with in our everyday lives”*.⁵

Another lexical strategy seen throughout the wider sample is the use of personal pronouns to create an ‘us’ foreign military

in-group ('us') and a piratical out-group ('them'). These strategies are identified by van Dijk in relation to racist texts.⁶ In the statement *"Once they get to a point where they can board, it becomes very difficult to get them off, because, clearly, now they hold hostages"*, pirates are named as *"they"* or *"them"* four times in a single sentence. This is a case of overlexicalisation, where a word is used more than one would expect, re-enforcing the idea that 'they' are not part of 'our' in-group. This emphasis on pirates as an out-group draws upon a discourse which legitimates the actions of foreign militaries.

A similar strategy can be used to specify who, on the other hand, is part of the in-group ('us'): *"What we will do," he [Rear Admiral Peter Hudson] said, 'is use our intelligence assets, our maritime patrol aircraft, the dialogue we have with the region ... as well as our partners, India and China ... to make sure that we can concentrate [our efforts] ... in a ... more sophisticated manner.'*" In this sentence, *"we"* or *"our"* are used three times each, articulating an 'us' group of the UK navy, readers and our *"partners"*. Statements of this kind articulate a discourse of group identification sympathetic to foreign powers and their actions.

A final lexical strategy is to identify pirates only by their nationality. Throughout many of the stories the terms 'Somalis' and 'pirates' are used interchangeably, blurring the line between the two. This lexical choice, seen in the following extract, is negative on two levels. Firstly, slippage between the two terms allows for the creation of a generalisation that Somalis are by definition pirates and also negatively identifies pirates in terms of national identity.

Questions of Verbal Agency

A number of grammatical strategies are employed which de-emphasise pirates. One strategy is to limit the number of pirate activations by means of agency. Activating participants by means of agency represents them as doing things, positively emphasising them as powerful. However, agency is all but absent, and when represented, pirate actions are negative or show weakness. Consider, for example: *"Ten Somalis surrendered and the smaller boats were destroyed."* Here, pirates are activated, in a dominant beginning-of-sentence position which emphasises them. However, weakness is represented by the verbal forms *"surrendering"* and *"could not continue"* and *"were left with only enough fuel ... to return to Somalia"* in other parts of this same story.

A more common grammatical representation of pirates involves placing them in prepositional phrases. This strategy de-emphasises social actors. Consider, for example: *"Its statement says the ransom was dropped to the pirates holding the 'Saint James Park' chemical tanker at Somalia's port of Garacaaad on Thursday."* Here, pirates are de-emphasised by their appearance in the non-dominant middle-of-sentence position in the prepositional phrase *"to the pirates"*. Alternatively, thanks to sentence position and activation, *"its [NAVFOR] statement"* is emphasised.

Another strategy used to de-emphasise the power of pirates, and thus articulating a discourse of foreign military success and legitimisation, is passivating pirates through the actions of foreign militaries. To be passivated involves the accentuation of social actors' subjection to others, and their weakness. In the statement *"A Royal Navy warship on NATO anti-piracy*

operations has destroyed two pirate boats in the Somali Basin, NATO has said", pirates are subjected to the actions of a powerful international organisation. This works to the benefit of military powers which were trying to justify their budgets.

Discursive Legitimation of Foreign Militaries

The lexical and grammatical strategies used to represent foreign militaries and their activities in the waters off Somalia are in stark contrast to those used to represent pirates and their actions. The process by which foreign militaries are named emphasises and legitimises them. Here, the militaries are either named personally, giving readers a point of identification, or named with functional honorifics connoting authority and respect.

Personal namings using functional honorifics include names like "*Commander Simon Huntington*", "*Admiral Mike Mullen*", "*Lieutenant Christensen*" and "*The British admiral in charge of the EU naval force*". Even impersonal names use lexical choices which emphasise importance by employing functional titles: "*The EU's naval force (NAVFOR)*", "*a Royal Marine team*" and a "*Royal Navy warship*" involved in "*NATO anti-piracy operations*" all connote importance. For example, the phrase a "*Royal Navy warship*" carries historical connotations of maritime might as well as regal power and justice.

Grammatical strategies continue to emphasise foreign militaries' importance and legitimacy. One common strategy is to activate foreign military actors with agency, which contributes to representations of power. In the statement "*A Russian warship in the Gulf of Aden drove off pirates who tried to capture the Saudi Arabian merchant ship Rabih*", the

power of a foreign military is emphasised, activated with agency by being described as “*driving off*” pirates. This extract also exemplifies the related strategy of representing foreign powers in the dominant beginning-of-sentence position. In one story, for example, foreign militaries enjoy dominant sentence position five times, while pirates are only in this position twice, despite the fact that the story recontextualises the event of pirates capturing a ship.

Activations of foreign militaries are not confined to those with agency, but again draw on discourses of foreign power and legitimacy. In one story, for example, the EU’s NAVFOR is activated six times in the first five sentences. Although a formulation may lack strong agency, as in the statement that “*NAVFOR is continuing to monitor the situation*”, it contributes to positive discourses about foreign powers. Furthermore, this activation does not really supply much information as to what exactly NAVFOR is doing, leading to abstraction, a process typically involving “*texts mainly concerned with legitimising and de-legitimising actions and reactions.*”⁷

Conclusion

Somali piracy is dangerous, a thorn in the side for global commerce and unlikely to decline in the near future.⁸ History has shown that foreign interests, influences and interventions are partly responsible for Somalia’s piracy and multitude of problems; such actions are usually performed out of self-interest, and mostly at the expense of the Somali people. This close analysis of BBC website news stories reveals discourses which emphasise the legitimacy of foreign militaries and their actions, while de-emphasising Somali pirates and their actions, and all but excluding Somalians themselves. These

discourses run counter to Somali interests because military intervention is not the answer to Somali's piracy problem, whereas establishing a functioning Somali government is. Since the media appear to be ignoring this issue, we can claim that the BBC is irritating an already volatile and dangerous situation which will doubtless become ever more violent - to the terrible disadvantage of the people of Somalia, who struggle daily with poverty, hunger, violence and fear.

Notes and References

¹ Theo van Leeuwen, 'The Representation of Social Actors', in Carmen Rosa. Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard (eds.), *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 32-70.

² Ruth Wodak, 'The Discourse-historical Approach', in Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, London: Sage, 2001, p. 70.

³ Ken Menkaus, 'Somalia', *The Royal United Services Journal*, vol. 154 no.4, 2009, p. 11.

⁴ Menkaus, 'Somalia', p. 9. See also Bjoern Seibert, 'The EU takes on the Pirates of Puntland', London: Royal United Services, *Newsbrief*, 18 November 2008, p. 1.

⁵ Menkaus, 'Somalia', p. 9.

⁶ Teun A. van Dijk, *Racism and the Press*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 210.

⁷ Theo van Leeuwen, 'Representing Social Action', *Discourse and Society*, vol. 6 no. 1, 1995, p. 99.

⁸ For a broader account, see Bjørn Møller, *Piracy, Maritime Terrorism and Naval Strategy*, Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2009.

41 / Violence and Values in the Japanese Manga *Naruto*

Norman Melchor R. Peña Jr.

Violence and the Media: *Manga*

Research on a possible causal relationship between media violence and deviant behaviour points in opposing directions. While some researchers attribute deviant behaviour primarily to exposure to media violence, a number of criminologists, psychologists and social researchers offer a more nuanced approach¹. They highlight other corollary factors, such as family background, cultural *mores*, and individual psychology, and suggest that the connection is more complex because media violence itself is only a representation and not actual aggression in itself.²

This essay examines the correlation between violence in the media and wider cultural values. It explores the possibility of a positive as well as negative consideration of media violence

through analysis of the first 19 episodes of the Japanese manga animation *Naruto*. Examining character and scene structures, category definitions, similarity patterns, connotative messages and narrative relationships, I ask three key questions. Which elements in *Naruto* 'sell', over and above violence? What does this have to say regarding violence in the media? What other factors need to be considered in the media violence debate?

Manga and *anime* are two distinct genres of visual art, literature and entertainment. *Manga* is the Japanese word for comics or whimsical images while *anime* refers to Japanese animation. Conceived in the 1950's as simple humorous pictures, Japanese animated *manga* in its various language versions is widely appreciated, and is adapted into *anime*. Manga, as Ito Kinko attests, does not exist in a vacuum but are "*immersed in a particular social environment that includes history, language, culture, politics, economy, family, religion, sex and gender, education, deviance and crime, and demography. Manga reflects the reality of Japanese society, along with the myths, beliefs, rituals, tradition, fantasies, and Japanese way of life. Manga also depicts other social phenomena, such as social order and hierarchy, sexism, racism, ageism, classism, and so on.*"³

Naruto originally started in 1999 as a series written and illustrated by Masashi Kishimoto in the magazine *Shōnen Jump*. *Anime* adaptations of the series were released across Japan in 2002 and were later dubbed and released worldwide. The first *anime* series of *Naruto* (directed by Hayato Date for TV Tokyo, 2002-2007) comprised 220 episodes while the sequel, *Naruto: Shippuden* (*Naruto: Hurricane Chronicles*) also directed by Date, has continued since 2007, and will have aired 340 episodes by the end of

2013. With a number of media spin-offs, it has been one of the most popular *manga* in Japan and elsewhere, with over 71 million copies of the series sold by 2007. Reviewers praise its art, dramatic storyline, and humour.

Naruto tells the story of young man growing up in the ninja village of Konoha. Naruto Uzumaki is a mischievous orphan within whom has been sealed the nine-tailed fox that threatened the village. As an orphan Naruto felt abandoned, alone and always bullied by his peers. He was teamed up with other young ninjas - Sakura Haruno and Sasuke Uchiba - in training for missions under a sensei or teacher, Kakashi Hatake. Each has his/her own distinct ninja technique utilising the forces of nature (earth, wind, water and fire). Naruto grows up learning his own identity, acquiring physical strength and technique, and developing interpersonal confidence and skills. His dream is to become *Hokage*, or leader of the village. The episodes show the challenges such a dream entails, including joy, betrayal, pain, victory and loss.

Episodes 1-19 tells the initial story of the birth, training and first mission of Naruto. This involves protecting the bridge-maker of a neighbouring village who hopes to re-build his village's confidence, economy and identity and win over the selfish magnate Gatto, who wants to control the village. Naruto, Kakashi, Sakura and Sasuke defend the village against Zabuza and his protégé Haku, who have been hired by Gatto. Working as a team, Naruto and his companions battle against the opponents. They restore peace while discovering the value of sacrifice, friendship, self-confidence, commitment and purpose.

The study based itself on Krippendorff's assertion that "*content analysis is an empirically grounded method, exploratory in*

process, and predictive or inferential in intent"⁴. Content analysis was applied to the 19 *Naruto* episodes chosen as valid and reliable representations of the *Naruto* series as a whole. Visual and audio-text words, concepts, themes, and characterisations were objectively quantified, coded, broken down and mapped into corresponding categories. The categories were taken from the *General Inquirer* text-analysis and mapping procedure that mainly combines the Harvard-IV and the Lasswell dictionary content-analysis categories.⁵ Figure 1 gives a non-exhaustive list of the category tags applied to the *Naruto* series, together with their definitions.

TAGS	Definition
Actv	ACTIVE words implying an active orientation
Strng	STRONG words implying strength
Neg	NEGATIVE words of negative outlook
Ngvtv	NEGATIVE word, an earlier version of Negativ
Pos	POSITIVE words of positive outlook
Pstv	POSITIVE words, an earlier version of Positiv
Psv	PASSIVE words requiring no to less physical effort
Hostile	HOSTILE words indicating an attitude or concern with hostility or aggressiveness
DAV	DESCRIPTIVE ACTION VERBS: straight descriptive verbs of an action or feature of an action, such as "run, walk, write, read".
HU	HUMAN: general references to humans, including roles

Figure 1

Top 10 of the 90 *Naruto* Visual-Audio Text Category Definitions.

Source: Philip Stone and Vanja Buvac, 'Harvard IV and Lasswell Value Dictionary Categories' in *The Harvard General Inquirer*.

Figure 2

Top 10 category tag frequencies for the 19 *Naruto* episodes.

Raw count and the percent of words in the text having that tag is included.

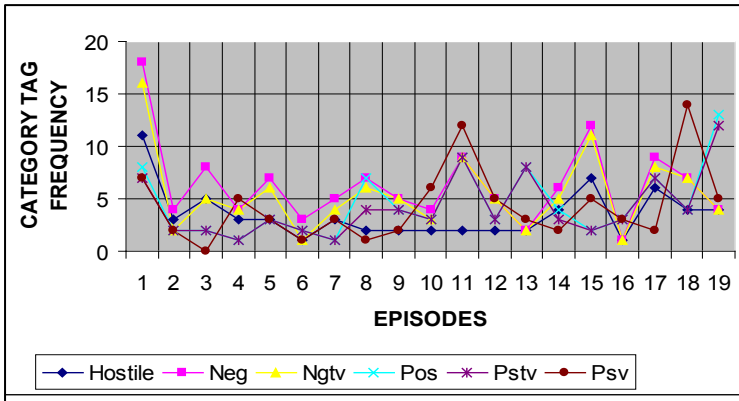
Ep	Category Tags Frequency Summary									
	Actv	Strng	Neg	Ngtr	Pos	Psv	Pstv	Hostile	DAV	HU
1-19	149	136	120	104	85	80	79	73	73	62
%	25.5	23.3	20.5	17.8	14.6	13.7	13.5	12.5	12.5	10.6

Didactic distribution was made after the word mapping and the top 10 tag categories were singled out and divided according to the 19 episodes. Figure 2 offers a summary of the results. Frequency patterns for TAG category portrayals emerged which provided basic accuracy, validity and reliability. Three syntactic and procedural problems were encountered: The presence of words not in the dictionary list for *General Inquirer* like 'duel', 'truce', and so on; the object of the research itself which is not pure verbal text but animated and framed visual narratives; where accuracy is concerned, the words and their quantity chosen for classification in the *General Inquirer* are by the present author; minor variance is certainly expected in the selection of type and quantity of words on the part of other researchers.

The first problem was resolved with the disambiguation or joining together of words not currently present in the dictionary entries to words currently present, and mapping their connotative signification. To respond to the second and

Figure 3

Frequency of the NEGATIVE (hostile, Neg, Ngvtv) and POSITIVE (Pos, Pstv, Psv) TAG categories in *Naruto* episode 1-19



third problems, conceptual analysis of visual representations actually shown in each of the episodes was utilised. The narrative unity of the episodes was found to facilitate the coding task and the visual representation (what is seen) guaranteed the accuracy and validity of the mapping system analysis. Thus fight scenes, for example, were coded as *fight*, whose category tags in the *General Inquirer* analysis are NEGATIVE and HOSTILE. Inferences were made and shown in Figure 3 which demonstrates an additional dissection of the TAG categories, substantiating both the *negative* and *positive* portrayals in the episodes studied. It allows for the subsequent naming of particular negative and positive portrayals in the series (for example fighting, killing, joy and courage). A percentage value of the positive and negative portrayals is highlighted.

Results

Naruto contains 90 of the 182 tag categories proposed by *The General Inquirer*. The TOP 10 tag categories were: ACTIV (149 word entries including 'alive', 'anger', 'escape', 'motivation' and 'challenge'), STRNG (136, including 'advantage', 'ambition', 'energy', 'hero' and 'survival'), NEG (120, including 'abandon', 'assassin', 'attack', 'terror' and 'fight'), NGTV (104, including 'battle', 'bad', 'hurt' and 'kill'), POS (85, including 'acceptance', 'affirmation', 'courage' and 'friendship'), PSTV (79, including 'confidence', 'happy', 'care' and 'hope'), PSV (80, including 'believe', 'failure', 'follow' and 'give'), HOSTILE (73, including 'enemy', 'betrayal', 'cut' and 'destroy'), DAV (73, including 'arrive', 'finish', 'run', and 'gather') and HU (62, including 'orphan', 'father', 'character' and 'children').

Results of the relational analysis of the tags is shown in Figure 3, where both the *negative* and *positive* tags are grouped. Interconnection was observed in the words mapped in each of the groupings, identifying Episodes 1 and 15 as most negative and Episodes 19 and 11 as most positive. Two distinct types of the 'negative' (i.e. violence) appear to be delineated: *physical-external*, exhibited most in Episode 15, *Zero Visibility: The Sharingan Shatters*, which contains fierce fights and strong exchanges of ninja technique between the protagonist and antagonists and *mental-internal*, exhibited most clearly in Episode 1, *Uzumaki Naruto Arrives!*, which introduces Naruto, the many rejections and bullying he receives and the mischievous acts he does to get attention, recognition and confirmation.

Most positive was Episode 19, *The Demon in the Snow*, where through their team-work and personal convictions Naruto's

group overcomes the *Zabuka* and his cronies, both in the *physical-external* and the *mental-internal*. At the end, Zabuka sincerely accepts friendship and care as most important, that which is shown to him by Haku, who sacrifices himself for Zabuka. The imagery of the white snow once again falling signifies the return of purity to Zabuka, who dies peacefully besides Haku saying “*Forgive me, Haku, for being selfish and for neither thanking you nor letting you follow your own dream*”.

Figure 4

Percentage values of both the NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE tag categories with overall values exhibited in the *Naruto* series.

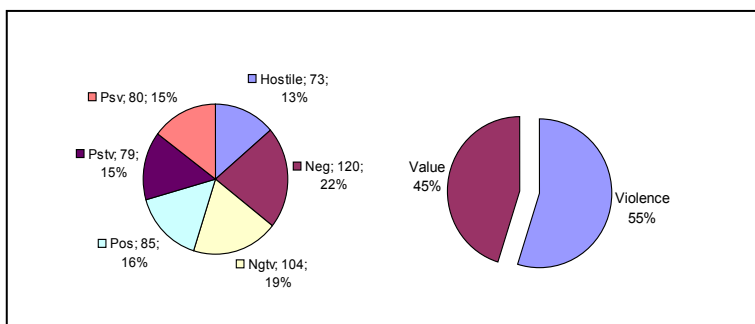


Figure 4 above, which gives a percentage value for the relational *negative* and *positive* TAG frequencies, seems to indicate that overall the *Naruto* series is 55% negative and 45% positive. On the negative, ‘violent’ side HOSTILE scenes demonstrated reached 13%, NEG reached 22% and NGTV 19%. On the positive, ‘value’ side PSV scenes reached 15%, PSTV 15% and POS 16%. What these appear to indicate is that what is being communicated is not only violence but also value. Although there is an immediate impression of violence in the fights, it is not focussed on as an end in itself.

It appears to show the reality of visual violence so as not to disregard and negate its presence in real life but to offer, in the end, positive 'value' strategies on how it can be overcome and how one can grow healthier in spite of its presence.

Culture and Values

As the results appear to show, portrayal of values (POSITIVE Tags) are also strongly evident and also sell in the media along with violence (NEGATIVE Tags). Both can be portrayed side by side. Figure 5 identifies the top 20 values and violence in the *Naruto* series. *Mid-portrayals* present in both violence and value, are also noted. They can be either negative or positive depending on how they are portrayed and on the particular situation from which they are interpreted. Thus in Western culture failure might be mostly considered negative while in Eastern culture it might be mostly seen also as an opportunity for positive growth. This highlights the importance of cultural and social background in the discussion regarding violence in the media, along with other related elements including trans-generational transmission, copycat aggression, desensitisation, new media effects and the social amplification of risks.⁶

Manga animations are clearly reflections of the perceived culture of a society. This can be related to how manga animations have become cultural commodities and part of the dynamic process of culture. For Mary Grigsby, manga animations are to be approached "*not only as a reflection of culture but as a part of the dynamic and constant process of the reproduction of culture in Japan and elsewhere*"⁷. Part of Japanese culture is the value, for example, of inner strength and of power not solely in terms of physical force but also in

thinking, relationships and team-work. Social background thus becomes a factor in considering what is negative or positive, and a significant element in understanding the violence and values that 'sell' in the media.

Figure 5
Top 20 words and their frequencies in
the Neg-Ngtv-Hostile and Pos-Pstv-Psv tag categories

*N.B. Middle column (MID-PORTRAYALS)
represents words in both POSITIVE and NEGATIVE tag categories.*

Negative (Neg – Ngtv- Hostile)		Positive (Pos – Pstv – Psv)	
Fight (19), Kill (14), Angry (9), attack (9), steal (7), wound (6), broke (5), Destroy (5), enemy (5), hurt (5), Defeat (4), Evil (4), Pain (4), Rival (4), Battle (3), confrontation (3), cut (3), Whip (3), Worst (3), Abandon (2)	Mid-Portrayals		
	7 Failure	5	Happiness (19),
	6 Rejection	1	Hero (10), Rescue (9),
	5 Coward	2	Courage (8), Truth (8),
	4 Death	1	Alive (6), Care (6),
	4 Suffer	3	Help (6), Confidence (4),
	3 Sad	2	Dream (4), Forgiveness (4),
	2 Hide	1	Friendship (4), Hope (4),
	2 Scared	1	Motivation (4), Perfect (4),
	2 Worry	1	Precious (4), Survival (4),
	1 Guilt	1	Accept (3), Believe (3), Faith (3)

Characteristic of portrayals of violence and value in *Naruto* is self- and group-identity attained through individual and communal training, friendship and team-work. Along with numerous fights, in *Naruto* there are also numerous social interpersonal interactions where self and group discovery occurs. In this regard, manga animations offer not only entertainment but infotainment, where virtual education occurs. For Jeff Adams this is when manga becomes “*a pedagogical vehicle of assimilation and where comical assimilation of pedagogy takes place*”⁸.

Analysis of the context and content of media representation of violence always necessitates a cultural dialectic. While violence portrayed in the media is a factor in actual violence in society, it is not its only cause. Japanese television in truth has the most violent imagery in the world, yet notably the country has a low rate of social aggression compared to other countries. In reality a great part of actual violence in society is also attributable to the culture and societal and family background of each individual, especially the young, and the resources allocated by particular societies.

Notes and References

¹ On the attribution of media to violence see, amongst others, Tina Kaufman, 'Screen Violence, Real Violence: The Contradictions', *Metro Magazine*, nos. 113-114, 1998, pp. 5-8, and Megha Desai and K. Jaishankar, 'Impact of Media Violence on Children', *Occasional Series in Criminal Justice and International Studies*, 2009, pp. 90-105. A broader and contrasting approach can be found in Joanne Savage, 'The Role of Exposure to Media Violence in the Etiology of Violent Behavior: A Criminologist Weighs In', *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 51 no. 8, 2008, pp. 1123-1136.

² Martin Barker and Julian Petley (eds.), *Ill Effects: The Media/Violence Debate*, 2nd ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2001, pp. 1-2.

³ Ito Kinko, 'History of Manga in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 38 no. 3, 2005, p. 456.

⁴ Klaus H. Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2013, p. 1.

⁵ For the 'General Enquirer', see www.wjh.harvard.edu/~inquirer/Home.html.

⁶ These elements are described in James Anderson, 'The Production of Media Violence and Aggression Research: A Cultural Analysis', in *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 51, 2008, pp. 1260-1279, and Kostas A. Fanti, Eric Vanman, Christopher C. Henrich, and Marios N. Avraamides, 'Desensitization to Media Violence Over a Short Period', *Aggressive Behavior*, vol. 35 no. 2, 2009, pp. 179-187.

⁷ Mary Grigsby, 'Sailormoon: Manga (Comics) and Anime (Cartoon) - Superheroine Meets Barbie: Global Entertainment Commodity Comes to the United States', *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 32 no. 1, 1998, p. 61.

⁸ Jeff Adams, 'Of Mice and Manga: Comics and Graphic Novels in Art Education', *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, vol. 18 no. 1, 1999, p. 74. Others affirm the educative influence of manga, for example Sharon Kinsella, 'Pro-Establishment Manga: Pop-Culture and the Balance of Power in Japan', *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 21 no. 4, 1999, pp. 567-572; Masami Toku, 'What is Manga?: The Influence of Pop-culture in Adolescent Art', *Art Education*, vol. 54 no. 2, 2001, pp. 11-17; and Teresa Morris-Suzuki and Peter Rimmer, 'Virtual Memories: Japanese History Debates in Manga and Cyberspace', *Asian Studies Review*, vol. 28 no. 2, 2002, pp. 147-164.

42 / Extreme Pornography, the Law and the *Casino Royale* Debate

Alex Antoniou

Introduction

After the case of *R v Coutts* [2006] UKHL 39, the UK Parliament legislated in the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 (CJIA 2008) to create a new criminal offence involving the possession of extreme pornographic images. The criminalisation of this particular category of pornographic material is aimed at addressing the contemporary technological challenges that the current legal framework faces in the Internet era: the images covered are most likely to be hosted on websites abroad, but accessed in the UK via the Internet, thereby circumventing existing legislation (Obscene Publications Acts 1959, 1964).

This essay briefly presents the elements of the offence and focuses on the regulation of such images contained in classified films. In addition, I critically evaluate the

contribution made to the final formulation of the offence by the Parliamentary debate involving the James Bond film *Casino Royale* (Campbell, 2006). I argue that the new provisions are unlikely to impact on artistic creativity, but they raise serious concerns over their potential interference with individuals' freedom of expression and right to privacy.

The Murder of Jane Longhurst

In 2003, the tragic demise of Brighton schoolteacher and musician Jane Longhurst offered a glimpse into a little-known world. She was murdered by her best friend's partner, guitarist and part-time salesman Graham Coutts, during sexual intercourse in March 2003. Just hours after surfing the web to fuel his fantasies of necrophilia and asphyxial sex, Coutts strangled Longhurst with a pair of tights after she had allegedly consented to his 20-year fetish for women's necks. According to the police, Jane's body was kept as a trophy for five weeks in a cool storage unit, before Coutts, who used to visit it repeatedly, panicked, dumped it and set fire to it on Wiggonholt Common in West Sussex.

Following his arrest, it was revealed that Coutts was a compulsive viewer of websites specialising in violent porn. Examination of his computer unveiled his dangerous obsession: violent images which had been downloaded from several websites classified by experts as "*genuine deceased appearance*", "*asphyxiation and strangulation*", "*rape torture*", "*violent sex*" and "*general pornographic*".¹ At the trial, Coutts claimed that Jane's death was a tragic accident which had occurred during consensual asphyxial sex, yet the prosecution stated that her death was not only intended, but also "*perversely desired*".² In June 2007, after jurors had

deliberated for thirteen hours, Coutts was finally convicted of Jane Longhurst's murder and was sentenced to a life term.

Following the conviction of her daughter's murderer, Liz Longhurst initiated a campaign to criminalise the possession of violent pornography, and launched a petition on 8 March 2004, International Women's Day. Her campaign received considerable political support from then Home Secretary David Blunkett and his successor Charles Clarke, as well as from Martin Salter, Labour MP for Reading West and David Lepper, Labour MP for Brighton Pavilion. In November 2005 the bereaved mother presented a petition of 50,000 signatures to the House of Commons, requesting the then Labour Government under Tony Blair to legislate in respect of extreme Internet sites promoting violence against women in the name of sexual gratification. Two years' commitment and intensive work came to fruition. In August 2005 the Home Office and the Scottish Executive produced a joint Consultation Paper on the possession of extreme pornographic material, which stated: *"We believe the material which is under consideration would be abhorrent to most people and has no place in our society."*³

The New Offence

The new law came into effect on 26 January 2009 after more than three years in the making. It involved a considerable degree of Parliamentary scrutiny, as well as thorough media analysis and public debate. Prior to the CJIA 2008 it was not an offence merely to possess obscene material, but under the Obscene Publications Acts 1959 and 1964 (OPA 1959 and OPA 1964) it is a criminal offence in England and Wales to possess an obscene article for publication *for gain*. During the 1960s it was possible to control the circulation of

prohibited material in the form of photographs, books, videos or films and DVDs by taking action against publishers within the UK.

In addition, the Customs Consolidation Act 1876 and the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 tackled the problem of physical importation of obscene material from abroad by empowering Customs officers to seize it. Nevertheless, the global nature of the Internet makes it very difficult to prosecute those operating from abroad. Therefore, the new legal provisions were put forward as a response to the ineffectiveness of the existing regulation in controlling a particular category of pornographic images which is produced beyond these shores but procured by Internet users within England and Wales.

The Government introduced the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill in June 2007. Where pornography is concerned, possession is a key factor.⁴ It was intended to be construed in respect of indecent photographs of children. It must be established that the defendant had custody or control of the image in question and that s/he knew of the existence of the image, not necessarily of its exact nature. Moreover, case law indicates that viewing material accessed via the Internet on computers or mobile phones will also be covered. The image itself must come within the terms of all three elements of the offence.

First, the image must be definable as pornographic. An image is deemed such if it is of such a nature that it must reasonably be assumed to have been produced solely or principally for the purpose of sexual arousal. This is a question for the magistrate or jury to consider by personally examining the material at issue. Second, the image must be

definable as grossly offensive, disgusting or otherwise of an obscene character. Third, the image must portray in an explicit and realistic way one of four “*extreme*” acts.

Clause 64(6) of the Bill defined the term “*extreme*” as follows: “*An extreme image is an image of any of the following: (a) an act which threatens or appears to threaten a person’s life; (b) an act which results in or appears to result (or be likely to result) in serious injury to a person’s anus, breasts or genitals; (c) an act which involves or appears to involve sexual interference with a human corpse; (d) a person performing or appearing to perform an act of intercourse or oral sex with an animal, where (in each case) any such act, person or animal depicted in the image is or appears to be real.*”⁵ The offence is not limited to photographs or films of real criminal offences; even staged sexual activities may be covered by the law if these are deemed explicit and realistic.

The Casino Royale Debate

The key words here are obviously “*appears to*”. This meant that acting and representation would be covered by the proposed offence. These two words would bring within the law’s scope depictions of simulated violence and sexual activity. Hence, cl. 65(3)(b) of the Bill excluded classified films from the ambit of the extreme porn provisions. However, according to the Bill, if the image in question was extracted from the whole, and it appeared to have been done so “*solely or principally for the purpose of sexual arousal,*” then the protection afforded would be removed and this would constitute a criminal offence. The same still, as part of the whole film that has been classified, would *not* be in breach of this proposed provision.

Following its first and second readings, the Bill was sent to committee where the wording and impact of cl.64 were examined in detail. In committee, Gareth Crossman, the Policy Director of Liberty, challenged the validity of the legal provisions as then drafted by raising the issue of whether simple possession of a series of extracted images from the 21st James Bond film *Casino Royale*, which had been issued a '12' certificate by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), could be defined as extreme pornography pursuant to cl. 64. Mr. Crossman referred to the scene in which the desperado Le Chiffre captures Bond and tortures him using a large, knotted end of a thick rope to strike him in the testicles. Le Chiffre demands a piece of information but Bond refuses to reveal it. Le Chiffre then appears to brandish a knife with the purpose of castrating him.

Mr. Crossman argued that the offence, as the Bill then provided, would potentially criminalise activity *"where you are dealing with something that, in itself, is perfectly legal – a film that has been censored and given a 12 certificate. A part might be extracted for the purpose of sexual arousal and the possession of that extract becomes a crime"*.⁶ The scene in question would fall under the definition of extreme pornography as found in cl. 64(6)(b): *"an act which results in or appears to result ... in serious injury to a person's anus, breasts or genitals"*. If it was extracted from the film, it would lose the defence afforded to classified films, since, as noted above, cl.65(3) removed this protection if the image was extracted from the whole and if this appears to have been done *"solely or principally for the purpose of sexual arousal"*.

In January 2008 the Bill was introduced in the House of Lords, where major amendments were tabled. Among others, all occurrences of the words *"or appears to"* from each of the

previous definitions in clause 64(6) were removed. Furthermore, the “*grossly offensive, disgusting or otherwise of an obscene character*” standard of the ‘extreme’ porn law test was introduced in order to address the *Casino Royale* situation and to create symmetry between the new offence and the OPA 1959. Combined with the remaining elements, this ensures that the offence only covers images that would be caught by the 1959 Act too, if they were published in this country.

However, the current definition of obscene material under the OPA 1959 (“*an article shall be deemed to be obscene if its effect ... is ... such as to tend to deprave and corrupt*” its likely audience, as per section 1) refers to the effect on the mind of the likely audience, whereas the above-mentioned categories refer to the content of the material in question. This means that there might be instances where the two standards do not overlap. A life-threatening, staged scene, for example, or a “*disgusting*” image might not be covered by the OPA 1959, because they do not “*deprave and corrupt*” but rather repulse the audience. Therefore, the new offence extends the powers of the Government to censor consensual adult pornography that is not covered by the 1959 Act.

Exclusion of Classified Films

The law, as it currently stands, provides for the exclusion of classified images in section 64(1) of the CJIA 2008. An excluded image is an image which forms part of a series of images contained in a recording of the whole or part of a classified work. However, an image is not considered as ‘excluded’ if it is contained in a recording of an extract from a classified work and it is of such a nature that it must reasonably be assumed to have been extracted (whether

with or without other images) solely or principally for the purpose of sexual arousal.⁷

Thus, an individual who has a video recording of a film which has been classified by the BBFC and which contains images that, notwithstanding their context, might be caught by the offence, cannot be liable for prosecution. In other words, the fact that the images are part of a BBFC-classified film takes them outside the ambit of the new offence. Nevertheless, the protection is lost as regards images contained within extracts from classified films, which must reasonably be assumed to have been extracted solely or principally for the purpose of sexual arousal. Namely, the exemption for an image forming part of a classified work is removed, if an image is extracted from the work at issue for pornographic purposes.

A Threat to Consumers

The UK Parliament passed the new law despite the absence of conclusive evidence as to whether allegedly appalling material online normalises distorted views of sexuality and sexual pleasure. The then Government heavily relied on a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA), the research findings of which were summarised as follows: *“The REA supports the existence of some harmful effects from extreme pornography on some who access it. These included increased risk of developing pro-rape attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, and committing sexual offences ... Men who are predisposed to aggression, or have a history of sexual and other aggression were more susceptible to the influence of extreme pornographic material ... The REA found no formal research studies of the effects on those who participate in making extreme pornography.”*⁸

However, the REA was severely criticised, since its results are attributed to bias and selective interpretation. As Feona Attwood and Clarissa Smith observe, the REA was shaped to fit the Bill.⁹ The causal link between consumption of violent pornography and sexual offending is equivocal, and a consensus on this empirical question has not yet emerged. The Home Office has also acknowledged that “we are unable, at present, to draw any definite conclusions based on research as to the likely long term impact of this kind of material on individuals generally”.¹⁰ There is considerable disagreement among social science researchers with respect to this causal connection. Overall, this is a perplexing issue which raises important questions about the notion of causality, as well as empirical and methodological ones.

The new offence, as currently drafted, is fundamentally intrusive and unworkable. It fails to capture unlawful acts and is more concerned with appropriate expressions of sexuality than with actual practices of violence. The then Labour Government used the radical feminist perspective as an expedient basis to promote an illiberal moral agenda. Simple moral denunciation of the portrayal of certain activities is neither a justifiable reason nor a proportionate measure for interfering with freedom of expression and the moral autonomy of the public. The ‘extreme’ porn law should have targeted only material in which any of the participants were actually coerced and harmed. This would constitute a narrow and proportionate response to extreme pornography. The Ministry of Justice initially envisaged that there would have been only around thirty prosecutions per year under the new law. However, according to the Crown Prosecution Service, in 2009-10 the volume of proceedings which commenced under the new law dramatically increased.

Prosecutions were in fact brought in respect of nearly 2,000 offences.

The new provisions are unlikely to stifle artistic creativity. Coercive and paternalistic measures render the forbidden fruit even more enticing, because of individuals' natural curiosity with regard to offensive material. Efforts to restrict or censor may result in the unwanted effect of increasing interest in the material in question. The "*grossly offensive, disgusting or otherwise of an obscene character*" element of the offence renders the legal provisions subjective. The new offence is not formulated with sufficient precision so as to enable consumers to regulate their conduct and reasonably foresee the implications of their actions, thereby creating uncertainty. The threat of up to two years' imprisonment for possessing extreme pornographic images portraying necrophilia or bestiality, and three years' imprisonment for images depicting life threatening acts or serious injury is hanging over consumers' head like the proverbial Sword of Damocles.

Notes and References

¹ *R v Coutts* [2005] EWCA Crim 52, [40].

² Steve Bird, 'Teacher Strangled to Satisfy Macabre Sexual Fantasy', *The Times*, 15 January 2004, p. 3.

³ Home Office, *Consultation: On the Possession of Extreme Pornographic Material*, August 2005, p. 1.

⁴ Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, Section 63(1).

⁵ the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, Sections 63(3), 63(6)(b) and 63(7).

⁶ Hansard, Commons Debates, Public Bill Committee, 'Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill', 18 October 2007, col. 124.

⁷ Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008, Sections 64(2) and 64(3).

⁸ Catherine Itzin, Ann Taket and Liz Kelly, *The Evidence of Harm to Adults Relating to Exposure to Extreme Pornographic Material: A Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA)*, London: Ministry of Justice, 28 September 2007, p. v.

⁹ Feona Attwood and Clarissa Smith, 'Extreme Concern: Regulating "Dangerous Pictures" in the United Kingdom', *Journal of Law and Society*, vol. 37 no. 1, 2010, pp. 174-177.

¹⁰ Home Office, *Consultation*, p. 10.



The London Symposium

Conference Proceedings Series

Series Editor: Phillip Drummond

Associate Editor: Dorothy Leng

THE LONDON READER 1

Essays from the First Annual London Studies Conference 2011

THE LONDON READER 2

Essays from the Second Annual London Studies Conference 2012

THE LONDON FILM AND MEDIA READER 1

Essays from the First Annual London Film and Media Conference 2011

THE LONDON FILM AND MEDIA READER 2

Essays from the Second Annual London Film and Media Conference 2012

THE LONDON FILM AND MEDIA READER 3 (in preparation)

Essays from the Third Annual London Film and Media Conference 2013

THE UNDERSTANDING BRITAIN READER 1

Essays from the First Understanding Britain Conference 2012