

The Pleasures of the Spectacle

Edited by
Phillip Drummond

The London Film and Media Reader 3



The London Film & Media Reader 3

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The London Film & Media Reader 3

The Pleasures of the Spectacle

60 Essays from FILM AND MEDIA 2013
The Third Annual London Film and Media Conference

Edited by
Phillip Drummond



The London Symposium

Conference Proceedings Series

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The Pleasures of the Spectacle
An Introduction

Phillip Drummond

Film and Media 2013

The essays in this volume are based on Papers presented at the Third Annual London Film and Media Conference, organised by Academic Conferences London and held at the University of London Institute of Education on 26-29 June 2013. The central theme for 2013 was 'The Pleasures of the Spectacle', which we have used to name the present volume.

The event brought together 230 scholars from nearly 40 countries for three days of lively presentations, discussions and debate. With almost 190 academic Papers on offer, there was great intellectual variety and much intercultural exchange and learning to be enjoyed. Fellowship and good cheer were

widely shared during panels, coffee-breaks and in the course of a buzzing conference reception, whilst a massive Conference Programme book commemorating the Speakers and their Abstracts kept us all on track throughout a complex, jam-packed schedule.

In addition to over 70 conference panels running in multiple series across the three days, the event was delighted to welcome distinguished scholars such as Laura Mulvey, Toby Miller, Jeremy Black, and Cathy Ross to deliver illuminating and challenging Keynote Addresses, and to enjoy the opportunity for a fascinating discussion session with eminent film and television director Joe Ahearne.

The Pleasures of the Cinematic Spectacle

The arrival of the cinema in the final decade of the 19th Century marked the completion of a quest for extended visual representation in motion, with all its attendant revelations of the modern world. Within just over three decades, synchronised sound had provided a further amplification, opening up the twin channels of the audio-visual.

The new medium offered the generalised pleasures of looking and hearing, but in emphatic terms – concentrated attention focussing on the high intensities of the cinema screen. It stressed visuality and audibility under conditions of increasing narrative rigour, and mounting spectacle. A further pleasure was entailed – membership of social audiences, entertained in the great movie palaces of the 20th Century.

These pleasures sometimes arose from the medium's engagement with the real, sometimes from its fantastical

departures from the everyday. They offered various forms of psychic release (as in comedy), and sometimes reinforced powerful human drives (such as the sexual). On occasion, perversely, their delights arose from their involvement of the spectator in apparently unpleasurable experiences of fear and dread (as in horror).

From TV to the Digital Era

From the mid-20th Century onwards, television shifted the focus of pleasure from the social arena of the movie theatre to the domesticity of the home, and from the endless circulation of individual film texts to the pleasurable 'flow' of medium, with its broad generic mix of audio-visual messages and its more diffuse manipulation of the audio-visual.

New media, especially in the era of digital, dramatically extended the range, in particular by loosening up the manipulation of sound and image – and providing consumers with the pleasures of a higher degree of control – and by 'personalising' media experience more directly. The fast-increasing power of digital media demonstrates just how far the audio-visual has come since its early fascination with the pleasures of the 'real', now offering both mundane and extreme forms of illusion and delight.

FILM AND MEDIA 2013 was thus dedicated to considering the many ways in which the spectacle has been constructed, and in which the spectacle afforded by film and media creates varieties of pleasure for audiences and spectators. These range from the basic forms of pleasurability involved in looking at, and listening to, audio-visual messages through to the complex psychic *régimes* involved in these processes, the

social nature of the practices of viewing and listening, and the broader politics of pleasure where sound and vision are concerned.

Keynote Addresses

Dr. Cathy Ross, then Director of Collections and Learning at the Museum of London, UK, opened the conference with her lecture on *Mediating the Global City: Knowledge, Pleasure and Spectacle at the Museum of London*. Ably deputising at short notice for indisposed MoL director Sharon Ament, Cathy illustrated some of the changes which have taken place in museum curation and interpretation over the decades as the modern museum wrestles with the challenges and opportunities of the multimedia age.

Professor Jeremy Black (University of Exeter) led us into the social history of the cinematic spectacle with a vivid account of *The Cinematic Spectacle of Britishness: James Bond at 50.* In a vivid lecture updating his 2005 book *The Politics of James Bond: From Fleming's Novels to the Big Screen,* powerfully expounded the changing identities of Bond in the half-century between *Dr. No* and *Skyfall*, emphasising the ways in which the films respond to and resist changes in the personal and social environments to which they have made such a massively popular contribution.

Professor Laura Mulvey (Birkbeck, London) provided an account, in her lecture entitled *Visual Pleasure Revisited: A Personal Account of a Critical Issue***,** of the evolution of her ideas about the gendered nature of film narrative, and its resultant spectacle, first explored in her hugely influential 1975 essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, which went on to become one of the most frequently cited essays in the

history of film theory. Her illustrations came from both classical cinema (Sirk) and counter-cinema (Godard).

Professor Toby Miller (then City University, London) brought FILM AND MEDIA 2013 to a fitting close with his lecture on *The Displeasures of the Media Spectacle: Towards an Ecology of Film and Television, based on* his then new book with Richard Maxwell, *Greening the Media* (2012). Toby offered a dazzling array of examples to debunk the idea that information and communication technologies are 'clean' and ecologically benign and proposed a new ecology of the media landscape. Even at their most liberal the pleasures of the media, as he demonstrated, come at a considerable cost where environmental issues are concerned.

Film-Maker Forum: Joe Ahearne

Whenever possible our conferences involve a celebration of the work of a leading media practitioner or theorist, as in the case of our screening of Ken Loach's *Ae Fond Kiss* in 2011 to celebrate the director's 75th birthday, or our 2014 obituary to the late Stuart Hall by means of a screening of John Akomfrah's poetic biopic *The Stuart Hall Project*. In 2013 our attention focussed on the work of film and television director **Joe Ahearne**, whom we were delighted to welcome to the conference, in discussion with Conference Director Phillip Drummond, for an outline of his work which was richly illustrated by a showreel of extracts from his work.

In this discussion session Joe discussed his beginnings as a film-maker, and his entry into the world of British cinema and television. He focused on his experience of the institution of British television, in particular his relationship to the dominance of the aesthetics of realism and naturalism, in

sharp contrast to an abiding interest in fantasy and horror which has taken him from the cult time travel fantasy *Dr. Who* to his various recent experiments in horror such as *Ultraviolet*, *Apparitions*, and The *Secret of Crickley Hall*.

The Conference Reader: Texts, Identities, Locations

Our largest conference to date produced our largest Conference Reader. The 60 essays which came forward for publication may represent less than a third of the academic work on show at FILM AND MEDIA 2013, but we think that the collection as a whole, drawn from nearly two dozen nations, still offers a very good overall sense of the much wider offerings of the gathering. Papers, submitted after the event, were strictly limited in length (no more than 2,500-3,000 words, so that they resembled the scope of the original Conference Paper) and their authors were confined to a small number of footnote references.

The result, we hope, is a compact and highly readable collection of essays by authors old and new. The book naturally takes a somewhat different course than the event itself. It is divided into three main parts, dealing with 'Texts', 'Identities', and 'Locations'. The essays are then spread across the more specific subsections of the Reader. These divisions are inevitably artifical and hence highly porous, with many essays joining up across these boundaries of convenience. A high degree of inter-connectedness, we believe, emerges from the collection as a whole.

Sound and Image

Part 1, 'Texts', looks at some of the basic building blocks of media messages. It takes as its basic foci ideas to do with 'Sound and Image, 'Narrative', 'Ontologies', and 'Extending

Media Experience'. In 'Sound and Image', two essays look at the relationship between silent cinema and the post-1927 world of sound. Here, Woodrow Hood considers the effects of adding new soundtracks to films which were created in the silent era, an issue which Titas Petrikis considers in practical and theoretical detail in an account of his work as a composer in creating a modern soundtrack for Tod Browning's *Dracula*.

We travel to the other end of this debate in considerations of the modern format of the pop video, where pop music meets with the experimental possibilities of the short experimental film. Here, Daniela Chana compares the work of musicians Tori Amos and Fiona Apple as they exploit this new audio-visual fusion, while Yael Maurer offers a detailed reading of the ideological meanings at stake in the sounds and images of Morrissey's 'Everyday is Like Sunday'. This section concludes by taking us back to the critically neglected medium of radio, and to Karolina Albińska's account of debates over the ongoing possibilities for the fusion of sound and image in the world of British and Polish radio systems.

Narrative

The challenges of developing the materials of sound and image into story structures are the focus of the essays here. William Bligh explores the complex issue of narrative in relation to processes of cinematic identification, while Simon Hewitt, focussing on Lynne Ramsay's riddling feature film *Morvern Callar*, considers whether or not cinema is an essentially narrative art in the first place. Case studies follow, from Hollywood and Bollywood. Smita Dalvi examines the varying deployment of space and spectacle in the Hindi *Devdas* films, while Douglas Keesey considers the grim repetitions of anticipation and fulfilment in the *Final*

Destination Films. Christa van Raalte brings this section to a close by arguing that Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty* represents a new configuration, by a female director, of the 'masculine' gaze typically deployed in U.S. action cinema.

Ontologies

In this section our authors consider wider ontological questions. In terms of theory, Julio Cesar Lemes de Catro offers a sunccinct account of the ways in which a series of theoreticians (Marx, Benjamin, Debord) have understood the notion of spectacle in relation to forms of commodity and modern urban experience, while Kit Wise considers related issues to do with media 'realism' and 'de-realisation'. Cinematic case-studies concretise the discussion here as in the case of Alex Ling's account of Lars von Trier's farewell to the exhausted power of cinema in his fable about the end of civilisation, *Melancholia.*

In this area Haruka Kawakami argues that documentary cinema, for all its avowed realism, shares fundamental interests with the seemingly contrary practice of surrealism. In a concluding pair of essays, Teresa Duarte Martinho and Tomasz Żaglewski illustrate the ways in which the experience of film exhibition alters the ontology of film. In the case of Martinho, these are the special conditions attaching to the distribution of Botelho's *Film of Disquiet*, and, for Zaglewski, what may be considered the 'post-cinematic' experience of the expanded spectacle provided by IMAX technology.

Extending Media Experience

At stake here are some of the ways in which media may be amplified, becoming multiple or hybrid. The traditional medium of the book, argues Martin Ed Chatterton, needs to

take into account new multimedia possibilities, especially when creating new narratives of repressed histories, such as those of slavery in connection with the urban history of his native Liverpool. Three essays in this section illustrate the way in which the spectacle of film may be creatively expanded through the performance capacities of the human body. Inês Lourenço shows how, in Portugal, the experience of Bollywood Cinema has been expanded by the practice of dance, based on the films.

Her compatriot Inês de Carvalho, meanwhile, considers some of the ways in which the innovatory 'audio-walk' is itself a form of cinematic spectacle. Tabita Rezaire, for her part, explores some of the psychosomatic activity frequently associated with Carolee Schneemann's 'live' performances of her experimental films, themselves often strongly concerned with bodily activity and corporeal processes. Reminding us of the conference's home at the Institute of Education, with its own pioneering role in Media Education since the 1970s, Paul Chilsen makes a passionate case for the role of digital film-making in produing new forms of student learning and personal development.

Forms of Pleasure

Part 2 of the collection focusses on 'Identities', considering 'Forms of Pleasure', 'Psychic Encounters', 'Femininities', 'Queerdom' and 'Religious Identities'. Forms of media pleasure are manifold, as the contributors to Section 1 amply demonstrate. From the outset, for example, cinema is strongly linked to magical processes of spatial and temporal transformation and dislocation, as Jonathan Gilhooly explains in his study of Buster Keaton's 'spectacles of deception'. Cinematic pleasure can be subtle and innovatory, as Alexandra

Simon-López shows in her study of Andreas Dresen's account of love in older age, *Cloud 9*, or, contrariwise, fearsome and ferocious, as Elena Woolley shows in her account of the 'unlikely' pleasures afforded the spectator by disaster movies.

If spectatorial relationships with characters are fundamental to the pleasures of the spectacle, then these relationships are often complex, shifting and multiple, as Sandra Meiri and Odeya Kohen-Raz clarify in their elaborate typology of actors, characters, and spectators. There is, as Margaret Hass goes on to show, a profound link between the spectator's 'binge' attitude to the constant flow of television, and the representations of cultural bulimia on American TV.

Psychic Encounters

This section of the Reader is home to a quartest of essays which deal explicitly with the psychological and psychoanalytic issues implicit in several contributions elsewhere in this volume. The point of origin here is, predictably, Freud, and in her account of Freud, France and the Cinema, Maria Angélica Amâncio offers a valuable account of the differing Freudianisms at stake in Sartre's abandoned screenplay for what became John Huston's *Freud, The Secret Passion*, and Robbe-Grillet's cine-roman and subsequent film, *It's Gradiva Calling*.

Freudian notions of the primal scene, extended in later theory, are the focus of Alice Haylett Bryan's account of Gaspar Noé and the new French Extremism, while a later psychoanalytic tradition is explored by Sian Mitchell, in her application to von Trier's *Melancholia* of notions of Deleuzian affect. Taking a different approach, the horror film, in its play on monsters both visible and invisible, is the focus for Erez Genish's ideas,

based on Kristeva, about cinema and the role of the abject and abjection.

Femininities

Here, 'Femininities' turns more directly to gender issues. Here, Linda Huszár considers the relationship between image and narration in *film noir*, focussing on the notion of appearances in the unstable world, hinged on female inscrutability, of Welles' historic *The Lady from Shanghai*. Women are more overtly powerful and central in modern Hollywood, as Samantha Lindop argues in her account of the post-feminist drive of Tarantino's *Kill Bill*.

Bollywood is also a significant resource of images of women caught up in processes of personal transformation, action and resistance, as Pradipta Mukherjee shows in her exploration of female resistance in contemporary Indian Cinema, and as Gauri Chakraborty illustrates in considering such case-sudies as *Zindagi Na Milegi Diobaara* and *English Vinglish*. In Japan, meanwhile, the beautiful but terrifying figure of Tomie grotesquely sums up many of the longer debates about male/female divisions and interactions, as Chia-wen Kuo explains in her case-study of the cult horror heroine.

Queerdom

This section of the Reader is made up of three essays offering case studies in gay and lesbian themes. Maria Golinelli focusses on a selection of lesbian-themed films and television programmes to show how they typically mobilise encounters with the apparent 'otherness' of lesbian identity through a mediatised version of what John Urry has called 'the tourist gaze'. The other two essays here focus on cinematic accounts

of gay identity from India. Sathyaraj Venkatesan studies the ways in which, from 1985 onwards, the tragedy of AIDS became a 'spectacle' which posed challenges for narrative and representation in Indian Cinema which have still not been fully met, while Rajesh James explores the theme further in his account of queerdom and pleasure in contemporary Malayalam cinema, with particular reference to the troubled iconography of 'masculinitity' and 'effeminacy'.

Religious Identities

The second Part of the Reader concludes by examining a variety of cinematic representations of religion. The market for religious films has become significant, and a range of films has been created in response to this demand, as Nathalie Dupont explains in her study of cinema and Christianity in America. Other forms of religion are also addressed here. Female Muslim identity remains a difficult challenge for American Cinema, as Ahlam Tariq shows in her account of *Pretty Persuasion*. From a different angle, William Onogu and Damian Amana deploy the idea of 're-mediation' to illustrate some of the ways in which religion has found its modern, spectacular representation in Nigerian video films.

Cities

Part 3 of the Reader considers the particular locations - both concrete and abstract - to which film and media texts and identities make reference, and within which they may be understood as operating. These are categorised here as 'Cities', 'Narratives of Nationood', 'Cultural Memory', and 'Scenarios of Conflict'. This Part opens with Lydia Jakobs taking us back to Victorian Britain, and the role of the magic lantern cycle in representations of urban poverty. The early 20th

Century is then the backdrop for Federico Passi's account of the uncanny pleasures of the urban spectacle in early films such as *Marvellous Melbourne - Queen of the South*.

The modern Australian city is in turn the focus for Jennifer Brown's account of the recent use of large outdoor media projection installations to connect with the architecture of Canberra on the occasion of its centenary. This section concludes with essays exploring further, different approaches to cinema and the city. Wu-Tso Lin explores the meanings of European cities such as Paris and Rome for an urban director nurtured by the very different urbanity of New York, while, turning to uestions of urban film consumption, Vaishali Diwakar offers a detailed study of film-going habits and practices amongst the social layers of the rapidly expanding Indian city of Pune.

Narratives of Nationhood

The larger entities of nationhood are explored by the essays collected here. In Europe, Greece is the major focus, in Maria Komninos' and Yannis Lambrou's study of the postmodernism of the so-called 'New 'Weird Wave' of film-makers in their treatment of family life and language-use. Germany is also under the spotlight here, as intercultural negotations with Japan over national identity and 'otherness' are tellingly analysed by Jennifer Coates in her account of cinematic exchanges between the two countries in WWII. Other essays in this area take us further into Asia. Vamshi Krishnareddy offers a critical analysis of Pre-Independence Telugu Cinema, while Ahmad Bilal describes some of the recent challenges faced by film-makers in Pakistan. In a further intercultural study, Juanita Kwok recounts Australia's vexed history in

representing the Chinese, and considers the achievement of Trenchard's *The Man from Hong Kong* in this context.

Cultural Memory

How narratives of nationhood are constructed within frameworks of cultural memory is the third area we explore in our quest for media 'locations'. *Chariots of Fire*, argues Lindsay Davies, takes on new meaning when seen in the light of contemporary Scottish nationalism and the drive for Scottish independence in post-millennial Britain, while for Justin Harrison, representations of 70s America in films by Crowe, Linklater and Scorsese are a test-bed for notions of authenticity and nostalgia. History is also at stake, Esther Yau reminds us, in the ways in which Hong Kong Action Cinema calls up generic memories of historic martial arts spectacles, while in Spain, as Norberto Mínguez–Arranz explains, the need to understand and go beyond the legacy of Civil War and Francoism poses challenges which have been differently faced by fiction and non-fiction cinema.

Scenarios of Conflict

The amibiguous spectacle of war and social conflict in general becomes the central focus of our final group of essays. Returning to the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, the spectacles of Socialist revolt and feverish Nazism are the subject of Wajiha Raza Rizvi's comparative analysis of the stylised aesthetics of *Battleship Potemkin* and *Triumph of the Will.* The World War which followed is the canvas on which Iris Haukamp paints a comptelling picture of trans-national cinematic encounters between Germany and Japan.

France's colonial wars in North Africa and South-East Asia are the focus for the study by José Maurício Saldanha-Álvarez of

how the legacy of conflict is understood in a series of films by Pierre Schoendoerffer. Modern war, notably in the Middle East, is then the focus of the last two essays in the volume. Here Serena Daalmans considers television's ability to represent moral complexities in the first stages of the Iraq War, whilst a participant in the reality of these events, Richard Gehrmann, offer his perceptions concerning the challenges faced by makers of the fiction film in dealing with the 'hidden reality' of war in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Conclusion

As Conference Director I had the great pleasure of chairing the plenary sessions, learning so much along the way from our distinguished Keynote Speakers. It was in the nature of things, sadly, that I simply did not get the chance to attend more than a few of the host of Panels on offer, and it therefore came as a great delight to have the honour of working on these sixty essays editorially to bring them to a broader audience.

They are, I believe, a remarkable bunch, marked by scholarly expertise across a very wide range of subject-matter, theoretical emphasis, and national frames of reference. We are very grateful indeed that so many new, emerging and established scholars entrusted us with the intricacies of bringing their initial Papers into final essay form. I am in turn thankful to the tiny team of people who made the conference happen so smoothly, so successfully, and in such a good spirit.

At Academic Conferences London, I would like to thank Dorothy Leng for her highly skilled work both as my Associate Editor on the Reader and in her role as our Director of Conference Services. We were ably supported at FILM AND MEDIA 2013 by our team of Conference Assistants, Mary Coughlin, Lynne Horgan, and Poppy Lury. At the Institute of

Education, Michael Walker and Sharon Fisher provided their customarily impeccable degree of institutional oversight and support. Dan Gritzman marshalled our technical resources with energy, efficiency and patience, and Jackie Connell ensured that we were fed and watered in appropriate measure whenever sustenance was needed. As always, the team of Carmen, Maria and Paul at The Printing Centre, Bloomsbury, were marvels of flexibility and productivity. My sincere thanks to all concerned for making an event as large and complex as FILM AND MEDIA 2013 such an efficient and productive gathering, and for helping us to foster what we believe to have been a truly global gathering marked by exemplary levels of collegial exchange, support, and mutual co-operation.

Phillip Drummond

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Series Editor, The London Symposium

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Part 1: Texts

1. Sound and Image

1 / Renegotiating Early Cinema: New Soundtracks for Old Films

Woodrow Hood

The idea of making new soundtracks for old films is nothing new. During the silent era, as films circulated around the world, the live accompaniment would certainly differ from time to time, only later becoming set during the age of the 'talkie'. What is new today is certainly the time-frame of reference. No longer are most audiences watching these films as an act of nostalgia, since they were not alive to see the original run. So, as the cultural and performative re-cycling of these silent films moves away from the realm of nostalgia to become a re-packaged media file ready to be consumed by a new generation of film viewers. What then is the relation between a new soundtrack and a silent film for audiences today?

This essay is an examination of what happens in the re-negotiation of image and sound, a breakdown of a film's 'audiovisuality', or what Philip Brophy refers to as the "*cinesonic*".[1] The central idea here is that a film's meaning is generated out of the relationships between sound and image (and not image alone, or in primacy). In my initial work, I started asking a set of larger questions. How does the new soundtrack help re-orient an older film by playing into newer tastes or preferences? Are there negotiations for dominance between the image and sound?

Furthermore, is the new soundtrack actually a mediated interpretation that creates a rigid set of meanings, or does it open up liminal spaces between sound and image that allow a more fluid set of interpretations? More specifically, I am looking for moments where the film and the new soundtrack seem to connect in new ways. The analysis and critique of new soundtracks for old films is an area poorly studied and may offer the potential for new insights into the relationships between sound and image in film-making in general.

From Mono to Dolby and Beyond

Since the earliest days of the silent era, films have undergone numerous incarnations as each film has been adapted to a new age. Later, as technology advanced, soundtracks could be recorded directly on to the film. When the home video industry took off in the 1980s, a particular scored version would receive a release, and, in a way, become the 'gold standard' for the soundtrack of that film (whether or not it was truly the original).

Of course, silent films were never truly silent. They were usually played with live accompaniment, or what Michel Chion

refers to as allusions to sound - characters speaking (followed by the intertitle cards) - or making noise visually by striking objects. Chion argues that the characters in silent cinema were indeed speaking *"sometimes even more than they would speak in a sound film, since they had to make visible the activity of speaking.*"[2] In other words, characters in silent film in a way had to work harder physically during the act of speaking to represent that very act.

The myth of origins, that is to say a pure and unalterable point of creation, commonly figures in discussions of the textual status of classic films. But what is different here - by way of contrast with discussions such as those surrounding George Lucas' seemingly unending revisions of his *Star Wars* saga - is that there is in fact no true point of origin where the soundtracks for silent films are concerned, as Rick Altman has pointed out:

"*Not only are the performances themselves forever lost, but even their traces have systematically fallen prey to the low esteem accorded ephemeral and tributary phenomena like silent film sound. Many original performances were improvised and thus from the start lacked a written record. Where sheet music was used, it has by and large gone the way of other cheaply produced century-old paper documents. Even when the printed music remains, we rarely know when it was used, how it was performed, and what its relationship was to which film(s).*"[3]

Some composers have not only started re-scoring silent films, but also early films with existing audio tracks for voice, underscoring, transitional music, and opening and closing musical sequences. Perhaps this impulse can be explained by the poor quality of the audio for these films, and the

audience's desire for better sonic experiences. Because of our contemporary expectations, early soundtracks tax today's audiences because of their poor sound quality. Recorded in mono, these films sound thin and shrill compared to today's multichannel surround sound effects.

Of course, the film itself has also aged, and, in the era of high definition images, this has also become a challenge for audiences. Unlike the image however, few audiences react negatively to a replacement soundtrack than say to the colorisation of a black-and-white film. Where the image may exist as sacred text, the soundtrack seems malleable and potentially interchangeable without audience or critic backlash. Home video producers (Criterion and the BFI, for example) have learned that they can charge premium prices for DVDs if they not only clean up the prints but also add contemporary soundtracks to engage contemporary audiences.

Silent Films and Pop Music: *Metropolis*

When I mention my research to audiences and colleagues, I often hear of a re-worked or new score for some old film that I didn't know existed previously. There are different scores for Welles' *A Touch of Evil.* There are numerous new scores for classics like *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Metropolis, Nosferatu,* and others. Some musical groups have even devoted much of their work to re-scoring old films, such as the Alloy Orchestra in the U.S. and In the Nursery in the U.K. The American composer Philip Glass even tackles films with dialogue tracks, converting words into opera and filling in static silences with new moods. And there are many others. Though this project has a wide scope, this essay focuses on a set of pop soundtracks. These selections present one particular problem:

the introduction of lyrics (new texts) in combination with the old.

In 1984, for the release of a colorised version of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* in cinemas and eventually on VHS, prominent pop music producer Giorgio Moroder enlisted a bevy of the best pop musicians of the decade. Pat Benatar, Adam Ant, Jon Anderson of Yes, Bonnie Tyler, Billy Squier, Loverboy, and Freddy Mercury of Queen all contributed original songs produced by Moroder, known for his work with David Bowie, Donna Summer, and Blondie. The result was a synthesis of classic silent film and MTV music video.

We hear different performers (Mercury, Ant, Benatar) interpreting characters on top of pre-existing performances. The emotional outpourings of Mercury on 'Love Kills' seems to sometimes match the bombastic acting style of the performances in the film, whilst others seem to connect with varying degrees of success. As Claudia Gorbman suggests, "*soundtrack music may set specific moods and emphasise particular emotions suggested in the narrative . . . but first and foremost, it is a signifier of emotion itself.*"[4] Not only does Moroder's pop music act as a sign to be read in itself, the lyrics of the pop performers create another layer of text; both have to be pulled apart to explain how meaning is being made.

Unlike other re-scorings of older films, audiences watching this version of *Metropolis* have to navigate through these interpretations and, in addition, they must negotiate the lyrics of the pop songs in relation to the dramatic action of the film itself. In the case of the older score, much of the interpretation is left up to us. Certainly the title cards that appear as the dialogue in the silent film help control the narrative to some degree, but otherwise in a silent film we are

left to discern by ourselves what meanings we derive from the action, movements, and expressions of the actors. In essence, the pop stars themselves are interpreting what they see on the screen and singing to us about it. We either connect to their reading or not, perhaps alternatingly so.

Throughout the film, pop stars become the voices of the characters or begin to add new narration to the film, filling in gaps previously left open by Lang. During much of the film, thudding beats, practical sounds (cheers, laughter), and electronic whooshes connect pop song to pop song. In the opening sequences of the film we see the male workers descending into the depths of 'The Workers' City' as we hear a plodding male chorus chanting gloom and doom. As we ascend back into 'Metropolis City', we hear the laughter and voices of the chosen few enjoying the high life. The first full pop song (Pat Benatar's 'Here's My Heart') appears as these two worlds collide for the first time in the meeting of the film's central love interests, Freders and Maria:

> *"Our two worlds met in strange surprise*
> *I hid my love in thin disguise*
> *I tried to leave, how could I stay?*
> *What if my heart gave me away?*
> *I always thought I'd be prepared*
> *But love just caught me unaware*
> *You said the words and I believed*
> *I fell so hard, I fell so deep*
> *Love can't hide, though it tries*
> *Hearts catch fire, so has mine*
> *Here's my heart"*

Benatar's lyrics become an extra, internal monologue for the lovers. Not only do we hear Benatar interpreting character, but the lyrics are also re-writing the scene, adding to the

silence that previously existed and narrowing the potential for more open-ended interpretation of the film. Is the "I" in the song Pat Benatar, Giorgio Moroder, or Maria? The audience is left to navigate through a complicated layering of texts, adrift in a sea of possible meanings, texts, and interpreters.

Battleship Potemkin

Other pop music artistes have also tackled silent films in a manner similar to Moroder. In September of 2004, electronic pop stars The Pet Shop Boys created an event in Trafalgar Square in London to premiere their new score for Sergei Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin*. Known for their intelligent dance-pop music and classical music influences, The Pet Shop Boys presented a mostly instrumental score that combined their electronics with the twenty-six piece Dresdner Synfoniker. The musicians and performers crowded in front of the screen and played along with the film in front of a live, outdoor audience.

The bulk of the score is electronic and rhythmic, giving contemporary audiences two hooks, a familiar sound or *timbre*, and a new pace. The quality of the sound would be familiar to anybody listening to contemporary pop. As for pace, sequencers and drum-machine software give the clear sense of time moving forward for an audience - the faster the pulse the faster time is moving, the slower the pulse the more it slows down. Certainly time is a constant according to the second hands on our clocks, but our perception of time is easily influenced by the beats and pulses we hear. But changing the time-signature changes our perception of time itself. In this score, The Pet Shop Boys are changing our sense that time is being condensed, in something akin to the effect of montage.

Where cinematic montage itself is concerned, of course, Eisenstein is famous for his revolutionary cutting techniques, propelling and stylizing the dramatic action. Previous scores for the film could certainly help move the film forward, but perhaps not with the speed, precision, or impact allowed by electronics. And the dynamic range, including the subwoofer thuds in the bass synthesizers, not only makes sure that we hear the new pace but makes us feel it in our body, affecting our whole selves - especially in an outdoor setting where large monitors can blast out the sound, an effect that even the best home theatre systems can't achieve. The result is a powerful address not only to the psychological state of the audience but to its physiological state as well.

The new score offers a few moments where lyrics arrive and begin to interpret the film for the audience. As the priest enters the film about fifteen minutes in, we hear the first lyrics - the Lord's Prayer with extra words, "*Brothers, oh, brothers. We are your brothers. Do not forsake us now*", an extension of a line from the film. As the next sequence begins and mutiny breaks out, the score turns again to beats and bass in a piece that would not be out of place in the dance clubs of London, Paris, or New York. In Eisenstein's famous 'Odessa Steps' sequence, we hear vocalist Neil Tennant sing:

> *"If you didn't really understand the rules*
> *If you didn't even know the score*
> *How come we went to war?*
> *How come we went to war?*
>
> *People are living now*
> *inside their memories*
> *How much we've all believed*
> *and how we've been deceived*

Time runs out
we all start dying
after all

If you didn't really understand the cause
If you didn't even pause for thought
How come we went to war?
How come we went to war?

People are falling down
becoming memories
Some day we'll all be grieved
too late to be relieved
Time runs out
we all start dying
after all
after all
after all
after all

I know the time will come
Just wait and see
Change is no obstacle
we can agree
Heaven is possible after all
Heaven is possible
after all
after all˝

The song seems to function both as narration, defining the context of the famous film sequence, and, by the end, becoming a monologue (using "I") for an unknown character (perhaps functioning as a stand-in for the audience, witness to the barbarous events of the scene as we see the soldiers firing on the unarmed crowd). The lyrics perhaps become a point of identification and connection for the viewer, or perhaps a

disruptor as we hear spoken (sung) words that may or may not support the action on screen. The soundtrack returns to electronic pulses as we see the woman die and her child in the baby carriage plummet down the steps. The rest of the score is instrumental until the end credits, when we hear the song 'For Freedom', clearly aimed at selling the soundtrack in the pop music market.

Controlling New Soundtracks

With the continuing advances in digital media technologies, we no longer live in a one-choice world when it comes to watching these films. We can set our media players to watch the original version of *Metropolis* or we can pick through the menu to play the pop opera while we watch the colorised film. As we can see in these new soundtracks for old films, some new scores gain in emotional impact by offering new pace, new *timbre*, wider harmonics, and fuller sonic environments. And, if YouTube and Internet Torrent sites on are any indicator, the recent proliferation of fan versions of these films with alternate soundtracks demonstrates a curious trend.

Instead of studios and media companies deciding what the soundtrack will be, a multitude of individuals may now be in charge, signaling a major shift of the power dynamics of ownership and expression. Anyone with a digital copy of a film can replace the score with any sound or music they wish. Clearly, further study and observation is needed to continue to monitor the effects of new soundtracks on old films: not only when new lyrics are added to old screenplays but when any new soundtrack is layered with the old, creating strata of fresh meanings and re-cycling the old to create something new.

Notes and References

[1] Philip Brophy, *Cinesonic*: *The World of Sound in Film*, North Ryde, NSW: Australian Film, Television and Radio School, 1999.

[2] Michel Chion, *Film: A Sound Art*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, p. 4.

[3] Rick Altman, *The History of Silent Film Sound*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 8.

[4] Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music,* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 73.

2 / Creating a New Sound World for Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931)[1]

Titas Petrikis

Studies of film sound and music have increased over the last few decades, and there are now several studies about the practical implications of sound and music in film. However there is no practice-based research on how 5.1 surround sound systems may be used unconventionally to create an expanded aesthetic for a film, or to enhance the meaning of an existing film through sound. The reason why experiments with 5.1 surround sound in films are rare may be to do with procedural conventions, time constraints and budgetary limitations within the film industry. The surround sound for film is still a rather unexplored area, but the rapid development and availability of sound technology will soon make it even more significant.

[1] A longer version of this essay appears as Titas Petrikis, 'Creating a New Sound World for *Dracula* (Browning, 1931)', *The New Soundtrack*, vol. 5 no. 1, 2015, pp. 35-54.

This study treats the original film soundtrack in a new way. First, the author of this research has composed a new soundtrack for Tod Browning's *Dracula* (Universal, 1931). *Dracula* has essentially no original underscore, which makes it possible to create a new sound world for the film. This new score provides an emotional context relevant to the style of late silent cinema and sound films after 1931. The second part of the research used this soundtrack as an element of a larger multi-channel composition, which liberates itself from *Dracula's* plot and, with the new contextual composition, creates new philosophical meaning.

Although the new multi-channel composition is independent of the film, there are several significant dramatic points in *Dracula* where the restored original soundtrack is synchronised with the multi-channel composition. The reason for this synchronicity is to keep the audience connected to the film material and maintain the implied dramatic points of the composition. Otherwise, the artefact could have become merely a concert piece divorced from the actual film. The entire soundtrack and audiovisual composition is my own work as researcher/composer.

Designing Sound and Music

Technically the project is in 5.1 surround sound and as such can be played on a domestic DVD player. However, the nature of the project is unrelated to that of the conventional understanding of surround film soundtracks which usually place the audience in the diegetic context of the film. The designing of conventional film sound and music composition were quite separate from each other until recently. Contemporary computer technologies now allow film sound and music design to be carried out by one person, thus

blurring the line between these two traditionally separate professions.

This study is grounded in the methods of practice-based creative research, which indicate that any creative academic research aims to contribute to the understanding of the process of creation and how it generates new knowledge. It was therefore natural that, as the research progressed, the initial objectives had to reflect new evolving circumstances, because the results which were delivered in the *praxis* called for a theoretical re-assessment.

The first part of the research included the preparation of *Dracula's* soundtrack. Too much cleaning of the original hiss could not be applied, because it caused an unwanted metallic quality in the sound, usually known as 'squawks' in the post-production sound industry. Therefore leaving a certain amount of noise in the original soundtrack achieved a better unity and balance between the cleaned audio elements (dialogue lines) and the background (relative original silence).

The prepared original (dialogue only) soundtrack of *Dracula* became the basis for further experimentation on the artefact. The next creative task was to create a coherent conventional film soundtrack that would adequately include the original dialogue in balance with composed music and sound effects (atmospheric and emotive sounds). The new score then had two main objectives.

First, as with most film music, it aimed to give emotional texture and colour to the film. With the help of music and sound elements, *Dracula* is given the attributes of a horror film. The other objective was to increase the dramatic pace of the second part of the film. *Dracula* is rich with visual and

dramatic development in the first part, but the problem of its slow pace has not gone unnoticed by critics.

Almost all on-screen sounds were removed from the original and replaced with the researcher's sounds instead, including Foleys, sound effects and ambiences. The classic approach to film scoring was employed, where film music themes attempt to guide the audience in the dramatic development of the story, and their identification serves to distinguish either certain characters or film themes.

My music themes in *Dracula* also provide certain traditional music associations or gestures that help to illustrate the main film idea, and ideas about characters. For example, Dracula's ancient nobility was linked through the sound of a harpsichord that plays a Baroque-style theme. For *Dracula* the music aims to lend gravity and credibility to the characters' emotions and their interactions.

The sonic palette of *Dracula* consists of on-screen and off-screen sounds, diegetic and non-diegetic music. Film sound can be categorised as literal and/or emotive, pointing to the essential coherence between sound design and music. It has become common to assert that all sounds in cinema are emotive while some of them also have a literal function. Literal sounds help the audience to believe what is seen on screen, for example footsteps, sliding doors, dialogue. Emotive sounds suggest an emotional context for the narrative, and as such are usually predominant in film music.

The reconstruction of literal sounds such as Foley and ambient sounds had to match the quality of the original dialogue. The emotive sounds of *Dracula* contain both musical and non-musical elements. 'Musical' sounds refer to

the systematic association with a melody, harmonic scale or identifiable rhythm, an accepted music concept in Western culture. 'Non-musical' sounds, accordingly, are those that lack connection to the systematic parameters mentioned above. However, although they are created as sound effects, using musical instruments (acoustic and electronic), non-musical sounds still carry emotional significance because the audience assigns specific emotional qualities to them.

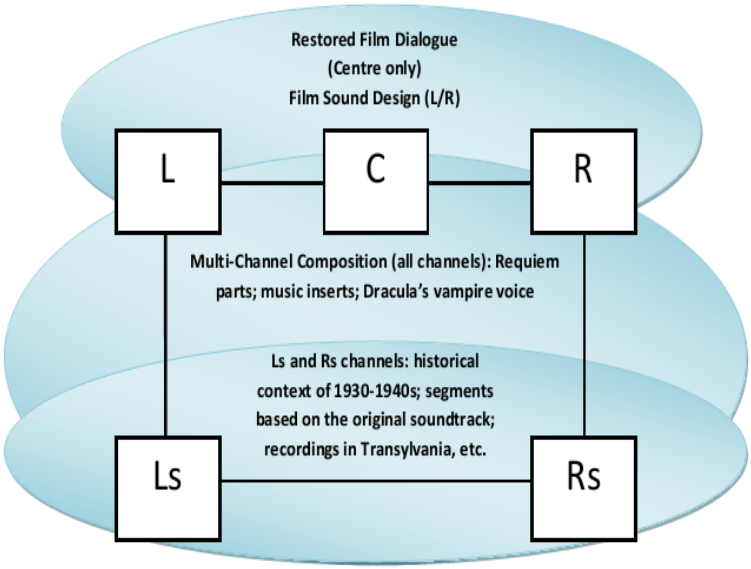


Figure 1. *Dracula* - Multi-Channel Composition

For example, a flute melody turns into the howling of a wolf, while Count Dracula's main music theme, played on the harpsichord, morphs into a muffled, obscure drone according to the mood and emotional gravity needed within a scene.

Literal sounds are primarily described as on-screen sounds, and emotive sounds are usually expressed via off-screen or non-diegetic sounds.

Multi-Channel Composition

The completed restoration of the film soundtrack provided a foundation for creating a multi-channel composition for *Dracula*. The topic of *Dracula* is rich in contextual material because it can be analysed through a wide range of issues - for example the notions of evil, otherness, morality, horror, folklore, culture, gender, society, history, and so on. The composition becomes unconventional in this regard as it uses an existing feature film as an element of the new art piece.

Browning's *Dracula* gains an original interpretation thanks to the new meaning it is given through the associations of the major cataclysmic events of the 20th Century. Among the usual composing techniques and tools the soundtrack includes a *Requiem*. Traditionally the *Requiem* is a mass to remember the deceased or loss of life. Here, it becomes an artistic device to suggest an appeal against the malevolence created by humanity. In the period of the film's production the memory of the First World War was still vivid in the minds of many Europeans, while it also saw the dawn of two different but equally brutal totalitarian ideologies, Bolshevism and Nazism.

Hitler and Stalin managed to consolidate power and deceived millions about their real intentions. Like Dracula, Hitler was able to mislead, seduce and kill those in his path while his thirst for power is perhaps allegorically expressed by the vampire's appetite for blood. Dracula's ability to turn his victims into vampires perhaps references the fanatical

segment of 1930s society that believed in the Nazi or Soviet ideologies and ruthlessly executed their policies without doubt or question.

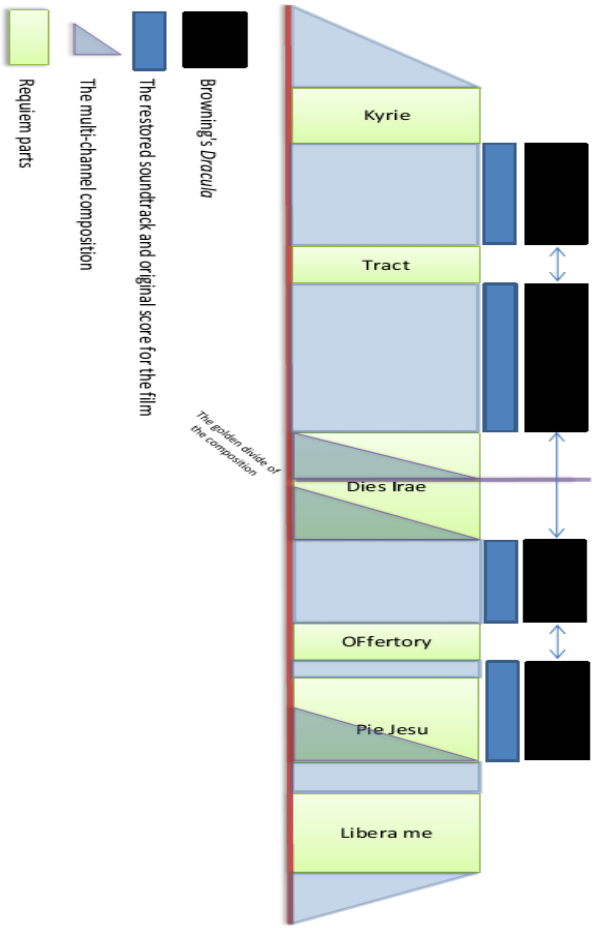
The masses marched and followed their leaders blindly, as in Browning's film when Lucy is passing through the cemetery thirsty for blood. The vampire infection was released, and, metaphorically, the cruellest social systems evolved with the foulest crimes against humanity committed by the two tyrants and their henchmen. Bela Lugosi offers striking visual similarities to Hitler. His frantic look and his use of the raised hand to control the crowd resembles Hitler's masterful use of gesture to control the masses in the 1930s.

The multi-channel composition suggests that both totalitarian regimes were similar, and that their crimes blend in nature. A society based on human rights, free will, speech, and justice, is always jeopardised by the dark human nature that is able to reveal its killing and destructive power. The composition implies growing emotional uneasiness and concern about the future of humanity.

When the soundtrack reaches its peak followed by a nuclear explosion, parts of the original dialogue are played backwards at increased speed. This creates the symbolic meaning that the conflict between good and evil is timeless and boundless. The multi-channel soundtrack attempts to expand the universe of the composition both in time and space. The contextual composition elements are present beyond the visual diegesis of the film and, among other sound elements, they suggest imaginative aural illustrations to the audience.

Figure 2.

***Dracula*: Multi-Channel Composition - Visual Plan**



The multi-channel composition categorises the sounds according to their origin. Verbal sounds have their direct semantic meaning, while their emotive expression becomes the secondary objective. For instance, the phrase "*the blood is the life*" was chosen to suggest the global appeal of Dracula's threat. The reading of the phrase in nine major languages (from ancient Greek to contemporary Chinese) emphasises the vital importance of blood for humankind, and hence contextually suggests that Dracula's threat is equally dangerous for all cultures in any historical or social context.

The Soundtrack and History

Non-verbal sounds add a referential implication to the historical or culturally established and recognised context and icons of the period. When Dracula arrives in England, the sound of air-raid sirens mixes with medieval church bells, suggesting the historical evolution of European warnings of of invasion. Similarly, Hitler's speeches were altered to the extent that they lost their direct semantic meaning but the intonation was recognisable and created a strong historical reference to the period. Some other examples include the sound of marching armies, guns, explosions and the technology of WWII; the execution in a cellar also contains sonic symbols associated with the historical context of the composition.

Music also partly reinforces the philosophical implications of the composition. For example, the historical context is superimposed through the excerpts and motifs of Soviet propaganda music, which includes uplifting orchestral and male choir intonations delivered through the extensive use of subdominant and dominant intervals, and a marching rhythm played on *timpani* and snare drums. The militaristic mood is

increased by the presence of the trumpet, which was also the leading instrument in Soviet youth organisations. This music language palette contains iconic symbols that imply the referential connection to the totalitarian societies.

The philosophical dualism and eternal fight against evil is suggested through the conceptual use of the *Requiem* genre, which, in essence, becomes another compositional layer in the multi-channel composition. Figure 1 above illustrates how the multi-channel system delivers the composition. The front speakers are mainly devoted to the film's diegesis; the centre speaker contains the film dialogue; the left and right channels place emphasis on the film's sound design. The decision as to how much of the soundtrack is present in the front depends on the intensity of the film dialogue and dramaturgical development of the piece (whether the composition reaches certain dramatic peaks or falls). During parts of the *Requiem,* the front left and right speakers accompany the rear channels.

Since there are several simultaneous sources of information in the project - the film images, original dialogue, new film soundtrack (music and sound design), and the multi-channel composition - it seemed wise to use a limited range of aural elements, so that the audience would still feel the homogeneity of the style. The following sound sources were used in the project: the original restored dialogue track and its manipulation; the original recordings in Transylvania (current-day Romania) completed in May, 2010 (on the same days of the season and in the same location where Stoker situates his story); quotations from Stoker's *Dracula*; and historical audio archives contextualising the 1930s/40s. The structure of the multi-channel soundtrack composition was arranged in such a way that the audio material would not

obscure the focus of the film. None of the film's original dialogue has been removed, even though there are places where tracks play simultaneously and create a polyphonic relationship.

Research Implications

The practical element of the research supports the notion that that film soundtracks may be enriched by the cohesion of sound design and music. The exegesis element suggests that instead of traditionally treating sound design and music as separate departments that meet in the mix, contemporary technology allows a far more productive interaction and porous relationship between the two. The blurred boundary between music and sound design enriches the artistic devices for the creator, providing powerful and yet subtle tools.

Another implication deriving from the research suggests that the film soundtrack may imply contextual meaning beyond the film. Instead of placing the audience in the middle of the scene, the soundtrack may communicate an additional historical, philosophical or social context. This implication is successful if the contextual soundtrack material does not conflict or obscure the focus on the main film dialogue, or break the integrity of film diegesis. Otherwise the audience may be distracted by simultaneous unrelated sound sources, especially if several verbal sounds collide.

Since the contextual soundtrack contains no link with the film visuals, the author of such a soundtrack has to consider carefully the type of sounds placed in the composition. One must bear in mind that the audience is focusing on the film, and off-screen sounds should establish a contextual reference that can be decoded by viewers. These sounds vary

from generic sources such as the sounds of war (bombs falling, planes, explosions, machine guns) to culturally established samples, for instance, speeches by the political leaders of the Thirties and Forties. Music also serves as referential material that suggests particular historical, cultural or philosophical notions (for example the Soviet army choir, the *Dies Irae* sequence from the *Requiem,* the harpsichord instrument to suggest the Baroque).

This method of re-voicing old sound or silent films generated considerable insights as theoretical assumptions about the ways in which surround technology may be enhanced to imply multi-layer meaning of the soundtrack were tested in practice. Although this method is unlikely to be used to score entire mainstream film soundtracks, as it goes well beyond the usual audience experience; it definitely inspires fresh and innovative ideas for using surround technology in planning the spatial lay-out of the film soundtrack.

The structural choice of the composition also offers a fresh perspective on the restoration of old films. Instead of merely re-voicing the film, the composition suggests its own structure, therefore becoming a larger work of which the film is a part. The inclusion of other artistic devices helps to achieve new artistic meaning, while essentially respecting the film's own dramatic structure. Re-voicing films in this way offers the chance to re-interpret cultural artefacts to new audiences, without endangering the integrity of the original, as it can still be seen as intended. The rich opportunities for artistic insight using such artefacts as their basis need to be developed more widely.

3 / Music, Text and Image in the Songs and Music Videos of Tori Amos and Fiona Apple

Daniela Chana

This essay discusses two outstanding music videos by two contemporary female singer-songwriters, namely 'Talula' (1996) by Tori Amos and 'Every Single Night' (2012) by Fiona Apple. I show how music, text and image work together to create a content which is only complete in the combination of all three aspects. I focus on incongruences and contradictions which create a space for double meanings and irony. My chosen examples - separated in time by just over a decade-and-a-half - also reflect certain changes in music television and music videos.

As several scholars in recent years have already acknowledged, music videos obviously survived the near-death of music television. Since MTV today is dominated by reality shows, these videos are mainly watched on the Internet or on DVD.[1] There might be a point in assuming that the independence from MTV actually serves the quality of music videos. Music television in the 1980s was dependent on advertising, resulting in programmes influenced by a certain idea of a youth audience with stereotypical interests.[2]

In this sense the new, contemporary means of distribution may thus contribute to a greater degree of artistic freedom.But why are images crucial to popular music in the first place? According to Diederichsen, the pop song itself is always incomplete, as the voice of the singer evokes his or her staged personality. Since the fascination is based on the image of the performer, the listener needs to complete the experience by collecting pictures, looking at the cover artwork or watching videos in order to get the impression of the artist really 'being there'.[3] The music alone is never enough.

In my examination of the relation between music, words and images, I am very supportive of the theoretical approach provided by Andrew Goodwin in the early 1990s. He was the first to focus on the dynamics between music, text, and image, showing that music videos could not really be understood without an understanding of how pop music itself works. In *Dancing in the Distraction Factory* (1993), Goodwin very convincingly pointed out how the patterns and narrative structure of pop music (such as repetition and rhythm) become active and reflected in the videos as well.[4] More recent research on the topic shows the influence of Goodwin's

ideas, such as for instance Carol Vernallis' *Experiencing Music Videos*.[5] In my discussion of *Talula* and *Every Single Night*, I, too, will draw on this approach.

Images of Confusion: *Every Single Night*

My first example is Fiona Apple's 'Every Single Night'. Directed by Joseph Cahill, the video illustrates the chaotic, contradicting feelings and continuously whirling thoughts coursing through the mind of a nervous, sleepless person. The richness of the images corresponds to that of the lyrics. Both convey the impression of over-stimulation which leads to sleeplessness. The first-person narrator in the lyrics is thinking about herself and her behaviour towards other people, as in the second stanza: "*What did I say to her? Why did I say it to her? What does she think of me?*".

In the video, Apple is sitting on a bed with a desperate look on her face, and we see colourful lines, resembling umbilical cords, running between her and a small globe in front of her. They point to how she feels connected to all the world's history and problems, since everything that happens around the globe seems to concern her. She feels addressed by everything. Just as in the lyrics, the image of the brain is dominant. It appears for instance when she is rummaging through a handbag and suddenly finds a small plastic brain in it. She is haunted by her intellect, which intervenes in everything. Here, the images perfectly mirror the lyrics in which the word "*brain*" is repeated over and over.

Extremely fast cutting mimics the confusion in the brain on the verge of sleep, when the person is in a state between reality and dream. For example, a doll's green skirt later appears on

Apple herself, the Eiffel Tower next to the bridge is later seen on the head of the plastic buffalo, while the head of the buffalo returns on top of the body of her lover, and so on. The tired mind keeps spinning, getting confused, and mixing up elements from different memories, creating a new content that does not necessarily make sense.

Although these images aim at creating confusion, it is important to note that they are not meaningless. The green skirt which moves from the doll to the grown-up Fiona also suggests constancy between the past and the present, signifying that this woman is chasing a dream. She has clung to the passions, hopes and fantasies of her childhood and tries to live up to her former ideals. The buffalo's head worn by her lover may point at her mixed feelings towards him. Since she is questioning everything, as the lyrics suggest, she obviously feels undecided about him as well.

Mind and body are constantly mixed up, in the lyrics as well as in the video. The words illustrate this confusion with the unusual expression "*butterflies in my brain*". At the same time, the first-person narrator is talking about "*these ideas of mine*" as if they were feelings, since they "*trickle down the spine*" like a physical sensation. This conflict between thought and feeling - making a feeling of every thought and a thought of every feeling - is also expressed in the images, for instance in the repetition of the refrain "*I just want to feel everything*", where the word "*feel*" is combined with the image of a brain. In short, feelings ("*butterflies*") arise within the intellectual sphere.

Music and the Image

Music and the image work together here in telling ways. The very soft and fragmented keyboard tunes are mirrored in the extremely short cuts, with each tune provoking a fresh edit. As a result, the cuts follow the rhythm of the song and make it visual. Some of the shots are so extremely short that the audience perhaps doesn't even recognise them when watching the video for the first time. For instance, spectators might not notice the image of a shoe at the beginning of the video, since it appears for less than one second. Thanks to this method, the images illustrate the connection to the unconscious, which is crucial to the song's meaning. We will see the same again later when discussing *Talula*.

Bright colours illustrate the artificial aspect and therefore underline the concept of a dominant brain. Representing culture, the brain is opposed to nature. We are drawn into a state between dream and reality which is also illustrated by the many references to cameras, mirrors, the glass of the aquarium, and the symbolic use of the zoo throughout the video. The video shows situations of created or staged reality, commenting on the practices of watching and being watched.

The image of the aquarium also leads to this self-referential aspect. Vernallis - writing years before this video was made - argues that a music video resembles an aquarium: the performers always look a little lost in the setting because they don't really participate as actors do in a film. Instead they are just floating by in the scenery.[6] Hence, there is some sort of self-referential irony in the image of the aquarium, commenting on the way in which images themselves can be said to 'float'.

At the same time, these images refer to the self-centred aspect of the neurosis that finds its expression in sleeplessness. Trying to understand herself, Apple's protagonist enjoys watching herself intensely. Another song by Apple comes to mind here: in her ballad 'Never is a Promise', from her debut album *Tidal* (1996), she depicts someone who is desperately trying to defend her neurosis against uninvited consolation. The first-person narrator in that song is eager to protect her sensitivity and her creative mood-swings.

As a consequence, she blames the "*You*" who does not understand how much she needs this suffering. The song contains the following line: "*Its colors' richness won't appear to your view.*" Hence, the beauty of the neurosis is associated with splendour. The same idea has found an expression in this colourful music video as well. With its ironic horror elements and moments of disgust which are juxtaposed with these intense and emotional images, it is shocking and beautiful at the same time, just like any neurosis.

'Every Single Night', as a synthesis of the arts, is based on contradictions. The lyrics seem to contradict the music, and the images of the video seem to contradict the lyrics. But instead of being accidental, these contradictions are telling. They display mixed feelings towards the neurosis – she is suffering from it but also needing it at the same time. The restlessness conveyed by the words, for instance, contrasts with the softness of the reduced, calm music. Apple illustrates one of the central lines of the lyrics: "*Every single fight's alright*", she sings, shifting the focus to the happiness within the sadness.

Playful Riddles: *Talula*

'Talula', by Tori Amos, needs to be understood in the context of the album on which the song first appeared, *Boys for Pele* (1996), a concept album which tells the story of a woman's self-empowerment. In the opening songs of the album, the first-person narrator is reflecting on the different ways in which she has been broken by love. She remembers having been cheated on, abused, objectified, left behind, dominated by men, and so on. For the first time, she accepts her pain, her anger and her sadness, and the songs illustrate the broad range of emotions she discovers. There is a lot of disharmony and a constant alternation between quietude and noise, whispering and screaming, in order to illustrate the sadness that lies beneath this woman's anger.

As the album continues, the songs become more and more optimistic. The woman is finding strength within herself, opening up her mind, regaining her compassion for others, especially for men, and gradually coming to terms with her fate. She stops being a victim and starts to understand the male perspective as well. Some songs on the album, such as 'Mr. Zebra', focus on the ways in which women themselves can be cruel to men. Hence, the perspective is shifting as the woman heals. She moves on from self-centred depression to greater empathy and fairness.

The song 'Talula' is placed in the middle of this concept album, and marks one of the turning points in the story. With its fast dance beat and a playful focus on rhythm and word games, it differs significantly from the other songs around it. By toying with associations and playing with metaphors, the enigmatic

lyrics convey a deeply-felt interest in riddles, as well as an ironic senselessness, and therefore illustrate the playful character of life.

After having focused on all this suffering, 'Talula' adopts a lighter tone. It shows that not everything has to be taken seriously, and also that riddles can be left unresolved. Listening to the song, one may feel that it communicates a sense of acceptance of life's imperfections. It is about discovering the joy of life despite all the suffering, being confident with all the contradictions and the pain, being happy with oneself rather than analysing everything, and finally gaining some sort of independence. There are some striking similarities here to 'Every Single Night'.

Art, Therapy, Freedom

In the video, director Mark Kohr illustrates the playful and creative character of the song by references to artists. Alongside acrobats and a band, we see Amos herself playing the harpsichord. These personifications of creativity are juxtaposed with scientists in a laboratory who try to examine, analyse, measure and understand everything, including human beings, such as Amos herself. Since the song is about the joy of the riddle, it follows that Amos is literally breaking out of the cage in which she is locked at the beginning, and dancing towards the piano.

It is artistic expression that saves her. The artist who fights for creative freedom resembles the woman of the concept album who strives for self-empowerment. The individual constitutes herself by refusing to be labelled and classified. Scientists and doctors represent powerful authorities who define concepts

of normality. The song and the video both suggest the triumph of breaking free. Just like the music and the lyrics, the images in the video stay true to the character of the riddle.

In her video collection *Fade to Red* (2006) Amos offers an audio commentary to the video in which she states that she herself doesn't really know what it is about. She simply trusted the director. I want to argue that in the video as well as in the song, the enigmatic form is the content. It is about the riddle that refuses to be solved. In the context of personal healing and therapy which is crucial to the central concept of the album, this flirtation with riddles has to be read as a symbol for the flirtation with one's own weaknesses and flaws. *Talula* thus shows the true nature of self-empowerment. The words illustrate self-empowerment by staying enigmatic.

The music does so by offering an unusual and slightly disturbing dance beat dominated by a harpsichord, the images by refusing to be decoded too easily. This difficulty in decoding is partly achieved by incongruences between sound and image. For instance, in one scene the band is shown playing saxophone and trombone. Although these instruments are in the song, they don't dominate the sound. In fact, they are very soft in the background, while other instruments, such as bass, drums, and percussion, are much more dominant acoustically but are not shown in the video.

This incongruence between sound and image again poses challenges for interpretation. What is hidden acoustically (namely the saxophone and trombone) is displayed visually, and what is dominant acoustically (like drum and bass) is pushed to the background. Sound, words and image here constantly try to escape close reading; they do not want to be

caught. This also illustrates a focus on the unconscious, since the gentle tunes of the saxophone may perhaps not even be heard by the listener even though they are put in a prominent position for the spectator.

Notes and References

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[1] See for example M. Kathryn Shields, 'Carnival Mirros: The Hermetic World of the Music Video', in Jane Kromm and Susan Benforado Bakewell (eds.), *A History of Visual Culture: Western Civilization from the 18th to the 21st Century*, Oxford; Berg, 2010, p. 347.

[2] Simon Frith, 'Youth/Music/Television', in Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 72-3.

[3] Diedrich Diederichsen, 'Sound and Image Worlds in Pop Music', in Dieter Daniels, Sandra Naumann and Jan Toben (eds.), *Audiovisuology 2, Essays – History and Theories of Audiovisual Media and Art*, Cologne: König, 2011, pp. 121, 133.

[4] Andrew Goodwin, Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 81-5.

[5] Carol Vernallis, *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

[6] *Ibid*., p. 55.

4 / Englishness and Its Discontents: Morrissey's *Everyday is Like Sunday*

Yael Maurer

In Morrissey's song 'Everyday [*sic*] is Like Sunday', which was first heard on the singer's *début* solo album (1988) and became a popular single, the speaker's elegiac tone expresses a melancholy view of the quintessentially English seaside town where "*everything is silent and grey*". This is a generic town, epitomising the bleak and uniform nature of such places, and stressing the speaker's anger and outright disgust at this facet of English life, and by extension, his view of this drab form of Englishness in general. In the music video accompanying the song - readily available on YouTube - this elegy is dramatised by a fleshing out of the minimalist lyrics and giving them form and a plot. In this essay I show how this visual narrative serves to both highlight and parody Morrissey's narcissistic engagement with his iconic status, as well as enhancing what the fragmentary lyrics can only hint at.

'Everyday is like Sunday' is a hymn, or rather an elegy, to a town in which nothing ever seems to change. Apparently prompted by a visit to Borth, in Wales, the video was shot in Southend-on-Sea on the East Coast of England. The singer laments the fact that his unnamed town is so boring it's even been ignored by the "*Bomb*", outrageously claiming that this might have been the only "*cure*" for this particularly localised English malaise.

This short film, chronicling the experiences of a young woman, and featuring Morrissey himself, acts as an additional text to enhance the meaning of the song's lyrics, suggesting that the iconic 'Englishness' represented by Morrissey is always already queer and other. The girl we see has an androgynous haircut and overall (typically 'Eighties') look, hinting at the singer's different sexual orientation and becoming a further representation of otherness.

We see her buying a Morrissey album, looking at his image on television through a shop window, and seeing images from the 24th episode in the famous *Carry On* series, *Carry on Abroad* (Thomas, UK, 1972) satirising an English coach party holiday to Spain. These images of 'elsewhere', involving an escape from dreary English beaches to sunny Spain, are presented as an imagined option: something to be viewed through a shop window, beyond which the TV screen is seen.

The use of this effect in the music video suggests the idea of mirrors and screens (cinematic and otherwise) as a way of showcasing the (very English) longing for a place in the sun, as well as acting as a comment on the role of iconicity in the making of filmic and musical images. The need to escape the typically English locale is, however, only seen as an option twice removed: through a window, and also on a TV screen.

The girl in the music video does not go to Spain, she buys a Morrissey record instead. Morrissey himself, on the other hand, later left England for sunnier climes; his lament for the loss of his version of an imagined England becomes a foreshadowing of his own life.

The video ends with a memorable image that flips the roles of the fan and the icon, the watcher and the watched. We see the girl looking through a pair of binoculars at Morrissey, who wears a T-shirt with her image on it. This reversal of roles enhances the implied similarity or even sameness of the singer and the slightly androgynous girl: they may be different versions of one another. However, the ending also suggests that there may be a way of looking away, through a different set of 'eyes', to a different place which may become the only 'way out'.

Fantasies of Escape

Providing a possible counter-text to the lyrics' gloomy tone and the music video's evocation of the endless boredom of the archetypal seaside town may be found in the incorporation of brief extracts from the *Carry On* film, which dramatises the longing for a place in the sun and yet also satirises its un-English inadequacy. The film offers another version of Englishness while also demonstrating the futility of escape. It ends with a return to England and a celebration of Englishness of a very particular nature.

In *Carry On Abroad*, yet another episode in the comic series describing the adventures of a group of quintessentially English types and caricatures, a coach-party leaves for the fictitious Spanish resort of 'Ellsbells'. The comic name (a play on the English vernacular phrase "*hell's bells*") already

indicates that the group will not get what they bargained for. When they arrive they realise that the Paradise they envisioned may be more of a chaotic 'hell': the hotel is not yet built, and pandemonium ensues. The film ends with the hotel literally collapsing around the drunk and unaware holiday-makers.

Although this is a comic film, the notion of escape is presented as a futile one as the film plays on the English fascination with the attractions of Spain's Costa del Sol. What the holidaymakers will encounter is another version of the England they left behind. Sunny Spain is not so sunny, after all, the food is the same terrible English fare (fish and chips), and the holiday is a total disaster. However, the film ends with a reunion of the group in the local pub. Their Englishness is re-asserted and celebrated, something that cannot be shaken off. Going abroad is not getting away. It's about confirming a basic sense of English identity, played out as it is against a foreign backdrop.

English xenopobia is taken to hilarious heights as the group ends up in a Spanish prison for disturbing the peace by causing a brawl in the local brothel. In the prison scene, the man in charge of the tour expresses his outrage at being put in jail and reminds the chief of police that they are British citizens. The chief of police, unfazed, replies in perfect English: "*I know. ... my sympathies*". Being British is seen as a slightly ridiculous, albeit lovable, trait. British people may be stuffy, but get a few drinks in them (including the film's version of an exotic love potion) and they are almost as fun-loving as the foreigners upon whom they look down.

In the music video, the girl sees the extract from the *Carry On* film twice; first through a shop window, and finally, in the

video's final scene, at home. This is the only time we see her smile: Her pleasure in witnessing this display of vulgar Englishness may indicate that, unlike the prim and proper, conservative and sedate seaside town, it still offers some form of 'otherness', if only in its camp style and over-the-top hilarity. As another embedded text, it may suggest the vision of yet another England: working-class, less refined, and perhaps harking back to Morrissey's childhood in Manchester. The inclusion of this reference to popular cinema may indicate the kind of popular British culture he was exposed to, and cherishes, despite his seemingly elitist position as expressed in the lyrics.

An Imagined England: Morrissey and Betjeman

Morrissey's ambivalent relationship to England and Englishness is evident not only in his lyrics but also in the many interviews and statements in which he expresses a nostalgic longing for "*good old England*", coupled by a disdain for the "*new*" England which he finally left for the USA and later Rome. One such comment is particularly telling: "*The England that I loved, and I have sung about, and about whose death I have sung about, I felt had finally slipped away. And so I was no longer saying, 'England is dying', I was beginning to say, 'Well, yes, it has died and here's the carcass'*".[1]

This bitter but also elegiac tone also characterises 'Everyday Is Like Sunday', where the singer laments the transformation of an idyllic England into a place where everything is "*silent and grey*", epitomised by a dull and uniform seaside town that could be anywhere and nowhere. The song is also influenced by one of Morrissey's acknowledged literary influences, the former English Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman.

Betjeman is most known for his critique of modernity, especially of post-war urban sprawl, with its creation of uniform neighbourhoods and dismal slums. As Lawrence Foley points out, the two men also share a similar world view: "*both express significant concerns at the levelling down of society and the undermining effect that large-scale urban regeneration had on individual identity and community cohesion, which in turn was also perceived as having destabilising implications for national identity*".[2]

Betjeman's famously controversial poem 'Slough' (1937) resonates in Morrissey's lyrics. In Morrissey, it's the "*seaside town … they forgot to bomb*". He calls for "*Armageddon*" to come and annihilate it. Betjeman, for his part, conjures up a similar fate for Slough, a town outside London marked by rapid industralisation: "*Come friendly bombs and fall on Slough! /It isn't fit for humans now,/There isn't grass to graze a cow./ Swarm over, Death! //Come, bombs and blow to smithereens/ Those air -conditioned, bright canteens,/Tinned fruit, tinned meat, tinned milk, tinned beans,/Tinned minds, tinned breath.*"[3]

This image of a "*tinned*" world where nature is not present ("*There isn't grass to graze a cow*"), reappears in Morrissey's lyrics and in the music video: the girl in the music video sees two ladies wearing fur coats and feeding their pet poodle meat. Disgusted by this sight, she leaves them a message on a napkin: "*Meat is murder*". This message echoes both Morrissey's investment in animal rights, and recalls the line in the song: "*Etch a postcard: 'how I dearly wish I was not here*'". The wish to escape this drab form of Englishness is the key to Morrissey's lyrics and to Betjeman's lament for an increasingly industrialised England.

Another connection between Betjeman's poem and Morrissey's lament for England's fall from grace appears in the poet's bitter condemnation of Slough's profiteering landlord figure: "*… that man with double chin/Who'll always cheat and always win,/Who washes his repulsive skin/In women's tears*". We witness a similar sense of disillusionment and mistrust in humanity when the singer in Morrissey's song "*trudges back over wet sand*" to discover that his clothes have been stolen. Although this is an isolated incident, in keeping with the lyrics' overall sense of betrayal and doom, we sense that the singer, like the speaker in Betjeman's poem, is expressing a sense of disgust at a world gone wrong.

The overwhelming feeling of despair at the world's unjust nature is shared by both Betjeman and Morrissey. Both speakers are at odds with the world as the find it. In both cases, we sense that the speaker is both enraged at the way things are, yet powerless to change them. Therefore, the only way he can envision change is through violence. In both Betjeman and Morrissey's elegies, only "*bombs*" can rid the world of what is seen as abhorrent, and the sheer violence of the image, in both cases, expresses a sense of futility and a lack of hope for a better future.

Although this feeling of despair at the injustice of the world - made very explicit in Betjeman - is more attenuated in Morrissey's minimalist lyrics, we find the visual narrative supplementing the story. The girl in the music video is an activist of sorts, and her protest, albeit not very radical, still expresses her stance against what she perceives as the evils of this world. If we see the girl as Morrissey's 'double', we can see her ideological investment in animal rights as a very clear

echo of Morrissey's continued and unswerving support for the vegan cause.

Furthermore, Betjeman's vehement poem ends with an expression of sympathy for down-trodden office-workers: *But spare the bald young clerks who add/The profits of the stinking cad; /it's not their fault that they are bad,/They've tasted Hell. It's not their fault they do not know/The birdsong from the radio,/It's not their fault they often go/To Maidenhead.* The final word in Betjeman's poem leads us to Maidenhead, the resort town on the bank of the Thames, a mere eight miles away, the only place the poor clerks can go in order to momentarily escape their enslavement in Slough.

If Morrissey's speaker can only remain in this seaside town where you "*win yourself a cheap tray*" and drink "*greasy tea*" (recalling Betjeman's tinned products and tinned minds), then both texts end with the vision of a living hell which goes on in an endless repetitive routine. Silent and grey, every day is the same, an endless Sunday that brings no peace or release but rather an overwhelming feeling of *ennui*. The two texts reflect each other and Morrissey's re-writing of Betjeman's attack on the transformation of England's countryside is in keeping with his own ideological investment in the nostalgic, at times elegiac view of "*good old England*".

Morrissey as Cultural Icon

The 'Everyday' video was filmed by Tim Broad at Southend-on-Sea and is supposedly based on the 1975 film *Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris,* based on the off-Broadway and West End show of 1968, in which Brel makes cameo appearances between performances of his songs by other artistes. Morrissey appears only in the last scene, shot in

London and added later. This appearance comes at the very end of the music video, but the short film is replete with images of Morrissey: on the covers of records, on the television screen, and elsewhere, he seems to be the deciding element without actually being there himself. This stresses the notion of Morrissey as a cultural icon rather than a sentient human being.

Morrissey himself seems rather pleased with the notion of himself as an 'icon', although he laments the fact that the term is used too freely. In an interview for the BBC's *Culture Show* 'Icons' poll in December 2006, Morrissey had this to say about his own perceived status. After stating that the term 'icon' is a "*peculiar*" word that is "*overused*", Morrissey goes on to say that if he is indeed an icon, then that is something other people have decided: "*You can't arrange yourself into myth*", says Morrissey, "*It happens accidentally*". Disavowals like that notwithstanding, it seems Morrissey is readily embracing his status as a mythical/iconic figure in the eyes of the public.

In the same interview, he talks about his love for the British people, and their love for him. This is set against the less friendly responses to his art. Morrissey's notorious shyness is not apparent in this interview. He openly flirts with the young and very enthusiastic interviewer, and seems very much in his element. Morrissey both embraces his status as an icon whilst simultaneously mocking it. The younger Morrissey we see in 'Everyday is Like Sunday' is already well on his way to becoming a 'national treasure'.

His bemused flipping of the roles of hero and fan in the music video's last scene attests to his awareness of the power of fandom and his own implication in this role. Tim Broad, who directed the 'Everyday is Like Sunday' video, also made the

famous 'Suedehead' video - also available on YouTube - in which Morrissey pays tribute to his idol, James Dean. In 'Everyday is Like Sunday', too, Morrissey is simultaneously the fan and the hero. The perfect mix of Morrissey's powerful lyrics and the music video's imaginative take on the song can be seen as one of the defining moments in Morrissey's career: it signifies his status as a true icon: not just of British *Angst*, but also of the ability to create alternate worlds by means of music and image.

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4 / 'Visualised Radio'? Research Findings from Britain and Poland

Karolina Albińska

Introduction: What is Radio?

Until recently many scholars ascribed every medium to a strictly defined, separate category on the grounds of its distinctive features. Radio thus remained the means of mass communication that reached the farthest places of the world, created intimate relationship with users, accompanied their primary activities, and promoted cultural equality among the audience. Traditionally, its most significant attribute was the ability to activate the user's imagination by influencing the sense of hearing alone and, thereby, separating the iconosphere from the audiosphere.

In other words, referring to Meyerowitz's concept of *'*multiple media literacies*',* it can be said that comparisons

and contrasts between visual and non-visual media come down to three main issues – media environment, grammar and content.[1] Following this way of thinking, the most obvious criterion for distinguishing between media is to do with the way in which their messages are disseminated, since, in McLuhan's famous dictum, "*the medium is the message*". According to a dictionary definition, therefore, radio could be defined as the "*transmission of sounds converted into electromagnetic waves directly through space to a receiving device which converts them back into sounds*".[2]

In due course it was realised, however, that no medium can be defined only by the technology of its distribution since, for example, "*a podcast remains radio because of the way it is produced. A film, after all, is still a film even when it is shot on a digital video camera and watched on television set*".[3] As a consequence, scholars started giving priority to the codes that can be seen as constituting a specific radio language.

At first sight these consist merely of sound effects, music, spoken words and silence, but to create a coherent radio programme these elements had to be combined by means of editing techniques. But is editing for radio the same as editing for, say television? Are the techniques interchangeable? In fact radio and television editing methods are by no means direct substitutes.

Rather, the 'grammar' of radio is complementary to the ones typical for both the 'small' screen and the 'big' screen, and along with the 'grammar' of print media and photography is caught up in the larger multimedia grammar of the Internet. For this reason, media stock classification is not at all evident. Moreover, in a world characterized by the hybridisation of the mediasphere, earlier distinctions are no longer valid

because of a far-reaching revolution that aims not only at the intermingling of media in terms of their aesthetic aspects, but also by considerable generic cross-fertilisation.

As a result, the answer to the question "what is 'radio' now?" is only at first glance unambiguous. Normally people use the term 'radio' intuitively to describe broadcasting institutions, methods of radio signal delivery, or electronic devices. In practice, the boundaries between vision-oriented and sound-based media have, once and for all, broken down. Visual components, for their part, have in fact long been elements of multifaceted radio transmission.

Demarcations? Radio and Television

Radio ceased to be a purely phonocentric kind of mass communication when pictures were physically added to radio content as long ago as the 1920s. Since this pivotal moment in history scholars have tried, in vain, to draw the exact demarcation line between radio and TV. Brett Spencer comments: "*radio with pictures might sound like television, but it's important to remember that visualising radio is a different medium altogether. Our aim is to give the option of a rich multimedia experience while ensuring that we don't interfere with those listening to the linear transmission*".[4]

His opinion is shared by Mark Friend: "*Early experience tells us that the pictures we get from our radio studios are very different from the material produced in BBC TV studios daily … We call this 'glanceable' content – the kind of stuff that will add something to your listening experience without being essential to it*". This is a view endorsed by Adam Heyhurst when he warns that "*Visualising radio … isn't television. It is a totally different beast*", adding: "*when you are trying to apply*

radio principles to a day-to-day radio station … You have to, I think, throw all your conventions away, just remembering some of the disciplines".[5]

Paradoxically, the difficulty in determining where one medium ends and another begins lies in the fact that at first, television broadcasting was itself treated as little more than visual radio. The traditional model of radio still exists, but thanks to the convergence process, in the digital age radio content is broadcast via different platforms. Radio has opened itself to multi-mediality and is entering a highly experimental era. Consequently, although they are the most popular, AM and FM broadcasts are only two possibilities.

Contemporary digital transmission, known as 'radio 2.0', adopts many forms – for example, terrestrial radio (DAB, DRM, IBCO), terrestrial digital TV (DVB-T), satellite radio and outside radio and TV broadcasting systems, Internet radio (web streaming, podcasting, videocasting), mobile phone systems, wide area networks and various hybrid systems. Most significantly perhaps, thanks to some of these, visual and non-visual content combine. This enriched output has been variously termed 'radio with pictures', 'radio with sight', 'visualised radio' or 'radiovision'.

The first three terms are very broad and inclusive. To cite just a few definitions: "*Visualisation is simply enhancing radio, using images*", "*visualising radio is enhancing an audio-only broadcast with visual material, to garner a richer understanding of the subject matter*", "*visualised audio is part of what we need to offer with any programme to reach the audience that we want to reach … It is the right content on the right platform for the right audience*".[6] The last comment sounds rather old-fashioned. A glance at the

specialist literature reveals that in previous times it applied to various, but narrowly defined, phenomena - for example, pre-recorded radio educational programmes for schools, accompanied by a set of slides or colourful film-strips.

Types of 'Visualised Radio' and Methods of Creation

The fluidity of contemporary definitions of 'visualised radio' covers a wide variety of media texts. Here, I focus on radio dramas and morning shows, which include fictional and factual types of radio programmes. The main classification used for the purpose of this analysis comprises two subcategories: full and partial visualisation. In practice, this terminology refers to two entirely different things within radio.

First, it refers to the length of the radio content, because it is not at all clear whether the whole audio work should undergo the transformation process and change into an audio-visual final product, or only the small, most interesting fragments that potentially attract the greatest attention. Second, it may also indicate the degree of detailed visualisation, determining how much freedom is left for the listeners to fill in 'empty' spaces and thereby 'co-create' programmes through their imagination.

Omnibus, sequential programmes may serve as perfect illustration of the first issue. Since they typically run for a few hours, people who deal with their visualisation are always faced with the same dilemma: what to choose, the whole or its parts? Since there is no single correct answer, both short and long versions of morning shows can be found and watched.

BBC Radio's *The Chris Moyles Show* (up until September 2012) and Polish Radio's Poranek, (now *Poranek On-Line*) which was also broadcast via TV until June 2012 are cases in point. Both of them were fully visualised parts of the radio schedule and every single segment, irrespective of its nature, combined audio and visual aspects. These programmes, however, were exceptions to the rule. Most radio stations give listeners limited access to visual content (e.g. Poland's *Sygnały Dnia*, 2011-2013*)*.

Only one part of *Wstawaj, Szkoda Dnia* (*Felieton Tomasza Olbratowskiego)* or one segment of *Dzień Dobry Bardzo* (*Gość Radia ZET*) is visually re-fashioned on a daily basis. Sometimes visualised stunts or interviews with special guests appear on websites devoted to morning shows as well, since more and more often, 'visualised radio' incorporates non-linear, listen-again services. When radio dramas are taken into consideration it has to be said that, in their standard form, they are not divided into smaller fragments to become visually enhanced works, unless they serve an auto-promotional strategy (for example, *Bóg Zapłacz, Głosy do wynajęcia).*

To explain the second notion of full/partial visualisation, one must resort to the idea of storytelling as discussed by Rachel Sawyer. According to Sawyer, listeners should not be deprived of the right to visualise radio dramas on their own, in their minds. Therefore, the best type of 'radio with pictures' should not be a full graphic representation of key images, objects and emotions but a wave-form visual presentation that gives listeners an alternative visual experience by means of the imitation of lip-syncing or sub-titling.

With this in mind, it should again be remembered that radio visualisation is nothing new. The first methods that were used to produce 'radio with sight' are almost as old as radio itself. Some historic techniques no longer exist (Rayfoto, the Fultograph) while others have recently been improved thanks to advances in technology. Among contemporary methods of radio visualisation, the visualised broadcast from the radio studio takes listeners behind the scenes to give them an insight into the work of presenters and to allow for virtually face-to-face interaction.

Observers occupy the position of a 'fly on the wall' with cameras showing the situation as it is - heightening intimacy at a distance, as well as creating the illusion of a personal relationship with the host and invited guests. From Poland, further examples include Polish Radio's morning show *Poranek-OnLine* and Radio Kraków's radio drama *Wesele*. The next innovation will probably involve placing the creative process into the hands of presenters so that they can control the two-way interaction, add extra content to the screen and operate the cameras. This kind of system operates on Radio 3FM in the Netherlands, where it is used solely for the purpose of visualising non-fiction programmes.

Still photography is also used to enhance both non-fictional and fiction-oriented content. Sometimes this method takes the form of so called 'cam photos' that are taken by the presenters as an alternative to press shots (as for example with the UK's Capital FM). In the case of Polish audio dramas, photos show listeners what actors look like (e.g. *Głosy do wynajęcia, Motel w półdrogi*) or depict the characters in a play and the place of action (*Flickerman*). 'Photo films', for their part, combine techniques that are used by photographers and film-makers alike. They can be created in

multiple modalities – as a series of static strips that resembles a comic (*Pushing)* or as moving images (*Dublin. One Way).*

In the case of films themselves, the audio content of a radio drama serves only as a soundtrack. In watching the final product, it is often hard to distinguish whether the visual component was an after-effect or, the other way round, a prelude to an audio output. Films created in this way may take many forms - for example *Yalda* is presented in a feature film-style, while BBC Radio 4's series *Dickens in London* is a combination of animated film and puppetry**.** Unfortunately, the production method perspective is not of much help in clarifying the concept of 'visualised radio'.

From a technological point of view, visualisation falls into many categories. These include *"the passive 'glanceability' type of content that enhances what you are hearing on digital TV or on a mobile phone"* and also *"the active build content that lies online*", with a huge range of possibilities between these two.[7] In this context 'visualised radio' "*could be something like a photo or something more complex like a mobile app. It could be something that adds visual depth to something that's going on live or it could be something made for this purpose and never broadcast … or it could be something like that, broadcast on the radio but that sounds so visual you have to go and watch it online*".[8]

Conclusion: Research Findings

Given the long history of attempts at experimentation, it may seem that 'visualised radio' is the manifestation of a well-established trend that allows the 'old' medium to adjust to the requirements of a 'newer' audiovisual culture: "*the*

evidence suggests that radio is what history says it is: it has no essence since it has already taken, and continues to take, different forms. Radio is what it is in a given context of use and meaningfulness"[9]. However, even if critical descriptors such as 'partial', 'incomplete', 'blind' or 'handicapped' appear in descriptions of contemporary radio less often than before, and if definitions of 'radio' in modern dictionaries often include the concept of the 'audio-visual', radio is still less visual than it could be.

No in-depth research exists concerning this issue. Extrapolating from the sketchy information provided by a few reports, it is obvious that the 'sight-less' nature of radio is still tantamount to a strength rather than an impairment. For example, according to the European Broadcastng Union, in 2011 less than 20% of public broadcasters used still images in slide-shows to add variety to radio content.[10] My own doctoral research on the popular radio morning programmes collected data quantitatively through open and closed questions. My test sample between October 2012 and mid-March 2013 consisted of 613 respondents living in London and Warsaw.

The findings show that radio with a visual dimension turned out to be not as popular as traditional radio. Just 2.6 % of people from the UK and 7.2% from Poland who listened to the radio in the mornings indicated that they chose radio broadcasts in visualised form. Five inhabitants of the Polish capital city watched videocasts and fifteen viewed live streaming transmissions via the Internet (eight people) and TV (seven people). Eight Londoners said they switched on a computer to see what presenters were doing in real time and one person watched non-linear videocasts. In contrast to

Polish listeners, none of them watched visualised radio shows via TV in real time.

Representatives of both groups who listened to morning shows were convinced that 'radiovision' was more attractive than radio without pictures (6.1 % of British respondents and 18.1% of Polish respondents). Their motivations were as follows: "*It is nice to see someone rather than just listening*"; "*We live in a visual age, so not having this detracts from the radio experience*"; "*Sometimes it is nice to actually see what is happening, at others its good for the radio to be traditional as it is easier when on the move*"; "*Pictures – I can see characters*"; "*You can understand someone better if you see him*"; "*Because more than one sense is activated*"; "*Broadcast is more realistic*", and so on.

To sum up, reports of the 'death' of radio as we know it are greatly exaggerated. Given that 'visualised radio' is disappearing more and more from television in favor of purely Internet broadcasting *(Poranek Online)*, it seems as though in the foreseeable future 'radio with pictures' will remain an alternative for a niche audience rather than a mass experience. It is scarcely possible, in other words, that traditional radio will ever be totally superceded by the visualised transmission model.

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2. Narrative

6 / Narrative and Cinematic Identification

William Bligh

The Broad Domain of Identification

Understanding how works of art function, and in particular why we appreciate films, has been the focus of much academic research. One way to approach how we enter into a fictional scenario and end up being emotionally affected is through the idea of the audience identifying with characters in a story. When we acknowledge, however, the vastly different kinds of stories and the characters we feel for, from Superman to Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* and Charlie Chaplin in *City Lights*, it becomes apparent that identification works across a very broad domain of character types and stories.

One further problem with the term 'identification', moreover, is precisely that it has been associated with many different

sorts of processes. In film theory, for example, reflection on identification often involves an appeal to psychoanalysis. Zillman notes that "*the idea that our emotional engagement with fiction, and in particular film fiction, is somehow rooted in something like 'identification' with and empathetic response to the characters of fiction*" is very widely held.[1]

This essay will approach the identification with a fictional character as part of a process that leads to an audience *emotionally engaging* with a story. To fully develop a theory of how we identify with fictional characters it has been necessary incorporate a number of different fields, for example the cognitive theory of emotions and dramatic theory, to develop a comprehensive framework that can be applied to an understanding of a variety of story types.

Rational Emotions

Our emotional response to a film can be generated by two different kinds of phenomena. First, the audience can respond to the cinematic form, the image, the music and the aesthetic qualities created by the film-makers. This kind of emotional response, which Carl Plantinga calls 'artefact emotions', comes from a direct relationship with the medium itself. Examples include the beauty and awe of a dramatic landscape or the image of young child crying. The second kind of emotion is developed through the story's events and characters. A narrative builds with a character's actions, creating a journey for an audience and generating responses such as suspense, fear, anger and curiosity.[2]

Whereas 'artefact emotion' originates with the medium, the second type, 'fictional emotion', requires that the audience has developed an empathy or sympathy with the characters

(i.e. an identification) in order to feel for their situation. Even though the first kind can also involve a character, this study is interested in examining emotions generated through the construction of character actions which are played out on screen. An argument will be presented here using only fictional emotions as the source of identification for an audience.

One major approach to understanding how emotions relate to an audience, the 'cognitive theory of emotion', emphasises that emotions require some kind of belief about a story.[3] This approach dictates that the audience's judgement is an essential catalyst in the formation of emotions. The main alternative to emotional cognitivism is a physiological approach (or James-Lange theory) which treats the cognitive aspect as secondary and emphasises the emotional experience as more to do with feeling than judgement. This study assumes a cognitive approach to fictional emotions and will be referring to the specific judgements made by an audience as part of a mechanism which they consciously and actively apply during the process of film reception.

The Intentional Character

The understanding and evaluation of the characters within a drama plays a central role in the communication and appreciation of a story. Livingston, for example, suggests that characterisation in a story is conceived of through the character's 'intentional action'. Grounded in aesthetics, he refers to a character as an 'agent' which "*can be defined broadly as referring to any entity capable of performing an intentional action*". This intentional action can be identified as "*behaviour produced and oriented by the agent's intention, that is, by a mental attitude that represents the state of*

affairs the behaviour is meant to realise". Livingston identifies two kinds of agency that contribute to characterisation. The "*doings of the actual agents*" is a type of agency which is related to the cause-and effect which drives the plot forward, while "*depicted or represented agency*" relates to a descriptive or expository representation in a film.

This essay will seek to focus our attention on the first kind of agency, where the character is defined through its intentional actions. The second kind, 'depicted agency', where the character is being set up, will be discussed later to highlight the role of this kind of representation in the process of identification which takes place during film viewing. The relevance of a character's intentional action to the audience's identification becomes apparent when viewing the fictional story from a dramatic perspective.

There is an abundance of practical material (i.e. procedural knowledge) which has examined in detail the specific case of the role the character's action plays within a dramatic film or play. Central to these ideas is the notion that "*drama is conflict*"[4]. The studies which propose and expound these kinds of processes tend to be aimed at the screenwriter or playwright. This stress on the character's actions goes all the way back to Aristotle's account of the three desirable unities of drama, one of which is the unity of action.

Although Aristotle mentions the importance of character in his *Poetics*, however, his primary focus is on the actions and the formation of the story's plot. A detailed understanding of a character's relation to conflict was developed by the celebrated Russian theatre director Constantin Stanislavski. His work was specifically aimed at understanding theatre through the actor's process. Stanislavsky drew inspiration

from Aristotle in discerning the super-task (or super-objective) where the character has a clear goal throughout the entirety of a play. Also similarly to Aristotle, he recognised the independent actions which he called tasks (or objectives).

What Stanislavski adds to Aristotle's argument is the notion of counteraction, which helps to develop conflict within a drama: *"An action meets with a reaction which in turn intensifies the first. In every play, besides the main action we find its opposite counteraction. This is fortunate because its inevitable result is more action. We need the clash of purposes, and all the problems to solve that grow out of them*." Stanislavski's approach highlights obstacles (or the "*opposite counteraction*"), which cause conflict for the character in achieving his or her objective. Importantly Stanislavski saw these series of character actions as leading to a situation where "*complex and difficult emotions are also broken down into a series of actions*".[5]

Typically, then, a character has an objective and meets with some kind of obstacle to achieving this action. This conflict leads to a crucial dramatic question: will the character get what he or she wants? Dramatists naturally know that this kind of situation involving conflict is fundamental to drama: theatre director Frank Hauser advises us to "*identify the story's compelling question*" and playwright David Mamet believes that "*it is the objective of the protagonist that keeps us in our seats*"[6]. Conflict for the character poses a dramatic question for the audience which acts as a kind of engagement. This type of conceptual engagement (i.e. a dramatic question) is, I suggest, the precursor to emotional engagement, and the specific scenario where identification takes place.

Where the audience's internal representation and rational emotion are concerned, we make a *judgement* using our imagination about the character's objective within a dramatic representation (i.e. the audience imagines the fictional character's desires, wants, etc.). This act of interpreting the character's actions as an objective is a prerequisite for identification. Identification occurs when an obstacle creates conflict which challenges (or even threatens) the character's want and poses a *dramatic* question for an audience. Therefore the *dramatic question* engages the audience with the character, resulting in identification.

Identification and Conflict

The actual identification with the character occurs during conflict when the character's intentional action, which has been described above as a 'want', is in jeopardy. However we have missed an important step in understanding who the character is that we identify with, given that various characters in the story are often engaged in some kind of battle. For example, in the case of *Superman* (Donner, USA, 1978), why do we side with Superman rather than with his antagonist, Lex Luthor? In *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Anderson, USA, 2009), the main character, a fox, happily eats lots of innocent chickens. But we don't question for a moment the validity of his carnivorous nature, which wouldn't be the case if the story was about a flock of chickens instead of foxes.

Of the two opposing characters, how do we choose who we identify with? To answer this question I turn to Rick Altman's theory of narrative, where he offers a perspective on storytelling using the concept 'following'.[7] Altman proposes that rather than focusing on a protagonist (who is actively moving the action forward in the drama) as being the central

proponent around which a narrative is structured, the emphasis is instead on who we follow (i.e. which character) as the story is told.

Even though Altman uses the idea of 'following' to develop ideas about narrative structure, I'd like to propose that the characters which are followed are the characters with whom the audience will identify during a conflict. Simply spending time with a character is the essential ingredient of the set-up phase, which is a requirement for the audience to empathise or sympathise, and occurs before the character finds an opposition to what he or she is trying to achieve. A classic example of a set-up followed by a conflict in order to get the audience to identify with a particular character is found in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (USA, 1960).

About a third of the way through the film, after the protagonist, Marion Crane, gets murdered in the infamous shower scene, Hitchcock spends an extended period showing the hotel's proprietor, Norman Bates, cleaning up the murder scene. I propose that what Hitchcock is doing is implanting Anthony Perkins' character as a surrogate protagonist. In this scene a dramatic question is posed: will he be able to hide all of the evidence of the murder? Hitchcock spends more time than necessary to communicate what the character is doing because he wants the audience to start to identify with this character – first by spending time with him, and then engaging with the character by asking a question raised through the situation.

It is important to note that the time spent with any character does not in itself guarantee identification; we need to engage with the character through conflict. In order for this identification to occur, precedence is given to characters who

have been *followed,* without conflict involving newly introduced characters. The importance of identification gets carried through the film as the director builds on the initial set-up, and the audience identifies with the character numerous times, creating a synergy between the audience and the protagonist.

Livingston, we may recall, proposed two kinds of agency that contribute to characterisation where the second kind, depicted or represented agency, represents the introduction of a character. This is expository information about character, commonly found at the beginning of a story though it can occur anywhere, can be viewed as a type of 'following', as the character will inevitably be shown for an appropriate duration. At this point it's also worth mentioning that other cinematic elements can be used to denote the protagonist/antagonist relationship. For example, sinister music can signal to the audience a type of character. Even though this method can play an important role in setting up identification, the 'following' of a character is always necessary for telling the story.

So far this essay has outlined the mechanics of identification based on character conflict. The final step for us in developing a concept of identification resulting in emotional engagement is to establish the kinds of emotions generated in a response to the handling of the story's conflict. There are perhaps two types of emotion which can be derived from a fictional scenario. The first are 'immediate' emotions, which occur during the conflict as a result of asking a dramatic question. For example, at the beginning of *Jaws* (Spielberg, USA, 1975), we inevitably become fearful as soon as we realise that we have taken the point-of-view of the shark.

The second type is a 'responsive' emotion, which we feel after the conflict has been resolved one way or the other. In the example from *Jaws*, when the shark attacks and kills the girl, we feel sadness and loss at her death. This response comes as a result of the resolution of the conflict that has the potential to be either positive or negative. A positive resolution would involve what is here impossible – the girl's escape from the shark.

Other Theories

Does identification then need to take place in order for an emotional response to be engendered by a fictional story? Critics such as Coplan, Grodal, Neill, Smith, and Gaut are amongst those who maintain that identification is indeed a necessary requirement for emotional engagement to occur.[8] Such views claim that identification is founded on the idea that the audience aligns itself with the character's point-of-view. For this theory of identification, all you need is to spend time with the character as a set-up and then present obstacles to what the character is trying to achieve.

Other theorists, such as Carroll and Plantinga, claim that audience identification in fact rarely occurs, if at all. They argue that the predominant experience for the audience is one of sympathy or antipathy. Carroll claims, for example, that: "*We respond to fictional situations as outside observers, assimilating our conception of the character's mental state into our overall response as a sort of onlooker with respect to the situation in which the character finds himself.*"[9]

Gaut makes the important point that identification should not be taken literally, but as a matching of mental states. Rather than expecting that the character's thoughts and the

viewer's are identical, one should understand that they can be more accurately be said to overlap with some of the audience's thoughts and feelings.[10]

A further issue arising from this approach is to do with explanations for the preference of one side over another in conflict situations. If identification is not available, then what makes us want to take sides with the perceived protagonist? This essay argues the audience *does* identify with any character that engages in conflict of one sort or other. Identification requires the audience to take sides with a particular character through conflict, and thus spectators emotionally engage with the story. It is surprising that in examining identification that the issue of emotion is not more prominent in the research. In developing an argument for identification, it is vital that emotion is at the forefront of the discussion as this represents evidence that one has actually identified with a character.

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7 / The Essential Narrativity of Cinema? *Morvern Callar*

Simon Hewitt

Essential and Extrinsic Narrativity

Narrative, we know, is a process involving the temporal, spatial, and causal ordering of events. Broadly speaking there are two categories of narratives, the unified and the episodic. Unified narratives have a beginning, middle, and end, whereas episodic narratives are comprised of small unified narratives linked by a character, setting, or theme etc. Following Todorov we can split these narratives into three stages: the world of the diegesis is in a state of equilibrium; a complicating action then forces it into dis-equilibrium; and finally some ameliorating force then establishes a new state of equilibrium. [1] The narrative is driven through these successive stages by a series of questions and answers in an erotetic logic which takes hold by forcing the audience to ask: what happens next?

According to Noël Carroll there are two types of questions in an erotetic logic, macro-questions and micro-questions.[2] The macro-question is the all-encompassing question presiding over the film, for example: will India Jones find the Ark of the Covenant and stop the Nazis? Micro-questions are smaller and more contained sets of questions, such as: will Indy get hit by the boulder? And will Marion give him the headpiece? Barthes calls these "*hinge functions*", that is to say the "*smallest units of a story that create the event linkage without which we would have another story*."[3]

Answers to micro-questions give the film direction, and taken in succession they provide the answer to the film's macro-question; Indy does not get hit by the boulder, which allows him to meet Marion, who gives him the headpiece, which in turn allows him find the Ark and stop the Nazis. Closure or 'unity' has been secured because the presiding macro-question has been answered. Ultimately, a film has to achieve unity in order to function as a narrative. A challenge to this model of unity, however, comes from film-makers who deliberately efface the temporal, spatial, and causal links within their films – that is, they pose micro-questions without offering explicit micro-answers, relying instead on the interpretative skills of their audience.

This is problematic, because as Gaudreault and Jost argue, our perception of filmic enunciation "*varies according to both the audio-visual context and the sensibility of the spectator*." So our construction of the narrative is dependent on our own cine-literacy, which is "*differentiated by knowledge, age, social class, and historical period*" - and, we should add, gender.[4] Consequently, the erotetic logic we use to understand narrative will break down if audience members

do not possess the requisite cine-literacy to interpret the micro-answers on offer. The stylistic trait of withholding overt micro-answers means that for non-cineliterate viewers, filmic enunciation is being deliberately effaced.

When these hinge functions do not exist, the story has no direction, and without direction it becomes impossible to answer the presiding macroquestion and achieve unity. If films are only defined as narrative based on the sensibility of their spectators then we must ask whether cinema is 'essentially' narrative (i.e. narrative is something inherent to the medium) or 'extrinsically' narrative (i.e. based on spectatorial construction)? To better answer this question it will be useful to examine a film in which the temporal, spatial, and causal links appear to have been effaced.

Morvern Callar

Lynne Ramsay's *Morvern Callar* (UK, 2002) is ostensibly the story of a young Scottish girl who reacts to the shock of her boyfriend's suicide by embarking on a fanciful journey with her best friend Lanna. The film begins with a close-up of a woman lying down stroking a man's head. The filmic convention of opening with a shot of the main protagonist, combined with the film's title, suggests that this is Morvern Callar. Judging by her actions (kissing his neck and stroking his hair) her position (lying down next to him) and the setting (a dark and quiet place), we can further assume she is lying in bed next to her boyfriend, husband, or lover. At this point we have seemingly been given enough information to answer the first micro-questions; who, where, and what are we watching? Answer – a young woman named Morvern Callar is lying in bed with her partner and stroking his hair.

However, we then see a shot of her touching what appear to be cuts on his wrist, but the use of an extreme close-up obscures our fuller understanding. Following the title screen, we then see a wide-shot of the man and woman lying on the living room floor with a pool of blood visible in the background. The cuts on his wrist and the pool of blood now suggest that the man is dead. Even though the clues been slightly obscured or delayed, one could argue that the scene is in fact relatively clear and comprehensible: its micro-answers can be created in retrospect, and the filmic enunciation is not too difficult to perceive. However, what happens to the narrative when this enunciation is not obscured or delayed, but deliberately effaced?

After reading the suicide note on his computer we see two close-ups of Morvern picking up coins from a desk followed by her picking up a ringing phone. These successive shots do not convey to the viewer that Morvern has now gone outside. The more cine-literate viewer may be able to infer this from the sound of seagulls in the second shot, but the less cine-literate viewer will have to wait for a third shot to reveal that she is now in a train station. She is about to make a call on a public telephone when it rings; we only hear Morvern's side of the conversation. It seems from her replies that the person on the phone is looking for a lost girl. Morvern says she is not at the train station, and tells them not to worry.

No explanation is ever given of who Morvern originally intended to call before the phone rang, or as to who the missing girl is and what happened to her. These are micro-questions posed by the film that have no overt micro-answers. The cine-literate viewer may interpret the person looking for the lost girl at the train station as a metaphor of

Morvern herself, in a sense she has become 'lost' after a tragedy she does not understand. It is interesting to note that we then see her wearing a necklace bearing the name 'Jackie' after leaving the train station; cine-literate viewers might surmise that Jackie is the missing girl and that Morvern has in some way appropriated this 'lost girl' *persona*.

This stylistic tactic of withholding overt micro-answers and relying on inference means that for non-cineliterate viewers filmic enunciation is being deliberately effaced. Without these hinge functions the story has no direction and without direction it becomes impossible to answer the presiding macro-question and achieve unity. For the non-cineliterate viewer *Morvern Callar* is therefore a non-narrative film.

According to this logic it is merely an example of what Peter Verstraten, adapting Kristin Thompson, calls "*stylistic excess*". Verstraten suggests that when a film-maker values form over content, or style over narrative, the narrative is distorted and this distortion can be called 'excess'. He says that "*excess begins where motivation is lacking, or, in other words, where a stylistic feature does not propel the story or serve a narrative function.*" *Morvern Callar* is replete with 'excesses' that mean for non-cineliterate viewers the film is "*nothing more than a formal exercise*."

Verstraten argues further that "*excess falls outside the scope of narrative analysis*"[5] but I would ask, 'excess' as defined by whom? The same excesses that prove to non-cineliterate viewers that *Morvern Callar* is non-narrative are the same stylistic traits that allow cine-literate viewers to answer the film's presiding macro-question, thereby achieving unity. Much like the cat in Schrödinger's famous paradox, *Morvern Callar* exists in a superposition between two states, narrative

and non-narrative, only to be fully defined once it is viewed.

If *Morvern Callar* and films like it can only be defined as narrative or non-narrative based on the sensibility of their spectators, then narrative is not inherent to the medium of cinema, it is a spectatorial construction. Cinema is therefore not essentially narrative, it is *extrinsically* narrative. This has significant implications when we attempt to historicise early cinema. To avoid further complication I will use the term 'cinema' in the knowledge that the word itself becomes problematic when discussing this era, as the concept of 'cinema' itself was yet to be defined.

Problems with the Past

After the pioneering Brighton FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives) conference in 1978 there began a widespread re-evaluation of early cinema history. Teleological assumptions that early cinema was merely a preliminary model for later film styles and practices were abandoned. Where scholars had once held cinema's narrative function to be the principal constituent of cinema as art, more recent work has suggested the technological means of representation constituted the initial fascination of cinema. This argument maintains that the principal function of cinema prior to around 1908 was to display the mechanical marvel of projected moving images, not to tell stories. The focus was on display or 'attractions', not on narrative.

Gaudreault writes that "*for several years, the first multi-shot films had been presenting the viewer with a significant narrative challenge: the large gaps that the narrative left between tableaux made understanding the film difficult in*

the absence of adequate links … Viewers had to fill in these gaps if they were to grasp the gist of what they were seeing."[6] These 'gaps' are the answers to the film's micro-questions, that is to say, the hinge functions that give the narrative direction.

If individual audience members could not grasp the gist of what they were seeing, if they did not possess the requisite cine-literacy, then each tableau would act as separate vignette rather than as part of the temporal, spatial, and causal ordering of events we call narrative. They would not perceive a narrative, merely a series of displays, the principal function of which would be to demonstrate the technological means of representation. However, if audience members did possess the requisite cine-literacy to fill in these gaps then they would perceive the film as narrative and consequently the film's principal function would be debatable.

Historicising this period is problematic because a film's principal function (attraction or narration) varies according to both the audio-visual context and the sensibility of spectators, that is, their cine-literacy. As a consequence, in order to understand early responses to cinema more fully, we require access to a wealth of information regarding the knowledge, age, social class and historical period apposite to early cinema spectators. Sadly, despite having access to contemporary trade journals, records of actual audience responses to films are almost non-existent and the clues we do have often come from newspaper accounts which are typically replete with clichés and exaggerations.

It is not difficult to see the reasons for such scarcity. At the time, early cinema was caught in a crisis of identity in which various commercial interests fought to define the new

medium by means of its technological capabilities in order to patent and profit from it, while the first versions of film histories attempted to single out the breakthrough films, to proclaim masters and masterpieces. But these burgeoning attempts to control a marketplace and legitimise a new art form overlooked the importance of the spectator.

Historians who try to define the first principally narrative film often make a similar mistake. The concept of narrative they use to analyse these films is only 'narrative' as they themselves perceive it, with all their knowledge, age, social class, and historical period informing that perception. They analogise the cine-literacy of early cinema spectators to their own while absenting themselves from the discourse. In doing so they create what Barthes calls a "*referential illusion*" in which they claim to let history "*speak for itself.*"[7]

The extrinsic narrativity of cinema demonstrated in films like *Morvern Callar* shows that in order to define the first principally narrative rather than attractional film we need to understand the cine-literacy of early cinema audiences. Ira Bhaskar agrees when she says that a truly historical approach "*demands a view of narrative as culturally and historically rooted, as embodying within it the life-world of its times.*"[8] The problem is that to combat the referential illusion of having historians analogise their own cine-literacy to that of early cinema audiences we require access to a wealth of information we simply do not possess.

Recording and Theorising the Present

Writing in *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich wishes that someone at the end of the 19th Century had fully documented the birth of cinema, including how those first

spectators perceived this new medium. He does not want us to make the same mistake twice, arguing that because the new meta-medium of the digital computer is emerging we should attempt to produce "*a record and theory of the present.*"[9] This will mean that in a hundred years' time people will not have debate the particular merits of the first webisode, podcast or image macro.

A similar effort is needed in the field of Film Studies because just as during the period of its birth, cinema is currently going through a crisis of identity. Various commercial interests are fighting to re-define it in the wake of technological innovations like Video-on-Demand, IMAX, and the current iteration of 3D. It is the job of film historians and film theorists to document and explain these changes and perhaps most importantly, because of its extrinsic narrativity, to attempt to document the cine-literacy of its audiences.

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8 / Space, Spectacle, and the Tragic in the Hindi *Devdas* Films

Smita Dalvi

The *Devdas* Metaphor

This essay attempts to examine the role of film architecture as a functional and stylistic device, specifically in adaptations and re-makes. When an iconic film is remade, directors tend to establish an alternative identity by locating the narrative in a different time and place, or by employing a distinguishing visual style. In either case, film architecture or settings perform a vital role. This essay discusses two Hindi films, *Devdas* (2002) by Sanjay Leela Bhansali and *Dev D.* (2009) by Anurag Kashyap. Both are adaptations as well as re-makes, and both employ spectacle to re-tell a tragic tale.

'Devdas' is a Bengali *novella* by Saratchandra Chattopadhyay, first published in 1917. It has been the subject of more than a

dozen films in India, including four in Hindi. This is a story of unfulfilled love between Devdas, the eponymous hero; Paro, his childhood mate in the village; and the city courtesan Chandramukhi. Devdas' narcissistic self-absorption makes him unable to return the love of either woman, leading to his eventual self-destruction through alcoholism. The story has acquired mythic status in Indian popular culture through its multiple re-tellings, especially in film, and its principal characters have become archetypes of the tragic.

While this essay discusses Bhansali's and Kashyap's adaptations, I also consider them as re-makes of the now canonical *Devdas* by Bimal Roy (1955). Roy's film played a key role in popularising the myth of the narcissistic, self-destructive hero, which Sreejata Guha refers to as the '*Devdas* metaphor'. She describes it as "*a time-honoured, enduring, tragic symbol of unfulfilled love that has captivated the film-going audiences for years*".[1] Several scholars have commented on this recurrent motif as observed in numerous film adaptations. Their concerns include issues of story-telling, colonial male subjectivity and masculinity, and *Rasa*-based analysis of song sequences.[2]

The Semiotics of Space in the *Devdas* Re-makes

One of the chief attractions of popular Hindi cinema is its ability to create visual spectacle, to dazzle with extravagant displays. Film-makers exploit stylistic features to create a distinct identity, this being particularly effective in re-makes of iconic films. According to Wilkinson-Weber, for example, costume plays a pivotal role in the re-imagining and re-staging of the re-makes.[3] Similarly, architectural imagery created through settings can also be exploited. I will show how the two re-makes under consideration deploy a

spectacle of space to visually distinguish themselves from the originals.

Space as a cinematic construct is created either through sets, locations, and their combination. What we might call the architecture of film creates fictional spaces for characters that fulfil a variety of visual and functional roles in the narrative. The primary function of settings is to establish time and place, to introduce ideas and themes, and to create specific moods. The visual and spatial characteristics of a setting also transmit cultural and emotional messages to the audience.[4]

Cinematic spaces form a network of signs as a sub-system, co-existing with other sub-systems such as costumes, dialogue, choreography and gesture in the larger system of film narration, each with its own narrative and signifying role. Set design can complement the narrative, contradict it, or overpower it. It can form a system of codes within the narrative or produce tropes or conventions through repeated use. Here, one of the ways in which the viewer's consumption of the tragic is mediated in the two films is through the use of spectacular spaces.

Narrative Structure and Spatial Themes

Roy's *Devdas* (1955) is largely a faithful adaptation of Chattopadhyay's 1917 *novella*. The story is situated in colonial Bengal. Its narrative relies on the paradigm of narcissism, and on the binaries of upper class/ lower class and the beloved/ prostitute to unfold the tragedy of doomed love. Devdas is the younger son of upper-class landed gentry (Thakur) in rural Bengal. Paro, his neighbor and playmate, belongs to a lower caste and is of an inferior class. Devdas is

sent away as an adolescent to Calcutta for schooling. Upon his return as a young man, childhood attraction is re-kindled between the two. In the face of opposition from his family - who cite the issue of caste/class differences - he vacillates and rejects Paro's marriage overtures.

Stung by this rejection, Paro's family marries her off to a much older and even richer landlord. A dejected Devdas leaves his ancestral home to return to Calcutta where he starts visiting Chandramukhi's brothel, and takes to drinking heavily. His memory of Paro makes him loathe the courtesan who, despite this, falls in love with him and decides to give up her profession. Devdas is consumed by his inability to accept love. In the final stages of his self-destructive alcoholism he undertakes a seemingly aimless cross-country journey, finally ending up outside Paro's marital home to breathe his last. Paro dashes out to see him but her family restrains her, preventing a reunion.

The adaptations by Bhansali and Kashyap are created and viewed in the context of the public memory of Roy's film. Bhansali's *Devdas* follows the same narrative structure, whereas Kashyap re-locates *Dev D.* to contemporary times, replacing rural Bengal with rural Punjab, and Calcutta with Delhi. The characters in *Dev D.* are more fleshed out, and exist within the youth culture of the early 21st Century. Chanda (Chandramukhi) even gets a back-story. Kashyap portrays the tragedy purely in terms of the narcissistic and self-absorbed Dev (there is no familial opposition or class hatred in this film) as addiction to alcohol and drugs leads him into the ever-deeper morass of his own hollowness.

His drunkenness leads to tragedy when, driving under the influence, he runs over and kills several people. While out on a bail, he goes on an aimless journey to the hills of Northern India. He returns to Delhi to stand outside Paro's home and die. However, in a brief and swift climax, Dev is awakened from his stupor when he himself narrowly escapes being killed by another drunk driver. He comes to his senses, returns to Chanda, and sets out with her on a path of rehabilitation.

Spectacles of Grandiosity: *Devdas* (2002)

In the *Devdas* narrative, the principal spatial themes are to do with Dev's and Paro's family houses in the village, Chandramukhi's brothel in the city, Dev's rental in the city, and Paro's marital home. The cinematic *mise-en-scène* forms a network of spatial signs with various denotations and connotations in the narrative. Bhansali's *Devdas* (2002), for its part, attempts to dazzle viewers through a spectacle of the grandiose, deploying extravagant sets in a *kitsch* mish-mash of architectural styles.

The spaces inhabited by his characters couldn't be visually more different than those of Roy's film, which was influenced by the neo-realist idiom. In this re-make, Devdas' house is a large neo-classical mansion with grand staircases and vast interior spaces adorned with classical statuary and period furniture. Devdas' own room is voluminous and filled with an array of *bric-à-brac*. Ironically, Paro's family, which in the novel is of an inferior class, lives in an equally large colonial-style bungalow with baroque exteriors and an abundance of stained glass and decorative flooring inside.

After being married off to an extremely rich landlord, Paro moves to a *haveli* (a large mansion) with multiple domes and arches like a Mughal palace, wide corridors, painted murals (inspired by Ajanta) and classical statuary. While these palatial homes with opulent interior spaces denote the wealth and status of upper caste landed gentry, they also carry connotations of *ajayabghars* ('museums of curiosity'). When Devdas leaves the village and returns to his student rental in Calcutta, we see him in lavishly decorated quarters which bear the connotations of the idle rich.

He begins to frequent Chandramukhi's brothel, which is set in a dream-like precinct inspired by the *ghats* of Benares, the Hindu holy city on the banks of the Ganges. The brothel has terraced pavilions and steps along a lake, lit by a million lamps. Her own pavilion stands out with a domed roof and a vast dance hall of carved pillars and brackets, inspired by Dilwara temple architecture. These architectural styles are traditionally denotative of sacred spaces, or market-places in holy cities. Here, however, they also resemble glittering malls of decadence.

Bhansali's camera-work fully responds to the architectural setting and often employs deliberately skewed viewpoints in order to exaggerate its scale. It also sets up interior perspectives of unending corridors or monumental interiors like Byzantine cathedrals. This results in shots where two characters in a room converse across vast distances, while the overwhelming scale dwarfs their presence. Interestingly, the camera frames scenes as tableaux or tracks movements as if to showcase the extravagance, but without a focus on any one object. The characters do not seem to share an intimate relation with any of them.

Rural Contemporaneity: *Dev D.* (2009)

In Kashyap's *Dev D.* (2009), the adapted narrative takes place in contemporary times. Dev and Paro's family houses are situated in a village in the Punjab and the camera evocatively captures its rural agricultural landscape. Paro's house is a traditional courtyard house while Dev's family, made up of members of the landed gentry, lives in a house constructed in modern materials. Both houses are characterized by chaotic, lived-in interior spaces populated with the paraphernalia of modern domestic life.

These spaces connote prosperity and progress in rural Punjab. Paro's marital home is shown briefly, but has little consequence in the narrative. What stands out in the rural home is Dev's personal room, which is draped in sheer, red curtains that swathe the smallish space in ethereal light, as when he passes out after a bout of drinking. When Dev leaves the village to flee to Delhi, he rents a place in an old building in the inner city. This is a grubby little hole - sparse, window-less, dingy and littered with cigarette butts and empty bottles. The walls are covered in graffiti.

It is here that he slides into the pit of addiction. The grunginess reflects the interior, psychological space of the self-absorbed 'hero'. Chanda, who is half-French, lives in a brothel in the inner city. She works by night as an exotic prostitute and attends college by day. Although the brothel is equally grubby and cramped, Chanda occupies an airy apartment with a study corner. At night, it is transformed by psychedelic colours and lighting that matches a customer's fantasy.

Signs and Meaning

Mythological or historical Hindi films often employ grandiose sets of palaces to convey the power and wealth of kings. Bhansali's adaptation fetishises lavishly mounted sets, irrespective of their function within the narrative. He uses a monumental scale for domestic spaces. Every home is large and lavish, subverting the binary of upper/lower classes. The brothel is made up of signifiers that mix the domestic with the sacred to convey the carnal.

The distinctions between household spaces and the brothels are broken down, especially in the many dance sequences in the film. The spectacle created in either space is the same, while the camera sweeps over lavish flooring and soaring drapes. The transformation of Chandramukhi from a courtesan to a state of quasi-marital domesticity - so effectively conveyed in Roy's version with the transformation of interior space - is missing in Bhansali's adaptation: the spaces never let go of their glamour.

The settings do not convey a specific time and place, instead connoting a vague sense of the past through a lack of the objects associated with contemporary life. They signify neither rural Bengal nor urban Calcutta. All the spaces are worlds unto themselves and are unconnected to the world at large. On the contrary, the use of architectural styles and the treatment of interior space (and costumes) reflect a contemporary, globalised, neo-traditional family spectacle of consumption.

These globally-aware, wealthy home-owners project their status by appropriating aspirational (classical/colonial)

architecture filled with vast collections of *objets d'art.* A false sense of artistic connoisseurship ends up in the decoration of homes as museums of curiosities which lack aesthetic appreciation. Ranjini Mazumdar describes this post-liberalisation trend as "*scenic interiorisation through design with neo-traditionalist nostalgia for family values.*"[5] Bhansali is clearly both influenced by, and tries to outdo, popular contemporary television soap operas. In that sense, cinematic spaces in *Devdas* make it an adaptation reflective of its own time, although the story indicates colonial Bengal.

In *Dev D.,* Kashyap's rendering of space is varied. We see realistic and intimate depictions of rural Punjab and the inner city of Delhi. Domestic spaces are both lived in and contextual. In this version, the prostitute leads a double life, something conveyed in the differing moods of the same space during day and night. The personal spaces of the protagonist are especially remarkable. Architectural and spatial *mise-en-scène* is successfully employed to reflect his morbidity and self-absorption. His room in his ancestral village farm house, his rental in old Delhi, and his shared space with Chanda are all heavily stylised and imply the representation of an inner psychological space.

Architecture as 'Star' or 'Character'?

Both the *Devdas* re-makes of the last decade represent huge stylistic departures from Roy's 1955 version. Bhansali uses grandiose, over-the-top settings while paying lip-service to the period narrative. Kashyap, on the other hand, employs a style that mixes grunge with psychedelia to portray a specific youth culture located in the underbelly of Punjab and Delhi. Both film-makers choose cinematic styles that are self-conscious, memorable and impressive and which set them

apart from the original. Both create spectacles using cinematic space, albeit very differently, to convey a heightened sense of the tragic.

In *Devdas* Bhansali creates an unceasing spatial spectacle of exaggeration and exaggerated consumption. The excessive style, suggests Corey K. Creekmur, has an overpowering effect on the narrative: "*This abundance ... constantly threatens to overwhelm what remains at heart a simple, if psychologically complex, story.*" [6] When narrative is subordinated to architectural space, according to Peter Wollen, it gives way to a spectacle whose purpose is to impress and visually dazzle. Such a spectacle makes architecture a 'star' rather than simply a 'character'.[7]

In Hindi cinema, famous actors or super stars are expected to portray their star *persona* rather than getting under the skin of the characters. In Bhansali's *Devdas*, spectacular architecture establishes its place as a 'star' akin to the other stars in the film. Invoking star appeal then relieves the architecture of the need to perform its narrative function. Characters, meanwhile, are 'lost' in these large spaces, but at the same time they need to register a powerful presence. The display of architectural grandeur seeks to enhance the emotion of tragedy, but this is in turn subsumed by architectural excess, undermining the narrative ambition.

In *Dev D.*, on the other hand, Kashyap creates a spectacle of psychological space using grunge themes and psychedelia to suggest the inner, personal space of the hero. Space acts as a 'character', connoting his narcissism. The tragic is conveyed by a spectacle of interiority. Kashyap uses such spectacle as a stylistic means to render the narrative contemporary and creates a spatial equivalent for the principal psychological

trope of the narrative – the narcissistic, self-absorbed hero, the '*Devdas* metaphor'.

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9 / Seeing Your Own End: Prefigurations of Death in the *Final Destination* Films

Douglas Keesey

The *Final Destination* films, made between 2000 and 2011, make up a U.S. horror franchise distributed by New Line Cinema. In this highly fatalistic series dealing with the relations between life and death, past and present, and forms of 'second sight', a protagonist has a premonition of disaster, which provides an opportunity for escape, but in a circular irony Death then intervenes to destroy the escapees in complex and bizarre accidents. The series comprises five films: *Final Destination* (dir. Wong, USA/Canada, 2000), *Final Destination 2* (dir. Ellis, USA/Canada, 2003), *Final Destination 3* (dir. Wong, Germany/USA/Canada, 2006), *The Final Destination* (dir. Ellis, USA, 2009), and *Final Destination 5* (dir. Quale, USA/Canada, 2011).

The *Final Destination* films imagine the possibility of seeing and surviving one's own death. Marketed to a younger audience, the films in one sense play to youthful fantasies of invulnerability. The characters within the films who have visions that may allow them to avoid death are surrogates for the audience members who, in watching these films, can imagine that they are viewing and avoiding death.

Yet what is most interesting about the *Final Destination* films is their ultimate *lack* of reassurance, the way that they disturb fantasies of invincibility with the extreme anxiety and the likelihood of failure that these films introduce into their characters' and audience members' childish belief that death can somehow be avoided. Indeed, the films vacillate between wish-fulfillment fantasies of immortality and horrified acknowledgments of the 'Real' that is death.

Understanding Bludworth

Traditional horror localises the threat of death in a monster so that it can be sighted, combated, and destroyed, whether that monster be Dracula or the Wolfman, Jason or Freddy, Sadako or Jigsaw. In a sense, the desperate characters in the *Final Destination* films are trying to turn their world into one of traditional horror, inhabited by a localisable monster - trying and then failing. Could the mysterious Bludworth, for example, be Death incarnate?

His name sounds like 'blood'; he's a mortician; he wears black; he's played by Black actor Tony Todd, who served to localise an urban legend in *Candyman*. Yet the very plethora of signs connecting Bludworth to death casts doubt on whether they really signify; the overabundance of signs suggests a desperate attempt to latch on to any and all

meanings that might somehow help to identify death. But if Bludworth isn't Death, then surely his proximity to it as a coroner or mortician provides him with special knowledge. In fact, Bludworth appears to be a veritable font of wisdom throughout the *Final Destination* series.

In *FD1*, Bludworth counsels that "*if you can figure out how and when it's coming*", Death's "*design*" could be thwarted; "*Play your hunch*", he says. In *FD2*, Bludworth's advice is that "*Only new life can defeat Death*"; "*You have to follow the signs*", he says. In *FD5*, Bludworth asserts that "*if you let Death have somebody else in your place … then you take their spot in the realm of the living*". All this contradictory advice - stay smart and alert, foster a new life, kill someone else - proves very difficult to follow, amounting to another super-abundance of signs with no clear signified.

Indeed, Bludworth often seems to be having a joke at the other characters' expense, as when the homeless man in *FD4* (who was originally supposed to be played by Todd himself) agrees that just being "*at the right place at the right time*" is what saved their lives - immediately before all the characters are killed. Bludworth's apparently helpful advice would seem to be sardonic, actually signifying its opposite, for as he also says: "*You can't cheat Death; there are no escapes*". Perhaps Bludworth is the Devil, tempting humans with hope only to enjoy seeing those hopes dashed? In *FD3*, after all, it is Bludworth's (Tony Todd's) chuckle - "*You can run but you cannot hide*" - that we hear coming from the Devil statue near the entrance to a rollercoaster just before the ride crashes.

To believe that the Devil has planned these deaths would offer a certain cold comfort, for at least then there would be

some identifiable evil providing an understandable order to the world. But the statue and the chuckle are merely further signs that may or may not point to some horrible but reassuring 'Devil'. The true horror is to be deprived of the comforts of conventional horror; it is not to know whether there is any structuring presence behind, or comprehensible order to, these deaths. This is the deeper sense of Bludworth's/the Devil's mocking laughter at the end of the closing credits: if only the bottomless horror of death could be contained by belief in the Devil, but in these films, it can't.

The Moral Logic of Death

If a nefarious force is not in command, could there instead be a moral order to the world? Could there be some link between destruction and just punishment that might help make death explicable? Two obnoxiously beauty-obsessed girls have their skin burned off in a tanning salon (*FD3*). A redneck racist catches fire while trying to place a flaming cross on a Black man's lawn (*FD4*). An egotistical athlete has his head crushed by iron weights straight after bragging about his invincibility (*FD3*). As brutally impactful as these deaths are, their effect on flinching audiences may be somewhat cushioned by the thought that these characters got what they deserved.

This would mean that death is operating on moral principles and that those with 'good character' - like us - could thereby avoid it. But then how to justify or accept the deaths of good characters like Sam, who catches fire after his beloved Molly is torn from his grasp in a plane explosion (*FD5*), or like Kevin, who is killed in a subway crash after spending most of the film saving others (*FD3*), or like Alex, who sacrifices his own life by grabbing a live power line in order to save his

girlfriend Clear, only for her to be later blown up (*FD1* and *FD2*)?

In *FD1*'s original ending, Alex's self-sacrifice did save Clear, who gave birth to their baby and imagined Alex's spirit still alive somewhere, looking down upon them. But this spiritual and sentimental ending was changed to one which was more down-beat because test audiences didn't buy the idea that having a child was the way to beat death. Significantly, many in today's horror audiences will not accept the traditional solace of a clear connection between death and moral order.

In retrospect, even the *Final Destination* deaths that seem somehow justified are so patly apt and so ludicrously hyperbolic - such as the guy crushed by a falling Buddha figurine after commenting on how fat it is (*FD5*) - that they appear to mock, rather the reinforce, the idea of a 'moral' death. If audiences want to see more death, it is in part because they are unable to accept the conventional explanations that used to suffice in bringing death's mystery to a conclusion. Competing with the childish desire for a fantasised understanding and closure is a more mature sense of death as the Real, a potentially unfathomable abyss. As a character realizes at one point, "*God, death is fucking complicated!*" (*FD3*).

Unlike in the slasher films where Jason, for example, acts like God punishing teens with death for acts of illicit sex, death only sometimes works that way in the *Final Destination* films, as when a pool pump sucks out a guy's intestines after he hooks up with a girl in a poolside tent (*FD4*). At other times, death kills the virtuous virgins along with the fornicators, the self-sacrificers along with the immoral egotists. Choosing the

righteous path won't necessarily make for a saving difference.

This uncertainty as to the effectiveness of the characters' choices within the film finds its meta-cinematic mirror in the DVD feature that enables viewers to intervene in the film's narrative and to make decisions that might - or might not - affect the outcome: "*Would you save innocent strangers from their final destination? At several key points you will be asked to make a decision with MORTAL consequences. What would YOU do? Select Heads? or Tails? Use your remote to select an option, then choose their fate*" (*FD3*). If the viewer selects tails when a character tosses a coin, then none of the film's characters dies in a rollercoaster crash, and the film ends prematurely, with everyone still alive. It seems that making a choice *can* affect fate.

However, if the viewer opts to intervene later in the film, deciding to have a character set the tanning salon temperature at a more prudent 73 degrees rather than at 76, this righteous choice ends up making no difference: whatever the temperature, the character dies a flaming death in the tanning bed. Similarly, if the viewer later has a character jump right or left to avoid a falling sign, either way he ends up crushed, with the only difference being whether or not the viewer gets to see a shot of his bloody torso - that is, a difference which makes no difference.

The seeming ineffectiveness of these latter two choices introduces a creeping doubt as to whether death can really be affected at all by the decisions we make. Rather than being enabled to take control through decisions that reduce mortal dread, the viewer is thus confronted with the same anxious uncertainty that afflicts the film's characters. The

lack of a localisable cause of death, such as a definitive Devil or a certain moral order, leads to a free-floating anxiety, a fear that death can come out of nowhere and for no reason.

This fear is figured in the concatenation of set-pieces that distinguish the death sequences in the *Final Destination* films, such as the elaborately choreographed demise of the gymnast in *FD5*. A ceiling fan rattles, shaking loose a screw which drops on to a balance beam where a female gymnast, practising her routine, narrowly misses stepping on it. An air-conditioning failure causes water to leak on to the exposed wire of an electrical cord, which is nearly - but not quite - trodden upon by the gymnast.

Another gymnast now mounts the balance beam, steps on the screw, and falls off, knocking over a stand that sends clouds of chalk dust into the air, disturbing the vision of the first gymnast who, messing up her dismount from the uneven bars, lands in a broken heap on the floor, having snapped her spine. The fan, the screw, the water, the wire, the dust, the beam, the bars - death, not being securely anchored in a monster with a motive, could be anywhere, everywhere, striking with or without reason.

Nevertheless, influenced by popular understandings of scientific concepts like the 'butterfly' effect - whereby a small, seemingly unrelated event in one location can set off a chain reaction leading to a massive change elsewhere in the universe - these concatenated death sequences carry the hope that, upon close enough examination, some causal chain can be traced and some first cause be pinpointed that might enable us to avert catastrophe. And yet the plethora of potential first causes and the complexity of the causal chains, combined with the extreme unlikelihood that such a

baroque concatenation of events could ever have been foreseen, cast doubt on whether any scientific explanation - particularly one that we could actually use to avoid death - is in fact likely to be forthcoming.

Viewer Identifications

Of course, in the most obvious sense, viewers of horror films are able to see and survive their own deaths insofar as we can identify with the characters right up until the moment of their deaths, when we detach from them. The very fact that film visualises people as characters makes it possible for us to *imagine* the 1996 TWA Flight 800 explosion (the basis for *FD1*) or the 2008 Minneapolis bridge collapse (*FD5*), to *view* these disasters through the eyes of characters and then to avoid their deaths.

If the *Final Destination* films bind viewers more and more tightly to the perspective of the characters, one result is that it makes our brush with death even closer, and thus our fantasy of triumphant survival even stronger. In *FD5*, together with a character undergoing laser eye surgery we look directly into the laser beam that, malfunctioning, burns her retina. Our being just barely able to see and survive it is the point, for the harder it is to watch, the stronger the movie-fed fantasy of defeating death.

Later, that same surgery patient has her head smashed into a car windshield, dislodging her eyeball which rolls on the ground toward us. We viewers are brought literally eye to eye with the dying character, even more so given that her eye rolls towards us in 3D. Is this so that we can more fully imagine continuing to see while she goes sightless, to live while her life fades away? Perhaps, but there is also the

sense of a joke played on our desire to see and survive death, as her enucleated eyeball seems, impossibly, to continue seeing even after her demise, looking out in mockery at our own eyes which so desperately want to do the same following our own deaths. The joke's punch-line comes when her eyeball is crushed under the wheel of a passing car - no more able to see than ours will be when we too are dead.

Advances in special-effects technology such as 3D make the death scenes look increasingly real, but lurking within our triumphantly close encounters with death is the nagging fear that death is not a special effect of our design or under our control. When a dead leaf falls directly in front of a character in *FD1*, this is accomplished by means of a string that is attached to the leaf and that is later painted out.

But in real life there is no digital technician or human puppet-master pulling death's strings; this is merely the illusion of control. In *FD2*, when a 600-pound pane of glass drops on to one of the characters, crushing him, a full-size cast dummy is substituted for the body of the actor, who can thus watch and walk away from the death of his character, much as we spectators can imagine viewing and avoiding our own deaths.

When a character in *FD3* has a premonitory vision of a rollercoaster crash, she can imagine separating the characters from their fatal ride like lifting the live actors from their green-screen background, removing the pixels of CGI blood. But undermining these FX-enabled fantasies of conquering death is a haunting fear of their hollowness: people are not pixels; real bodies actually present at scenes of mortal danger are not so easily detached from death; and no full-size dummy is likely to replace our vulnerable flesh at

the last minute to bear the crushing burden of death so that we can live on.

A Third Dimension

To view *FD4*, we put on 3D glasses and watch while a speedway car crash sends flaming wreckage right into the faces of the characters watching from their stadium seats, some of whom are crushed, impaled, or exploded. We feel the effect of death along with the characters - yet survive. The stronger the impact, the more exhilarating is our escapist fantasy that we can somehow confront and conquer it. Our surrogates in the film are those forewarned characters who also survive, based on one character's premonitory vision of the crash - a vision which is practically as real as the crash itself, and which enables him and some other characters to avoid it.

Later in the film, however, one of these characters is seated in an auditorium watching a 3D movie where, after a car careens dangerously 'close' to the audience, it seems to explode out of the screen, impaling them with its wreckage - which includes a nail through a character's eye. In one sense, this is simply the tightest binding yet between us and the characters, making for the strongest possible imagined experience of - and escape from - their deathly predicament.

But in another sense, as we watch a 3D movie in which the characters watch a 3D movie *and die*, are we not finally bound so tightly to them that we can no longer avoid realising that we will die too, that death is actually something that we, like them, cannot see and survive? The race-track crash exploding from the screen into the eyes of the characters gives the lie to the idea that some premonitory

vision could have empowered them to control and avert death, just as it exposes as escapist fantasy our movie-fed notion that we can view and avoid our own deaths.

The *Final Destination* films thus seem to see-saw between immature belief in an immortal ego and a more adult acceptance of vulnerability. The search for signs of death - both supernatural and scientific - is encouraged as a means of identifying and defeating it, but this search and these efforts at control are repeatedly shown to fail because of the elusiveness and unpredictability of death. 3D makes death appear ever more present and CGI makes it seem manipulable, but scenes like the one where a 3D movie audience is actually killed expose us to the fact that *death is not a special effect*: proximity to it is fatal; blood cannot be painted out, nor can bodies be simply lifted into some other scene where they go on living.

Interestingly, it is the characters who get a rush out of seeing and surviving others' deaths who are marked as the most immature, such as the one who is called "*sick*" for freely admitting that "*of course*" he attends car races "*to see a crash*" (*FD4*), or the one who wants "*to feel how that would be to just crash and burn like that*" because of his belief that "*what doesn't kill you makes you stronger*" (*FD3*). In the *Final Destination* films, what doesn't kill you at first inevitably kills you eventually and unpredictably, bringing fantasies of unlimited empowerment to a decisive end.

Could it be that the deeper reason why *Final Destination* viewers want to see more death is not to confirm their egotistical fantasies of survival but to see these fantasies destroyed by the 'Real' of mortality - destroyed again and again until, instead of remaining in childish denial of death,

viewers are forced to grow up? When the characters in *FD5*, believing they have viewed and avoided their own deaths, end up boarding and dying in the very plane that crashes in *FD1*, death closes the loop, in a sense drawing all the films' characters back into a realisation of their own mortality, proving that - all escapist fantasies notwithstanding - it is never possible to see one's own death and survive.

10 / Re-negotiating the Spectacle: Authorship and the Gaze in Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty*

Christa van Raalte

Kathryn Bigelow's status as an *auteur* is controversial. Some critics admire her attention to detail and the technical lengths she will go to achieve the visual effects she needs, while others dismiss her work as privileging style over substance. Some believe that she would be taken more seriously if she were not a woman, others that it is only her curiosity value as a woman working in what are viewed as 'masculine' genres that attracts the degree of critical attention she receives. Feminists in particular are divided in their response to work that seems to simultaneously exploit and explore issues of cinematic violence and the sexual objectification of women. The film-maker herself likes to claim that she doesn't see the world through a gendered lens. Such claims, however, seem

somewhat disingenuous in the light of her work itself, which is, as Rascaroli argues, "*essentially a discourse on vision*"[1], and one that demonstrates a keen awareness of its gendered nature.

Bigelow's work brings an art-house sensibility to mainstream genres, setting out quite consciously, as her interviews make clear, to explore and experiment with those genres. Hence the internal tension within her films between the integration and interrogation of Hollywood conventions - particularly those associated with sex, violence and spectacle, the unholy trinity of the Hollywood blockbuster. Underlying her beautifully crafted cinematic set-pieces can be found a self-conscious foregrounding of the mechanisms of cinema itself, in terms of the gaze and its relationship to power. It is Bigelow's fascination with spectacle and the gaze that provides the focus for this essay. For Bigelow, spectacle is not only a formal issue, an aspect of style; it also, in itself, constitutes content and meaning. The act of looking is not simply a function of film-making and film viewing; it is an explicit theme in much of her work.

Starting her artistic career as a painter, Bigelow has often been described as a director whose work is characterised by the meticulous construction of beautiful images. Indeed the narrative of *Near Dark* (1987), as Tasker has remarked, "*revolves explicitly round the play of light*"[2], while *Point Break* (1991) transforms action into visually ravishing spectacle, eliding the distinction between them. This celebration of visual pleasure, however, is repeatedly offset by explicit and often uncomfortable scenarios of voyeurism, exemplified by the striptease scene in her first feature film, *The Loveless* (1981). In fact voyeurism is both thematically and stylistically central to *Blue Steel* (1989), as it is to *Strange Days* (1995), as

well as providing an important *leitmotif* in *The Weight of Water* (2000).

The Dynamics of the Gaze

In *Blue Steel,* Bigelow articulates a specifically cinematic understanding of the dynamics of image and the gaze through a provocative play on point-of-view, which implicates and at times de-stabilises the spectator. While emotionally aligned with the female hero, we find our gaze repeatedly aligned with that of the voyeuristic villain – the origin of our 'point of view' withheld until we have already, unwittingly invested in it.

This idea is further developed in *Strange Days*, largely set in the 'Retinal Fetish' nightclub, which problematises scopophilia and the gaze itself on a number of levels. The SQUID (Superconducting Quantum Interference Device) technology which features in the film, allowing users to indulge in vicarious, voyeuristic experiences, has dangerously addictive properties, and its abuse can be fatal - moreover, while used for pleasure, it can also deliver extreme un-pleasure, making the user uncomfortably complicit in the scenes of horror they are made to witness.

It is significant that the device is sold on the black market, having been originally developed as a tool of police surveillance. Bigelow describes *Strange Days* as a film about power structures, implicitly linking power and the gaze as she goes on to say: "*we're a watched society and a society of watchers*".[3] It is also significant that the main 'genres' of content consumed on the SQUID appear to be violent action, pornography, or a combination of the two, and the consumers appear to be primarily male.

In many ways *The Weight of Water* is something of a departure for Bigelow, a move into a more expressly 'art house' milieu – and indeed into a thematic and generic territory more readily associated with female directors. At the same time, however, it re-visits her accustomed themes, explicitly exploring the nature of violence and the relationship between the gaze and desire - specifically female desire, as highlighted in the person of the photographer heroine. It does, nevertheless, mark a transition from her earlier treatment of *"ennui and action aesthetics"* toward *"the sustained, unrelenting tension"* of *The Hurt Locker* (2008).

The film marks, along with *K-19: The Widowmaker* (2002), *"a new phase of Bigelow's career, one in which slow-burning animosity and perseverance are the crucial themes*."[4] Themes of surveillance and paranoia are also reprised in *The Hurt Locker*, in which the soldiers are constantly watched as well as watching – their gaze frequently mediated through viewfinders, helmet cameras and 'botcams'. This use of the mediated image also lends emphasis to Bigelow's fetishisation of physical objects within the film, which becomes almost abstract at times with its intense, poetic focus on visual details.

Zero Dark Thirty: The Spectacle of Authenticity?

Zero Dark Thirty (2012), for all its clean lines and tight compositions, at first seems out of character for this most visual of directors. Its austerely realist, *faux*-documentary aesthetic is consistent with '"*the spectacle of authenticity*" that King identifies as typical of the '*respectable'* war film.[5] It refuses to indulge the spectacular, potential of violence: the notorious torture sequence is unpleasant, and understated in terms of its voyeuristic potential.

The main feature of what would, in a different film, be the big action sequences (the explosion at the restaurant, the assassination of the agents at the base, and the night-time raid, that occupies the final thirty minutes of the film) is poor visibility, confusion and an almost hurried matter-of-factness that has no time for glamourising or for dwelling on the act of violence itself. This is not to say the representation of 'enhanced interrogation' as a legitimate and effective strategy is unproblematic. Indeed Bigelow's claims for political neutrality seem as disingenuous as her previous comments on gender. These issues, however, are not the focus of this essay.

Bigelow's treatment of the female lead, Maya, is similarly a-typical. The viewer is presented with a studied avoidance of shots that objectify or fetishise her in any way – for all that she is played by the strikingly beautiful Jessica Chastain. In short, the film-maker seems to have renounced visual excess and what Tasker describes as her "*erotic investment*" in the image.[6] *Zero Dark Thirty* is very different in this respect even from *The Hurt Locker*, Bigelow's first take on the modern war film.

Compare, for example, her slow motion, strangely lyrical treatment of the explosion that kills Thompson in the earlier film, with the studied matter-of-factness with which she presents the one that kills Maya's colleagues – viewed mainly from a distance, and over in a moment; or compare the battle-ground in *The Hurt Locker*, where every bead of sweat is visible, to the night raid to capture or kill Osama Bin Laden in *Zero Dark Thirty,* where almost nothing is.

Image, Agency, and Gaze

I would suggest, however, that this refusal of spectacle simply represents another perspective on the same issues to which Bigelow has returned repeatedly throughout her career – and that the relationship between the image, agency and gaze are explicitly explored in the subtext of the film. Just as the gaze and the pleasure of the spectacle are foregrounded in *Blue Steel* and *Strange Days* as themes, rather than simply as formal tropes, so, in *Zero Dark Thirty*, a certain avoidance of spectacle and un-pleasure in the gaze are foregrounded, along with an ambivalence towards the relationship between agency and the gaze. Here, at times, the act of watching signifies, or actually confers, a level of control and at others it highlights - or exacerbates - a sense of frustration and impotence.

These themes are reflected in the double frame that structures the narrative. *Zero Dark Thirty* has a prologue and an epilogue that sit outside the primary narrative, while the opening and closing scenes of that narrative present resonating images of looking/not looking that create an internal frame. The prologue provides two minutes of back-story in the form of audio from inside the Twin Towers during the 9/11 attack, played over a black screen. Bigelow eschews the wealth of contemporaneous visual material that has become so iconic, its very familiarity threatening to drain it of meaning and impact.

The audio sequence which is used instead is highly effective in conjuring up the felt reality of the attack, its success underlining the inadequacy of the image to the task of representation at such a moment. The epilogue, on the other hand, sees Maya, her mission completed, boarding an empty

troop carrier. The disembodied voice of the pilot asks her: "*Where do you want to go?*", to which she has no reply. The close-up of Maya, framed against the red webbing of the interior, with tears running down her face, has been described as "*a pieta for the war on terror*" and is certainly as apt a response to the events of 9/11 and its ongoing legacy as it is to the specific events of the film. [7]

Maya's Vision

Critically, these final moments also offer the film's first and only rendition of 'woman-as-spectacle' in the traditional sense, suspending the narrative to dwell on her features and emotional response. As with many of Bigelow's protagonists, we are given very limited access to Maya's inner life for the greater part of the narrative. The emotional release of this final scene is rendered the more intense by way of contrast – and is characterised by a visual intensity, and a change in pace, that marks it as very much apart. In particular there is an almost shocking quality to the colour in these shots after the washed out shades and shadows that dominate the film.

Up until this point Maya is very clearly represented as the bearer, rather than the object, of the gaze, and it is the dynamics of her gaze - and the withholding of her gaze - that frame and structure the primary narrative of the film. In the opening scenes that follow the prologue, Maya is present at the ongoing interrogation of a prisoner. She rejects the opportunity to watch from a monitor and opts to stay in the room - but it is clear that the process makes her uncomfortable. She covers her face, closes her eyes, and looks away repeatedly during both sessions - providing a metaphor for the position of the viewer (and potentially that of the State that turns a blind eye to the activities of its agents.)

The close of the primary narrative also focuses on Maya's gaze. Her final triumph over the enemy she has hunted for twelve years consists of looking at and identifying his body. The shot/reverse shot sequence allows the audience limited access to the corpse, of which only the beard and nose are visible – and likewise limited access to Maya's response, seen only in two low-angle medium close-ups from the dead man's point-of-view. Hers is a troubled, unsatisfactory gaze – one that takes no pleasure in its own power: there is no sense of elation as she identifies the old man, zips up the body bag, and walks away.

Maya's gaze not only frames the main narrative, but is central to it. The primary action represented in this film is that of looking - looking at and looking for. It is a narrative of surveillance, structured episodically as a quest - a traditionally male-led search for knowledge. Working through endless tapes of interrogations is clearly coded as labour, gruelling and tiring. Inasmuch as the process of watching involves piecing together evidence, which leads to knowledge and thus to action, her gaze is associated with control. But insofar as the process is frequently frustrating, involving a number of dead-ends and false leads, it is also associated with a lack of, or failure to, control. The unreliability of the image in relation to knowledge is highlighted when a key piece of evidence - a wrongly identified photograph - proves to have misled the investigation, wasting hours of Maya's time.

Questions of Surveillance and Control

The frustration and frequent feelings of impotence associated with surveillance, meanwhile, are reprised on a number of occasions: Maya's initially fruitless attempts to make sense of endless video footage; the scene where the agents watch

CCTV footage of an attack they are powerless to prevent; the prolonged exercise by the field agents as they attempt to track Bin Laden's courier through the busy streets of Pakistan, their boredom and tension signified by close up of tapping fingers reminiscent of scenes in *The Hurt Locker;* and particularly, once Bin Laden's stronghold has been discovered, the satellite surveillance of the compound and the infuriatingly limited information it provides.

Further ambivalence around the relationship between the gaze, agency and control is expressed during the climactic raid sequence, in which Maya does not participate, her role being merely to observe from the command centre. Maya's ability to monitor events stands as a proxy for action, suggesting her control of the broad narrative sweep, if not the actual operation. Yet in effect she is reduced to much the same position as the audience during this sequence, having the illusion of omniscience and control but no real agency. That Maya's primary activity in the film is watching things on screen mobilises ideas of cinema spectatorship – but also of the process of film-making itself.

She is, after all, charged with 'editing' the filmed images to tell a story, as well as, on occasion, 'directing' the (primarily violent) action that is to be filmed. The final scene of the film, moreover, mirrors Bigelow's own description of her emotions on finishing this film project – a feeling of being "*without purpose all of a sudden*."[8] Ultimately this is a narrative about a quest for answers through surveillance that is successful only on a superficial level. The gaze does not produce pleasure, the search does not produce satisfaction, violence is banal and ugly, knowledge is only partial and much remains unclear - including what the director describes as the "*national and global question of 'now what?*".[9]

Zero Dark Thirty, then, is a film that problematises both the pleasure of the spectacle and the epistemological function of the image. As in her earlier work, Bigelow explores these themes both at the level of the film's stylistics and at the level of its narrative, questioning, in the person of her central character, the relationship between the object and the subject of the gaze, and the nature of the cinematic gaze itself.

Underpinned by a mainstream militaristic ideology, and addressing a mainstream market, *Zero Dark Thirty* is clearly not what Mulvey had in mind when she called for a cinema that deconstructed the mechanics of the gaze and freed the representation of the woman from its structurally pre-determined function.[10] I would like to suggest, however, that Bigelow's re-negotiation of the gaze here, as elsewhere in her work - and despite her refusal to identify herself as a feminist - makes a highly meaningful contribution to that project.

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11 / Cinema, Consumer Society and Spectacle

Julio Cesar Lemes de Castro

Karl Marx: Commodity Fetishism

This essay explores the ways in which Walter Benjamin, with his concept of 'phantasmagoria', and Guy Debord, with his understanding of 'spectacle', develop Karl Marx's ideas about commodity fetishism. At the same time, it suggests how, taking advantage of these theoretical tools, we may consider possible articulations of consumer culture, first in the case of what may be called proto-cinematic apparatuses, and then in terms of cinema itself.

Marx locates commodity fetishism at the heart of capitalism. A product of labour has use value insofar as it satisfies a want or need, and exchange value when it is traded in the market, that is, when it functions as a commodity. The exchange value of a commodity expresses the average amount of

labour socially necessary for its production. But, once in the market, a product distances itself from its producers and from the conditions in which it was produced.

Whereas in the pre-capitalist community the buyer has direct contact with those who make things, in capitalist society each product results from the work of several anonymous individuals, separated from the purchaser by numerous intermediaries. As a consequence, market value gains autonomy and is seen as intrinsic to the commodity.

A table, for instance, is, in itself, something banal, but, as soon as it appears as a commodity, it splits into physical and metaphysical aspects. The physical aspect refers to its materiality, the metaphysical to the market value assigned to it. Since it is this value which defines it in the market. In a famous formulation, what Marx calls "*the determined social relation between men*" assumes, for him, "*the phantasmagoric form of a relation between things*".[1]

At first glance, it may be thought that in the case of commodity fetishism the visual dimension is weakened, to the extent that the abstract aspect of exchange value prevails over the concrete aspect of use value. Things, however, are more complex. When the value appears as something inherent to the commodity, it transcends the materiality of the commodity, surrounding it with a ghostly 'shell'. As we read on the first page of *Capital*, the commodity meets needs which arise from both *"stomach"* and *"imagination*".[2]

Cut adrift from the materiality of human labour, the commodity may give free rein to fantasy; to put it another way, the phantasmagoria of value drives the fantasy. This gives the commodity a spectacular facet, which in turn

further enhances the distance from the strict empirical properties of the object.

With the evolution of capitalism, the more abstract the system gets, the greater the spectacle of the world of commodities. It should be noted, however, that the spectacular appearance of the commodity under capitalism, entirely congruent with Marx's analysis, is not in fact developed there. At this point, recourse to Benjamin and Debord is useful.

Walter Benjamin: Phantasmagoria

Marx's theory is contemporary with the rise of mass consumption, which takes place from the second half of the 19th Century onwards. To take account of the cultural universe of this period, marked strongly by the problematic of consumption, Benjamin, in his unfinished masterpiece on the Parisian arcades, proposes as a starting point the concept of commodity fetishism.

In his letters, he says that the Marxist concept is at the heart of *The Arcades Project*, and that the basic categories of his work aim at determining it. Whereas in the Baroque age commodity fetishism was still relatively undeveloped, "*the new forms of behaviour and the new economically and technologically based creations that we owe to the 19th Century enter the universe of a phantasmagoria*".[3] We can even define 'modernity', as the word is used for example by Baudelaire, as "*the world dominated by its phantasmagoria*".[4]

Benjamin's project, however, has some remarkable peculiarities. If Marx calls attention to the relations behind

the appearance of the commodity, Benjamin highlights a different aspect of commodity fetishism: the commodity as spectacle, for instance in arcades, universal expositions, and department stores. It is no coincidence that the expression "*phantasmagoric form*", which qualifies commodity fetishism in the first quotation from *Capital* above, captures his attention in a special way.

Throughout *The Arcades Project*, there are numerous references to 'phantasmagoria' to describe fetishism, but in many cases the term takes on connotations that go beyond what we find in Marx. Benjamin's working method leads him to adduce quotations from other authors in which this term appears, continuously expanding its constellation of applications.

When Benjamin refers to fetishism, his interest is not so much in the commodity in general, which is simply circulating in the economy. Rather, it is important for him to apprehend its status at the time it is being displayed somehow to the public. For Benjamin, 'phantasmagoria' refers to the visible, lush, spectacular side of the merchandise, and to its subjective impact. Moreover, he wants to show how phantasmagoria spreads through all walks of life.

Phantasmagoria and Proto-cinematic Apparatuses

In the 19th Century the phantasmagoria surrounding commodities relates to the one generated by proto-cinematic apparatuses such as the panorama, the diorama, the cosmorama, the pleorama, the kaleidoscope, and others. The panorama is a cylindrical surface with paintings, usually portraying landscapes and historical events, which involve the viewer and give him the illusion of being in a certain

environment. The first 360-degree panorama was opened by Robert Baker in London in 1792.

The diorama had a platform which rotated, showing each time a different scene, mostly from a distant place and time. It is an 1822 invention by Daguerre, better known for the daguerreotype, which comes later. The cosmorama, created in 1832 by Abbe Gazzara, reproduces landscapes with the aid of magnifying mirrors which give them an illusory depth. The pleorama, debuting the same year in Berlin, simulates a journey, with the viewer sitting in a ship against a moving backdrop.

The kaleidoscope, patented in 1817 by David Brewster, uses an arrangement of mirrors to produce a series of symmetrical visual patterns. The phantasmagoria itself is a device, invented in the late 18th Century and popular in the 19th, which uses a magic lantern to project frightening images on to a screen; it is recalled in the early films of Georges Méliès.

In all these cases, what we have are techniques generating visual effects which attract and beguile the audience. The development of new technologies of representation goes hand-in-hand with the development of technologies employed directly in commodity production. And the fact that such apparatuses are contemporary with the expansion of the culture of consumption cannot be overlooked.

The City as Spectacle: The Arcades

Proto-cinematic apparatuses are often means of entertainment in the space of the arcades, which emerged in Paris in the first half of the 19th Century. The arcades were

narrow streets, covered with glass roofs to create an inner space, accessible only to pedestrians, and thus allowing refuge from weather and traffic. Described by Benjamin as temples of commodity capital, they served as corridors with luxury shops on both sides. Many survive today.

Benjamin sees them as the forerunners of department stores, but they are closer to modern shopping malls, which come later. The Passage des Panoramas, precursor of the others, owes its name to the fact that it was constructed in 1799 to give access to the panorama on the Boulevard Montmartre. The Galérie Vivienne, built in 1823, later housed the cosmorama.

In 1858 the Passage Jouffroy, an extension of the Passage des Panoramas, became the site of the Théâtre Séraphin, specialising in marionettes and shadow puppetry. Also in the Passage Jouffroy, the Musée Grévin, a waxworks museum, opened in 1882. The illusionist Georges Méliès presented his first public shows at the *Cabinet Fantastique* of the Musée Grévin, and then at the Galerie Vivienne.

All this means that the same gaze is entranced by scenes generated in the proto-cinematic apparatuses and by commodities displayed in the arcades. Content in both cases may also be similar, the tours often making reference to remote times and regions. Thus, the experience of the *flâneur*, or city stroller, characterised by Benjamin (drawing on Baudelaire) as the modern urban spectator wandering in the arcades, is redoubled by the proto-cinematic apparatuses as a *flânerie* of a virtual kind.

Akin to the arcades in its style and materials, although on a much greater scale, was London's Crystal Palace, home to the

Great Exhibition of 1851. Other world exhibitions followed suit - notably those organised in Paris - in 1855, 1867, 1878, 1889, and 1900. At first, the purpose of these events was to promote the world of production, showcasing scientific and technical novelties. Quickly, however, the emphasis shifted to consumption.

From 1855 onward, an entrance fee was charged and all objects carried price-tags. Benjamin considered world exhibitions as sites of pilgrimage to commodity fetishism. They are realised in large environments, opening up a phantasmagoria which a person enters to be distracted. And proto-cinematic apparatuses are helpful here: the Great Exhibition of 1851, for example, included dioramas of cities.

With the arrival of department stores, established around 1870, consumers were for the first time in history considered as a mass, and thus the theatrical element of commerce was heightened. For Roslaind Williams they became, and remain, "*places where consumers are an audience to be entertained by commodities, where selling is mingled with amusement, where arousal of free-floating desire is as important as immediate purchase of particular items*".[5]

It is no wonder that Dufayel, a department store in Paris at the turn of the century, should feature a cinema auditorium with a capacity of 1,500. And the tricks for catching the attention of viewers and consumers are similar: in 1900, L. Frank Baum published both *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, a book which deals with the power of illusion and was later turned into a famous film, and *The Art of Decorating Dry Goods Windows and Interiors*.[6]

Guy Debord: The Society of the Spectacle

Influenced by *avant-garde* currents like Dada, Surrealism, and Lettrism, which merge art and politics, Debord and his movement, the Situationist International, intended to change life and transform the world. In his 1967 book *The Society of the Spectacle* Debord sets out to revitalise Marxism, adapting its analysis to the new historical conditions of post-war France. He sees in this period a mutation in capitalism, which comes to rely on social reproduction through a cultural hegemony based on consumer values, the use of media apparatuses, and new forms of urban and everyday life.

Debord dubs the resulting social formation 'the society of the spectacle', a concept which brings together a range of apparently disparate phenomena. It could be argued, for example, that the cultural form of the spectacle was already synthesised, for example, by late-Victorian advertisers, but back then it had to vie with other forms. It is only later that spectacle comes to dominate society as a whole, and this is for Debord the most important feature of 20th Century life. Spectacle comes then to cover the whole globe, either as *concentrated* spectacle (in the Soviet-style regimes of the former Eastern bloc) or as *diffuse* spectacle (in the capitalist regimes of the West).

The Society of the Spectacle begins with a paraphrase of Marx's opening to *Capital*: "*The whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles*."[7] Substituting 'spectacles' for 'commodities' in Marx's formula, Debord stresses that commodities appear nowadays in the basic form of spectacle. Thus what was in Benjamin a highlighting of appearance now goes further: "*The spectacle*

proclaims the predominance of appearances and asserts that all human life, which is to say all social life, is mere appearance."[8]

In an earlier stage, 'being' became 'having'; now, 'having' became 'appearing'. This is commodity fetishism to its utmost degree: capital is accumulated to a point where it becomes image. The prevalence of the spectacle furthers the prevalence of the commodity itself, which completes its colonisation of social life. In this moment, even dissatisfaction becomes a commodity. The form of spectacle thus corresponds to the contemporary materialisation of ideology, which freezes history through a false consciousness of time.

The Cinematic Spectacle

Throughout the 20th Century, the consumer and the cinematic dimensions of the spectacle, already associated in Benjamin, achieve even greater integration. This is evident in Debord's analysis of the society of spectacle. According to Debord, in our epoch not only does commodity become spectacle, but at the same time spectacle – in the narrow sense of mass media, its most superficial manifestation – becomes commodity, the main commodity of the society of the spectacle.

The forms of representation which Debord mentions most frequently are television and cinema, referred to as spectacular industries. Debord declares that modern society is obsessed with saving time in several activities, but this time is then spent in passive spectatorship, which inhibits one from actively producing his or her own life.

Spectators rely on media and its celebrities as models for lifestyles and views of society; for instance, a film may spark a fashion craze. So, in a circular motion, spectacle as commodity promotes commodity as spectacle. And the role of visual media makes them the perfect metaphor for the operation of ideology in the society of spectacle, in which the consciousness of the spectator is "*imprisoned in a flat universe bounded on all sides by the spectacle's screen*."[9]

Debord was of course not simply a theorist. He began his career as a film critic and a film-maker, and he continued to make films throughout his life: *Howlings in Favour of Sade* (1952), *On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Moment in Time* (1959), *Critique of Separation* (1961), *The Society of the Spectacle* (1973), *Refutation of all the Judgments, both Complimentary and Hostile, that Have been Brought to Bear up until Now Concerning the Film* 'The society of the Spectacle' (1975), and *In Girum Imus Nocte et Consumimur Igni* (1978).

Debord's intensely experimental work has an important influence on later *avant-garde* and underground cinema. In his film adaptation of *The Society of the Spectacle*, many of the theses of the book are presented in voice-over, alongside extracts from movies of various genres, newsreels, and TV commercials, as well as framed quotations from other authors. Like the book, its adaptation, as Debord states in the publicity brochure for the film, proposes "*a holistic critique of the extant world, which is to say, of all aspects of modern capitalism and its general system of illusions*", of which cinema itself is an important component.

Film critics too, says Debord, are "*writing employees of the system of spectacular lying*". For that reason he prefers "*to*

remain in obscurity together with these masses rather than consenting to harangue them in the artificial illumination manipulated by those who hypnotize them".[10] In other words, for Debord the radicalisation of the spectacle leaves no room for an opposition which is not itself radical as well.

Notes and References

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[3] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 14.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 26.

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[7] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, New York: Zone Books, 1995, p. 12.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 14.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

[10] Guy Debord, 'Réfutation de tous les jugements, tant élogieux qu'hostiles, qui ont été jusqu'ici portés sur le film *La société du spectacle*', in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes, 1952-1978*, Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1978, pp. 162, 174.

3. Ontologies

12 / Lars von Trier and the End of Cinema: *Melancholia*

Alex Ling

Von Trier's End Game

I want to begin with a perhaps contentious claim, which is that the Danish director Lars von Trier is a fundamentally *negative* film-maker. Needless to say, 'negative' should not be understood in a derisive sense. Nor, for that matter, do I want to suggest that he deals exclusively with negative or depressive content (though a case could certainly be made for this point). Rather, I want to argue that von Trier's approach to cinema is 'negative' insofar he is at his best when he's sucking the life out of a film, leaving something like an empty husk, the mere shell of a film. And he's at his *very* best when he does this by inhabiting and exploding established Hollywood genres. I would even go so far as to argue that von Trier's elementary cinematic gesture is to take

an established genre that's perhaps gone a little stale - that's become saturated or bloated from over-indulgence and over-use - and run with it to the point of absolute exhaustion.

Think of *Antichrist* (2009) and the horror genre, or *Nymphomaniac vols. 1 and 2* (2013) and pornography, or *Dancer in the Dark* (2000) and the musical. This last work is probably the simplest and most effective example of von Trier's quasi-vampiric approach to cinema, being a film that takes the established genres of the musical and the melodrama as far as they can possibly go, all the while reminding us that what we're watching is, in the end, nothing more than an artificial construction; stylised, yes, but ultimately a mechanical reproduction which only ever has two real options on offer - namely either adhering to, or rejecting, an established set of generic codes and conventions.

Having taken an established genre to its absolute extreme, and having made sure that there's no life left in it whatsoever, von Trier then takes it upon himself to pronounce it dead. Suffice it to think once again of *Dancer in the Dark*, which goes so far as to have the film end - in a sequence so emotionally exhausting it leaves its audience virtually dehydrated - by executing the heroine mid-way through her final, heart-wrenching performance, and then, in a gesture which evokes the cinema auditorium as much as the operating theatre, by symbolically drawing the curtains on this devastating scene.

My contention is thus that, unlike the early Tarantino or Joss Whedon's more recent work (to take only two familiar examples), von Trier turns to stale and established genres not to 'revitalise' or breathe new life into them, but rather to

execute them, to deal them the killing blow: a von Trier film is, it seems to me, almost always a *coup de grâce*. Moreover, this fundamentally negative approach - which obviously has its roots in the *Dogme 95* group and its famous 'vow of chastity' (where originality was predicated first and foremost on restriction) - would appear to reach both its logical conclusion and its apotheosis in *Melancholia* (2011). For it is with this film that von Trier's focus shifts, as it were, from the 'local' (namely, from what I'm calling the 'negative' treatment of genres, styles and tropes) to the 'global', that is, *to the cinema itself*.

Indeed, while *Melancholia* certainly carries on the negative work of its predecessors – in particular by re-working the disaster film and the melodrama (and in doing so exposing the deep continuities between these ostensibly opposed or even 'gendered' genres) – it is something more than cinematic genres, styles and tropes that its director sees as bloated and in need of being put out of their misery. Rather, this is a film that sees cinema itself as a saturated medium whose possibilities have been exhausted, whose creative well has finally run dry.

This is a cinema that no longer has any real promise, regardless of how many *Dogme*-esque restrictions one places upon it, or however much one seeks to 'purify' its contents. To put it another way, *Melancholia* is indeed an intensely melancholic film, but the object of this melancholia is less the story of two sisters, a wedding, and the imminent destruction of earth through a collision with the planet 'Melancholia' than *the cinema itself*. It is a melancholic film about the end of cinema. Or as von Trier's *Dogme* collaborator Thomas Vinterberg supposedly said to him after having watched *Melancholia*, "*how do you make a film after this?*".[1]

Conceptualising Cinema

How then exactly is *Melancholia* is about cinema? Obviously, on an immediate, naïve level, *Melancholia* contains myriad references to cinematic practice and history. For one thing, the film plainly references a number of landmark films, foremost being the great works of Andrei Tarkovsky (in particular his 1972 Russian masterpiece *Solaris*), but also Alain Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad* (France, 1961), and of course - by way of Richard Wagner (and in turn by way of Bernard Herrmann) - the so-called 'greatest film of all time', Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (USA, 1958) (a film which, incidentally, revolves around a man suffering from acute melancholia coupled with a guilt complex).

On top of this, the film also contains numerous telling references to the 'spiritual' foundations of cinema, namely, Eadweard Muybridge and his famous images of horses in motion. Think here of the film's beautiful overture in which a horse's collapse is caught in brilliant detail by the kind of modern high-speed camera that would have brought tears to Muybridge's eyes. Indeed, *Melancholia* even goes so far as to have the film's proxy 'director', Kiefer Sutherland's astronomer John, symbolically end his life in the horse stables. Yet clearly this sort of self-referentiality isn't enough to say that *Melancholia* is actually *about* cinema.

For as long as cinema has been around, people have been asking what it truly is: *qu'est-ce que le cinéma,* as André Bazin famously wondered in post-WWII France.[2] More specifically, theorists, philosophers, journalists and critics alike have asked what is it about cinema that is *truly new*, what is it that 'singularises' cinema in relation to the other arts? Or in other words: not only 'what is cinema?', but moreover 'what can it

do?', what does cinema - and cinema alone - *make possible*? Very broadly speaking, these questions have been posed in four general ways, raising different questions which ultimately represent rather different (essentially philosophical) approaches to thinking cinema.

Working with very broad brush strokes, we might say that the first approach treats cinema as an ontological art**,** suggesting that what is peculiar to cinema is its ability to stage the complex interplay between *being* and *being-there*, between what *is* and what *appears*. Cinema is then an art which dramatises the relations between being and appearing. In this sense, cinema (*pace* photography) was the first art to truly and faithfully *re-present* the world, in all its infinitely complicated glory.

A second approach - the one which is probably most familiar to us, thanks primarily to the work of Gilles Deleuze - concerns cinema's relation to time and tells us that cinema's great power lies foremost in its ability to transform time into perception, that is, the way it allows us to 'see' time itself. A third approach concerns artistic impurity and revolves around cinema's relation to the other arts: here, cinema is either praised for presenting the profound synthesis of the other arts, or else it is condemned as little more than the 'plus-one' of the arts, the 'superfluous' art, the art which thrives parasitically off its more 'sophisticated' sisters.

The fourth and final approach concerns non-artistic impurity, and sees cinema as an art that is itself 'beneath' art, due to its integral relation to non-art. The idea here is that any 'true' artistic activity or 'originality' in cinema can only really be discerned as what Badiou calls "*a process of purification of its own immanent non-artistic character*".[3] Or, to put it more

simply, for a film to be truly artistic, an effectively interminable (and fundamentally *negative*) process of purging must first take place. In sum, we can ask what cinema is (and, crucially, what it does) by examining it as an ontological art, as a temporal art, as an art which is inextricably tied, for better or worse, to the other arts, or as an art that it hopelessly enmeshed with non-art.

To my mind, the first person to identify and investigate each of these approaches was the great Italian-French film theorist Ricciotto Canudo, who is perhaps most famous today for introducing the term 'the seventh art' to describe cinema, by which he heralded cinema as a 'brave new art' alongside poetry, painting, sculpture, music, theatre and dance. Writing in 1911, Canudo believed that the cinema would ultimately come to constitute a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art. Film would thus "*serve as Art's powerful coadjutor*".

Canudo contends: "*when the painter and the musician truly wed the poet's dream, and when their triple expression of a single subject is achieved in living light by the écraniste – at least while we wait for the screen's Wagner to embody all three at once – films will reach us with a supreme clarity of ideas and visual emotions. We will then recognize cinema as the synthesis of all the arts and of the profound impulse underlying them.*"[4]

It is instructive to place Canudo's beautiful but decidedly romantic thoughts about cinema alongside those of Alain Badiou, who, writing 80 years after the fact – with, of course, the benefit of hindsight – holds that the 'seventh art' is little more than "*the 'plus-one' of the arts*", and is as such an art which is "*both parasitic and inconsistent*".[5] Far from providing a glorious synthesis, Badiou effectively tells us that

cinema is little more than art's shadow. The Platonic reference here is key: cinema is literally a shadow art, an impure amalgamation of greater - and fundamentally Other - artistic Ideas, Ideas which exist outside cinema, outside the cave.

Here we should think of both Plato's cave, so often associated with cinema, and the 'magic cave' which appears toward the end of *Melancholia*, which is I think a direct reference to this philosophical cinematic precursor. To put it differently, cinema offers only the phantom of the Idea, a shadow of its true form. Moreover, as Badiou sees it, cinema can only lay claim to any real artistry insofar as it rids itself of all of its non-artistic baggage. The crucial point, for him, is that 'art' (or 'originality' or 'truth') can only exist in cinema by way of a complex sequence of refusals and negations.

The Romance of Destruction

It seems to me that these two opposing poles – Canudo's romantic conception of cinema as providing the platform for the first true *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and Badiou's more negative understanding of cinema as a hopelessly bloated medium which can only really touch on 'art' insofar as it empties itself of its jaded content – operate simultaneously in von Trier's cinema, and in particular in *Melancholia*. A single example drawn from either camp must suffice here. On the one hand, I will briefly consider von Trier's conflation of opera - in particular, Wagnerian opera - with cinema; and on the other, I will say a few more things about what I have called von Trier's 'negative' approach to cinema, whereby his films can be seen to equate to a concerted sequence of refusals.

For one thing, the fact that von Trier divides his film into two 'Parts', heralded by an extended overture (accompanied by nothing less than the Prelude to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*), is alone enough to register *Melancholia*'s grand artistic pretentions: as von Trier happily admits, with *Melancholia* he desired, as he told Thorsen, "*to dive headlong into abyss of German romanticism*". Indeed, for a film that spends so much time referencing the great works of art – from Shakespeare and de Sade through to Velasquez, Breughel, Millais, and the Suprematist movement (not to mention *The Old Testament*) – I can't recall another 'popular' film that so immediately and conspicuously gestures toward the grandeur of cinema in its stupendousness, as much as in its totalising nature.

The images in the overture, for example, are quite literally poetry in motion, the high-speed camera capturing the slightest gesture with more accuracy and immediacy than a painting ever could, calling us back, once again, to Eadweard Muybridge's famous photographs of galloping horses, from which cinema itself supposedly derived. The fact that von Trier uses Wagner here, the great champion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, only serves to hammer home the point: cinema, von Trier tells us, is the ultimate art, the one which, as Canudo argues, truly synthesises all the others.

And yet this sublime sequence – this grand paean to Romanticism and the infinite grandeur of cinema – is itself, for von Trier, equally an admission of failure: as he himself wonders in the Thorsen interview, "*is* [this] *not just another way of expressing defeat? Defeat to the lowest of cinematic common denominators?*". Accordingly, Part 1, 'Justine', immediately turns this sublime imagery on its head, returning us to more familiar von Trier territory, contrasting

the overwhelming grandeur of the overture with the kind of anti-aesthetic cinema that von Trier is most famous for (employing shaky handheld camerawork, fragmented dialogue, jump-cuts, pseudo-documentary style, and so on).

We might say that at this point the film shifts from the traditional objective and omniscient position adopted by the 'great artwork', to a more subjective, intuitive space, mirroring the passage from the 'immortal' work of art to that of mere mortal man, bringing us back down to Earth, as it were. One can't help but note, however, that these 'refusals' to follow the conventions of cinema have by now become well and truly conventional. No longer do we experience the joy, as we did, say, half a century ago with Godard's *A Bout de souffle* (France, 1960), of experiencing cinema as though it had been born anew.

The Impossibility of Cinema

Indeed, I think von Trier himself has by now recognised that the purifying techniques he employed only a few years earlier in films like *Dogville* (2003) and *Manderlay* (2005) no longer produce anything new but rather trap him in an endless cycle of repetition. Contrast, for example, von Trier's recent work with his well-known statement of only a few years ago that "*you can do almost anything on film now. With the help of computers, I can insert a herd of elephants into a scene, or create an earthquake. But that doesn't interest me. I'd rather draw the shape of a dog on the studio floor to mark that there is a dog there, or put a crate of beer in a corner to indicate a bar*."[6] Clearly such pretentions have flown out the window by the time of *Melancholia*, with its sublime set-pieces and digital enhancements.

All of which leads us, I think, to the melancholic heart of von Trier's film, namely, that there are no longer any possibilities left in cinema. Needless to say, this should not be understood in the resignedly postmodern 'everything's-been-done-so-let's-just-repeat-the-past' kind of way. Rather, my point is that, with *Melancholia*, at least so far as von Trier is concerned, it seems that the avenues of cinema have finally become closed off. Even the *Dogme* idea of originality through restriction quickly became stale, and few of its supposed adherents actually adhered to it anyway. Whereas, once upon a time, restrictions provided a remarkable creative stimulus – think, for example, of Italian neorealism in the aftermath of WWII, or even the imaginative ways Hollywood cinema circumvented the Hays code in the 40s and 50s - the resources offered by negation appear to have finally been exhausted.

This loss is moreover acutely registered in *Melancholia*, in the passage of the film itself. Whereas in the overture von Trier symbolically conflates destruction with creation on a ridiculously grand scale, depicting the collision of the planets in terms of both unimaginable destruction - total and utter annihilation - and, at the same time, as the very origin of life, the moment of conception or fertilisation (an image which, incidentally, has itself been employed countless times throughout the history of cinema), all this has changed by the film's conclusion. Now the colour drains from the frame and, as the music swells, the film prematurely ends before Wagner can hit his famous '7th', before the magical, transcendent moment arrives, and, of course, just as the magic cave, the cave of illusion and ignorance, the cave of cinema itself, is annihilated.

In truth none of the four approaches to thinking cinema I outlined earlier seem to offer any more promise: cinema has by now well and truly said what it has to say about the nature of both appearing and time. And as the grand synthesis of the arts, cinema has fallen hopelessly short, having long been crushed by the weight of its own artistic expectations and shortcomings. Lastly, and most significantly for von Trier, the idea of purification or negation - the approach to cinema that effectively equates destruction with creation - has ceased to be productive. Indeed, after the abstractions of *Dogville* and *Manderlay*, what is there left to purge? I think *Melancholia* gives us an answer, and the answer is cinema itself.

Notes and References

[1] Nils Thorsen, 'Longing for the End of All', undated interview with Lars von Trier, at www.melancholiathemovie.com/#_interview.

[2] For a scholarly edition, see André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, Montreal: Caboose, 2009.

[3] Alain Badiou, *Cinema*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013, p. 139.

[4] Ricciotto Canudo, 'Reflections on the Seventh Art', in Richard Abel (ed.), *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology 1907-1939, vol. I: 1907-1929*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988, p. 293.

[5] Badiou, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

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13 / Surrealism and the Documentary Film

Haruka Kawakami

Reality and Surreality

The relationship between Surrealism and documentary film may seem antithetical. By contrast with the immediacy and 'realism' of documentary, the perplexing practices of Surrealism are often considered outdated, or at best an artistic style that solely explores inner, subjective fantasies. The gap is, however, not quite as wide as we might imagine. As well as the fact that some Surrealists have employed documentary film practices, especially in relation to their ethnographic interests, Surrealists can in fact be seen as having goals not dissimilar to those of documentarists, in their case the discovery of a 'surreality' which is an alternative to reality as commonly understood.

The contributions of the *avant-garde*, Modernism, and the Surrealist movement to the development of documentary film practice is undoubted. According to Nichols, the *avant-garde*'s use of 'poetic' film techniques (especially its use of fragmented montage and abstraction) exerted a strong influence on documentary film during the 1920s and 1930s. In contrast to documentary film's everyday realism, the *avant-garde* introduced a strongly aesthetic visual style that enabled film-makers to depict things "*in a radically new way*".[1]

The relationship between Surrealism and documentary, however, should be examined in ways that extend beyond aspects of visual style or the rhetoric of film technique. In fact, a more theoretical connection exists between Surrealism and documentary film, because they are both creative practices that engage with actuality. I suggest that the problem of observation is the most significant shared component in the practices of Surrealism and documentary.

As Grierson suggested in his influential Thirties essay 'First Principles of Documentary', the fundamental concepts of the documentary film are 'observation' and 'construction'.[2] The confrontation - and balance - between these concepts in the film-making process distinguishes the 'documentary' - Grierson's coinage - from any other type of non-fiction film. However, the evolution of documentary film shows us that these two concepts are actually interwoven and that they are in effect inseparable in the practice of documentary film. Filmic observation is best seen as an arrangement that subjectively constructs the observer and the observed object, rather than as an attempt to objectively examine things 'as they are'.

Historical Relationships

In the context of Surrealism, there are several instances of this approach to the description of everyday scenes and objects. Perhaps the most famous example is Buñuel's *Las Hurdes: Tierra Sin Pan (Land without Bread,* Spain, 1933*)*. This film appears to be a typical ethnographic documentary that focuses on the abject poverty affecting the people of Las Hurdes in western Spain.

The film nonetheless creates very disturbing impressions, because, surprisingly, the film-maker displays a strong lack of sympathy for the inhabitants rather than the expected degree of empathy. In addition, the film contains an exaggerated narration that, on occasion, is seemingly not suited to what is being shown. As Jeffery Ruoff has suggested, not only does Buñuel manage to disturb the conventional system of representation, he is also critically satirising the traditions of the ethnographic documentary.[3]

In 1929, four years prior to *Las Hurdes* - and in the same year that *Un Chien Andalou* was released - Bunuel's early collaborator Salvador Dalí wrote a series of essays entitled *Documentaire: Paris 1929.* In them Dalí describes the affinity that exists between documentary films and Surrealism. According to Dali, both are inherently objective, spontaneous, and share anti-literary characteristics. In his essays, Dalí also created verbal 'documentaries' on his daily life. As we shall see, they are remarkable examples of a Surrealist form of writing that is based on the documentary attitude.

In France during the 1950s, Michael Zimbacca, Jean-Louis Bedouin, and Benjamin Péret created several short documentaries based on primitive myths from around the world. These exerted an influence on young French documentarists from the same period, including Jean Rouch and Chris Marker. In Britain, meanwhile, Humphrey Jennings, such an important figure in the British documentary film movement, had participated in the British Surrealist movement of the 1930s. Jennings was one of several organisers of the London Surrealist Exhibition held in 1936, and also translated the poetry of Péret.

Although Jennings later moved away from Surrealism, it exerted a strong influence on his views of the significance of daily life, as can be seen in his short film *Spare Time* (1939), which depicts the leisure time activities of working-class people. From these instances, we can see that Surrealist documentary film is regularly devoted to ethnographic interests, seeing in different cultures the potential for alternative realities.

A further attempt to make direct connections between Surrealism and documentary film was made in the late 1950s by Toshio Matsumoto, a young Japanese film-maker and theoretician of the period, who had discovered the potential of the 'neo-documentary' in Surrealism. Matsumoto proposed that the Surrealists' explorations of objects and their techniques of juxtaposition should be applied to documentary film-making.[4]

He argued that documentary films should resist the naïve realism that tended to dominate Japanese documentary, and suggested that film-makers should discover a technique to unify subjective, inner reality with exterior social reality.

Matsumoto suggested the basic Surrealist method of expression, involving spontaneous montages of images, as a possible new approach to documentary film-making.

Matsumoto believed that the documentary film could maintain its significance only by the convergence, via Surrealism, of objective 'observation' and subjective 'construction'. Documentary films could then come close to Surrealism by capturing realms of reality broader than that which is commonly perceived. (We should note, however, that Matsumoto's understanding of Surrealism appears quite limited. He unfairly condemned the historic Surrealists, for example because he believed they solely concentrated on the exploration of inner reality.)

Observation and Construction

From the beginning, as we have seen, documentary as a genre of film-making was theorised in terms of the ambiguous relationship between 'observation' and 'construction'. As already noted, Grierson believed that the proper observation of circumstances, and the appropriate interpretation of the situation that comes from subjective constructions (including montage and dramatization), to be essential concerns for the documentary film.

Referring to Flaherty's *Moana* (1926), the result of a year's immersion in the lives of Samoan islanders, and Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927), Grierson coined the term 'documentary', claiming that the genre was distinct from any other kind of non-fictional film, such as a newsreel or educational film, through a well-balanced mixture of aesthetic sense and objective views. Ever since, the documentary film has struggled to accommodate the twin

demands of 'observation' and 'construction', and to negotiate the potential contradiction between objective recording and subjective fictionalisation.

A film already mentioned, Buñuel's *Las Hurdes*, keenly focusses this problem. The famous sequence of a mountain goat falling from a high peak is a prime example. This scene is shocking, but it was apparently staged.[5] Furthermore, the arrogant, indifferent narration intends - but fails - to equate the sequence with the narrative of the film, which explores the harshness of life in a mountainous region. Buñuel exposed how the documentary film feigns actuality, when in reality, documentary films are an artificial fabrication or collage of images, narrative, words, and sounds.

Today, the term 'observation' in the context of documentary film tends to refer to the works of the American and Canadian 'direct cinema' of the 1960s. Works of direct cinema tend to use no narration nor music, and intend to show the direct, objective recording of situations and events. Whereas 'Direct Cinema' prompted debate about the morality and validity of its fly-on-the-wall approach, the creators of the related school of *cinéma vérité,* for their part, were to create more self-reflexive films.

The most celebrated and representative work of *cinéma vérité* is perhaps *Chronique d'un été* (*Chronicle of a Summer*, France, 1961), a collaboration between sociologist Edgar Morin and anthropologist/film-maker Jean Rouch, set in Paris and St. Tropez. The makers of *cinéma vérité* films describe themselves as a players involved in the situation being filmed, fully acknowledging that the observer is inseparable from the observed situation, reminding us that that 'observation' and 'construction' are indeed inseparable in this context.

Frederick Wiseman, for example, the key exponent of 'direct cinema' in the observational style, tries to exclude any shots in which a person being filmed looks at the camera. This would perhaps suggest that nobody actually cares about the presence of the camera, but in reality it is the result of careful editing. Wiseman's *Titicut Folies* (1967), a study of the Bridgewater State Hospital for the criminally insane in Massachusetts, provides a further example here.

The Japanese documentary film-maker Kazuhiro Soda, who is strongly influenced by Wiseman, has also drawn attention to the importance of the editing process in his own observational style. After all, observed objects must be constructed and interpreted with reference to the film-maker as the observer. In other words, 'construction' and 'observation' reinforce one another in the structure of the film.

Filmic observation, as a key component of the documentary film, is thus an arrangement of the relationship between the film-maker, the camera, and the observed objects. This arrangement owes its validity to our conventional trust in the inherent indexical ability of photographic imagery. The most important thing is that 'observation' as an arrangement can generate innovative relationships and connections between objects and subjects. It is precisely at this point that 'surreality' can emerge.

Image and Enigma

The most significant instance of Surrealist observation is to be found in a passage in Dalí's essays. At the end of the first part of *Documentaire: Paris 1929,* he suggests that documentary should be regarded as "*the most delicate and*

constant osmosis that is established between surreality and reality".[6] His microscopic description of the composition, spatial relationships, and osmosis of objects in a room – mundane and fantastical by turns - certainly resembles the transcription of a sequence of filmic observation, however enigmatic. Just before these depictions, he insists that when a documentary is simple and instinctive, it can indeed be a kind of enigma. 'Enigma' is an important concept in Surrealist imagery. As David Bate points out, surreal images are produced by a semiotic effect conveyed by the short-circuiting of fundamentally contradictory values. This semiotic circumstance he describes as "*enigmatic*".

'Enigma', following Laplanche, is a sign that an individual cannot understand what something means on a conscious level. When one confronts the enigma, he or she knows that this sign certainly refers to something, but does not recognise what that something actually is. During this disruption of the normal, conscious process of signification, an enigmatic object emerges. The object bears a shadow of the realm of the unconscious that Bate describes as "*psychical reality*".[7] In Dalí's essays, the documentarist's role in observation is precisely one that generates such enigmatic processes involving everyday objects.

André Breton's anecdote about a uniquely-shaped spoon is another instance of this enigmatic process. In *L'amour Fou*, Breton writes about his chance purchase of a wooden spoon during a stroll with Giacometti in a Paris flea-market in 1934. The spoon became montaged together with many other elements in Breton's personal life - Cinderella's glass slipper, a sculpture which Giacometti promised to make for him, even his unconscious sexual desires.[8] Breton's words are supplemented by a Man Ray photograph of the spoon.

The combination of a photographic image with verbal depiction generates a process of observation that renders the spoon enigmatic. In these two texts, we find that the same arrangement of observation with documentation, reinforced by photographic indices, works to construct the surreal imagery of daily objects. Generating an alternative relationship between the observer and the observed, it shows a de-familiarised figure of daily life, a potential alternative reality. It also works to prevent 'the surreal' from collapsing into mere subjective fantasy.

Documentary observation is an arrangement of the relationships between film-makers, the camera, and the situation being filmed. Documentary film and Surrealism come together in a shared quest for an alternative reality. Observation is the point of cross-over between *avant-garde* poetics and what Grierson famously called "*the creative treatment of actuality*" in a filmic structure. Both Surrealists and documentarists employ observation as a technique to catch an expanded reality and to criticise the conventional system of representation, a core concept of documentary film practice.

Notes and References

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[8] André Breton, *L'amour Fou,* Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1987, pp. 30-8.

14 / Rethinking De-realisation: The Ethics of The Spectacle

Kit Wise

The Overexposed City

Paul Virilio begins his 1984 essay 'The Overexposed City' with an account of the technologisation of the city, created in order to increase its security, including the application of militarised technologies, primarily those of surveillance, to protect the thresholds of urban spaces. The examples he gives are those of airport security, counter-terrorist measures such as CCTV, and "*the sudden proliferation of cameras, radar and detectors at mandatory passageways*". Such features make the airport "*the state's last gateway*".[1]

Virilio goes on to comment that "'*The camera has become our best inspector'*, *John F. Kennedy declared a short while before he was killed on a street in Dallas. Actually, the camera allows us to participate - live or on tape - in certain*

political events and certain optical phenomena, such as phenomena of breaking into effraction, in which the city lets itself be seen through and through, and phenomena of breaking apart, diffraction, in which its image is reflected beyond the atmosphere to the ends of space ... This overexposure attracts our attention ..." (p. 546)

The term "*diffraction"* refers to a specific optical event, caused by the apparent bending of light as it passes around a small object or through small apertures. This can cause a single ray of light to appear to radiate in a circular pattern as it passes around and through things. "*Effraction"*, meaning forcible entry such as a burglary, similarly suggests the permeability of an object to light, but here in the opposite direction: light breaks in, rather than out.

This disruption of a replete boundary, and the legal connotations of the term, aligns Virilio's discussion of transparency and immateriality through the lens with the idea of a crime or violation: the camera is the means to this end. Virilio qualifies this criminal aspect of the rupture: "*Where the polis once inaugurated a political theater, with the agora and the forum, today there remains nothing but a cathode-ray screen, with its shadows and specters of a community in the process of disappearing. This 'cinematism' conveys the last appearance of urbanism, the last image of an urbanism without urbanity, where tact and contact yield to televisual impact ...*" (pp. 546-7)

The Disappearance of the Moral Community

This first instance of Virilio's use of the term "*cinematism*" in the essay is again clearly marked by its association with criminality. It signals a collapse of social order, decorum and

exchange. Unlike the Classical city, built around the functional site of political debate, where citizens were equal and interacted to develop laws for the common good, the 'overexposed' city merely brings everything and everyone together as "*shadows"* and *"specters"* of a community that is already fading or disappearing.

Social skills and mutual respect are absent; "*urbanity*", here understood as a community with shared ideals of civilised behaviour, is replaced by its final "*image*" - urbanism, a collection of people who share only their location. The implication is that social and ethical co-ordinates have been lost to cinematism. We now understand Virilio's notion of the 'aesthetics of disappearance', explored in his 1980 book of the same name, as implying both the literally fleeting quality of moving, light-based images – fundamentally associated with cinema - as well as the disappearance of societal norms and expectations.

Virilio describes Hollywood as "*the city of living cinema where sets and reality, cadastral urban planning and cinematic footage planning, the living and the living dead merge in delirium*" (p. 550). Here, Virilio's language becomes increasingly influenced by notions of the undead: "*shadows and specters*", "*the living and the living dead*", "*the 'spectral' character of the city and its inhabitants*". Virilio seems to impute a zombie-like quality to the city of living cinema - an unreal, supernatural state that is without thought or consciousness and therefore again lacking an ethical framework.

For Virilio, Hollywood is from the start a key instance of this otherworldly, metaphysical process of de-realisation. As "*The Babylon of film 'derealization', the industrial zone of*

pretense, Hollywood built itself up neighbourhood by neighbourhood, avenue by avenue, upon the twilight of appearances, the success of illusions and the rise of spectacular productions (such as those of D.W. Griffith) while waiting for the megalomaniacal urbanization of Disneyland, Disneyworld and Epcot Center." (p. 550).

The mythical or metaphysical dimension of de-realisation is here reinforced by reference to the parable of Babylon. The Biblical Babylon is a magnificent city, within which a major architectural edifice started to be built - the Tower of Babel - intended to be high enough to reach God. Appalled by this attempt to compete with the divine, God scattered the people of Babylon to separate regions of the earth and divided into many tongues what had been so far a common language. The parable is intended to have a moral dimension, criticising the Babylonians for their vanity. Virilio, a devout Catholic, here suggests that Hollywood is a similarly blasphemous, God-less construction.

As we know, Griffith was one of the founders of Hollywood and produced one of the first feature-length films, *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which quickly became infamous for its racist content. Renowned for his spectacular productions and roadshows, Griffith became vilified for the film's heroic portrayal of the Ku Klux Klan, as well as the representation of African-American men as ignorant and sexually aggressive. In its specific reference to Griffith, Virilio's reference to the cinematic is once again laden with moral critique.

Finally, these connotations of immorality or amorality are more emphatically asserted in Virilio's discussion of modernist narratives, immediately prior to his account of cinema: "*If a crisis exists today, it is first and foremost a crisis*

of references (ethical, aesthetic), an incapacity to take stock of events in an environment where appearances are against us." (p. 549). Similarly, in reference to mass communication, he claims that it "*heedlessly structures and destructures space-time, the continuum of society.*" (p. 548). Ethical crisis and the de-structuring of society are his repeated concerns.

Throughout his text, then, Virilio suggests that the overexposed city leads to criminality, the collapse of society and an ethical void; and that this is associated with its most complete form, cinema. He maintains the same concern in 'The Law of Proximity' when he concludes that we require a new perspective: "*the accelerated perspective of real time and the invention of new architectural and urban theories. Thus the law of electromagnetic proximity opens up imperious necessities concerning not only ethics and politics but aesthetics and world view*."[2]

'The Overexposed City' also leads to an understanding of cinema as a new perspective, understood as both a new form of visual perception, as well as requiring a new ethical viewpoint. While Virilio identifies this ethical lacuna – even if by indirect reference or in passing - he makes no attempt to respond to the need for a new ethical framework. The ethical void that he associates with the rise of cinematism in the overexposed city is therefore, we have to say, also found in his writing itself.

The Will to Art

Deleuze, conversely, finds precisely in the cinematic the potential for a new ethical framework. In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, he acknowledges the importance of embracing the potential of new technologies for the development of

new artistic horizons. He provides an important qualification of his famous 'spiritual automatism', the affect of cinema on the mind or spirit, such that new modes of thought are possible, involving "*the will to art*". This motivation, he argue, gives value to the affect generated by 'automatism'; yet he also acknowledges the inherent risk involved here, which in sum is the fundamentally capitalist condition of spectacle, as first outlined by Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle*. In considering the significance of the "*new automatism*" that modern cinema enables, which we can interpret as an example of Virilio's technological innovation, Deleuze states:

"*The new automatism is worthless in itself if it is not put to the service of a powerful, obscure, condensed will to art, aspiring to deploy itself through involuntary movements which none the less do not restrict it … electronic images will have to be based upon still another will to art, or on as yet unknown aspects of the time-image. The artist is always in the situation of saying simultaneously: I claim new methods, and I am afraid that the new methods may invalidate all will to art, or make it into a business, a pornography, a Hitlerism ….*"[3]

While Deleuze goes on to provide an account of how specifically cinema can contribute to a re-thinking of our world view - indeed is perhaps uniquely able to accomplish this - I would here like to turn from the discussion of cinema and crime to focus on how the ethical void of cinematic spectacle might be addressed. How might the "*will to art*" be manifested? Through Giorgio Agamben's account of the 'witness', we can reconsider more precisely how cinema could be deployed. If we assume that the non-ethical spectacle is resisted through our becoming engaged witnesses of our time, rather than passive consumers, then

we need to address the question: how can the artist establish a methodology of practice that allows witnessing?

Authorship and Witness: Auschwitz

In *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (1999), Agamben identifies a different problem of witnessing, what he regards as the essential *aporia* of the problem of testimony: "*the survivors bore witness to something it is impossible to bear witness to*"[4]. Agamben cites Primo Levi's awareness, in *The Drowned and the Saved* (1989), that what was most true of the Nazi concentration camps, and what was most horrific, was that which lead to the demise of the vast majority of the camps' inmates: those who witnessed the actual Auschwitz perished. Levi and the other survivors were the exception and only survived because their experience was in some way abnormal (for example, they received preferential treatment because of their special skills - in Levi's case, his training as a chemist).

Witnessing disasters such as Auschwitz thus becomes impossible: the dead cannot speak their testimony. Instead, as Agamben puts it, the survivors "*speak in their stead, by proxy, as pseudo-witnesses; they bear witness to a missing testimony*" (p. 34). Consequently, for Levi, the question of testimony suggests that "*the entire history of the brief 'Millennial Reich' can be reread as a war against memory*".[5] For Agamben, the issue can be taken further: how do we know anything of the past in general? "*The aporia of Auschwitz is, indeed, the very aporia of historical knowledge: a non-coincidence between facts and truth, between verification and comprehension*." (p. 12)

In the final chapter of *Remnants*, Agamben provides an account of the meaning of the word 'author'. He pursues the Latin origin of the word *auctor*, which had three meanings, designating a vendor and an advisor as well as a witness. Agamben points to the significance of this last meaning: "*insofar as his testimony always presupposes something - a fact, a thing or a word - that preexists him and whose reality and force must be validated or certified. . . . Testimony is thus always an act of an 'author': it always implies an essential duality in which an insufficiency or incapacity is completed or made valid.*" (pp. 149-150).

As a result, Agamben argues that in the case of the witness, "*every creator is always a co-creator*", specifying that in this collaboration, the act of the *auctor* "*completes the act of an incapable person*"; and that the work of the author/artist is equally invalid without "*the imperfect act or incapacity*" that precedes it (p. 136). He concludes: "*The survivor and the Muselmann, like the tutor and the incapable person and the creator and his material, are inseparable; their unity-difference alone constitutes testimony.*" (p. 136). The implications of this formulation of the author as witness reflect the concerns expressed in the work of Primo Levi and much of Agamben's account is by implication addressed to this example.

In contrast with Levi's work being limited by an unease about his authorial position, Agamben's account points to the fundamental necessity of his role and gives it equal value to those whose stories he attempts to tell, through their "*unity-difference*". This effectively provides a response to what Agamben calls "*Levi's paradox*" (p. 68): how one bears witness when the witnesses have perished; and demonstrates that "*the subject of testimony is constitutively*

fractured . . . the witness, the ethical subject, is the subject who bears witness to desubjectification. And the unassignability of testimony is nothing other than the price of this fracture ..." (p. 137)

To summarise: the consequence of Agamben's argument is that there is no authoritative 'I' that speaks; only the ambiguous, compound self of witness/writer can be the subject and author of testimony. This formulation provides an ethical rationale, indeed an imperative, for the artist. We can understand the process of both appropriation and collaboration in the construction of testimony as a deliberate and concerted attempt to engage with the ethical void that Virilio identifies in de-realisation.

Remnants can be understood, as Agamben suggests, as a wayfarer's guide to the grey zone where ethics collapse, and his specific, repeated emphasis of the role of the author (Primo Levi, but by extension all artists) engaged in a collaborative relationship with the witness, indicates the importance he places on art as a means to this end. Drawing on Agamben's awareness of the vagaries of testimony and the complex duality of artist/author - here understood as the film-maker - appropriation and collaboration are revealed as being central to the construction of testimony. This enables, through a "*will to art*", the attempt to engage with the ethical void that Virilio identifies in cinematic derealisation.

David Joselit also comments on the role of the artist in engaging the viewer as an ethically alert witness. In an analysis of the work of Bice Curiger, he refers to Thomas Hirschhorn's 2008 piece 'The Eye': "*An artist has to lead us to the point of caring - perhaps even put us in a panic. For if art is ever to become genuinely political again, it will have to do*

so through a politics of witnessing. And this presumes the vivid, visceral assertion … that looking is not innocent - it is a commitment, a contract, an embarrassment, an accusation, a turn-on, and an assault, but never just a simple act of consumption."[6] It is precisely at this "*point of caring"* that we no longer engage in the passive consumption of the testimony of the other as spectacle and we experience Deleuze's "*will to art*". Film then becomes a vehicle that works to realise our witnessing.

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15 / The Astute Melancolia of Fernando Pessoa: Exhibition Strategies for João Botelho's *Film of Disquiet*

Teresa Duarte Martinho

This essay focuses on the unusual strategy for exhibiting and distributing João Botelho's *Film of Disquiet (Filme do Desassossego,* Portugal, 2010), an adaptation of *The Book of Disquiet* by Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935). Pessoa is one of the best-known and most widely translated Portuguese writers and one of the most influential internationally. The book, published posthumously in 1982, is a particularly good representation of his writing process. In George Steiner's phrase, it conveys the "*astute melancholy*" which characterises Pessoa's work as a whole.[1]

Rather than showing the film in a commercial cinema, the director opted to have the first showing of *The Film of Disquiet* in a Lisbon theatre. After the opening, and in line with a strategy the director had marked out together with the company which produced the film, the *Film of Disquiet*

was always shown in municipal theatres and auditoriums, on specific days, using a single copy and a digital projector.

Botelho was present at every showing, addressing the audience before the screening with some introductory words about what they were going to see and appealing for audience involvement. This distinctive strategy for exhibiting and distributing the film was successful in attracting a significant number of viewers compared to other Portuguese films opening in 2010.

My aim in this essay is to examine the way the *Film of Disquiet* was shown, emphasising how this represents an alternative channel for film distribution and exhibition. This strategy can be seen as a deliberate attempt to subvert the prevailing logic of film commodification. It can also be interpreted as an attempt to get around and to overcome the powerful, traditional mechanisms for promoting and distributing blockbusters.

At the same time, I believe that the strategy and subject-matter involved here make direct appeals to the production of cultural perspectives and theories of art. Although each of these has specific features, they place a common emphasis on the idea that artistic work is principally the product of the combined efforts of a diverse group of actors and not the fruit of the isolated action of a single individual.

Botelho, Pessoa and Portuguese Cinema

João Botelho is one of the best-known Portuguese film-makers, gaining international recognition through exposure at major international film festivals. Throughout his career he has been one of the most active participants in discussion of policy and strategy for promoting cinema in Portugal.

Botelho is one of a group of film-makers who argue that a country of Portugal's modest size cannot afford to support an industrial system of film production, and that it is therefore more effective to produce films using the 'craft' model.

The relationship between Botelho's films and the work and person of Fernando Pessoa is a characteristic feature of his path as a film director. His first full-length film, *Conversa Acabada (The Other One,* 1980), revolves around the relationship between the poets Pessoa and Mário de Sá Carneiro (1890-1916). When this film opened, the work of Pessoa was not yet as widely known as it has since become. A number of factors have contributed to making Pessoa better-known in recent times.

These include, on the one hand, greater access to the vast legacy of work which he left unpublished, and, on the other, the fact that a lot more of his work has been published and translated. That is why Botelho, when asked if his film adaptation of *The Book of Disquiet* was "*a long-held dream*" said: "*It is a settling of accounts. 30 years ago I helped Fernando Pessoa a bit, with my first film, now he's helping me. It's such an important work that it was worth taking risks for. I've reached an age when I'm only interested in taking risks*".[2]

'Risk' is a word which frequently crops up when the director talks about his *Film of Disquiet*, especially given the fragmentary structure of Pessoa's book. A further element of risk arises from the failure of Botelho's previous film, which led him to search for a more innovative strategy and greater control over how his films are circulated and received. In his own words, the previous film, shown for less than a month in

seven cinemas belonging to a leading distributor, was a "*death sentence*".[3]

The main trends in film consumption in Portugal are familiar enough in terms of what is observed in other countries. Television is the platform which accounts for the vast majority of film viewers (78%). The purchase, rental and borrowing of DVDs (36%) is closely followed by commercial cinema attendance (35%). Alternative cinema, which includes cinema clubs, festivals, cycles and special showings, accounts for just 12% of film viewers.[4]

Where the commercial cinema is concerned, according to data from the European Audiovisual Observatory, Portugal was the European country which lost the largest number of film viewers in 2012. This decline has accelerated since 2002, and contrasts with the continuing increase in the number of screenings. In terms of audience figures, Portuguese films shown in 2012 accounted for a market share of just 5%.[5]

The Book of Disquiet

The evolution of the book was unusual and it was left unfinished. Pessoa was writing it throughout most of his adult life, from the age of 25 up until 1934, the year before his death. During his lifetime he published only thirteen of the approximately 500 fragments which he left earmarked for the book, but without putting them in order or deciding on an overall structure.

The version on which Botelho's film is based was put together by the researcher, translator and editor Richard Zenith. This first appeared in 1998, with several subsequent editions following. The main figure to whom Fernando

Pessoa attributed the recording of the "*disconnected impressions*" which cut across the whole of *The Book of Disquiet* is one 'Bernardo Soares', a clerical worker in an office in Lisbon. Of the various heteronyms which Pessoa created to disseminate and display his many voices and techniques, 'Bernardo Soares' occupies a special place.

Pessoa regarded the name as a semi-heteronym, because they had similar characteristics, such as a liking for speculation and the way they both felt the relationship between life and dreams. Pessoa and Soares also shared addresses and working environments – the rua dos Douradores, in downtown Lisbon, their offices, which still exist today. In the words of 'Soares', *The Book of Disquiet* is an "*autobiography without facts*"[6], a diary of sensations and thoughts, aphorisms, and philosophical speculations.

As well as considering the *Book of Disquiet* as a work of such importance that it was worth taking risks for when adapting it to the cinema, Botelho pointed to three main ideas in Pessoa's book which made him want to turn it into a film. The first is the notion of light, an element naturally dear to film-makers and photographers: he cites the proposition made by 'Soares' that the light which illuminates the faces of the saints is the same which illuminates the shoes of passers-by.

Secondly, there is the issue of time. In the director's words, based on 'Soares': "*time in our dreams is not the same as time in our real lives, it is always distorted, shorter, longer … which is why the film is about three days and three nights in the life of Bernardo Soares. Three days … or three minutes, if we go by the clock. And in the end it's two hours, which is the running time of the film*".[7]

Finally, Botelho was inspired by Pessoa's interest in orality and audibility, leading him to create a film in which he gives the text power over the image: "*Pessoa achieves an oral language here which cannot be achieved in silence … I made a film in which* [I wanted] *the text to prevail over the image*". In addition to the various ways in which Pessoa's book appealed to Botelho, the director also faced the challenge of filming Lisbon and representing the city in its different patterns and landscapes.

Exhibiting and Distributing *Film of Disquiet*

As for the film's distribution strategy, the director outlined a different argument. It was based, from the outset, on his firm decision, together with the production company, not to show the film in commercial cinemas, but in municipal theatres and auditoriums instead. (It should be noted that the film's budget was largely provided by the Ministry of Culture and the Lisbon municipal council.)

Only one copy of the film would be used, shown by means of a digital projector, purchased by the director specifically for this purpose with the help of the producer. Botelho gave two main reasons for this choice. The first was an argument in favour of the viability of state funding of the arts, with the underlying idea of giving something back. In Botelho's words, those who benefit from state support have a duty to provide public service: "*when an artist is subsidised he should try to ensure his work reaches the largest possible number of people*".[8]

The second reason given by Botelho for his exhibition preferences also demonstrates his commitment to the viability and effective use of public resources. It is connected

to the particular suitability of these resources to *Film of Disquiet* in particular. It is also connected to an educational aim with regard to cultural practices and experiences of the reception and consumption of works of art.

In practical terms, the public resources in question comprised the network of municipal theatres themselves, which had been promoted by the Ministry of Culture in the second half of the Nineties with the aim of refurbishing existing spaces and building new facilities for putting on shows. Since that investment was, in general terms, not followed up by further investment in actual cultural programming, why not make good the gap by using them to show films, and moreover by using them for an unexpected programme?

This is what Botelho had to say: "*These theatres are fantastic, they have audiences which enjoy seeing and listening to new things. What is more, Fernando Pessoa's text demands a certain dignity and respect which is impossible to get in shopping centres* [where most commercial cinemas are located], *with people eating and drinking*".

We should recall that the director's aims with this film and the way it was to be shown were to avoid a repetition of the failure of his previous film. According to Botelho: "*that film sold more on DVD than there were spectators, who numbered about seven thousand. This is ridiculous, because when someone invests time and money he wants people to see his film … They threw me to the wolves of the shopping centres. The cinema today … is no longer a place of reflection, of emotions, so we have to re-educate people in how to go to the cinema*".

What Botelho means here by "*educating*" film audiences is basically giving viewers a different experience of seeing images and films: "*Those who* [mainly] *go to the cinema today are kids between eight and eighteen who want entertainment, with popcorn, mobile phones, whoopee-style amusement, and scares. They are fairytales, they can be told in three minutes flat. A lot of effects, a lot of images, three thousand shots, kids today can only concentrate with a succession of moving images. If you give them a still, they cannot see the wind in the trees*".[9]

In terms of the audience figures for *Film of Disquiet,* Botelho achieved his goal. Of the twenty-three domestic feature films which opened in Portugal in 2010, the film achieved the third-highest audience figures. In the course of screenings between September 2010 and May 2011 in over thirty theatres and auditoriums, the film was seen by thirty thousand viewers, with an average of two hundred and thirty-seven spectators per screening. For subsequent viewings, abroad as well as in Portugal, the original model has been replicated, the director being present at every screening.

This was the single biggest factor which marked out the strategy of Botelho and his producers. Some earlier Portuguese film-makers had indeed occasionally shown their work in municipal theatres and auditoriums, searching for ways of countering the shrinkage in the number and types of films offered in commercial cinemas. Here, the combination of Pessoa's original book and Botelho's personal presence with his film rendered the occasion unique.

This new way of distributing/exhibiting a film was a collaborative effort by several different actors in the field of

culture and the arts, starting with the producers and the director. The director took on a number of roles, including those of artist and cultural mediator. This combining of roles turned out to be a key factor in realising the director's wish for greater control over how the film was disseminated.

The success of this strategy for showing the *Film of Disquiet* also demonstrates that theatres and auditoriums were exactly the right place for seeing a film whose main aim is to put the text and the word at the forefront of audience attention. I would not wish to argue that the format is the right one for all films which are not blockbusters, but it was clearly the right choice for *Film of Disquiet*, for which a principal objective was indeed to afford viewers some of the more thoughtful pleasures of the cinematic spectacle.

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16 / Post-cinematic Experience: The Spectacle of IMAX

Tomasz Żaglewski

Introduction

Amongst the many positive opinions concerning IMAX technology and the IMAX film experience, two stand out with what I regard as explanatory force. The first comes from Charles Acland, who points out in *Screen Traffic*, his authoritative account of modern trends in film exhibition, that in many of nowadays multiplex attractions we don't really have to enjoy the film itself because we have so many other things to do around the experience of the film itself. Bars, concession stands, trailers and commercials are significant among the para-textual attractions which are gaining more and more of our attention when 'going to the cinema'.

In other words we don't actually even have to 'see' a 'film' to actually experience what we might call a post-cinematic form of film exhibition. My second point of reference is director Christopher Nolan, the director of *The Dark Knight* trilogy (2005-2012), *Inception* (2010) and *Interstellar* (2014), made with and for IMAX systems, who has commented on the astonishing way in which IMAX enables an audience "*to connect with the movie*". If we look at the most popular IMAX presentations as well as at the marketing efforts that surround them, we can certainly see that the notions of 'being in' the movie, 'living in it', and 'feeling it' are an essential part of the discourse surrounding such films.[1]

I suggest that any effort to understand IMAX as a cultural, technological and economical phenomenon must be situated somewhere between the implications of these two perspectives. That is to say, IMAX is a cinematic experience that exists in a very interesting and paradoxical imperative which defines film exhibition as something which simultaneously 'immerses' and yet 'extracts' the filmgoer/spectator. This dualistic approach takes us back to the very foundations of post-cinematic culture - the formation that I'll use to present the main IMAX determinants and, in consequence, these determinants themselves as a properties of post-cinematic experience.

Post-cinematic Culture

By post-cinematic culture I refer to the new way of producing, promoting and experiencing films, in which we four crucial strategies are involved. The first is *highly developed para-textualisation of the film text*. Almost every film that we enjoy in the multiplex, on TV, or by means of

digital devices is surrounded nowadays by a vast array of para-texts – materials that refer to or develop the 'anchor product' such as trailers, DVD extras, breakfast TV specials, gadgets etc. I'm not trying to say that these ideas were not present previously in the film marketplace, but rather that their status in today's culture is even more significant.

The second quality of post-cinematic culture is to do with a new form of the economy connected to modern ways of promoting a film. A trio of marketing logics is involved – an *attention* economy (attracting the viewer's notice, mostly by means of some of the para-texts previously mentioned, is crucial for financial success), an *affect* economy (only by invoking the emotions of the viewer can we successfully promote a product) and a *gift* economy (which is the consequence of the previous two strategies and lies in fans' and viewers' reactions, rooted in the 'prosumer' ideology). By using some or all of these ideas of 'economy', the modern film market is able to develop high-concept projects as well as less expensive, more artistic spectacles.

The third foundation-stone of the post-cinematic paradigm is what I call the importance of technological awareness in creating a Hollywood spectacle. Without highly developed social media, mobile devices and new film exhibition techniques like IMAX, there will be no attention economy and no para-textualisation as described before. Para-texts, with their power to create 'attention', 'affect' and 'gift' in the ways I've mentioned, reach the viewer via such channels as Facebook, Twitter, DVD, Blu-ray, Netflix or YouTube.

The modern, post-cinematic viewer thus inhabits a new media world: on the one hand, s/he demands that the

cinematic experience be a part of it as well whilst, on the other hand, s/he becomes a technological 'geek' in terms of his/her enthusiasm for the technological background of the spectacle. Finally, this media-oriented, paratext-hungry viewer, caught up in the various economic strategies I've outlined, must engage in a new kind of cinematic or rather post-cinematic participation. Life in this new post-cinematic era is very familiar to the 'prosumer', the film viewer who must be ready not only to enjoy the experience of the film but also to co-construct it through his/her own participation.

Vaudeville Revisited

For media scholars the main logic of media evolution (including cinema) is the journey towards its primary ambition of technological re-presentation. I think that Toby Miller puts it perfectly when he tries to explain the new face of American cinema in terms of what he calls 're-vaudevillisation' in reference to the type of film exhibition which characterises multiplex-orientated culture.[2] Re-vaudevillisation involves the return to the very first ideas about a film experience that is supposed to offer an immersive and overwhelming spectacle.

The narrative content is only a pretext: the main intention is to amaze the viewer with the show of movement and sound. When we view the latest blockbusters in cinematic spaces like IMAX – for example Cuarón's *Gravity* - it becomes obvious that the cinema is advancing into the future by, in a sense, returning to its roots: we are here very close to the terrifying first screenings, immersive and overwhelming, of the Lumières' historic mini-film *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (1895).

By thinking about post-cinematic culture in the context of re-vaudevillisation we can once more observe that all of the themes of post-cinematic form that we have been mentioning are in fact efforts to restore the 'feel' of cinema, from the earliest times, as it tries to capture the viewer in a very sensual way. As one of the posters of IMAX presentation says: "*You're not at the movies. You're in them*". IMAX is indeed the best example of the trend towards re-vaudevillisation in cinema on almost every level – in terms of of architecture, economy and exhibition.

IMAX's own definition of itself locates this type of experience in a very clear sense of spectacle: "*IMAX's initial introduction to the public was targeted at a fairly niche set of venues. Purpose-built theatres were designed and placed in museums, science centers and some iconic commercial destinations. The first permanent IMAX projection system was installed at Ontario Place's Cinesphere in Toronto in 1971 … Other locations would show films that matched the nature of the venue - a Grand Canyon exploration, a deep dive under the sea or even a trip into space*."[3]

This emphasis on the museum and gallery-like spaces situates the technology itself in the context of something more than an ordinary, big screen multiplex. Its exhibition technique is now almost aligned with the experience of the amusement park; we will now enjoy what we might call cinematic 'rides' rather than an 'ordinary' experience of film viewing.

IMAX went on to the revolutionary new technology of DMR (Digital Re-mastering), whereby an already powerful Hollywood movie can be transformed into a breathtaking

IMAX blockbuster. It allowed IMAX to work with directors on dozens of ways to enhance a movie and to change the saturation, contrast, brightness and a score of other variables in virtually every frame. The first film to employ this technique was Ron Howard's *Apollo 13* (USA, 1995) and it met with tremendous acclaim many months after the original release. After that, Hollywood's romance with IMAX blossomed. Once more, it is symbolic that *Apollo 13* should be celebrated here as marking the beginning of the IMAX-Hollywood union. The tale of a fatal space journey offers a hybrid film experience that connects the story's dramatic narrative line with the 'post-museum' or 'post-amusement park' aesthetic of spectacular 'space' cinematography.

Post-cinematic Spectacle

For better understanding of the post-cinematic trajectory of IMAX we must now consider three further issues: the architectural dimension, the reconstruction of IMAX-dedicated film texts, and the reproduction of the discourse that surrounds this type of film entertainment. The very first thing to be experienced by the IMAX viewer is the type of the IMAX theatre itself. By planning an IMAX theatre in a very specific type of architectural form we can see that in this particular example of post-cinematic culture even the location of the 'film ride' can be seen as its para-text, or an attraction in itself. The best examples of this can be found in places like London's BFI IMAX cinema, created in a very impressive dome-like form.

The façade of this kind of cinema is an attraction in its own right, becoming a giant advertisement for the pleasure that awaits the viewer inside the building. For the most-anticipated IMAX premieres, like *Skyfall* (Mendes, UK/USA,

2012) or *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug* (Jackson, USA/New Zealand, 2013), the façade turns into the gigantic cinematic poster that tempts the passer-by. As Acland puts it in his description of the mutiplex, the venue can become an "*architectural trailer*" in which "*The lobby is as much a feast for the eyes, decorated with such movie props as a model of F-14 Tomcat Tom Cruise flew in 'Top Gun', the submarine from 'The hunt for Red October' and the 'Starship Enterprise' from 'Star Trek: Generations'*".[4]

The creation of post-cinematic experience must also, as I've been arguing, base itself on the specific type of economic techniques that are applied to the business of film exhibition. IMAX presentations are very good examples of building the viewer's interest by using the 'attention' and 'affect' economy to attract and sustain its client's desire to see an IMAX show. The most obvious mechanisms involve promotional materials like trailers, posters or TV spots.

Three interesting examples of IMAX posters punchily sum up the crucial qualities of this system. The first is a general IMAX poster that uses pithy imperatives: "*See More. Hear More. Feel More*". This is, as we can suspect, the main promise that comes from the IMAX presentation. The second poster connects with the one of the blockbuster's hits of 2007 – Michael Bay's *Transformers*. On its IMAX poster we can find the claim of total vision achievable only by IMAX: "*You haven't seen it at all until you've seen it in IMAX*".

My final poster example supports the re-release of Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993). It uses one of the most memorable scenes from the film, in which a giant *tyrannosaurus rex* is chasing a jeep. The emblematic image here features the t-rex's head reflecting in the vehicle's

mirror, with the warning: "*Objects in mirrors are closer than they appear*". Each of these posters tries to build IMAX awareness by exploiting the 'affect' or 'attention' economy.

When we hear that IMAX is the cinematic space in which we can 'feel more', we inevitably want to experience the Hollywood's blockbusters in this 'higher' and 'truer' form of entertainment (as the *Transformers* poster suggests), where our senses can be re-adjusted to learn that in IMAX, film objects "*are closer than they appear*". The attention and desire that comes from this type of commercial refers to the promise of the fully immersive experience as described by Angela Ndalianis: "*Increasingly, and through their own media-specific methods, entertainment media strive to obliterate the frame that demarcates a distance between reality and fantasy. The cinema relies on wide-screen formats, computer-generated special effects, and surround-sound experiences*".[5]

Technology and the Spectator

One of the main moments of every IMAX trip is the 'credo' of this technological system that is playing before any IMAX presentation. This contains the main information about the system that we are going to see in action – the number of speakers, the quality of the screen, and so on. This is the essential look behind the frame of film immersion that refers to the audience's demand to be amazed but, at the same time, to be better informed about the technological background of the experience.

This desire is brilliantly perceived by Barbara Klinger in relation to home cinema in terms which can also help us understand the more public world of IMAX: "*Mediation thus*

becomes the ultimate arbiter of experience. In this way, the affective power of image and sound is displaced onto the machinery that delivers it. As technology achieves authority, the spectacle of images and sounds is once again underwritten by another spectacle – the grand proficiency of the machines of reproduction themselves".[6] In IMAX cinemas we are witnessing – and gaining pleasure from – not only the spectacle itself, but also the technology by which it is being produced.

Finally, we can concentrate on the viewer, and his or her new type of participation in the spectacle of film. Once again, IMAX commercial materials are revealing here. A large number of IMAX-dedicated posters simply consist of a few 'promises' that are supposed to be fulfilled by the IMAX experience: "*Take in a movie or get taken into one*", "*Watch superheroes or become one*", "*See an enchanted forest or get lost in one*", "*See a movie or be part of one*". These are examples of the 'promises' that draw the viewer into the new IMAX-dedicated film texts, offering a personal transformation, or even an elision with the text itself.

The bank robbery scene in *The Dark Knight* (Nolan, USA, 2008), the skyscraper climbing scene in *Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol* (Bird, USA/UAE/Czech Rep., 2011), and the volcano scene in *Star Trek: Into Darkness* (Abrams, USA, 2013) all demand a type of viewing associated with an audience that wants to be 'inside' the cinematic attraction, as for example in a video game. As Ndalianis puts it: "*audience members are invited to imagine that they are being enveloped by the architectural dimensions of the screen events … the spectator's focus shifts continually. As in 'quadratura' painting, which invites the spectator to engage with the image in architectural terms by altering his or her*

focus and viewpoint, all privileged, singular focal points are abandoned to encompass the enormity and spatial complexity inherent in the spectacle … The viewer is now the center".[7]

Conclusion

This essay has tried to describe the ways in which the IMAX experience connects with the post-cinematic paradigm in modern film culture. In explaining such issues as para-textual strategies, new economy mechanisms, the technological awareness of the spectator and his/her demand for 'immersion', I've referenced the 'architectural' implications of IMAX and its marketing discourse in order to sketch out its role in the post-cinematic domain. I hope that my ideas may provide an interesting point of departure for further study of the role of IMAX within a broader understanding of post-cinematic film consumption.

Notes and References

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[1] Charles Acland, *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003; Nolan at www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqRl9Z96q5I.

[2] On vaudevillisation, see Toby Miller *et al*, *Global Hollywood 2*, London: British Film Institute, 2nd. ed., 2008.

[3] For self-description and rationale, see the IMAX website at www.imax.com/about/. The historical account which follows is indebted to this source.

[4] Acland, *Screen Traffic,* p. 116.

[5] Angela Ndalianis, *Neo-Baroque Aesthetics and Contemporary Entertainment,* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005, p. 256.

[6] Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies and the Home*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006, p. 42.

[7] Ndalianis, *op. cit.,* p. 193.

17 / *The Last Slave Ship*: A Multimedia Book of Liverpool

Martin Ed Chatterton

My research is attempting to answer a number of questions, in a number of ways, about what now, in the rapidly changing landscape of publishing, constitutes a 'book'. I'm doing this through the production of a hybrid literary artefact that explicitly links Liverpool's role in the Atlantic slave trade with a narrative of contemporary civil unrest. While a work of creative fiction will form the core of this examination, I am also developing lines of enquiry via a number of other media (film, music, interactive forums, fan-fiction, social media, collaborative art) and it is one aspect of one of these that I would like to concentrate on here, namely, 'saying the unsayable'. This particular line of enquiry identifies what I believe is an as yet largely unexplored historical and aesthetic

connection between my home city of Liverpool and the phenomenon of slave resistance, through two apparently unlikely sources: the former 'king of pop', Michael Jackson, and the contemporary British sculptor, Anthony Gormley.

I became interested in Liverpool's legacy of slavery when considering a photograph of my in-laws taken on their wedding day in 1957. My father-in-law, Arthur, and my mother-in-law, Audrey, are flanked by Audrey's mother and grandmother. Audrey's mother is of mixed race, her grandmother clearly of African descent. In some ways, this image could be called the definitive text for my research in its encapsulation - for me at least - of the paradoxical assimilation and invisibility of the Black African community in Liverpool.

Despite the ethnicity of my wife's family I was struck by how little my children, and indeed the rest of the family, knew of or discussed their Black African lineage. The 'Black story' of the family had largely been erased by an unspoken and ingrained culture of racism within the (largely Irish Catholic) working class Liverpool community and, as I found through further reading, the wider institutions of the city.[1]

The Transatlantic Slave Trade

It is difficult to overstate the horrors inflicted upon the slaves taken during the Atlantic slave trade. We are all too familiar with the hideous conditions on board the ships, the cramped quarters and the demeaning, unsafe and insanitary life below deck. What is less well-known is the level of calculation and designed terror that went into construction of the ships. From the very blueprint onwards, the slavers considered every detail of repression, torture and subjugation. The control of

the human cargo was at the forefront of every slave voyage and any device that could result in maximising profit - from ordering child-sized thumbscrews as part of the preparation, to debating the most effective way to use sharks as a tool of oppression - was to be applauded.[2]

This complex catalogue of industrialised evil helped the Liverpool slave trade to expand exponentially into one of the worst instances of genocide in human history. Although a cursory modern reading of Atlantic slavery has been (understandably) appropriated by generations of articulate American and African-American academics, campaigners and artists, I believe that, without in any way downgrading the horrors experienced in the African-American context, framing the trade in this way allows Liverpool to sidestep responsibility.

In 1699, the year that Liverpool officially became an independent city, the first slave ship, 'The Liverpool Merchant', sailed to West Africa, picked up a 'cargo' of 220 slaves and delivered them to Barbados. In the one hundred and seven years of the Liverpool/Atlantic slave trade, approximately 15 million Africans were taken from West Africa and turned, via a sophisticated global trading system, into cotton, sugar, steel and coffee. Over half the number of Africans abducted from their homelands were carried by ships from Liverpool. They were ships that had been designed, crewed and financed in my home city.

It is my contention that Liverpool and its largely white population has been too ready to consign 'our' genocidal savagery to something called 'the past' – to see it as 'history', something that has been dealt with. Commitment to an impassioned intervention in the past seems to me to place

under suspicion any notion that temporal distance lends 'objectivity'. Further reading of contemporary social texts revealing ongoing, institutionalised racism towards the Black community in Liverpool has reinforced my belief that my research must be polemical and, crucially, that it must have contemporary relevance. This line of thought suggested contemporary civil unrest as a key theme, which in turn led me to read further into the politics of resistance and rebellion.

Resistance and Identity

In the hundred years and more of the Atlantic slave trade, resistance was a constant. Violent action, refusal to conform, refusal to eat, the singing of resistance songs (something that is becoming an important plank in my convergent argument) were everyday occurrences. Efforts to contain this resistance were brutal and complex, involving and informing every aspect of the slave trade, from shipbuilding to systems management, and the balancing of the needs of security and profit via survival 'ratios'. Put simply, order was imposed by terror.

This tactic, refined and evolved over a century of Liverpool-designed slavery did not vanish with abolition. As recently as 1981, against a backdrop of institutionalised racism, a lack of police accountability, and the abuse of 'stop and search' laws, the predominantly Black area of Liverpool 8 erupted in civil unrest. So 'alien' was the city to the Conservative government of the time that the Thatcher cabinet discussed 'writing off' the entire city. In 2012, riots erupted again. The continuing alienation, poverty and invisibility of the Black community cannot have failed to have been a factor.

This invisibility, and the consequent response, is, of course, a tricky subject. Black identity in Liverpool is complicated by subtler and more slippery notions of both 'Black-ness' and Liverpudlian identity in general than at first appears. The city is a place with a history of looking elsewhere for identity. The city gazes outward, to see itself as distinct from England, a port city, an Atlantic gateway. Simultaneously, as Gilroy points out, "*no one part of the Black Atlantic can be understood without considering its connections to the other parts . . . within the diaspora, all cultures are hybrid*".[3]

Liverpool's inhabitants, of all ethnicities, also often turn inwards culturally, identifying as 'Scouse' (a vernacular term for people from Liverpool) first. Jacqueline Nassy-Brown, explaining that her discussion of Black identity in Liverpool was rooted firmly in geographical place, found that "*to understand Black people [in Liverpool] you've got to understand Liverpool*".[4] It can be seen that identitifying as 'Scouse' complicates the discussion of race in Liverpool and, perhaps, goes some way to beginning to explain a family and a city that ignores its own history. However, despite the shifting subtleties of local identity, what emerges from the literature is that Liverpool has an unresolved relationship with the legacy of slavery.

Temporal Geography

For me, the answer lies, at least in part, in the work of sculptor Anthony Gormley. Although he is regarded nowadays with a slight curl of the lips by metropolitan art critics, I have something of an ongoing obsession with Gormley. In my 2012 novel *A Dark Place To Die* I used his totemic Liverpool installation, *Another Place,* as a key location. I also used his *Inside Australia* piece as a setting and I attempted to articulate

his work in certain passages in the book. The essence of Gormley's work is the paradoxical reality of a slippery 'something else' being made concrete by artworks as definitively physical as *Another Place*, or *Angel of the North*. For me, the Gormley pieces evoke a multitude of place-specific meanings and although I can find few writings connecting *Another Place* with Liverpool's history of slavery, the connection with Liverpool's mournful, shameful history seems palpable.

Of course, merely 'feeling' that there is a connection is not enough. My interest in Gormley, and the idea of linking 'the history' and 'the now', directed me towards looking at the possibilities contained within other texts beyond the written word. Through Gormley and others artists such as film-maker Terence Davies and sculptors Rachel Whiteread and Marcus Harvey, I can detect an aesthetic and intellectual osmosis occurring between apparently unconnected art works and the narrative I'm writing. I see in several of these art works explicit themes of 'time' and 'place', which are beginning to act not only as important 'tonal signifiers', but as aesthetic guides to something Papastergiadis calls "*temporal topography*".[5]

Papastergiadis has a number of variations on the term, but for me 'temporal topography' means explicitly linking locality with time, to make concrete that which is not available for discourse. As Gormley told Ernst Gombrich: "*In a way, where you ended in 'Art and Illusion' is where I want to begin. That idea that in some way there are things that cannot be articulated, that are unavailable for discourse, which can be conveyed in a material way, but can never be given a precise word equivalent for*."[6] It is in my view art, and three-dimensional art most particularly, which has managed to do this with precision.

physically experience the pleasure emanating from Bollywood through the performance inspired by Indian cinema choreography, namely Bollywood dance. This essay offers an anthropological analysis of both popular Indian cinema audiences and the growing practice of Bollywood dance in Portugal.

In April 2013 the Indian production companies PVP Cinema and AA Globe Services chose Portugal as a location for the filming of Gopichand Malineni's Telugu movie *Balupu (Arrogance)*. The last time an Indian film had been shot in Portugal was as long ago as 1979, when Amitabh Bhachan and Neetu Singh danced in iconic areas of Lisbon in Shakti Samanta's *Sabse Bada Zuari (The Great Gambler*). More recently, the company Picture Portugal has signed an agreement with a company from Mumbai for the production of other Indian films in Portugal.

As for film exhibition, Cinestúdio 222 in Saldanha used to be the only theatre where Indian films could be seen. We no longer see, unlike a few years ago, the bustling groups of Indian families who went there at weekends to watch the most recent Bollywood releases. The informal sales of DVDs and film rentals amongst communities of Indian origin has emerged to bridge this gap, whilst leaving access to Indian cinema even more difficult for the Portuguese public in general. There isn't any legal chain for the distribution of these films in Portugal, meaning that fans have to find them on the Internet or buy them abroad. Overcoming these barriers, however, many participants in my study turned out to be excellent connoisseurs of this vast canon.

Given my interest in the role played by art in connection with the idea of 'resistance', I was struck by how precisely Erdem Gündüz's *Standing Man* protest in Istanbul's Taksim Square in June 2013 articulated that which cannot be articulated. The resemblance to Gormley's *Another Place* is undeniable and powerful, especially when Gündüz was joined by a large number of other 'standing men'. Like *Another Place*, the *Standing Man* cannot help but be defined and assessed by its geographic and temporal space.

In reading and searching for a way to further explain how to say the unsayable, I found another compelling answer in popular Black music. Singers such as James Brown, Otis Redding and Little Richard (just to identify three ready examples) have frequently used non-verbal 'tics' and sounds in ways that, while not expressly precise in what they are articulating, are undeniably communicating *something*. Furthermore, that 'something', while perhaps containing a multitude of possible meanings (pain, anguish, loss, ecstasy, thoughtfulness) to different listeners, also contains a subtle and readily 'readable' (primarily by black listeners) group of 'signifiers'. And this is where the music and the sounds of Michael Jackson come in.

Mark Anthony Neal points out that non-verbal vocalisations in songs are explicable in terms of "*tonal semantics*". "*The practice of 'polytonal' expression*," Neal writes, "*in which complex and varying meanings were conveyed via vocal tones, represents a unique process emblematic of the African-American experience*".[7] It is significant that my example of non-verbal communication being used to signify tonal intent can be so clearly linked to the polyphonic, covert

communication used by slaves when denied both instrumentation and access to their own songs.

Connecting this with my own narrative of resistance, and with the non-verbal communication of ideas and mood in Gormley and Whiteread, leads me towards an explanation of 'tonal signifiers' that I can feel myself rapidly closing in on. One of my explorations involves an audio-visual collaboration with Liverpool musician Steve Grimes. Our sampling of non-verbal vocals from such sources as Black music, new original music, film footage and graphics is a conscious effort to make a clear creative link between Liverpool, slavery and Black resistance aboard the slave ships. These kind of multimedia explorations are the reason I began my research journey. If the 'book' is changing, then writers also need to change in the ways they approach a subject. And, while it is a bold claim at such an early stage, I hope that collaborations like this will help strengthen my thesis that the last slave ship did not sail from Liverpool in 1809: the last slave ship *is* Liverpool.

Notes and References

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[2] Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History,* London: Penguin Books, 2008.

[3] Elaine Baldwin *et al*., *Introducing Cultural Studies*, Harlow: Person Education, rev. first ed., 2004, p. 177, discussing Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

[4] Jacqueline Nassy-Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

[5] Niko Papastergiadis. 'Creative Practice and Critical Thinking', in Rod Wissler *et al* (*eds*., *Innovation in Australian Arts, Media, Design: Fresh Challenges for the Tertiary Sector,* Flaxton, QLD: Post Pressed, 2004, pp. 159-170.

[6] Antony Gormley, from an undated interview with Ernst Gombrich, at http://whitecube.com/artists/antony_gormley/text/.

[7] Mark Anthony Neal, *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture*, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 38. See also Mel Campbell, 'Saying the Unsayable: The Non-verbal Vocalisations of Michael Jackson', *Journal of Music Research*, no. 26, Spring 2003, pp. 17-26.

4. Extending Media Experience

18 / Watching and Dancing Bollywood in Portugal

Inês Lourenço

Introduction

The impact of Bollywood cinema on Portuguese viewers is unknown in the wider society. Although usually associated with the communities of Indian origin, the consumption of this kind of cinema also occurs among people from various sectors of the Portuguese population who, although not related to each other, have in common the habit of watching Indian films in private, away from the puzzled looks of their relatives and friends.

Even if Bollywood suffers from poor visibility in Portugal - its diffusion being still in a process of expansion, particularly in the urban areas - some fans, however, overcome the spectatorship barrier and

Case Study 1: Audience and Anthropology

Before I proceed I would like to reflect on the advantages of anthropological work with audiences. This methodology, involving participant observation with real audiences - very different from those of quantitative studies - creates a personal connection with viewers. This is reflected in the information collected and in a deeper and arguably more accurate view, different from the voiceless masses considered by the Frankfurt School.

In this context, we cannot neglect the contribution of Cultural Studies in establishing a relationship between the forms of popular culture and the broader issues of political ideology and gender, as well as the relationship between culture and power, in which Stuart Hall had such a decisive conceptual role.

The methodological tools of anthropology allow us to spend time with people watching TV, going to the movies, talking to them about their experiences of consumption, and finally articulating this information analytically with an understanding of the audience's social and cultural context. In this sense, as Gordon Gray reminds us, "*Cinema is embedded in society just as cultural values and social knowledge is embedded in the cinema*".[1]

My first case study involved a group of 30 people aged between 19 and 46, mainly in their 30s. Composed of a majority of women, this group included only 6 male members. The socio-cultural level of the group was medium-high. Although centered on the city of Lisbon,

the study also extended to other areas of Portugal - Oporto, Leiria and Madeira. Several methodological tools were used in this approach: online contacts, as many members of this audience were found through the Internet (blogs, emails, a forum created for contact between members), informal interviews, and participant observation.

The empirical data collection included, in addition to informal interviews, visits to establishments selling Indian films, collecting information from vendors, and attempts at contact with potential fans of Indian cinema. This period of work also involved the viewing of a selection of films according to the main choices made by the participants.

A Variety of Viewing Pleasures

The interest in Indian cinema on the part of the participants in this research involved a variety of factors. The main elements of attraction were music and dance, followed by the emphasis on cultural and religious elements, predominantly Hinduism. The data collected also highlighted the significance viewers place on the expression of feelings, and also a certain naiveté that emanates from these films, which greatly pleases their audience. Particular attention was also paid to the colourful cultural differences that they transmit.

The pleasure emanating from these films, it transpired, results not only from the typical Bollywood themes but also from the spectacle which they provide, in particular, by means of their song and dance sequences. With the music "*the central axis along*

which desire and identification are calibrated"[2] and the dance a form of temporary permissiveness[3], these are core elements in the creation of feelings of pleasure and "*embedded in both the viewing of the films and the reproduction in the dancing bodies*".[4]

Bollywood consumption by Portuguese audiences, however, has particularities compared to other Indian cinema audiences outside India. Unlike what happens in other countries where the Bollywood display is public, in Portugal its consumption is eminently private. Compared with the British context analysed by Ann David, for example, the Portuguese audience for Hindi films has no access to their public exhibition. Despite having a large community of Indian origin – numbering some 70,000 - they rely on the consumption of DVDs and satellite broadcasts.[5]

Moreover, despite the growing global interest in Indian cultural products, including popular cinema, this audience is confronted with stereotypes about Bollywood in their social, cultural and family surroundings. This leads to a private consumption of pleasure, where desire and fantasy play a decisive role. The 'hidden' nature of Bollywood consumption in Portugal does not inhibit these audiences from immersing themselves in the world of Bollywood glamour. Fans are devoted to Aamir Khan and Shahrukh Khan - heroes whose bodies are objects of consumption, with SRK a figure of global popularity – and include practitioners of Bollywood dance who wish to take part in this fantasy world, investing in a professional career that will allow them to realise this dream.

Finally, given that we have been discussing a non-Asian audience, we should of course address the issue of the exotic 'other'. In general, Indian popular cinema represents, for most of its Portuguese viewers, India itself, even allowing for images and cultural constructions that have often been essentialised and exoticised. The passion for Bollywood, in other words, is integrated into the urban culture of ethnic consumption together with a general interest in India.

This phenomenon should not be reduced, however, to a simple instance of Orientalism or neo-Orientalism. Instead it should be regarded as a form of contemporary cosmopolitanism which contributes to the global circulation of Asian popular media through processes of re-mediation. That is what the next case study aims to demonstrate, based on David Novak's analytical approach whereby processes of re-mediation create the contemporary cosmopolitan subject.[6]

Case Study 2: Bollywood Dance in Lisbon

The second case study examines the practice of Bollywood dance in Lisbon. Although the current field-work is still in progress, the research so far focuses on a Bollywood dance class, and a dance company, both guided by a professional dancer. The study was conducted at Dance Factory in Lisbon. Bollywood dance classes are conducted weekly as a form of recreation and physical activity, but some of the students also participate in stage performances choreographed by professional dancer Diana Rego.

Bollywood dance often consists in the reproduction and transformation of song-and-dance sequences from the films. A key feature of Bollywood's adaptability for audiences is that these sequences can be removed from the structure of the film, with the migration of Hindi film dance to the stage often involving the transformation and adaptation of the dance as a feature of the original narrative.

During one of the academy's sessions that I attended, the dancers were rehearsing in front of a private party of Portuguese public figures, after which the teacher invited the audience to comment. I expressed my great interest in the adaptation of the 'Dola Re Dola' performance from *Devdas* (Bhansali, India, 2002) by means of a Rajasthani martial choreography in which two women faced each other using knives. One of the dancers was surprised by my observation and commented that she had no idea that this performance was linked to a narrative in which two women confront each other over the love of the same man.

The choreographer answered: "*Oh, yes, but what she is saying is in the movie*", clearly demonstrating her intent to creatively transform the original. In fact, the adaptation of song-and-dance sequences to alternative cultural narratives illustrates the complex nature of the dance sequences themselves: "*the dance, masked as spectacle, engenders an explicitly alternate narrative space at once connected to, yet distinct from, the dominant narrative*".[7]

It is time now to return to Novak's concept of re-mediation, which allows to reconsider the role of the

subject in the study of movement and cultural globalisation, through the practices of cultural appropriation, leading to the creation of contemporary cosmopolitan subjects. Rather than focusing on the differences that performance suffers in the translation from film to stage or to dance classes, it is important to understand how the cultural re-appropriation of these materials through creative processes leads to what Gaonkar calls "*alternative modernities*", and the resulting construction of social relations through mediated references.[8]

My research shows that, unlike the previous case study, the practitioners of Bollywood dance are not concerned with a deep knowledge of Bollywood. Despite occasional film-viewing, they do not know the titles of the films or the names of the actors, focusing instead on the choreography. While expressing some interest in India's cultural references and differences, they do not exhibit the same degree of fascination as the Orientalist consumer of Bollywood. Thus, the concept of re-mediation helps us to understand that the appropriation of Bollywood song-and-dance sequences by Bollywood dancers in Portugal does not necessarily imply a detachment from an authentic culture, neither does it end in a process of purely exotic essentialisation.

Conclusion

India has always seduced the European imagination. The Portuguese were gripped by an early fascination for the country, arising from the voyages of discovery and the colonial process. The old Orientalism in which

representations of otherness were grounded seems to arise in other areas in the context of globalisation, and in relation to the new forms of identity which are characteristic of cosmopolitan Portuguese society. The consumption of Indian cultural references has become common in Portuguese society, as in other European contexts, expressed in the growing demand for products such as film, literature, cuisine or clothing.

The public for these cultural products finds them increasingly available in a market that some authors refer to as 'Indo-chic'.[9] However, although the allure of the exotic is certainly present in the cultural practices presented here, the issue should not be reduced to a straightforwardly positive form of Orientalism in which individuals yearn to escape local reality for a distant cultural Utopia. Rather, it should be understood as a contemporary form of cosmopolitanism in which the overlapping of media worlds plays a decisive role.

Notes and References

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19 / Film, Kinetic Theatre and Spectatorship: The *Danse Macabre* of Carolee Schneemann

Tabita Rezaire

The Ecstatic Body

This essay explores the notion of the ecstatic body - both as an idea and as a representation - and the relationship it creates between the erotic, the spiritual and the political body in the art performances of Carolee Schneemann and the writings of Georges Bataille. Looking at how Schneemann's kinetic theatre piece *Snows* (1967) echoes Bataille's concept of 'inner experience' as developed in his book of the same name (1943), this essay creates a surreal dialogue between text, film and flesh. Both Bataille and Schneemann alter, sublimate, and violate the body as though in a bewitching incantation. With the same violence, their works are at once fearful and desirable, like a *dance macabre* between Eros and Thanatos.

Both are committed to an exploration of bodily excess, and hence 'ecstasy'. Religious ecstasy as discussed by Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Meister Eckhart refers to the ultimate experience of being in the presence of God, while ancient Greek philosophy saw ecstasy as a union with goodness. It is usually referred to as the experience of extreme joy or bliss, but Michael Eigen goes so far as to claim that "*ecstasy focuses on the ever necessary confrontation of a mystical core with suffering, degradation, annihilation, and an endless play of destructive forces that exert deforming pressures*."[1]

Bataille's concept of inner experience embraces this ambivalence, claiming that "*the mind moves in a strange world where anguish and ecstasy coexist.*"[2] This paradoxical character reflects the movement one goes through while experiencing inner experience. If ecstasy means, etymologically, 'going out of oneself', then in Bataille's inner experience we find a contrary movement of exploring one's *inner* self, the core of one's body, making the flesh visible and tangible and the subject collapse.

Schneemann's kinetic theatre pieces confront the subject with the destructive forces referred to by Eigen. These performances are a product of their time and attest a fraught relationship between politics and culture, investigating the division between nature and culture insofar as they seek to overcome the mind-body dichotomy. *Snows* is a visceral performance which places the emphasis on bodies in performance and bodies on screen in relation to the bodies of the spectators themselves, interrogating the aesthetic distance that traditionally exists between the viewer and the art work. How then does art mediate these extreme experiences, and what are the consequences of this mediation for the audience?

I intend to demonstrate the relevance of this work in contemporary and modern society alike, which is marked by confusion, fear, guilt and repression where the body is concerned. What does the excessive body mean today as capitalist culture urges us towards increased productivity? How do we respond to visceral experience in our digitally mediated world? How can art which embraces cruelty be meaningful when violence is part of our everyday culture? In such a context, can art be transformative?

The Theatre of Resistance: *Snows*

Performed in New York as part of the Angry Arts Week in 1967, *Snows* is a theatre of resistance, trying to resist American consumerist alienation and its political context through extreme body experience. *Snows* uses film as a main protagonist, contrasting filmic language and performance. Dancers perform in front of the screen; live bodies confront images of the body; the dancers respond to what they see on the screen; and the films conversely reinforce the performers' movements.

Schneemann used film for its textural and structural qualities, creating tensions between live action and celluloid, thus extending the visual densities of kinetic theatre work. *Snows* contains five films: *Red News,* which opens the performance with a five-minute 1947 newsreel of catastrophes, *Bavarian Sports, Travel Diary 1, Travel Diary 2*, showing winter leisure activities, and the film *Viet Flakes*, a cine-tract against the Vietnam War. These films juxtapose winter leisure environments and War atrocities. *Viet Flakes,* a montage of newspaper images Schneemann collected over six years portraying the atrocity of the Vietnam War, anchors the performance.

The title of the film is disturbingly ironic, referring to how news and media information are consumed like cornflakes, and criticising the way in which the photographs of Vietnamese War victims were disseminated like cheap breakfast food ready to be eaten and digested, looked at and then instantly forgotten. In this film, Schneemann uses a close-up lens and magnifying glasses to 'travel' within the photographs, which gives an uncanny feeling to the film, almost bringing these figures back to life.

The stills become moving images; through the camera these victims of war are given movement through their death. Often left out of focus, the figures appear as if floating on the screen, in transit, half there, as if waiting in slumber. *Viet-Flakes* contrasts violently with the other films showing snowy winter landscapes and Bavarian winter sports activities. While the latter are projected all around the space with rotating projectors almost suffocating the audience with their own leisure, *Viet Flakes* is projected at the centre of the stage on a white disk, isolated on a sun that has stopped shining, stressing the devastation and the lonely agony of these people. The screens white-out everything else, like a call into the light, an ecstatic negation of space.

Snows, meanwhile, plays on the sublime and the horrific. Here again the title is ironic, the falling of snow being a metaphor for the falling of bombs, once again contrasting the work of nature and culture and dealing, for its maker, with issues such as putrification, clarification, homogenisation, and obliteration. Schneemann's quest for the ecstatic is based on what Bataille calls 'dramatisation'. To achieve the limit-experience of ecstasy, the point at the margin of life, one needs to project oneself at the extremity of the possible, and 'dramatisation' is a form of mediation between the idea of

ecstasy, its representation and its performance. This process expunges the self, allowing us to go beyond ourselves, to reach the stage of not-knowing, to fall in the abyss of ecstasy.

According to Bataille, one reaches the states of ecstasy or of rapture only by 'dramatising' existence in general: "*If we didn't know how to dramatize, we wouldn't be able to leave ourselves. We would live isolated and turned in on ourselves. But a sort of rupture - in anguish - leaves us at the limit of tears: in such a case we lose ourselves, we forget ourselves and communicate with an elusive beyond.*"[3] Projecting oneself to the point of torment leads to ecstasy, as when Bataille analyses his experience of viewing a gruesome photograph of a tortured Chinese man:

"*In the end, the patient writhed, his chest flayed, arms and legs cut off at the elbows and at the knees. His hair standing on end, hideous, haggard, striped with blood, beautiful as a wasp.*
I write 'beautiful'! … something escapes me, flees from me, fear robs me of myself and, as if I had wanted to stare at the sun, my eyes rebel."[4]

Schneemann uses the same process by screening images of war, forcing the audience and the performers to gaze at them, like the dramatisation of the Crucifixion, which leads Christians through agony to the divine. However it is a supplication without hope. 'Dramatisation' uses pain, and enters into the profound anguish of being - although for Bataille, anguish is a gift of life that one should not try to escape. This limit-experience, much as it is violent and painful, is also a blessing. One should not hope to be saved; there is no salvation, no object at the end of the quest, only an odious evasion.

Bataille, Bernini, and Transfiguration

The relationship between the images of ecstasy used by Bataille, notably the visage of the Chinese tortured man, and a photograph of Bernini's statue of Saint Teresa's face in *Eroticism,* has been interestingly traced by Patrick Ffrench. He notes that the framing of these ecstatic faces is bound by the experience of sacrifice, which he claims is dependent of "*an aesthetic framework which isolates in a photogram the ecstatic face*".[5] Ecstasy becomes an image, in these cases involving a face. Schneemann, for her part, aims at transforming this into an actual experience involving the whole body. This body seeks transfiguration, the moment of divine radiance where nature meets God.

The terrified, frozen expressions of people burning, drowning, and being dragged makes for a grim and eerie atmosphere in the case of *Snows*. Schneemann confesses: "*We were actually frightened in 'Snows'. The experience was all-enveloping, making us aware of the audience as an extension of ourselves, but not of ourselves in self-conscious presentation. Walking the planks was dangerous, and the central imagery of 'Viet Flakes', once fully apparent as dire and agonizing, confounded our own pleasurable expectations and collaborations within the glistening white environment*".[6]

Schneemann's film performance places the body in a similar state of supplication, albeit metaphorically, acting as a means of dramatisation for its performers and the audience. The performers and the audience are propelled towards a new threshold, the borders of humanity and the broken lines of the self. The viewer is at the edge of recognition. Playing an active role without realising it, the spectators trigger flashes of blue light thanks to a system under the seats which is

sensitive to their movements. Just as they had to crawl through a foam mouth to enter the performance, the spectators plunge into the body of the spectacle, ready to be sacrificed. *Snows* is meant to be felt, the rawness of the performance an attack on all the senses.

Sound also plays a significant role in the performance. Composed by James Tenney, the soundtrack is a collage of fragments from Mozart, Bach, the Beatles and Asian folk songs. These songs play against recordings of train noise mixed with the sounds of Schneemann's and Tenney's orgasms. This sound collage re-creates the films' war/winter sports dichotomy, almost acknowledging Schneeman's own guilt, her pleasure in the face of the distress of others. Sound thus conveys the relationship between death and sexuality, between the erotic and the morbid. Although the performance is about war and death, something erotic nonetheless emerges from these bodies.

Perfomance and Spectatorship

A dislocation occurs as the performers absorb and fracture the imagery, crawling towards the audience like animals, as if to warn them of the cruelty, of their alienation, telling them to leave aside their (in)humanity and embrace their animality in order to free their bodies. *Snows* is bestial, like the War; it enacts a war against consumption, power relations and the hegemony of the mind. For Schneemann violence is a productive force, a bodily gesture of resistance. The movements of the performers recall the medieval *danse macabre,* which was performed in order to remind people of their mortality and to confront them with the vulnerability of their own lives, stressing that there is no social hierarchy in the face of death.

In *Snows*, the performers enact the dance of death before the audience; they are in an in-between space between the dead bodies on screen and the living, lively bodies of the spectators. The performers have been called upon by the cinematic screen to dance before it, hence it also becomes a dance 'for' cinema, an ode to the power of the image. The performers are submitted to an Artaudian cruelty - crawling, falling, pushing, crouching, colliding, painting each other's faces, making body sculptures, chasing, hanging and tying each other. *Snows* is a contestation, as the performers shift between the roles of aggressor and victim, torturer and tortured, lover and beloved, in a contestation of power relations in respect of the *status quo* of social dominance and patriarchy.

Schneemann purges herself and the audience of anger on this stage full of snows, foil, and foam rubber debris which symbolises the chaos of wartime. The performance is cathartic and the 'dramatisation' is acoustic, visual and tactile. Scheemann acknowledges, like Bataille, the importance of mediation, the importance of the image in the process of experience: "*the body is in the eye; sensations received visually take hold of the total organism".* For her, the event is the enactment of "*A visceral necessity drawn by the senses to the tigers of the eye … a mobile, tactile event into which the eye leads the body.*"[7]

Viet Flakes is a painful spectacle for both performers and audience. Through its troubled imagery the performers are able to 'dramatise' and hence access a state of anguish leading them to their inner selves. For the audience, the performers themselves become an image of how 'dramatisation' might proceed. Witnessing the ceremony, the audience feels alive, becoming. Schneemann's performance

aims at getting beyond oneself, forgetting oneself and one's personal identity in order to participate in an experience which is essentially collective. Fulfilling a key ambition of modern performance in art and theatre, this is a rite of passage across a liminal stage where the subject is both challenged and changed.[8]

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20 / The Cinematic Spectacle and the Audio-Walk

Inês de Carvalho

Introduction

As a scenographer and visual artist, my work is a continuous practice-based investigation of possibilities for the construction of space and visuality, focusing essentially on unconventional ways of *making space*. Since 2009, designing for space and performance with Visões Úteis ('Useful Visions') has enabled me to collaborate in a series of audio-walks and landscape art interventions. This essay results from an impressionistic theoretical exercise based on the analysis of my embodied experience of audio-walk projects, following a research-through-practice methodology. The essay considers the audio-walk as an interdisciplinary art form and as an emergent practice of expanded cinema in the light of the wider scope of immersive spectacle. It presents

the audio-walk as an extreme cinematic experience where the screen seems to dissolve into the landscape, and where sound and vision explore new limits.



'Walking'. *The Bones that the Stone is made of* audio-walk, Santiago de Compostela, 2009. © Inês de Carvalho

The Inscription of Space

Situated somewhere between film, spectacle and life, the audio-walk is a performance and visual art form that feeds on both reality and fiction, whilst opening to other worlds with their unsuspected, unpredictable and multi-layered intermediate dimensions. The audio-walk is a journey through a pre-determined path, supported by an audio script that informs the spectator about where to go and where to look at any given moment. Conceptually, it is the poetic writing of space powered by the audience, whose expected roles as viewers, walkers and performers merge in a singular fusion.

Profoundly anchored in the reality of the specific location it is devised from and designed for - site, building or city - the audio-walk is also profoundly determined by each audience member's walking experience. It results from a complex layering process invariably centred on the audience's personal, private and immersive experience of space. The spectator's walk powers a moving place where reality is fictionalised to a point where it becomes difficult to discern which elements are 'true' and which are 'false'. The interplay between soundscape and landscape frames the situation. Led through an extreme sensorial experience, members of the audience combine the artificial stimuli provided by the audio with their own visual perception and framing of the landscape and the environment.

Each member of the audience takes an active part in the construction of the narrative. A silent agreement is forged between artwork and audience at the time of their acceptance of the sound equipment, and is confirmed again when pressing the 'play' button. The audience is guided from point A to point B, physically responding to audio and visual stimuli along the way. By the manipulation of sound, word, image and memory, a narrative starts to unfold before the eyes - and involving the body - of each viewer. Of necessity it unfolds differently for each participant.

The Audio Walk as Expanded Cinema

I want to suggest that the experience generated by the audio-walk is, in a number of ways, close to the viewing of a 3D film that manages to expand into real life through the most outstandingly faithful technical effects. However, here the viewer does not sit comfortably inside a darkened auditorium, nor is the film projected on to a physical screen.

Instead, the audio-walk instructs viewers to move and inspires them to *perform the film* themselves, so to speak, taking to new extremes the functions of looking and hearing, in a complex context of cinematic immersion and interactivity.

The audio-walk opens up the possibility of experiencing immediacy - image and sound in *motion* and in *e-motion* - as it establishes new bridges of connectivity to space, in real time. Metaphorically speaking, the viewer's body and mind centralise all the equipment and processes used in cinematography for image-capture and editing. The eyes, the brain, the whole body engages with all the senses in the most exciting and dynamic ways, as one tells the story of a space oneself by crossing it, silently and intimately.

It is interesting to note that, in terms of production, the kind of work involved in the creative and technical preparation of the audio-walk exhibits similarities to the pre-production of a conventional film. Designing the walk requires acute flair and intuition in the search for locations, and the discovery of meaningful places to engage with music and the word: in short, to find a sequence of places where action makes sense and narrative can be created.

Precision in selecting location and positioning is essential to the successful outcome of an audio-walk. The audio-script pre-determines the boundaries of space. These limits are usually natural or human-made features of the landscape - urban or rural - and work towards the design of the physical borderline that, similar to an audio-map, informs the viewer's steps.

The Power of Walking

Walking, the atavistic physical act of putting one's body in motion, is also the act by which the living body invests itself in the most complete sensation of space. As Careri reminds us, *"It was by walking that man began to construct the natural landscapes of his surroundings".*[1] On the surface of the earth, and through its physical dimension, body and landscape touch one another, interact and make space. Framed by the audio-walk, the action of walking is a way of writing space, of opening places in space, of consuming time and space in the same instant, marking place and body simultaneously.

The audio-walker is also an active viewer. It is from the viewer's positional perspective that what is local and particular can be perceived. The point-of-view places the viewer in relation to space at each point of the way.[2] Perception functions as an enabler of the reception of signals and the formation of narratives. By carving out a path, walking provides a sense of what Heidegger called "*spacing*".[3] The viewer mediates between the things that are finite and material, and those induced by the audio script that contribute fictional samples from different times and places, but that also connect with the specific time of experiencing of the walk. The action of walking seems to support and convey both the weight and the weightlessness of worlds that are both real and imaginary.

Cinema, for its part, has always connected to a related idea of motion, to a passion for movement, and to the suggestion that 'motion pictures' represent life, or a condensed, intensified expression of it. Evoking the essence of

movement, cinema connects to life and to walking as the most symbolic action of moving. The action of walking intensifies the experience of life and the sensation of time. As a eulogy of presence, to walk is to relate the present with its memory, intensively and in depth.

A walk is a composition formed in space by a sequence of steps. At each step, the viewer collects images that register in memory as a sequential fusion of fact and fiction. However, it seems to be in the interval between steps, between breaths of becoming, in the very potential of movement, that movement is more than simply an accumulation of steps. Here we could evoke Deleuze's concept of the 'image-movement' as it suggests an interesting geography for the provisional access to that perceptive sense of continuous movement that runs beneath the surface, behind our backs, in between the cuts.[4]

The audio-walker moves through space, showing apparent constancy. The walker's body appears to remain constant and singular, and does not reveal any relevant visible transformation other than the nuances of hair flowing in the wind, or arms swinging alongside the body. The truly outstanding transformations operate at different levels. They belong to a more profound dimension that is flooded with interiority. The act of walking carves spaces within one's body, becoming mediator and enhancer of transformation. The eyes become instruments for the construction of the visual, perceiving images from the real, but also simultaneously re-inventing them as fiction. The audio-walk is thus a multi-layered, multi-textured construction, designed to assign new *régimes* of visibility to what is already there to be seen.

Sound and Screen

If walking is the physical action that supports all layers of the experience, audio will provide the incorporeal flux of inspiration that thickens the whole. The audio-walk emerges from a serious case of infatuation between sound and space. The success of the final experience results from a carefully balanced layering process that aims to provide the audience with additional input over reality - audio, visual, and sensorial inspiration - for the reading of a complex space.

As Chion puts it, "*the phenomenon of added value is especially at work in the case of sound/image synchronism, via the principle of synchresis, the forging of an immediate and necessary relationship between something one sees and something one hears*".[5] Although Chion is referring to film and the screen, I find his words also apply to the extended field of visuality, relating quite effectively to the case of the audio-walk. The audio-script brings together voice, word, music, sound and is multi-layered in its own right. It enables the audience to see more, and to see through reality, adding interior movement to the walk, as "*sound by its very nature necessarily implies a displacement or agitation, however minimal.*"[6]

There seems here to be very little or even no space between viewer and scene viewed, as the audience is, in fact, inside the scene. There is thus no intervening 'screen', as is the case in cinema. The eyes, informed by word and sound, select and capture slices of reality. Vision produces sequential cuts from reality and adds imaginary layers. Speaking of the invention of landscape, Cauquelin refers to perspective as a device for moving between reality to its corresponding image.[7] In the

case of the audio-walk, reality is subverted by an accumulation of layers of fiction. As an act of passage, the walk seems to have the power to as it were dissolve materiality.

The scenographic eye supports the framing of worlds between places, real and fictional. In the case of the audio-walk, the viewer mediates the flow of significance, charged with a high degree of subjectivity. In a kind of underworld of moving quietness, the body maintains physical awareness of exteriority with all its senses, as an active recipient, but immersed in a state of illusion. Reality is, in fact, laid out as a set, where the viewer is to perform his walk.

Conventionally, a 'set' is a place for the staging of a composition of three-dimensional objects in space, in relation to each other and to the architecture of place. Its purpose is a live event, where audience and performance meet and engage emotionally, sharing space and time. In an audio-walk, on the other hand, the viewer becomes the performer, acquiring a 'twisted' perception of reality. The audio-walk script guides the viewer in a sequence of staged scenes in the course of which the viewer will be both the camera and the actor/actress - shifting between 'shots', deciding on composition, deciding the next move, engaging cinematically with reality.

Conclusion

The audio-walk opens an abyss in space and an interval in time. It is a place of intense intersection, where new times and places are generated, where images associate in unexpected ways, subject to individual references and expectations. What occurs in an audio-walk is thus both a

spatial contraction and a temporal distension that sustains and gives credibility (or at least suspends disbelief). From the point of view of reception, the space designed by the audio-walk is always somehow excessive when compared to the physical dimensions of reality.

Concretely founded in the present, in 'real time' action, it seems to enlarge reality, making it feel denser, wider and more extreme. When observing an audio-walking audience in action, one can never begin to imagine the fantastic cinematic worlds of their walk. Even if one follows, step by step, the complete walk performed by an audio-walker, it is impossible to access precisely the same places and images. The walk, in other words, belongs entirely to the walker.

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21 / Transformative Learning and Digital Film-Making

Paul J. Chilsen

We are immersed in a culture of spoken media, written media, and now, screen media. Just as writing and speaking skills are keys to functioning in society, we must accept that a global culture and economy dominated by screens increasingly demands screen media literacy as well. It is how we are communicating, teaching and learning. And in a screen-driven world, perhaps the best way to *learn* screen media is to *create* screen media. By offering instruction in what screen media are, how to create them, how they relate to other literacies, and how this informs everyday teaching and learning, digital media literacy and proficiency can become more broadly understood and attainable.

This essay explores part of a unique curriculum developed by the Rosebud Institute and looks at how, by using simple, accessible technology, people can become more screen media literate through the process of creating digital films. Developed along with Rosebud's Program Manager, Christine Wells, the creation process enables deeper, more authentic learning, allowing us all to communicate more effectively, to self- assess more reflectively, and to thrive in a screen-based world.

The Mediation of Everyday Life

In the tectonic media shift which we are experiencing, the lines we think we know and think we can count on are blurring – so much so that even finding a catch-all name can prove difficult. For the purposes of this essay the term *screen media* is used to describe media produced, created for, and unfolding on the screen. The term encompasses both the media we *watch* (film, video, television, gaming) and the media we *see* (websites, social media, blogs).

The myriad goings on in this convergent media world, while a fascinating and rich topic, understandably extend beyond the scope of this essay. The focus here is on what we can do now. Since the explosive growth and pervasive penetration of new media is upon us, how can get a firmer grip on the reins? How can we go beyond handing out expensive devices designed to simply access the conversation, and instead convey real skills that allow more people to effectively join in, to make clear meaning, and to affect the change they seek?

One way is to take a step back – to get 'back to basics' a bit and begin to give people some simple tools that they can use

to more effectively be a part of this burgeoning world of globalised screen media. The programme outlined here presents a very practical and do-able approach to giving people a basis from which to become more active and informed members of this world. Interestingly, it is in this more simple approach that the potential becomes highly expansive, giving people the tools to go wherever they want, much like the effect of teaching a person to read and write. This is a broadly prescriptive approach that takes achievable steps towards reducing what we might call our rampant media *illiteracy*.

If we accept what Eva and John Waterworth call the "*proliferating mediation of our everyday lives*",[1] then one could argue that just as we are taught and know how to write and speak in a text-based society, now, in order to function competently in a screen-based society, we would all do well to become more proficient at 'mediating' as well. Embracing and expanding what Daley has called "*the greatest digital divide*", the approach outlined here seeks to close the chasm between those who can read and write in screen media, and those who cannot.[2] Put simply, because so many now have access to and can therefore create media for the screen, everyone ought to be learning the basics of how to read and write in the language of the screen. To do anything less is to leave this tremendous and expanding power in the hands of relatively few.

It is from this wellspring of possibilities that the Rosebud Institute was formed, at least partly inspired in name and independent spirit by the enigmatic and prodigious Orson Welles, and the mysterious utterance at the heart of his *debut* masterpiece, *Citizen Kane* (USA, 1941). Without wishing to overstate his influence, we might say that the

Institute seeks to embody both Welles' revolutionary approach to motion pictures as well as a sort of can-do, hands-on approach to addressing a growing need – a need to better equip future media-makers in a world overwhelmed by screen images.

Educational Ambitions

When one currently teaches writing or speaking, it is not necessarily with the aim of creating great novelists or orators. That may indeed happen, but the main driver is literacy and all that comes with it, especially the cultural, social and political efficacy that follows. As Casinghino asserts, we do not teach maths to young students in order to prepare them all to become professional mathematicians.

Similarly, we are not teaching digital film-making in order to crank out a new generation of Spielbergs. Instead we are "*helping learners to develop cooperative skills, to enhance their problem-solving abilities, and to participate in cultural and social processes as capable, engaged interpreters*"[3.] The Rosebud Institute believes that the skills of reading and writing screen media are important and intrinsically inter-connected.

It seems to be increasingly a given that education needs to improve student understanding of how screen media work, how they make meaning, and how they construct (or reconstruct) reality. But more and more are coming to understand that true screen media literacy must also provide students with the ability to *create* media products.[4] With the written word, we know that people are better readers if they have at least a working understanding of how to write, and the same seems to hold true for screen media. We teach

basic literacies for many reasons, not the least of which is to elevate our society and level the playing field. If we accept the fact that screen media are here to stay, and recognise that its literacy is important and unique, then it stands to reason that we must take a more formal approach to this area of pedagogy.

And yet, in at least the broadest sense, we are generally taking the opposite approach. As Buckingham has argued, the majority of school-based computer usages "*signally fail to engage with the complex technological and media-saturated environment in which children are now growing up. For the most part, they are narrowly defined, mechanical and unimaginative*."[5] If this is indeed the case, then what we are doing is leaving it up to the surrounding stimuli to teach our children how to read and write in this pervasive, growing medium. As a result, people are likely to be developing a skewed and undiscerning way of relating to screen media in general.

Laura Kipnis has referred to this phenomenon as a "*marginally-trained sensibility*" - one based almost entirely on the unregulated consumption of commercial television, film and Internet programming in a comparatively indiscriminate fashion. If the educational system produces students with little or no formal training in screen media literacy, we are passing on that legacy and sending them out rather ill-equipped to function at the level demanded by a rapidly converging world. As George Lucas has claimed: "*If people aren't taught the language of sounds and image, shouldn't they be considered as illiterate as if they left college without being able to read and write?*"[6]

In order to keep up, students and their teachers need a basic tool kit of these specific skills as they venture out into the real, professional world, regardless of their eventual vocation. It involves a new literacy – a language that continues to be accessible and used by still greater numbers of people. It is a natural step then to guide, educate, and form the ways in which students can use this language across virtually all professions in a more engaged, enlightened and effective manner.

The Rosebud Programme

The challenge for the Rosebud Institute was to come up with an approach that could address this clear need in current and future pedagogy. To this end, the Rosebud Institute launched a pilot programme, the first version of which took place towards the end of June 2010. Called 'Media & The Moving Image', and originally offered in Rosebud's Summer Series, the pilot programme was designed as an intensive course for teachers and graduate students in education. This concentrated graduate-level course was designed to address new approaches to media literacy by exploring the basics of reading and writing in the language of screen media.

Following a dynamic yet simple hands-on programme, participants learned a two-pronged approach to screen media. They each created two somewhat modest media pieces designed to help them begin to find their feet. Participants conceived of a simple, relevant motion picture project, which they wrote, shot, and edited, trying their own hand at using basic cinematic language to tell a simple, visual story. Alongside the film project, they each built an e-Portfolio website of their own design, creating a timely,

accessible and expandable way to display, manage, and share their projects, their ideas and even themselves.

The film was not simply a slide-show movie and the e-Portfolio was not simply another website repository. Both projects carried the weight of audience engagement and were a true expression of what one could call the maker's *digital self*. While the projects seemed modest in scope, they were replete with importance and significance. The gratification of getting a solid grip on using technology more effectively, coupled with the thrill of truly creating something from nothing, lent a palpable air of accomplishment to the work. All of the projects were created in a guided, supportive learning environment where collective work, feedback, interaction, and sharing were all fostered and encouraged.

Creating a short first film of this nature seems to give most people a heightened sense of ownership and empowerment. They get to see how it is done, and - contrary to their assertions at the beginning of the course - they learn to become *better* watchers of film and television, not 'ruined' as they often fear. An additional benefit of both projects is a deeper, richer and more authentic learning experience. As 'inverted' classrooms and project-centered learning continue to grow in importance and efficacy, this is one of the areas that holds exciting promise for future exploration.

This is a two-pronged approach, with both projects having a strong sense of audience. Concentrating here on the digital film portion, the potential power and reach of their creations focuses attention, driving students to do well and to be clear. This is not 'art' or 'expression' created in a vacuum. This is work that potentially the world can see, and with that comes a great deal of power and responsibility. The motion

component, while relying on basic precepts of film-making, is decidedly removed from the Hollywood mode and instead approaches film grammar as a new language of expression and making meaning.

To lay the foundations for effective communication, the course-work introduces a process encompassing the three fundamental aspects of making a film - pre-production (treatments, scripting, storyboarding and planning), production (basic camera use, angles and filming), and post-production (importing and editing clips, exporting, and delivery) - as well as addressing issues of aesthetics, ethics and cultural impact. Participants thus build a base of knowledge with which to create their own purposeful, comprehensive, and communicative films.

Instruction emphasises the de-mystification of the technical interface in favour of a more basic exploration of reading, writing, and presenting in the language of the screen. When beginning film projects, it is important to help participants become comfortable with adopting the grammar of media language by emphasising connections with things they already know. Perhaps more than any other medium, cinema is a great re-appropriator, borrowing heavily from almost everywhere in its need to communicate and create meaning.

Challenges for Media Pedagogy

The challenge is to show participants that much of what they already know - the patterns, influences and structures of most if not all other intellectual pursuits - share a commonality with the basics of media language. Additionally the Rosebud Institute focuses on the initial use of narrative to tell a simple screen story. It creates an important

commonality at a crucial juncture where students are taking their first tentative steps in a new language. This highly relevant, hands-on, and progressive approach to the maker-audience relationship is crucial in a screen-driven world, and when exploring this together under the rubric of screen media literacy, participants come away with a heightened and more nuanced understanding of how this all relates to the way we learn, teach, and interact.

The courses are a movable feast of sorts, able to go virtually anywhere and effectively instruct at almost any level. Adjusted for various constituencies, the programmes attempt to offer realistic and useful options for participants, giving them differing viewpoints and ideas through film screenings, story circles, panel discussions, emerging technology lectures, and relevant supplementary course-work. What has been witnessed in programmes thus far is that the close-knit structure of the course and the necessity to collaborate offers ample opportunity for participants to work and learn together while networking and sharing with their peers.

A further challenge stems from the rapidity of media change. As Montgomery pointed out over a decade ago, "*the explosion of the new digital media culture is occurring so rapidly that its growth is surpassing the ability of scholars … and educators to grasp fully its nature, its direction and its impact*".[7] In the interest of not chasing the elusive dragon of expanding media portals and their all-pervasive and seemingly unruly effects on our culture, this approach takes a more stripped-down, basic approach, empowering educators and their students in what many see as a battle for attention amidst an ever-dizzying cacophony of media messages.

One way to rise above the din is to embrace the 'me' in 'media'. More and more, what the world seems to want and even demand are unique and personal views. As the personal increasingly becomes public, it will be the clearer, effective voices that get heard. And much like the voyeuristic attraction of cinema, the more personal someone is on the screen, the more drawn in the viewer seems to become. The Rosebud coursework outlined here is designed to give individuals the tools they need to find their appropriate voice and become more effective mediators.

While access to technology remains critical, the issue thus seems to be more a matter of effectively finding one's own voice. As Lucas also comments: "*When people talk to me about the digital divide, I think of it not being so much about who has access to what technology as who knows how to create and express themselves in this new language of the screen.*"[8] If simply having technology in the classroom "*does not automatically inspire teachers to rethink their teaching or students to adopt new modes of learning*", as Hiltzik has commented, then handing out $2000 pencils is not enough. [9]

We can't simply add screen media literacy to the curriculum, in the process "*hiving off 'information and communication technology' into a separate subject*".[10] Rather, we need to re-conceptualise our definition of literacy itself. We have both the ability and the duty to educate young and old alike in the language of the screen. To do anything less would be to leave them unprepared in an often hostile world – a world where the manipulative immediacy of media messages is dramatically altering the classic modes of teaching, learning and communicating.

Acknowledgment

I am most grateful to my Rosebud Institute colleague Christine R. Wells for her contributions to this essay.

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Part 2: Identities

5. Forms of Media Pleasure

22 / Spectacles of Deception: Residual Magic in the Films of Buster Keaton

Jonathan Gilhooly

Introduction

This essay examines the films of Buster Keaton in relation to the concepts and strategies of stage magic. The films that Keaton made during the 1920s deploy familiar tropes from the world of theatrical magic, from the lateral dispositions of his film sets - mirroring the stage sets of late 19th and early 20th Century magic theatre - to Keaton´s contingent and mutually transformative relationship to other agents (human and non-human) with which he comes into contact. Exploring films such as *Neighbours* (Cline, USA, 1920) *Sherlock Junior* (Keaton, USA, 1924) and *The Navigator* (Crisp and Keaton, 1924), I show how Keaton deploys the spatial and temporal dislocations - twin strategies of deception in stage magic - which propel the narrative action of his films and generate their frequent spectacularity.

Keaton not only mimics but, significantly, often reverses the traditional relationship between magician and audience, thus placing the viewer in a privileged position whilst his own perspective is, according to the two-dimensional logic of the cinema screen, apparently occluded. In this way Keaton extends and develops the spatial logics explored by Méliès in early cinema to create his own unique systems of action.

My argument here is that theatrical magic, or what Simon During refers to both as "*secular magic*" and the "*magic assemblage*" which it creates, can provide a perspective from which to understand the spectacular and often complex visual style of Buster Keaton's classic films made between 1920 and 1928.[1] For During, the conjurer, from the point when his magic became unyoked from its supernatural cousin, engaged in simulation and dissimulation, in occlusion and revelation, in spectacle and misdirection; in other words, in activities that anticipate the complete panoply of visual effects that were to become the preoccupation of the modern age, and which were to develop into a lexicon of effects for the cinema.

Contextualising Keaton

It is worth remembering that Keaton cut his teeth, as a child stage performer, in the first decade of the 20th Century when vaudeville was at its zenith. Vaudeville performances were each made up of a series of separate, unrelated acts - including comics, dancers, magicians, acrobats - grouped together on a shared bill. This format coincided with, and to an extent determined, a shift in the presentation style of theatrical magicians, from the more formal manner of artistes such as Alexander Herrmann and Harry Kellar, to a

strikingly speedier and flashier delivery, exemplified by performers like Howard Thurston, Harry Houdini, and Horace Goldin. Nicknamed the 'Whirlwind Illusionist', Goldin not only crammed his vaudeville appearances with dozens of tricks but, unconventionally, also performed them in silence.

Among much research into the significance of early cinema in establishing a lexicon of effects for the future development of film, surprisingly little has been devoted to the role of the stage magician, and of magic generally, in anticipating and capitalising upon the illusionistic potential of this emerging new medium. Yet many early film-makers and exponents of the camera and projector were themselves magicians: Georges Méliès in France, G. A. Smith and David Devant in England, the American illusionists Carl Hertz and Albert E. Smith. Méliès himself purchased his first projector from the British stage illusionist David Devant. These individuals were instrumental in utilising the material and technological potential of film for the realisation of a variety of effects - materialisations, disappearances, transformations and dismemberments - which, carried over and transposed from the magic theatre, were to enter and structure the idiom of film.

Erik Barnouw traced this connection in his book *The Magician and The Cinema* (1981), but chiefly in terms of historical overview. During's *Modern Enchantments* (2002) includes a more forensic examination of the ways in which an assortment of magic effects became imbricated with the technological apparatus of the cinema in its formative years, and which indeed could be said still to survive - if often vestigially - both in mainstream cinema and within the variously distributed forms of digital media.[2] The

nomenclature of digital software and special effects industries is merely one aspect of this covert presence, but in fact the various technical transitions - wipes, fades, etc - that have become a naturalised part of cinematic language, as well as established narrative themes such as 'disappearance' and 'metamorphosis', all hint at the residual tropes of the 19th Century magic theatre. Therefore, from the viewpoint of both his own theatrical background, and from the perspective of the part played by the 'magic assemblage' in the early development of cinema, it is possible to establish a cultural context of magic-influenced paraphernalia within which Keaton's own films can be seen already to be situated.

That Keaton attempted consciously to either incorporate the tropes of the stage magician into his films, or to mimic wholesale the (narratively unmotivated) strategies of the early magicians/film-makers, is not what is being argued here; rather I want to explore a more subtle interpretation in order to foreground what is unique to Keaton's approach. I intend to examine Keaton's distinctive concept of filmic space and of its incorporation of both the central character (Keaton himself) and its positioning of the viewer in relation to that space.

I also wish to explore Keaton's on-film relationship with the world of objects, what Noel Carroll, in his phenomenological account of Keaton's work, describes as his 'equipmental' way of being in the world. I am also following Carroll in privileging, not the narrative content of Keaton's films, but rather the "*strategies of composition and editing that he mobilises*". As Carroll declares, this amounts not so much to a hermeneutics of art, but instead (quoting Susan Sontag) "*an erotics*" of art.[3]

Spatial Dislocations

In his book *Life to those Shadows*, Noel Burch describes the particular circumstances in which the "*autarchy of the* [two-dimensional] *primitive tableau*" - exemplified by the 'proscenium arch' films of Méliès - is extended to three dimensions for the staging of outdoor chase scenes in films such as Pathé's *La Brigandage Moderne*.[4] Keaton deploys this haptic space in his films of the 1920s, carving out a complex interplay between foreground and background - often through diagonal movement in space - in a sequence of deep-focus long shots.

This emphasis on a highly visible long shot determines, as Carroll argues, the ability of the viewer to see events in their causal totality, but it does something else as well: it sets out the visual dynamics against which sight-gags can be precisely calibrated and, for the audience, make either predictable or the source of surprise and spectacle. This both replicates and, at times, inverts the stagecraft of contemporary theatrical magic acts, in which an emphasis on 'sight-lines' is crucial.

In his book *Hiding the Elephant*, Jim Steinmeyer describes the extreme attention to detail practised by magicians such as Howard Thurston, whose 'Levitation Illusion' relied precisely on the positioning of curtains, stage props, and also upon the seating configurations within the auditorium itself.[5] The stage illusionist's craft is largely dependent upon the audience's (unconscious) assumption of a panoptic control of the theatrical space, whilst simultaneously ignoring, or bracketing out, taken-for-granted depth indicators which seem to be of negligible significance.

We tend to forget the extent to which our judgment of distance is highly contingent, or how we are so inured to the quiddity of object permanence. The audience's lack of knowledge-in-depth can be exploited in a variety of ways, such as the distance at which the performer appears to be standing in front of or behind an object, whether the ball is underneath (or behind) the cup, or the relationship between the width and depth of a trunk, couch or table.

In his films Keaton exploits the viewer's apparent panoptic knowledge (but in fact, lack of knowledge-in-depth) for comic effect. In *One Week* (Kline and Keaton, USA, 1920) the lateral trajectory of the train coming out of depth but perfectly horizontal to the screen rectangle misses the stranded house, only to be immediately substituted by its exact mirror image travelling in the opposite direction; this time the inevitable *dénouement* is realised, and the house is smashed to smithereens.

In *Sherlock Junior* the amateur detective is shadowing his quarry as the pair approach a flight of steps; but whilst his target ascends the steps, Sherlock continues with his horizontal trajectory, disappearing behind them. *Sherlock Junior* is perhaps the best example of Keaton's incorporation of magic strategies, and in a spectacular sequence in which his character (a cinema projectionist and amateur sleuth) enters, in an extended dream sequence, the space of the film which he himself is projecting, Keaton makes elaborate use of the 'trick splice' pioneered by Méliès.

Although arguably employing it for the more classical ends of spatial shifting, Keaton's character is repeatedly transposed into a bewildering succession of hostile settings whilst maintaining the illusion of temporal continuity. Utterly

superfluous in narrative terms, these effects are motivated purely by the film-within-a-film conceit; ironically they are *precisely* the type of visual 'tricks' that Keaton avoids within his *actual* films, for their absence of motivation. Later in the film Sherlock steps straight through a mirror in which he appeared to have been admiring his reflection - a metaphorical 'mirror image' of his own incorporation into filmic space.

Acting through Things

Robert Knopf has suggested that Keaton's films display affinities with surrealism - a claim that hardly seems credible given the emphasis upon the irrational within surrealist practices: rather, Keaton's response to his environment and to 'things' is always rational, albeit proceeding within highly circumscribed conditions.[6] Keaton views objects as mutable things, whose status is highly contingent upon particular circumstances; this is what Noel Carroll describes as Keaton's "*pragmatic or equipmental*" approach to "*being in the world*".[7] So a golf club quickly becomes an oar when circumstances demand its transformation (*Convict 13,* Cline and Keaton, USA, 1920), and is no less effective than the similarly transformed violin in the flood scene in The *Playhouse* (Cline and Keaton, USA, 1921).

Keaton's deployment of a swordfish to fence off an aggressor of the same species is only 'surreal' in the most generic and degraded sense of the word; within the (admittedly ludicrous) confines of the narrative it is an entirely rational response, but one that conforms precisely to magic's lexicon of conjuring effects in relation to the material world of objects. More specifically this falls into the category of transformation, whereby the magician changes an object's

shape, form, colour or size. However, Keaton does not materially transform his objects, rather it is their function that changes, and even then a residual or potential function is retained: so a golf club *could* be used as an oar; with the swordfish gag, the joke of course lies in the object's morphological denomination.

In their book *Thinking Through Things*, Henare, Holbraad and Wastell construct a methodological approach to objects, in which they consider the possibility that "*things might be treated as sui generis meanings*"; in other words thing and meaning can be seen as identical, rather than meaning being seen as distinct from material things, or as something to be imposed upon them. They articulate a manner of conceiving material objects not interpretively, but such that "*wonderment*" can be held in a "*state of suspension so as to resist the urge to explain it away*". The book's central proposition - of a collapsing of the distinction between 'concepts' and 'things' - is useful in scrutinising the curious ontological status of magic objects, as well as providing a key to Keaton's contingent relationship to the material world.

Magic objects (or 'props') can, within a set of specially circumscribed conditions (i.e., a theatrical magic performance), be conceived of as *embodying* their 'symbolic' role or purpose. So, there are certain objects within the magic act that are traditionally associated with effecting particular kinds of change: the magic wand, for example, is the magical agent of change *par excellence*. The wand, however, is not exempt from transformation itself - for example it might suddenly become soft, metamorphose into a bunch of flowers, or float in mid-air. This apparently maverick capacity of the wand to re-style itself from tool to magical object, or to be *both at the same time*, is of course

part of the anarchic apparatus of the magic act. It also illustrates Henare's, Holbraad's and Wastell's proposition that "t*he 'things' themselves may dictate a plurality of ontologies*".[8]

So the wand's 'meaning' (which might conventionally be thought of as metonymic symbol of the magician's power), is embedded within its very thing-ness, with what it does or is seen to do. Within a highly specialised and (stylised) setting, the theatrical magic act retains a conception of objects as intrinsically meaningful, possessing agency, and fluid. Further examples: playing cards are already understood as being 'about' fate and chance, because a random element is, as it were, built into them; similarly, a knotted rope is already (at some level) emblematic of entanglement or binding, precisely because it is itself an entangled object.

I am arguing that magic objects disclose their meaning through what they are (conceptually) and via what they do (performatively). Furthermore, it is possible to regard magic objects as possessing an excess or surplus in relation to their function. An example of this is the copper cup that is used to 'disappear' a ball in the cup-and-balls routine. This cup already causes the ball to disappear in a certain obvious sense, in that *it covers the ball* - once covered, we can no longer see the ball (although our – rational - sense of object permanence tells us it is still there). When the cup is lifted and the ball is no longer there, however, the cup has effectively collapsed the distinction between an object that disappears from our sensory awareness (is 'hidden'), and one that disappears in that it 'ceases to be'.

This idea of a magic prop or object having its magical capacity somehow already embedded within it echoes Dant's

assertion that human interaction with objects exceeds its symbolic meaning: "*as the social human being interacts with an object, she or he must take account of what the object is doing or is about to do and must fit their line of activity to the intentions embedded in the object.*"[9] The cup (which already has a 'disappearing intention' embedded in it) therefore becomes a kind of super-charged agent-for-disappearing-things. Thinking (or acting) through things precisely describes Keaton's contingent relationship with the world of material objects: the objects with which Keaton interacts acquire agency, becoming fluid and mutable within the highly circumscribed conditions of cinematic space.

'The Great Stone Face'

I would like to conclude by commenting, briefly, upon Keaton's performative style, with specific reference to his face. In a previous Paper I cited the example of the character of Chinese magician Ching Ling Foo in Christopher Priest's 1996 novel *The Prestige*.[10] Foo, Priest writes, performed an illusion in which he produced a large bowl of water from underneath an otherwise 'empty' cloth.

Logically, the only place that the magician could conceal the bowl was beneath his cape, and yet at the same time this was clearly impossible for "*it was obvious to everyone that Ching Ling Foo was physically frail, shuffling painfully through his routine*" (p. 36). In fact Foo had adopted the shuffling walk in order to conceal the enigma - that the bowl was indeed concealed beneath his cape, and that the magician himself was a man of great physical strength and fitness. He was therefore condemned always to walk in this fashion, performing or otherwise, solely in order to maintain the deception necessary to execute the trick.

It is for similar reasons, I would argue, that Keaton maintained his stone-faced expression, even off-camera, as a means of constructing a *persona* whose means of acting-in-the-world is through his body, rather than through his facial expressions, and whose "*way of seeing*" is, as Carroll suggests, "*preoccupied with the physical dimensions of the world and with the motion and interaction of material things, including human bodies, as they enter networks of causal relations*". [11] There exist several photographs of Keaton at his wedding (his real wedding) to Natalie Talmadge: one searches in vain, even here, for even the merest hint of a smile on Buster's face.

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23 / The Pleasures of Silence and The Flesh: Andreas Dresen's *Cloud 9*

Alexandra Simon-López

Dresen and *Cloud 9* (*Wolke 9*)

This essay aims to unveil and discuss the various layers of silence and the flesh portrayed in Andreas Dresen's *Wolke 9*, (*Cloud 9*, Germany, 2008). Dresen is one of Germany's most celebrated directors, whose East-German roots are recognisable in all of his films, though this factor does not dominate the general plot and *mise-en-scène.* Allusions to the former German Democratic Republic occur in a natural way and serve as local references, for example the street names of East-German cities, East-German accents and dialects, and a typical East-German interior design that can still be found in many homes in the former GDR.

Born in 1963 in Gera, Dresen started an internship at DEFA (the Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft), the state-owned film studio of the GDR, in 1985-6, before studying film direction at the Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen Konrad Wolf in Potsdam/Babelsberg from 1986 to 1991. His realistic and semi-documentary style, which allows actors to improvise their scripts, plays an important part in *Cloud 9*, which won several national and international awards, not least the Best Director and Best Actress prizes at the German Film Awards in 2009, and the *Coup de cœur du jury* prize at Cannes 2008.

Cloud 9 focuses on love and sex amongst the elderly, and, spectacularly, this features on-top-of-the-covers sex between a grandmother aged nearly 70 and her 76-year-old lover, as well as with her husband of 30 years. Inge (Ursula Werner), almost 70 years old, is married to Werner (Horst Rehberg), who is in his mid-70s. Together they have raised her daughter Petra (Steffi Kühnert) from an earlier relationship, and now they seem to have it all: an outdated but still pleasant flat, a cottage, grandchildren, and a still functioning sex-life.

Inge, however, falls in love with Karl (Horst Westphal), who is even older, and starts a secret affair with him which marks the beginning of the film. Haunted by her betrayal and guilty conscience, Inge plans to end the affair, but is unable to resist her carnal pleasures which, in the end, transform into a deep love for Karl. Although advised by her daughter to keep quiet about her affair, Inge follows her heart and confesses to Werner. In the end, she leaves her husband for Karl, and Werner, unable to cope with his loss, commits suicide. The film concludes with Werner's funeral, from which a heartbroken Inge returns home to Karl, who takes her in his arms.

Silence, Noises, and the Flesh

One of the defining characteristics of *Cloud 9* is the lack of music, which is replaced by realistic background noises, for example traffic noises (trains, planes, bicycles), noises of domestic appliances (a coffee machine, a sewing machine), natural noises (birds singing), and human noises (weeping, crying, moaning). Despite this, silence dominates the majority of scenes and is emphasised even more by these background noises. In the first scene of *Cloud 9*, the audience is thrown directly into the action because there are no opening credits, and no background music, simply the sound of a sewing machine which is accompanied by a close-up of Inge's face, marked by anxiety.

She nervously bites her nails, looks out of the window, finishes her sewing, and finally decides to leave her marital home. The spectators listen to the sound of public transport as Inge embarks on her journey through Berlin, or more precisely, the East Berlin of the 2000s. It is only when she arrives on Karl's doorstep that the film's first dialogue occurs, and it consists of just a few lines which clarify the characters' relationship with each other.

Inge works as a tailor, and Karl is one of her latest clients who has brought her a pair of trousers for minor changes. Instead of waiting for the client to pick them up at her home, she decides to deliver them in person, claiming that she needs to attend to some business in the neighbourhood, which is, as the spectator already knows, a lie. A tender touch, a meaningful look, and, most importantly, moments of silence between Inge and Karl, eventually lead to their first sexual

encounter, which happens in bright sunlight on the carpet of Karl's living room.

Dresen does not employ a voyeuristic perspective towards this sexual act, but frames it in natural light in order to reflect upon the naturalness of such an encounter between two persons of an older age. Passionate lust is caught on camera by using close shots of the flesh and the genital areas, by explicitly framing the couple during the act, and by zooming-in in order to unveil the most intimate zones of the human body. *Cloud 9* begins at the point where the majority of films which deal with love at an older age draw the line, namely by presenting carnal pleasures as an ordinary part of life.

In one scene, for instance, Inge secretly talks to Karl on the phone, saying that she very much enjoys sleeping with him. In another scene, it becomes evident that she still has an active sex life with her husband, which is framed differently. Here the act takes place in the marital bed during the night, without natural light, which emphasises the contrast in Inge's relationship with Karl. In the majority of scenes with Werner, Inge's life is pictured indoors in an outdated home, whereas her relationship with Karl is portrayed as part of a light and colourful life outdoors.

Motherhood, Sexuality, and Ageing

Dresen breaks through the prevailing barriers of shame and embarrassment in the same way as Helma Sanders-Brahm did in her 1980 film *Deutschland bleiche Mutter (Germany, Pale Mother)* in which images of childbirth, blood and the birth canal were shown. Crime, corpses, and horror had already been seen on daily television and in film, but, as Möhrmann has commented, "*the blood of women is*

embarrassing and offends our sense of propriety. It belongs in the private sphere."[1]

Back then, Sanders-Brahm's taboo-breaking film gained her mostly negative reviews, whereas Dresen's film was applauded with standing ovations at Cannes 2008. If stereotypes are slowly changing, however, according to Möhrmann: "*What never fails to astonish is that no other artistic medium has so persistently perpetuated the stereotyping of women and mothers as film.*"[2] Against this background, *Cloud 9* plays with stereotypes of older women and/or mothers as portrayed on screen.

Cloud 9 thus owes a debt to several classic films, ranging from Sirk's *All that Heaven Allows* (USA, 1955) to Michell's *The Mother* (UK, 2003), a cycle which includes Ashby's *Harold and Maud* (USA, 1971) and Fassbiner's *Angst essen Seele auf* (*Fear Eats the Soul*, Germany, 1974). Instead of being directly outcast like the mother characters in these films, however, Inge, after confessing her infidelity to her daughter Petra, is comforted by the wave of understanding and encouragement that emanates from her daughter. This stops, however, at the moment when Inge finally decides to leave her husband for Werner.

Petra cannot accept her mother's decision and urges her to maintain appearances by continuing her affair without telling Werner anything, to which Inge vehemently responds: "*Should I just fritter away the last 20 years of my life?*". It is evident that Dresen's *Cloud 9* tries to come to terms with an ageing population that refuses to be cast away and ignored by younger generations. Victor Hugo once famously noticed that the flesh is the surface of the unknown, an assumption which Inge proves right, as it is thanks to the pleasures of the

flesh that she realises how desperately she needs to start a new life.

Hegemonic and Hybrid Masculinities

Karl and Werner, for their part, are different kinds of men. What we might call the 'hegemonic' masculinity of Werner is in contrast with the 'hybrid' masculinity of Karl. Following Connell, who presents hierarchically organised key categories of masculinity in terms of patriarchal power, starting with hegemonic masculinity which guarantees the continuation of men's dominance over women because it can be perceived as "*the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity)*",[3] Werner is the typical 'macho' figure. According to Bradley, this form of identity is "*tough, competitive, self-reliant, controlling, aggressive and fiercely heterosexual.*"[4]

Werner is an academic, a retired teacher with a beard, who smokes hand-rolled cigarettes and who constantly criticises Inge. She plays along, accepting his dominance by serving him drinks and food in the living room and by sharing his hobbies, although she does not seem too fond of his leisure activities. Werner's passion is focussed on trains, and he spends his evenings in front of an old record-player listening to the different sounds of the German Reich Railways (Deutsche Reichsbahn).

In one scene, Inge serves him a drink while he attentively listens to the sound of trains entering a station. She sits down next to him, in the silence of a dark, gloomy living room in which can be heard only the sounds of locomotives. In another scene, we see the couple on a train, in silence, watching the landscape speed past them, perhaps a symbol

of life racing away from them. The contrast with the life she shares with Karl was established in a previous scene, in which Inge and Karl are seen at one with nature as they cycle to a lake. Instead of passively observing life and nature from a train, they take an active part in it, swimming naked in the lake and listening to the sound of birds.

This antithetical structure dominates the entire film: the sound of birds versus the sound of trains, being an active part of nature (cycling/swimming) versus passively sitting on a train, and living amidst nature versus observing it from a train. It is an allegory for life versus death, and in the end, it is death that Werner chooses after Inge's departure. By throwing himself under a train, Werner not only chooses one of the most physically destructive ways to take one's own life, he also chooses to have his life taken away by what he has adored most in his life. This tragic end echoes Werner's inability to change and to adapt to a new life. The old 'macho' figure, who preferred listening to the sound of trains of bygone times via an old-fashioned record player, could not cope with the changes arising from the loss of his wife.

Karl, on the contrary, does not live in the past but in the present, and his masculinity can be considered hybrid rather than hegemonic. He does not smoke; he is well shaven; he comforts Inge by serving her food and drinks; he shares outdoor activities with her and, most importantly, he does not dominate her, but gives her the time and space to make her own decisions. His hybrid masculinity enables Inge to accept her carnal pleasures and to realise that she is not only a caring wife, mother, and grandmother, but also a woman with unfulfilled needs and desires. This is emphasised by a gradual shift in her underwear, which changes from white to violet and then black.

Cloud 9: Narrative Outline

Exposition (Act I): *Inge decides to embark on a sexual adventure with Karl, but still seems happy with Werner.*

Choir 1

Rising Action (Act II): *Inge initially struggles to accept her longing for Karl, as she enjoys her family life as a grandmother. She meets him again and they start an affair.*

Choir 2

Climax I (Act III): *the contrasting characters of Karl and Werner are portrayed in this scene. Inge realises that she has fallen in love with Karl and questions her life with Werner. She tells her daughter about the affair.*

Choir 3

Climax II (Act III): *Inge confesses to Werner which leads to an emotional confrontation. Her daughter shows no understanding of her mother's decision.*

Choir 4

Falling Action/Element of Retardation (Act IV): *Inge moves out of the marital home and in with Karl. She enjoys her new life with Karl. It seems as if she is now on good terms with Werner, too, as they celebrate a family occasion together.*

Choir 5

Resolution/Catastrophe: *Inge meets Werner for the last time at their home. After she leaves, he commits suicide. Inge is devastated, attends his funeral and then returns to the new home that she is now sharing with Karl.*

The Role of the Choir

Music plays an important role in the film, even though, as mentioned, *Cloud 9* communicates with the audience via a quietude which typically offers natural and mechanical noises as background fillers. For example, Inge sings in a choir which is composed of retired people with a passion for music, with whom she regularly rehearses and performs. The significance of the choir remains however somewhat unclear, as the audience watches Inge and the other elderly choir members performing songs in five seemingly randomly chosen different scenes.

The five choir scenes can be considered as spectacle-driven scene-markers which correspond to the Aristotelian and then later Shakespearian five-act dramatic structure. The first choir scene is inserted after the introduction of the main protagonists and their relations with each other and therefore marks the end of the exposition. The second choir scene then marks the end of the rising action (Act II), and so forth. The climax is divided into two scenes. Each of the songs sung by the choir ironically reflects upon Inge's personal situation and therefore emphasises the importance of the choir, acting not only as scene markers but also as an indicator of her development.

Conclusion

To which genre does *Cloud 9* belong? Could it be interpreted as a purely 'German' (with a slightly Eastern touch) contribution to the New German Cinema of the 2000s, which is currently dominated by a discourse on transnationalism? Social problems, confrontation with and discussion of historical topics, intercultural problems and transnational

issues are not however dealt with in *Cloud 9*. This perhaps comes as a surprise in a context where, as Cooke has pointed out, the discourse on transnationalism is currently dominating Film Studies in Germany.[5] As Hake also comments: "*A look at recent publications on German cinema confirms that the transnational has emerged as a key category in mapping film and media culture since the fall of the Berlin Wall.*"[6]

Cloud 9, however, does not concern itself with these issues. It is an experimental film that tries to come to terms with a still prevalent taboo, not only in film-making, but in society, too. The pleasures of the flesh and sexual desires do not stop at the age of 50, and love can always strike you, often when you least expect it. Members of today's 'older' generation refuse to be treated as second-class citizens and rightfully demand to be taken into consideration as active participants in society. With *Cloud 9*, Dresen impressively opposes the mainstream tendency to support films largely about and by young people.

Notes and References

[1] Renate Möhrmann, '*Germany, Pale Mother*: On the Mother Figures in New German Women's Film', *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture*, vol. 11, 1995, p. 69.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 74.

[3] R.W. Connell and James Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept', *Gender & Society*, vol. 19 no. 6, December 2005, p. 832.

[4] Harriet Bradley, *Gender*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, p. 46.

[5] Paul Cooke, 'Recent Trends in German Film Studies', i*Monatshefte*, vol. 102 no. 3, Fall 2010, pp. 384-399.

[6] Sabine Hake, 'German Cinema as European Cinema: Learning from Film History', *Film History: An International Journal*, vol. 25 nos. 1-2, 2013, p. 110.

24 / Visual Pleasure in Crisis: Actors, Characters, Spectators

Sandra Meiri and Odeya Kohen-Raz

Breaching the Body-Character

What we term 'body-character breach films' are those that create a rupture between the actors' body - physiognomy and distinct attributes usually associated with their *persona* - and the characters that they initially play in a given film. Body–character breach films create a crisis in spectatorship, which is also a crisis in visual pleasure. This crisis involves two levels, the first of which is cognitive. Challenged here are the viewer's perception, and associated modes of processing data, pertaining to the initial characterisation of the films' protagonists as embodied by specific actors.

For example, in *Face-Off* (Woo, USA, 1997) FBI special agent Sean Archer (initially played by John Travolta), subjects himself to a face transplant, taking on the face of the megalomaniac terrorist Castor Troy (initially played by Nicolas Cage), who is in a coma, in order to get access to information on a bomb Troy has planted. But Troy regains consciousness and undergoes a similar surgical procedure -taking on Archer's face - in order to usurp Archer's position both in his family and at work. For most of the film, we see Travolta's physique/body and have to believe that he is in fact Troy, whose personality and mannerisms have been imprinted in our memory by Cage's characterisation at the beginning of the film.

Furthermore, throughout the film we have to remember that in his role as Troy, Travolta is obliged to simulate Archer's tormented personality in order to sustain the fiction. The same effort is required from us when viewing Archer/Cage. This is no isolated example. The body-character breach device has many further manifestations in cinema, and is characterised by a structure of opposition, as evident in the following taxonomy.

A Taxonomy of Breaches

The *body-switch* is the most salient film category of body–character breach. As explained in the example from *Face/Off,* in this category we have the co-presence of two swapped bodies, each containing two opposite characters (good/evil; young/old; female/male; married/single; active/passive, and so on). As well as struggling with a situation where a character inhabits a body that is not his/hers, we are constantly required to cross-compare the characters. For example, in Nelson's *Freaky Friday* (USA, 1976), a mother and daughter swap bodies, generating a sub-genre of body-switch comedies.

In the case of *reincarnation,* a past character occupies the body of another in the present. In films like *All of Me* (Reiner, USA, 1984) and *Down to Earth* (Chris and Paul Weitz, USA, 2001) the oppositions young/old, white/black, and male/female are manifested in a new body/actor playing another, very different (dead) character.

Birth (Glazer, USA, 2004) uses the reincarnation sub-genre to make us believe that Cameron Bright, who plays the character of 10-year-old Sean, is in fact the late husband of Anna (Nicole Kidman). In contrast to the body of the young boy, we are required to imagine a sexually mature grown man. Bright's gloomy acting stands in direct opposition to his 'baby' face and young, undeveloped body.

Body transformation involves a character whose body has been radically transformed, hence played by two different actors. The oppositions old/young, female/male, refined/common, and fat/thin are manifested, as in the body-switch category, in the contradiction between body and character. The difference is that there is only one character.

For example, in *Big* (Marshall, USA, 1988), following the disappearance from the screen of the young actor (David Moscow), who plays thirteen-year-old Josh, we are left with Josh's character inhabiting the body of a twenty-year-old, played by Tom Hanks (Josh's grown-up self). The appearance of the body of Hanks is contradicted by his acting, which simulates the behaviour and gestures of a thirteen-year-old. In *La piel que habito* (*The Skin I Live In*, Almodóvar, Spain, 2011), meanwhile, male character Vicente (Jan Cornet) is transformed into Vera Cruz (Elena Anaya) after having been subjected to a male-to-female operation.

Variations of this category may be found in films like *Vertigo* (Hitchcock, USA, 1958) and *Shallow Hal* (Bobby and Peter Farrelly, USA, 2001), where we have only one actress playing a character whose transformation is achieved by make-up and clothes. Another variation is to be found in *Fight Club* (Fincher, USA, 1999), were we at first seem to have two characters (Jack and Tyler) played by two actors (Edward Norton and Brad Pitt).

At the end of the film they turn out to be one character (Jack/Norton) who has undergone a psychological transformation. Then we realise that what we have seen is really one 'split' character, Jack/Norton, and that Tyler/Pitt has been but a figment of his imagination. The oppositions are manifested by the co-presence of the two actors throughout the film. Hence, we have to retroactively modify our impressions and perceptions.

In the case of the m*ultiple-body character*, the main character is played by one or more actors (one character, multiple bodies/actors). The oppositions are manifested in the difference between the physique and attributes (sensual/apathetic, old/young, black/white, tall/short and male/female) of the actors who play the main character.

In addition to *Cet obscur object du désir* (*That Obscure Object of Desire*, Buñuel, France, 1977), notable for its use of two actresses (Carole Bouquet and Angela Molina) in the single role of 'Conchita', two further films stand out. In *Palindromes* (Solondz, USA, 2004) thirteen-year-old Aviva is played by as many as seven different actresses, while in *I'm Not There* (Haynes, USA, 2007) American singer Bob Dylan is played by no fewer than six actors/stars, of different age, race, and gender.

Where the *two-sex actress/body* is concerned, the oppositions are manifested in an actress who plays a male-to-female trans-sexual; we are invited to believe that the female actress (whose femininity is hyperbolised) is a man who has turned into a woman. Carmen Maura in *La ley del deseo* (*Law of Desire*, Almodóvar, Spain, 1987) and Felicity Huffman in *Transamerica* (Tucker, USA, 2007) are quintessential examples of this mode.

The *body host* category is epitomised in *Being John Malkovich* (Jonze, USA, 1999), where we have one actor/body (John Malkovich) occupied, alternately, by three different characters: Craig Schwartz (John Cusack), Maxine Lund (Catherine Keener) and Lotte Schwartz (Cameron Diaz). On each occasion (in particular when Malkovich's body is taken over by Craig/Cusack) we have to struggle to disregard Malkovich's physique and *persona*, and attribute his physical changes and behaviour to another character.

The oppositions here address sex (male/female), gender (femininity/masculinity), fame/lack of recognition and sexual orientation (straight/gay). In *The Host* (Niccol, USA/Switzerland, 2013) Saoirse Ronen plays the character of resistance fighter Melanie, whose body is forced to host an invading alien named Wanda. Thus the body hosts two characters (aggressive fighter Melanie and non–aggressive Wanda) who are in conflict with each other.

Psychoanalytic Dimensions

The structure of oppositions functions to unmask the mechanism of desire (the subject's relation to the lack in the Other) in the dialectic of fantasy/desire. This brings us to the second level, which is the focus of our attention: the

psychoanalytic. Here we find ourselves in a crisis in which the work of fantasy is being challenged, both in relation to the spectators' fantasy in the context of casting and that of the characters' fantasy in the films.

In the context of casting, this challenge is grounded in breaching the match between body/actor and character, one of the precepts of mainstream cinema involving the desire of spectators. Unlike theatre and opera, where it is less of a prerequisite, in cinema the body of the actor matches in more than one way the character, aspiring to comply with what the spectator's fantasy might be in regard to this embodiment on screen.

Behind the wish to achieve utmost correspondence between casting and roles is an attempt to guess what the 'Other' - the audience - wants in relation to characters/actors. "*What does the Other want from me?*" is, according to Lacan, the fundamental question asked by every subject in relation to the enigmatic desire of the Other, and the answer given by the subject is a fantasy scene - a defence against castration, the lack in the Other.[1]

We may suggest that when the spectator associates the character wholly with the physique of the actor/actress, the casting becomes a fixed immobile fantasy image, a mode of defence against castration. In body-character breach films the disruption of the imaginary relationship/match between the actor's body (as well as *persona*) and character creates a spectatorial/specular crisis, in which the viewer is confronted with lack, thus raising important questions regarding the ways public and private forms of fantasies interact in the production of visual pleasure.

This is achieved via the various strategies of the films, which engage spectators with their fantasy/fantastic scenarios in fulfilling the desire of the Other, while simultaneously undermining them. These scenarios enable the characters to get access to the Other's desire (to learn what the other character wants from them in their capacity of embodying the Other) and to acquire his/her privileges: the young get to be older, black get to be white, female characters get to be male - and *vice-versa*.

Fantasy and the Other

For example, in the Mark Waters version of *Freaky Friday* (USA, 2003), while in her daughter's body the mother gets to control her daughter's looks and life, and her own body gets to be young in style and manner. The daughter, for her part, has free access to the mother's credit cards, and later on she learns how to feel more at ease with the boy she is secretly in love with, and how to get along with her stepfather.

However, the realisation of the fantasy to have access to the enigmatic desire of the Other (the initial traumatic experience of the subject against which it needs fantasy), to be the all-knowing, all-enjoying Other, is undermined by suggesting that such a realisation might entail the materialisation of incest. In *Freaky Friday* such thoughts and uneasy sensations arise when the daughter (initially played by Lindsay Lohan) is seen in the body of actress Jamie Lee Curtis (initially playing the mother) having a good time with a boy she is in love with. The other characters think the 50-year-old mother, about to re-marry, is flirting with a teenager.

Her fiancé (Mark Harmon) finds it difficult to follow the reckless behaviour of his 'wife to be', as well as the

unexplained control her teenage daughter has suddenly over her. In his bewilderment (for example, when he asks "*Am I supposed to follow this*"?) he represents the spectator. The character of the young boy (son and brother), for his part, is not only puzzled by what he believes to be his mother's behaviour, but also literally repulsed (his reaction is shown in close-up) when he sees her bottom, sporting a thong, sticking out from her trousers.

This reaction affirms our apprehension of incestuous situations all the way through, for example while facing the fact that a marriage is about to materialise between the (real) daughter (in her mother's body) and her stepfather. This apprehension is enhanced by the display of the (real) mother's horrified gaze, emanating from the body of actress Lindsay Lohan. The horrified gaze, evinced in all mainstream body-character breach films, functions as a ploy in drawing the viewer's attention to how the body-character breach device is used to problematise character portrayals and to render visible unconscious scenarios buried in the conscious ones.

The latter, often considered to be complicit with dominant ideology, infuse spectatorial pleasure.[2] By making visible that which is barred from consciousness in the creation of pleasure, body-character breach films provide a platform for "*traversing the fantasy*" - for "*subjectivisation*", a process whereby a character becomes what Fink calls "*the subject of his or her own fate*."[3]

Cinema and the Primal Scene

Cinema may thus produce public forms of fantasy, as well as providing a stage on which any individual spectator may script his/her own desire.[4] This necessarily involves one of the three

fantasies of origins (of the subject), firstly, the 'primal scene', which refers to how the subject came into the world. The primal scene directly addresses the desire of the Other, as it is this desire that brought him/her into the world.

In the staging of the unconscious fantasy regarding the primal scene the child/subject may occupy more than one position - both as a witness to the parental coitus, and as a participant in it. In this respect, the primal scene is an unconscious fantasy that stages the wish to be the Other, to fulfill the Other's desire by usurping the position of one parent.

Mainstream body-character breach films address the conflation of the primal scene as formulated in the unconscious with film's propensity to enable multiple spectatorial positions by tackling such a staging of desire. Revealing the incestuous content of the primal scene, they allow for a transition from the position in which the Other acts as the cause of the subject to one in which the subject becomes his/her cause.

The engaged but horrified spectator might find it difficult to adhere to a fetishistic spectatorial position, one that marks the position of a perverse subject, who is convinced that he knows exactly what the Other wants from him/her. This realisation allows for a shift in the fetishistic position, a process encouraged by all body-character breach comedies, which make clear that the granting of the wish to be the Other may indeed occur only in fantastic fictional films, belonging to the realm of fantasy.

While body-character breach films belonging to counter cinema (e.g., *Cet obscure objet du désir*) address this question by alienating the spectator (never satisfying desire), without

explaining why, mainstream body-character breach films explain the difference between a perverse, fetishistic position (knowing what the Other wants) and a neurotic-inquisitive one, in which the subject assumes responsibility over his/her own fate. At the end of the films the characters return to their own bodies, becoming the masters of their own desire. The transition from one position to the other marks the process of subjectivisation.

The Dialectic of Fantasy/Desire

By delineating a parallelism between the two different spectatorial positions and the two different subjective positions in relation to the question of the desire of the Other/the lack in the Other, mainstream body-character breach films show how in the process of subjectivisation, although a fundamental fantasy is set in motion, fantasy itself is not renounced altogether, thus maintaining the dialectic of fantasy/desire.

This dialectic is at the core of the mainstream cinematic experience, as well as at the core of the subject's experience. By engaging the spectator with their fantasy, while at the same time subverting it, mainstream cinema re-enacts this dialectic - unlike counter-cinema, that operates wholly in the realm of desire, never reaching satisfaction (insisting on the experience of lack), and in the process, we might say, risks losing the spectator altogether.

In her discussion of fantasy and spectatorship Teresa De Lauretis addresses the question of a particular film's failure to engage a spectator with its fantasy. She makes a significant distinction between "*subjectivity*" - the realm of psychoanalysis (fantasy, desire, identification, and so on) - and

"*subjecthood*" - the subject's social locations (sexual identity, race, class, gender, etc.). She argues that the latter has more weight in a spectator acceptance of a film as ready-made fantasy.[5] Our question is: what is it that might engage a viewer with a film that specifically disregards his/her subjecthood?

For example, *Face/Off* may appeal not only to viewers who like action films, or who advocate the sanctity of heterosexual families. This means that what is at stake is not the film's specific fantasy that one seeks to identify with provided that it complies with the subject's own subjecthood or ideology (although this certainly plays an important role in visual pleasure and identification). Being white, black, lesbian, or of a certain class or social status does not bear a necessary relevance to one's subjective structure in relation to lack. Rather, it is thanks to mainstream cinema's ability to engage the spectator, to various degrees, in a quasi-analytical process (subjectivisation), precisely because it maintains the dialectic of fantasy/desire (pleasure/displeasure), that it holds on to the spectator.

Notes and References

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[2] See Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze: Film Theory after Lacan*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2007.

[3] Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. xiii.

[4] See Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, 'Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality', in Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan (eds.)*, Formations of Fantasy,* New York: Routledge, 1986, pp. 5-34. See also Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, pp. 129-137; Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire,* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994, pp. 81-148; and Elizabeth Cowie, *Representing the Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis,* London: Macmillan, 1997, pp. 123-165.

[5] De Lauretis, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

25 / The Unlikely Pleasures of the Destructive Spectacle

Elena Woolley

The Imagination of Disaster

When disaster strikes it is shocking, horrific, grief-inspiring and overwhelmingly disruptive to the otherwise peaceful equilibrium of everyday life. Cinematic interpretations of destructive disasters, on the other hand, often play a far less distressing role for spectators. In fact, these images of the catastrophic are designed precisely to entertain, rather than provoke anguish. While the spectacle of destruction has found a home in many film genres, it is arguably most prevalent in the disaster genre itself - a genre predicated on demolition and large-scale catastrophes. The purpose of this essay is, primarily, to consider how destructive images are cinematically rendered in relation to spectatorial pleasure.

In her canonical 1965 essay 'The Imagination of Disaster', Susan Sontag proposes that "*ours is indeed an age of extremity. For we live under continual threat of two equally fearful, but seemingly opposed, destinies: unremitting banality and inconceivable terror …. For one job that fantasy can do is to lift us out of the unbearably humdrum and to distract us from terrors, real or anticipated - by an escape into exotic dangerous situations which have last-minute happy endings. But another one of the things that fantasy can do is to normalize what is psychologically unbearable, thereby inuring us to it. In the one case, fantasy beautifies the world. In the other, it neutralizes it.*"[1]

For Sontag, fantasy is at the heart of the imagination of disaster. She identifies two active states of mind - banality and terror, two different, yet equally occurring, psychological phenomena. The first of these, banality, is the mundane, the ordinary and the commonplace. Yet the ordinariness of banality is offset and alleviated by a fantasy of danger - that is fantasy as an escapist concern, one in which danger is stripped of its dire consequences. Terror, on the other hand, is, as Sontag suggests, neutralised by emphasising the mundane aspects of the terrifying and the upsetting - so that terror prevails less. Fantasy, in this conception, is where mundanity and the horrific meet - the neutral point between the two, where both exist in equal, potent measure.

As familiar tourist destinations are destroyed in Hollywood films such as *Independence Day* (Emmerich, USA, 1996), *Armageddon* (Bay, USA, 1998) and *The Day After Tomorrow* (Emmerich, USA, 2004), the mundane is encroached upon by the disruptive and destructive spectacle of disaster that is represented as a disturbing yet remote threat, a fantasy. Emmerich's *2012* (USA, 2010) provides a good example of a

distanced, fantastical representation of destruction. The film posits a scenario in which the Earth's core heats up, causing tectonic plates to rapidly and dramatically shift - tearing asunder the Earth's crust, and the world of humanity.

As the film conveys this state of disequilibrium the spectator is encouraged to look on as the West Coast of America crumbles into oblivion. Similarly, amidst the large-scale destruction on show, the people swallowed up by the devastation are small and incidental - never fully introduced, and only briefly captured by the camera as they perish. What is evidenced by the destructive spectacle of *2012* is a fantasy in which the unthinkable happens, in which buildings are destroyed in place of the human individuals who inhabit them.

In a notable sequence early in the film, the tectonic plates are ripped suddenly apart as the central protagonists - a dysfunctional family group - board a plane to flee the scene. The runway, much like the rest of their surroundings, cracks and then crumbles away, the rift in the ground creeping ever closer to the characters. As the plane takes flight the camera appropriates its point-of-view, providing aerial long shots that enable the full extent of the damage to be viewed, but at a significant distance from any fatalities suffered.

The Spectacle of the Banal

Here, the spectacle of the banal is transmuted into the terrifying, as the Curtis family survive (fantastically, one might say) one obstacle after another, and always against the odds. As the Los Angeles skyline disintegrates into the newly formed chasm, cars, trees and buildings are consumed and lost. The plane, as it flees the scene, dodges falling roadways,

debris and other mundane objects that assault the aircraft as the familiar cityscape of Los Angeles is transformed into a hellish, apocalyptic fantasy.

Unremarkable objects such as glass and furniture appear momentarily amidst a cascade of other equally mundane objects as these items are dislocated from the ordinary and the banal and instead positioned in unusual places and situations. These objects appear in order for the spectator to witness their moment of destruction - largely through the comforting distance of extreme long shots - as they become the centre of the spectacle. It is not the thousands of human beings trapped in the falling rubble who are forfeit to the fantastic spectacle, but the built environment.

Here, as Sontag hypothesises, a dangerous situation both interrupts the "*unbearably humdrum*", while the absence of closely observed human casualties and, equally, the deeper ramifications of such destruction, remain unobserved. Thus the terror of destruction is neutralised by fantasy. In *2012* the everyday is transformed. Buildings precariously topple, cars and trains fall seemingly from the sky, and as the protagonists fly through the labyrinth of falling debris the mundane habitat that was L.A. becomes a theme-park ride of death and ruin. It becomes fantastical and spectacular.

But what function does spectacle play in conveying such a destructive fantasy? Spectacle in and of itself might be characterised as an indulgent excess, a mode of spectatorial address that flourishes from the attention bestowed upon it. Without such attention what takes place on the screen cannot be 'spectacular', merely a sublime cinematic occurrence - a grandiose expression of visual or emotional

extravagance. Spectacle, then, is a phenomenon that is dependent upon the gratification of its audience.

In the grand scheme of fantasy, spectacle becomes a crucial tool, rendering the catastrophic artificial through its unashamed excess. And if the filmic execution of these "*terrors, real or anticipated*" are intended to offer entertainment and spectatorial pleasure to the audience, as Sontag suggests, such an appropriation of spectacle is key. This is not to suggest that spectacle is synonymous with either entertainment *or* pleasure, but rather that in its audacious, cinematic interpretation of the world, spectacle detaches audiences from the reality of such terrors and instead, facilitates a fantastic, unperturbing rendition of the catastrophic. It allows destruction to become a bold and exaggerated aspect of the *mise-en-scène*. And yet it is simply *too* bold, *too* exaggerated to become truly disturbing.

This is an exaggeration rooted in the extravagant depiction of even the most ordinary and commonplace of objects and locations. Take, for example, the cascade of buildings and a seemingly airborne train that are captured in the ostentatious frames of *2012*. These are extraordinary things occurring to ordinary items. As such, spectacle becomes emblematic of an accessible and familiar domain as surely as it does an exotic and performative one - in essence, spectacle itself enacts a fantastical function for the spectator. Indeed, spectacle is the tool by which fantasy mediates the banal and the terrifying - both destructive and artificial in its awesome scale.

Indeed, artificiality is central to the effectiveness of the destructive spectacle. The troubling truth that disasters do sometimes occur is divorced from the exaggerated cinematic

images of the disaster genre. Special effects enable a simulated yet uncannily familiar world to collapse around a given film's protagonists in spectacular fashion. Such a filmic approach to destruction distances the catastrophic circumstances of the narrative from the spectator, thus denying the spectacle's true, underlying, horrific potential, and instead giving way to a detachedly entertaining one. Destruction in this conception becomes fantastical.

Spectacle and Reality: *Titanic*

The films I have mentioned thus far are rooted in fiction, often hypothetical imaginings of disastrous or apocalyptic events that culminate in the deaths of hundreds or thousands of largely unseen characters. But what of disaster films with some basis in reality? How does a destructive spectacle that is inescapably intertwined with actuality maintain its fantastic hold on the spectator? James Cameron's *Titanic* (USA, 1997), for example, is a film that seeks to replicate the tragic 1912 sinking of the ship of the same name in destructive and emotional fashion. In contrast to *2012*, *Titanic* incorporates elements of melodrama and sentimentality into its depiction of spectacular destruction.

As the ship sinks, the film cuts between visually dramatic images of the up-ended vessel and emotionally distinctive moments of human melodrama. The casualties of the filmic 'Titanic' - with their actual, historical antecedents - are an emotional inheritance of the fateful story of the ship, and thus are cinematically and spectacularly acknowledged in turn. The climactic sinking sequence of *Titanic* then oscillates between distanced glimpses of a terrifying disaster and close documentation of the experiences of those who fight to survive amongst the crowd. As the ship approaches its

demise the film cuts between close-ups and medium shots of protagonists and strangers alike. All are presented as victims of the disaster at hand. The film places a premium on the emotional *gravitas* of each character's involvement and imminent death.

Here, the emotional spectacle becomes as pronounced as the visual spectacle - distracting audiences from the actuality of the disaster by exaggerating its fatal implications, and thus rendering them fictional too. The special effects shots of the doomed vessel and the mundane exchange of glances between strangers give rise to a dramatic exhibition in which a spectacle of melancholy disaster is born. Here, the gravity of the destruction is informed and characterised by the film's high degree of interest in those who die, and equally, the spectacle of the broken ship.

The scene is constructed in such a way as to provoke sadness in the audience, to establish a familiar human centre to the film. In contrast, *2012* frames only protagonists in close-up amidst the chaos, and offers *their* perspective on the crumbling cityscape around them; it does not engage directly with the anonymous figures who perish in the spectacle. Indeed, in *2012*, the mundane is rooted in the everyday settings and objects that are destroyed, while the destruction itself is the source of terror.

With the exception of brief glances at the suffering of various small and insignificant characters as they experience such horrors - and the equally fleeting glimpses of the protagonists' responses to these - *2012* does not locate its awesome terror in the emotional and personal consequences of the spectacular situation, but rather in an otherwise unperturbing image of unbelievable devastation. *Titanic*,

however, is based on actual events, which inherently establishes its basis in a mundane world, a thread in the fabric of an ongoing human history.

Similarly, *Titanic* locates the banality of the everyday in its settings. For example, the 'look' of a familiar historical period dominates the *mise-en-scène*. Objects as unassuming as plates and furniture tumble and smash. As bedrooms tilt to crazy gradients the hitherto comfortable world of this lavish ship becomes a hostile environment. These images, much like the shattered L.A. skyline of *2012*, inherit the visual responsibility of conveying the concurrent human deaths of the story to the spectator. The mundane becomes emblematic of terror, and the real tale of the 'Titanic' becomes a fantasy.

Cloverfield and 9/11

Matt Reeve's *Cloverfield* (USA, 2008), on the other hand, much like *2012*, is not based directly on actual events. The film documents a large, unexplained monster that terrorises New York City, destroying buildings and killing humans. Yet, despite its fictional basis, *Cloverfield* contains strong echoes of the events of 9/11 - the media coverage of which has been likened to the work of film.[2] The Hollywood films released preceding the attacks on the World Trade Centre featured polished and carefully framed images of destruction - such as the opening sequence of *Armageddon* in which the Chrysler building is destroyed.

Cloverfield, however, released only six years after the attacks, emulates the imperfections and restricted perspective of footage filmed by someone caught up the chaos of a disaster - that is, footage not entirely unlike the

visual accounts of disaster that appeared in the media following the 2001 tragedy. In a sense, *Cloverfield* recalls the media coverage of 9/11, and not the reverse. Whereas *2012* takes a detached stance in relation to the destruction upon which it fixates, and while *Titanic* views its destructive spectacles melodramatically, *Cloverfield* strives to position the film spectator behind the camera and amid the fray as buildings collapse and thousands die. In *Cloverfield*, then, the spectator does not go where the destruction does, but rather it comes to him - invoking the memory of 9/11 in the process.

As the monster makes its (narrative, if not explicitly visual) appearance, disaster becomes a tangible and familiar sight for the film spectator. Handheld, somewhat grainy footage of the events strips the film of its deliberate, constructed appearance, instead lending a sense of spontaneity and unpredictability to the events. As the characters spill on to the city streets to watch as landmark after landmark is destroyed, the camera pans unsteadily and wildly from one spectacle to another.

As the head of The Statue of Liberty hurtles across the skyline and down the street, the handheld camera struggles to hold it in its sights. It is not all-seeing, and here the cinematography fails to sustain the comforting spectacle of artificiality - which is only maintained by the film's inescapable use of special effects and, importantly, its fantastical plot. Nevertheless, these effects conjure images of actual events, with the crumbling figure of the Empire State Building acting as an iconic stand-in for the World Trade Centre.

As the dust cloud of its debris advances through the city streets, one cannot help but recall similar footage from 9/11.

Yet, what is portrayed is an illusion of a first-hand experience of destruction, which plays heavily on the iconography of 9/11 - thus simultaneously depicting both the mundane and the terrifying, by stripping a fantastical narrative of its perceptible fictionality. Essentially, the film recalls an actual disaster, and thus positions its spectacle within touching distance of reality. Fantasy and spectacle here meet reality half-way, presenting a recognisable and yet somehow digestible vision of even the most disastrous of events. It exaggerates, embellishes and so dilutes the terrors inherent in the cinematic spectacle of destruction.

The disaster genre takes a varied approach to presenting such a spectacle to its audience. Some films divorce their narrative content and influences from actual disasters, instead presenting an escapist fantasy. Others are indebted to, or perhaps burdened with, the responsibility of reconstructing the final moments of real lives under catastrophic circumstances, or even just drawing on the haunting iconography of tragic disaster. Yet each of these cinematic takes on destruction deploys fantasy to both normalise the brutality of disaster and to elevate it from the mundane.

At the core of fantasy is spectacle: a means by which even the most horrific of diegetic circumstances can be enjoyed by audiences. While the three films I have discussed here maintain the comforting cloak of fantasy in equal measure, their relationship to the spectacular dramatically alters the manner in which audiences engage with filmic renditions of devastation. As terrors become the subject of flamboyant visual or emotional excess, the spectator is allowed the cushioning virtues of artifice and, indeed, the solace implicit in disbelief.

Acknowledgement

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Notes and References

[1] Susan Sontag, 'The Imagination of Disaster', in Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965, p. 209.

[2] See Geoff King, '"Just Like a Movie?": 9/11 and Hollywood Spectacle', in King (ed.), *The Spectacle of the Real: From Hollywood to Reality TV and Beyond*, Bristol: Intellect, 2005, p. 47, and BBC's *Panorama* programme of 24 March 2003, presented by Steve Bradshaw, *September 11: A Warning from Hollywood*, a transcript of which is available online at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/panorama/1875186.stm.

26 / Consume, Purge, Repeat: The Spectacular Pleasure of Cultural Bulimia in U.S. Television

Margaret Hass

Theories of Blubber

In her book *Blubberland: The Dangers of Happiness*, Elizabeth Farrelly attempts to diagnose the ills of the late capitalist world. Although she initially states that 'blubber' is not necessarily a bad thing, her description soon takes a negative turn, in which fat becomes a metaphor for all that is wrong with consumerism and modernity:

"*But blubber is also the very opposite of light: the track-suited, mind-numbed couch potato, the quadruple-garaged McMansion, the idealised fantasy life of the virtual-reality addict, home alone with a flickering screen in a darkened room. It is the bear-pit of reality TV, the pseudo-feminist 'me-*

ring' that you buy yourself, the neurotic shopaholics aspiring to ever bigger and more perfect apartments just to house all the stuff. Blubber is the world of vast, glittering malls and dreary look-at-me suburbs interspersed with limitless acreage of concrete, asphalt and billboards. It is cashed-up pension funds forcing their market-driven conservatism across the corporate world, terrified women with silicone breasts and plastic relationships locked into the fearful luxury of gated communities … "[1]

In her laundry-list of alarmist critiques, Farrelly makes a number of easy associations: "*silicone breasts*" imply "*plastic relationships*" and those enjoying "*virtual-reality*" and "*reality TV*" are necessarily isolated from the rest of the society, "*home alone with a flickering screen in a darkened room*". Most importantly, in positing blubber a symbol of everything from social isolation to suburban sprawl, Farrelly makes fatness the master sign of modern malaise and the symptom of a pathological form of consumption akin to an eating disorder: "*Like the gut flora of some poor, fixed creature, addicted to this bulimic cycle of buying, getting and getting-rid-of, we extract what we want, or think we might want some time, and excrete the excess - the packaging, the recycling, the half-digested junk.*"[2]

While Farrelly's critique is mostly levelled at her native Australia, American Julie Guthman makes a similar argument. Instead of making fat people the scapegoats of over-consumption and symbols of postmodern isolation, however, Guthman attempts to show how the body acts as a "*spatial fix*" in the neo-liberal economy: "*the material contradictions of neoliberal capitalism are not only resolved in the sphere of surplus distribution, but also in bodies, such that the double fix*

of eating and dieting produces a political economy of bulimia, as it were, but has differential effects on individuals (with strong correlations with class). Regarding the latter, I will note a culture of bulimia, where on one hand consuming is encouraged and on the other deservingness is performed by being thin no matter how that is accomplished."[3] As a result, "*bulimia is not simply a way to read bodies; it is a way to read the neoliberal economy itself.*"[4]

Guthman acknowledges that all subjects, not just Farrelly's "*mind-numbed couch potato*" and "*neurotic shopaholics*", are implicated in this system, while some are disproportionately affected and targeted. In this reading, the moral panic surrounding the so-called 'obesity epidemic' is also a symptom of this cycle rather than a cure. As Guthman notes, the weight-loss products and procedures marketed to solve obesity simply constitute a different kind of consumption; instead of suggesting we all consume less, the neo-liberal economy proposes "*purchasable solutions*" for the problem it has itself created.

Cultural Bulimia and Television

In addition to making an important contribution to the theorisation of fatness within the new field of Fat Studies, Guthman's cultural bulimia thesis also provides a compelling model to describe a range of contemporary U.S. reality television programmes that appear to reflect the contradictory impulses of consumption and purging. Just as Guthman suggests, the bulimic cycle is evident both on the level of the individual body and that of the household.

This means that there are shows that valorise the excessive consumption of food, while others preach and produce

weight-loss; there are those that champion the amassing and stockpiling of goods, while others seek to purge 'hoarded' houses of excess stuff.This essay analyses representative shows of each of these four types, comparing and contrasting *Man v. Food* (Travel) and *The Biggest Loser* (NBC), as well as *Extreme Couponing* (TLC) and *Hoarders* (A&E). In all cases, these programmes indulge in a spectacular pleasure, a pleasure of extremes, but these spectacles also vary in important ways.

In *Man v. Food* and *Extreme Couponing*, patterns of consumption are subsumed into a framework of competition. In line with the neo-liberal emphasis on free market capitalism, this inherently valorises the activity performed regardless of its practical utility. On the other hand, those individuals who are seen to retain too much, whether it is weight on their bodies or objects in their homes, are pushed into the framework of the abject and pathological spectacle. After invoking our horror, though, *The Biggest Loser* and *Hoarders* produce another type of spectacle, in which the subject's body or house, respectively, is reformed on a path of personal transformation.

Both *Man v. Food* and *The Biggest Loser* are TV shows with competitive formats, albeit with ostensibly opposite aims. In *Man v. Food*, the goal is to perform a spectacle of eating, to put an excessive amount of food *into* the body, whereas *The Biggest Loser* attempts to take weight *off* its contestants through extreme exercise. *Man v. Food* features Adam Richman, who travels the country in search of local specialties and eating challenges. Each episode features a different city, in which Adam typically visits two or three restaurants. The first of these visits showcases a local delicacy, showing how it is made and enjoyed, while the final part always features an

eating challenge which Adam takes on before a cheering live audience of the restaurant's local patrons.

Throughout the programme, *Man v. Food* presents itself as a champion of local food and eating traditions, particularly those that overflow with excessive amounts of cheese, meat, and other indulgent ingredients. In Boulder, Colorado, for example, in episode 40, Adam eats a Grand Sicilian pizza described as a "*mountain-style pizza for mountain appetites*", weighing up to 14 lbs. and frequently eaten with honey. The pleasurable eating experiences presented early in the programme, accompanied by extreme close-ups of gooey food and the nearly orgasmic sounds made by Adam, contrast starkly with the competitive atmosphere and gruelling pain of the finale.

In the challenge, eating is presented as hard work, a heroic trial in which the rival, the food itself (as the title suggests), is defeated by supreme effort. While these two contrasting parts do not significantly vary in terms of time devoted to them in the episode, the order in which they are presented, as well as the various teasers leading up to the challenge, mean that the second mode of depiction, in which consumption is clearly valorised despite (or perhaps because of) its lack of pleasure, dominates the show. Ultimately, Adam's gluttony is subsumed into a framework of competition in which the spectacle of eating is championed.

The Biggest Loser, on the other hand, presents a spectacle of weight-loss. In this programme, the participants, removed from their everyday lives to endure weeks and months of gruelling exercise on 'the ranch' do not only seek to beat their own previous weight, but also compete with others on the scales. Those who do not lose enough weight quickly are

subject to potential elimination, and additional challenges are regularly integrated into the programme in order to heighten the competitive frame. In order to justify both its ends and means, *The Biggest Loser* relies on a presentation of fat bodies as inherently deficient and diseased, so near to death that drastic change is the only remedy.

Medical authority in the form of an on-site doctor intervenes to assure the viewer that these people must lose weight or suffer from heart disease, diabetes, or even an early death. At the same time, the spectacular pleasure of the show relies on the existence of the very phenomenon the show attempts to erase: the fat body. Equally paradoxical, the programme's showcasing of fat bodies contributes in a way to their normalisation.

In the course of the series viewers become more used to seeing the fat body and therefore more immune to its spectacle. This means that the show must indulge in more overt strategies to present the fat body as excessive, utilising particular shots and effects (extra jiggling of the camera when a candidate walks, for example) to highlight the body's difference, and recruiting heavier and heavier people to trump previous seasons and produce ever more dramatic transformations.

When contestant Michael Ventrella was introduced at 526 lbs. (239 kg) in season 9, for example, he was frequently referred to as the heaviest contestant ever. After losing over half his body weight, Michael won the season and the grand prize, embodying the paradoxical promise of the show's title more than any other - once literally the biggest of the 'loser' contestants, he lost the most weight and so won the title of '*The Biggest Loser*'. As with all *Biggest Loser* finales, this

transformation was further spectacularised by its staging in front of a live studio audience and a styled makeover.

In addition to turning the excessive corporeality of its contestants into a visual spectacle, *The Biggest Loser*, like many reality television programmes, can be said to produce a spectacle of affect. Driven by over-the-top workouts and the exhortations of their tough trainers to 'let it all out', the contestants not only sweat, vomit, and sometimes bleed, but also cry, scream, and shout. Over the course of the season, these exclamations change from frequent cries of pain and frustration, illustrating the lack of both physical and mental endurance of the candidates, to controlled shouts of victory and achievement.

In personal interviews, the contestants also stress their newfound ability to let go of negative emotional baggage. This emotional purging accompanying the physical shedding of weight is equally important for the show's message of transformation. Initially presented as unable to effectively manage their bodies and embodied affective responses, the contestants transform into responsible citizens able to sublimate their suffering in pursuit of competition.

Taken together, *Man v. Food* and *The Biggest Loser* demonstrate the way in which cultural bulimia wreaks havoc on the body of individual consumer, who is both encouraged to eat to excess and to remain thin at all costs. Consuming large amounts of food is masculinised as a heroic struggle, but the fat body itself is feminised, seen to be vulnerable and subject to a lack of affective control. In the end, however, both processes of consumption and purging are subsumed into the neo-liberal framework of competition and are valorised through the performance of spectacle.

Filling and Emptying the House of Consumption

If *Man v. Food* and *The Biggest Loser* represent the literal embodiment of consumption, *Extreme Couponing* and *Hoarders* demonstrate the cultural bulimia inherent in domestic consumption patterns as a whole. Here it is the house, rather than the body, that becomes the container which is filled with goods and later emptied. Paradoxically, while both shows produce visual pleasure through the sheer masses of stuff that their protagonists accumulate, the attitudes of the shows toward their protagonists vary considerably.

While the extreme 'couponers' are praised for their incredible consumption, performed in the name of frugality, the 'hoarders' are identified as sufferers of a psychological condition that requires therapy. While it may briefly appear otherwise, the contrast between these two groups of people is not based on any kind of rational utility inherent in their actions. Extreme couponers are frequently shown buying items they already possess in great quantities or products they do not even like, simply because they possess the coupons to buy them at greatly discounted prices. Likewise, many hoarders profess their need to retain certain items because they might be useful in the future.

Yet the modes of depicting these two behavioural patterns could not be more dfferent. A&E's *Hoarders*, filmed in much the same style as its programme *Intervention*, presents hoarding as a pathological condition. Each episode begins with the stark black-and-white declaration that "*Compulsive Hoarding is a mental disorder marked by an obsessive need to acquire and keep things, even if the items are worthless,*

hazardous, or unsanitary". This statement problematically labels the protagonists of the show 'sick' before they are even introduced to the audience, and this despite the fact that, as Susan Lepselter notes, hoarding has yet to be definitively accepted as a medical condition within the mental health community.

Soon after this initial screen, the camera accompanies a psychologist or other professional into the home of the hoarder; the viewer is invited to gape in morbid pleasure as the guest climbs over the abject mass of things in the house. Meanwhile, as Lepselter observes, the hoarders are depicted as completely isolated, visually dominated by the surrounding mess, as if they are not connected to social forces at all. Nevertheless, "*the stories are, on one level, a didactic primer on a neoliberal emphasis on choice, instructing us on the limits as well as the freedoms of the affective economy*".[5] To be re-integrated into society, the hoarders must therefore be reformed, learning to make rational choices about what is to be kept and what is to be thrown away so that the in-out flow of circulation is restored.

Interestingly, like Guthman, Lepselter also makes a connection to eating disorders and the body, suggesting that "*the image of the hoarded stash is sometimes seen as a putrid, dark part of the embodied self that needs to be cleansed ... The disorder of clutter feels like, and discursively becomes, an embodied medical disorder or illness*."[6] In the quest to reform the subject, this dirty part of the embodied self must be brought to light in a public spectacle. In *The Biggest Loser*, this means that weigh-ins are public, performed before fellow contestants as well as the viewing public; in *Hoarders*, the entire contents of the house are brought out on the lawn by a huge team of helpers, displayed for immediate neighbours

and for America at large. In the end, the clean house is presented in contrast to the messy house at the beginning, highlighting its spectacular transformation and the subject's progress in modifying his or her behavior.

If individuals on *Hoarders* are pathologised, the protagonists of *Extreme Couponers* are clearly celebrated. Accompanied by an upbeat voice-over, they are shown proudly displaying their private stockpiles and going on massive shopping sprees that require hours of preparation, a team of helpers in the store, and multiple transactions at the cash register. Whereas A&E implores potential hoarders to seek counseling, TLC's website offers a list of resources and featured stores so that the viewer too can become an extreme couponer. Extreme couponing is presented as a sort of extreme sport, a competitive activity in which the consumer acts as a clever rival for the supermarket.

Yet this is of course a false opposition. Far from discouraging the activities of the extreme shoppers who pay much below market price, the supermarket chains depicted accommodate and encourage their efforts. While the extreme consumption of these couponers does not seem to make sense from the point of view of personal utility or the supermarket's bottom line, it is useful on a larger scale if we consider Guthman's point that the neo-liberal economy produces excess goods that must be absorbed somewhere; in this sense, the stockpiling by the extreme couponer, like the storage of fat by the body, provides a sort of fix. Moreover, instead of presiding over the abject mess of the hoarder, the couponers featured tend to keep their stockpiles perfectly organised, maintaining the appearance of order and the illusion of future utility.

Conclusion

As I have shown, Guthman's model of cultural bulimia provides a useful framework for understanding television programmes that, taken individually, appear to propose diametrically opposed attitudes toward consumption and the body. Understood as parts of a fundamentally bulimic neo-liberal cycle, these contradictory impulses reveal themselves to be two sides of the same coin rather than a set of problems and their solutions. In demonstrating how the body itself becomes a "*spatial fix*" for neo-liberal capitalism, Guthman draws our attention to the places where the capitalist flow is interrupted, where circulation appears to stop and goods accumulate. It is in these spaces where the conflicts within neo-liberal culture are evident, and here where television can turn both extreme bingeing as well as extreme purging into spectacles for pleasurable consumption. These spectacles not only partake of neo-liberal discourse by placing all protagonists within a framework of competition or personal development, but also by producing television as an ultimately consumable good, full of its own contradictory pleasures.

Notes and References

[1] Elizabeth Farrelly, *Blubberland: The Dangers of Happiness*. Cambridge: MIT, 2008, p. 10.

[2] *ibid*., p. 25.

[3] Julie Guthman, 'Neoliberalism and the Constitution of Contemporary Bodies', in Sondra Solovay and Esther Rothblum (eds), *The Fat Studies Reader*, New York: New York University Press, 2009, p. 209.

[4] *ibid*., p. 214.

[5] Susan Lepselter, 'The Disorder of Things: Hoarding Narratives in Popular Media', *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 84 no. 4, 2011, pp. 926.

[6] *ibid.*, p. 926.

6. Psychic Encounters

27 / Freud, France and the Cinema: Sartre´s *Freud: The Secret Passion*, and Robbe-Grillet´s *It´s Gradiva Calling*

Maria Angélica Amâncio

In his essay 'The "Cinema of Poetry"' (1965) Italian director and theorist Pier Paolo Pasolini compares films with dreams at the fundamental level of structure. He also defends, as did Luis Buñuel in his 1958 presentation 'The Cinema, Instrument of Poetry', the need for more dream-like or oneiric films, works that would challenge traditional and classical modes of cinema, that is to say a poetic kind of cinema.[1] Following on from Bunel and Pasolini, in the remarks which follow I examine two films that take as their focus the most famous of dream theorists, Sigmund Freud. I begin by considering the curious script, more than three hundred pages in length, written by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1958, and shot by John Huston four years later as *Freud: The Secret Passion* (USA, 1962).

I go on to examine Alain Robbe-Grillet's *C´est Gradiva qui vous appelle* (*It's Gradiva Calling*), the *ciné-roman* that he published in 2002 and turned into a film proper in 2006.[2] This was based on Wilhelm Jensen's novel *Gradiva* (1902), a book which inspired one of the most well-known Freud studies, 'Delusions and Dreams in Wilhelm Jensen´s *Gradiva*' (1907).[3] I will compare the two films, showing their different approaches not only to the thinking of Freud, but also in terms of their varying conceptions of cinema itself.

The Cinema of Poetry

'The "Cinema of Poetry"', presented by Pasolini at the First International Festival of New Cinema in Pesaro in June 1965, remains one of the most important reflections on the subject. Pasolini begins by analysing the nature of the cinematographic image, looking at the balance between univocal interpretation (which emphasises communicability) and ambiguity (which favours poetic expressiveness). In short, these can be understood as the two opposing modes of prose and poetry.

This idea of the poetic function of language, developed by Jakobson, is opposed to the crystalline grammar of the cinema of prose. The cinema of poetry, it is suggested, allows for the expression of subjectivity, in a certain balance with objectivity, in cinematographic 'speech'. It implies that conventionality is not overcome by denying it, but rather by the act of re-structuring. The cinema of poetry favoured by Pasolini thus maintains its dialogue with the traditional narrative model. Proposing a new arrangement of the 'look', it reveals deeper mechanisms, questioning the relations of society, and synthesising realism and formalism.

Pasolini considers that, at least until this point, there hadn't been a film that used this feature consistently. He examines, therefore, those films where he detects at least a trend towards the cinema of poetry. In such films, the story is centered on a character whose subjectivity has an influence on visuality itself, the articulation of shots, and the structure as a whole. The drama of the protagonist reveals, moreover, the one confronting the film-maker himself - a condition that Pasolini characterises as "*representation paranoid*".

In such cases, proposes Savernini, "*the emotional state of the character … interferes in the narrative not only on the level of fabula but also in the discourse. His personality destabilises the standard, bringing slight disturbances, enough to generate a perception of the cinematic vehicle. There is, in the cinema of poetry, an apparent level of metalanguage, in which the perception of the technique is required in order to reach a second narrative level*."[4]

This level of metalanguage is connected to montage as a further important concept in these ideas about the poetic. Montage can provide a particular rhythm to filmed reality, changing its denotative meaning. The viewer is thus invited to fill in the resulting gaps or "*indeterminate zones*" in the film text.

In many aspects, Pasolini´s point-of-view is in agreement with the ideas of Buñuel in 'The Cinema, Instrument of Poetry'. Here the arch-surrealist describes cinema as well-developed in terms of technique and dramaturgy, but believes this not to be the case where its expressive and artistic potential is concerned. Rather, the cinema should be explored for its ability to radically extend the powers of human vision.

Instead of cushioning the imagination of the viewer in a mundane extension of everyday life, the director should focus on cinema's intrinsic ability to mimic the dream state and so to explore the unconscious.[5] To this end the filmmaker should explore meta-language, metaphor, and subjectivity, by means of which to generate strangeness, unpredictability, a disordering of the emotions - and the participatory enjoyment of the spectator.

Huston and Freud

Such is not the case with John Huston's biopic *Freud: The Secret Passion*. The film follows the first years of Freud as a researcher, between 1885 and 1890, when he developed some of his most striking theories. It focuses on his relationship with Josef Breuer, who sponsored his work, and with a patient of both men called Cecily Koertner, as well as showing Freud´s fascination with the power of hypnosis in patients diagnosed with hysteria.

The screenplay takes the shape of a detective mystery, attempting to link various crises in Freud's private and professional life with his theoretical conclusions, most often doing so within dream sequences. It was criticised, however, for its unrealistic description of certain treatments. Doctors are shown as virtual magicians, being able to hypnotise their patients and control their minds with just a few words, and the cure - in a context where loss of sight or mobility was sometimes regarded as a hysterical symptom - comes as a miracle, with patients suddenly being able to walk or see.

The script was originally offered to Jean-Paul Sartre, who, after writing more than five hundred pages, withdrew his involvement following disagreements with Huston about its

length. Sartre used Ernst Jones' Freud biography and also began taking notes of his own dreams in a self-analysis that would obviously influence the script.[6] In *Le scénario Freud*, Sartre wonders about the roots of creativity, while he sets free, through writing, his repressed phantoms, such as his relationship with his two 'fathers' – one biological, the other his step-father. The submissive relation between father and child, analyst and patient, may also be reproduced by that between the director and the screenwriter. The screenwriter may provide the basic material, but the director has the right to manipulate the script, and create images for it, as he wishes.

Had he followed the spirit of Sartre´s script, Huston would probably have created a much more poetic film, perhaps in accordance to the ideas of Pasolini and Buñuel. In the event he made a perhaps predictable choice within the Hollywood system, however, and opted for the traditional aesthetic associated with the cinema of prose. As in the case of Robbe-Grillet, a commitment to the exploration of subjectivity by means of the oneiric would have perhaps been a more apt way of evoking not only Freud the man, but also his ideas.

Robbe-Grillet and the *ciné-roman*

The oneiric function of art is what Alain Robbe-Grillet honours in his cine-novel *C´est Gradiva qui vous appelle.* The cine-novel is a peculiar genre that can initially be defined as a mix of script and novel, to be read and enjoyed not only by experts in film, but also by lay readers. This nomenclature has been used by several writers in different times and circumstances, going back to the relationship between serial novels and films such as Feuillade's *Fantômas* (France, 1913).

The term became better established thanks to its use by the French writer Alain Robbe-Grillet in the 1960s. Nonetheless, a clear definition does not emerge: for example, each of the four publications that Robbe-Grillet called cine-novels – *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1961), *L'Immortelle* (1963), *Glissements progressifs du plaisir* (1974) and *C'est Gradiva qui vous appelle* (2002) – has a different structure. What we generally see in a work by Robbe-Grillet, however, is a significant open-ness to other media, a commitment to what has been called 'intermediality'.[7] This ranges from the imitation of certain cinematic techniques in Robbe-Grillet´s writings to the cultural references, in *L'année dernière à Marienbad*, to photography, theatre, sculpture, and, in the case of *C'est Gradiva qui vous appelle*, to theatre, opera, and the paintings of Delacroix.

C'est Gradiva is a foray into surrealism, mixing together eroticism, sadomasochism, reality, fantasy and dream, and evoking, to this end, various media in very different ways. The plot itself directly supports such representational admixtures. John Locke, the protagonist, is an art historian who, while living in Marrakech, writes a book about the work which the painter Eugène Delacroix created in Morocco. He is obsessed by the theme of woman as object, and begins to be haunted by fantasies in a complex game that involves his maid and lover Belkis, a fake blind man, the forger Anatoli, and the mysterious Gradiva (also called Leïla).

The reference to the oneiric become even more timely, since the narrative is based on Jensen's 1903 novel *Gradiva,* the basis for Freud's 1907 analysis. In this work, Freud applies his methods of interpretation to dreams invented by writers and assigned to their characters. In Jensen´s novel, the researcher Norbert Hanold is visiting a collection of Roman antiquities in

Morocco, where he finds the *bas relief* of a young woman who, as she walks, lifts her dress, showing her feet. Their delicacy fascinates him. Following this encounter, a female figure similar to Gradiva appears to him - in dreams, in reality, at times even in the blurred space between the two - and becomes an obsession for the character.

Reflexivity and Uncertainty

In Robbe-Grillet´s film, the historian lives in a state of fascination with and bewilderment by, the mysterious figure of his Gradiva. She presents herself on two occasions, defining herself as a dream actress and also as a writer, when she talks about the richness of the writer's craft. She is of course referring implicitly to what Robbe-Grillet himself is doing in a film which began life as a cine-novel: he is using his power as a writer to mix dream and reality, building up the narrative in such a way to leave the reader/viewer just as perplexed as the central character.

Robbe-Grillet clearly enjoys this meta-linguistic way of working, playing with perceptions, focussing on the figure of the artist, especially the writer. In his discussion of *Gradiva* Freud himself was conscious of the delicate relationship between reader and writer: "*It is an author's privilege to leave us in such uncertainty. The charm of his language and the ingenuity of his ideas offer us a provisional reward for the trust we place in him and for the still unearned sympathy which we are ready to feel for his hero.*"[8]

Leaving the reader in uncertainty is certainly one of Robbe-Grillet´s preferred tactics. Many elements in both book and film are guarantees of mystery: a woman´s scream that suddenly cuts the scene, and shots that highlight the moon,

the night, and the world of the obscure. Sadomasochism and eroticism are also elements that provoke sensations of strangeness and discomfort in the audience, but frequently they are associated with a sort of 'right of the dream', where, as in the arts in general, everything is possible and acceptable.

The character Leïla/Gradiva explains that all dreams are erotic and have a dual reality, one which is much more intense and violent. It is undoubtedly a meta-linguistic statement, in a film related to dreams, in so many different ways, not only concerning the subject, but also its structure. We may say that Alain Robbe-Grillet, in this instance, is creating a film based on what both Pasolini and Buñuel demanded most of the cinema of poetry: putting together metalanguage, subjectivity, and zones of indeterminancy for the audience to fill in through its imagination and, in the case of a film that refers itself to Freud´s interpretation of dreams, by creating an atmosphere which is oneiric throughout.

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[2] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *C'est Gradiva qui vous appelle*, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 2002.

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[5] *Ibid.,* p. 61.

[6] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Le Scénario Freud*, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, in English as *The Freud Scenario*, London: Verso, 2013. For fuller discussions of Sartre and the cinema, see Dominique Chateau, *Sartre et le cinéma*, Paris: Seguier, 2005, and Pascale Fautrier, 'Le cinéma de Sartre', *Fabula: LHT* [*Littérature, Histoire, Théorie*], no. 2, December 2006, at http://www.fabula.org/lht/2/Fautrier.html.

[7] See Claus Clüver, 'Intermidialidade', *Pós,* vol. 1, no. 2, 2008, p. 9.

[8] Freud, *op. cit*., p. 14.

28 / Cinema and the Primal Scene: Gaspar Noé and the New French Extremism

Alice Haylett Bryan

In his 2009 film *Enter the Void* Gaspar Noé shows his audience the traditionally un-showable. The film's viewers are taken inside the vagina of one of the protagonists and are able to witness her penetration, and subsequent fertilisation, by the man with whom she is having sex. The viewer is able to see the male ejaculation - the visual sign of his pleasure - without the need for a 'money shot'. This is obviously a computer-animated view, a visual spectacle designed to shock and titillate, yet it does highlight the key themes of the film in greater detail: incest, Oedipal love and the idea that the return to the womb symbolises rebirth and eternal life.

Five years prior to Noé's internal cum-shot, James Quandt offered a discussion of the increasing use of shock tactics in French cinema since the 1990s. Quandt's 'New French Extremity', as he termed it, was described in bodily terms, a trend "*determined to break every taboo, to wade in rivers of viscera and spumes of sperm, to fill each frame with flesh, nubile or gnarled, and to subject it to all manner of penetration, mutilation, and defilement*."[1]

The directors of these visceral works reflected the wider rise of socially aware films that were being produced in France during this period. However, in comparison to more mainstream offerings such as those within the heritage or crime genres, this new extreme cinema stole imagery and visual themes from horror, exploitation movies and pornography, using them to depict often complex and sexually motivated philosophical and social issues.

The Embodied Narratives of French Extremism

Noé is just one of a number of directors now considered to be part of what has come to be known as the New French Extremism. The films that have been produced by these auteurs may be disparate in style and content, but they share an approach that seeks to push cinema to the limits of representation. These films, although demanding attention through dramatic narratives, also play out these narratives on the body of the viewer as much as on those depicted on screen. This focus on the relationship between the bodies on screen, the body of the film, and the bodies watching the film have led many to approach this movement from post-structural perspectives.

Martine Beugnet, for example, calls the films of the New French Extremism a "*cinema of sensation*", contending that they break down the traditional relationship between spectator and film by reaching out directly to the audience.[2] Tim Palmer also argues that the films display a "*brutal intimacy*", resulting in a *cinéma du corps* that obsesses over the body and its boundaries. Sex, graphic and sometimes un-simulated, is nonetheless portrayed as dispassionate: "*intimacy itself depicted as fundamentally aggressive, devoid of romance, lacking a nurturing instinct or empathy of any kind*."[3] Palmer argues that this brutal intimacy occurs not only between the characters on screen, but also extends out to the viewer, who is forced to bear witness, uncomfortably, to the acts which are being performed.

Focusing on the visceral response that these films demand explains the heavy impact that they have on their audience, yet it is important to consider how their narratives as well as their formal style assist in creating this embodied experience. This essay aims to demonstrate how these works combine an affecting portrayal of extreme images with narratives that speak to the body through their re-telling of the original narratives of life, what Freud called primal phantasies. These primal phantasies enshrine the unanswerable questions of childhood – questions of origin and difference – and as such are critical to all of Freudian psychoanalysis.

Crucially, these are embodied narratives tied to the formation of the ego, which as Freud argued, is first formed through bodily sensation.[4] They return to the very start of the development of the individual as an autonomous, conscious being. This essay intends to show how Noé's combination of sex and violence with overt symbolic imagery explores and re-tells the phantasies of the primal scene and

intra-uterine life through its narrative, and also by the manner in which it reaches out to the audience in its demand for a visceral response.

Primal Phantasies

Freud argues that the primal scene (the vision or phantasy of the parents having sex) is one of a select number of phantasies that form the basis of human phantasy life in general and instructs its organisation. He contends that these four 'primal phantasies' – including castration, the primal scene, seduction and intra-uterine life (or the womb phantasy) – exist universally, regardless of sex or experience, as they are phylogenetically inherited.

As Laplanche and Pontalis note, these four primal phantasies are all to do with origins: "*like collective myths, they claim to provide a representation of and a 'solution' to whatever constitutes a major enigma for the child.*"[5] In the case of seduction phantasies it is the origin of sexuality that is discovered, with castration the origin of sexual difference, with the primal scene it is the origin of the subject, and finally, with the womb phantasy, it is intra-uterine life.

The phantasies of the primal scene and the womb phantasy are very much inter-related. Freud never devoted a full study to womb phantasies, yet it is through his work on Oedipal desire and the primal scene where some of their importance is uncovered. Freud argues that womb phantasies represent the desire to return to the safety of the mother's body, and also signify the wished-for consummation of the Oedipal goal: sex with either the mother or father. Freud believed that the desire to return to the womb can be a sign of the

repressed desire to either penetrate the mother, or to take her place and have sex with the father.

In the case of the Wolf-man, therefore, one of Freud's most famous patients, Constantinovitch's dream - which had as its latent content the witnessing of his parents having sex - was also tied closely with the patient's identification with his mother, represented by his womb phantasy of being separated from the world by a veil. In Freud's view, this identification with the mother was a sign of the Wolf-man's Oedipal desire to have sex with his father. In other case studies too, Freud presents patients whose womb phantasies represent a repressed desire to experience their original primal scene, with the child returning to the womb so that it can be present at the moment of its own conception.

Freud contends that his work with Constantinovitch shows the influence of the primal scene on the developing mind of the child, involving a number of converging ideas, themes and phantasies. The act of sex can be considered violent, yet the vision of it is at once both sexually exciting and simultaneously guilt-inducing, as it features the parents. It has links to the Oedipus complex, as well as potentially inciting the castration complex, or, the realisation that the mother is without a phallus. Therefore the primal scene involves the act of looking, as well as a sexual display, sexual difference, the nature of the origin of the self, and the illusion of violence.

For this reason the cinema of the New French Extremism itself mirrors the primal scene, for it too revolves around the display of sex and violence, and discussions of sexuality and the nature of being human, before an audience. Therefore these films invoke an embodied response not only through

their focus on the visceral, but also in the way that they recall the primal phantasies of origin that are tied up with the child's first exploration as to how the body works, lives, procreates and dies. The spectacle of the primal scene is repeated in their depiction of sex and violence, and the work of Noé is one of the locations where this relationship can be seen in its clearest form.

Horror and the Cinema of Attractions

In a short biography of Noé published in 2003, Matt Bailey argues that the director's work exemplifies a modern cinema of attractions.[6] Bailey contends that Noé's films encourage a primal response in the viewer, such as fear or shock, through the use of attractions that occur outside the narrative. Non-diegetic gunshots accompany a number of the cuts in *Seul contre tous* (*I Stand Alone*, 1998) whilst in *Enter the Void* (2009) the bright lights of Tokyo city form a psychedelic *mise-en-scène* that pulsates like a living creature. In *Irréversible* (*Irreversible*, 2002), swinging and turning camera movements are used to provoke nausea and discomfort in the audience.

Adam Lowenstein's extensive work on the horror genre as a cinema of attractions shows how these spectacles can also operate from within the narrative. He draws on Gunning's argument that the cinema of attractions is not one that is in opposition to narrative cinema, rather it exists alongside and in dialogue with it. Lowenstein contends that the horror genre creates a space where narrative progression does not need to be the driving force of the film, with spectacle being raised up to an equal position.

He argues that 'spectacle horror' films utilise what Tom Gunning saw as a focus on the relationship between film and

spectator in the cinema of attractions, rather than the relationship between characters on-screen, or even an identification between spectator and character. In Lowenstein's view, therefore, even though a spectacle may occur in, or exterior to, the narrative, it is the manner in which the spectacle appeals to the audience that is key.[7]

Even though the films of the New French Extremism cannot be classed as directly part of the horror genre, the boundary between the New French Extremism and horror cinema is fluid and fluctuating, as they share the use of spectacle as a means of creating a response in the viewer. This is not to claim that either horror cinema or the New French Extremism forego narrative, rather that classical forms of narrative are rejected, and that such narrative elements as do exist are presented to the viewer as being on an equal level with the basic experience of film-viewing.

These films create a multi-sensory experience that encourages the spectator's body to react both to what is depicted on screen and also how it is represented through sound, image, and the visceral and tactile nature of what is shown. Noé could be seen as the greatest proponent of this embodied-response cinema, with his films combining spectacles that exist exterior to the narrative, as well as narratives that themselves revolve around the spectacles of sex and death.

Enter the Void follows the death and reincarnation of Oscar, an American living in Tokyo with his sister Linda. Oscar is shot dead by the police after being set up by a friend in a drugs bust, at which point the film shows his journey through the afterlife in the manner of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* and Oscar's eventual reincarnation as Linda's child. As with Noé's

previous work *Irreversible, Enter the Void* conspicuously refuses to follow a normal time-logic.

Temporality and Point-of-View in *Enter the Void*

The film begins with a twenty-minute-long point-of-view sequence seen through Oscar's blinking and sometimes blurred eyes. At the moment he is killed, this point-of-view strategy is exchanged for extended master shots which float omnisciently around the city, following what unfolds directly after his death, whilst simultaneously showing us images from Oscar's childhood and the events that led up to his shooting. Just as the audience is presented with Oscar's embodied point-of-view, they are also shown his disembodied point-of-view, as his history flashes before his eyes and his soul surveys the continuation of life without him.

Oscar's disembodied mind also takes on the point-of-view of other characters within the film, the camera focusing on and then moving through the backs of their heads and looking through their eyes. The continuous use of embodied/disembodied point-of-view shots that switch from Oscar to his friends and then back again transforms the most orthodox of the cinematic senses - sight - into an experience that refuses a passive relationship between spectator and screen.

It is via the movement back and forth through time that Noé reveals Oscar's life-story and his relationship with Linda and his parents. In an extended montage sequence comprising four formally linked but temporally disparate sequences, the flashbacks from Oscar's life reveal incestuous desires for both

his sister and his mother, two characters who appear to merge together throughout the film until its climax.

Oscar's mother is depicted as a Venus-like figure, continually linked to water - a Freudian symbol for birth and re-birth - through scenes that show mother and son in the bath together, swimming in a pool or by the seaside before the car crash that takes his parents' lives. These images of water are also used as points of transition within the montage sequences, reinforcing their position as markers in each new stage of Oscar's life.

This entire montage sequence is saturated with Freudian themes and Oedipal imagery, such as Oscar watching his mother breast feeding Linda, his friend Alex saying that he had the best time of his life sucking on his mother's nipple, Oscar sniffing his sister's underwear, Linda covering her brother in overly erotic kisses and the sexual relationship that Oscar has with another friend's mother.

Part of the fourth section of the montage sequence shows Alex and Oscar in a bar together - the same bar where Oscar will eventually meet his demise - with Alex telling Oscar that if he overcomes his fears, LSD will be able to take him anywhere that he wants to go. The main source of light in this shot comes from a television screen in front of the friends, which is playing images of a foetus *in utero*, suggesting that his mother's womb could be Oscar's desired location.

The next shot is of Oscar walking down a dark alley towards the light. The film then cuts to an earlier period when Oscar as a child asks his mother what would happen if she died ("*I will watch you from the sky*") and if she loves his father more

than him ("*I love you both, but it is a different love*"). The alley shot is then reproduced in a scene of Oscar as a child walking down a hotel corridor, opening the door to one of the rooms and seeing his parents inside, having sex *a tergo*. After a few seconds the film cuts to a shot that has complete formal synchronicity, but now an adult Oscar watches Alex having sex in the same position as his father.

Enter the Void: The Primal Scene

Alex is the most sensible and likable character in *Enter the Void*, acting as a source of guidance for Oscar before his death and caring for Linda afterwards. Oscar's vision of Alex having sex in the scene discussed above foretells the film's climax, where Alex's penetration and fertilisation of Linda is shown both internally and externally. Oscar is reincarnated as Linda and Alex's child; he is both the procreator, looking through Alex's eyes, and a procreated entity waiting to be born inside his sister/mother. Oscar becomes father, brother and son all at once, witnessing the primal scene of his own birth. Both in its narrative and formal style *Enter the Void* thus continually brings to mind the phantasy of the primal scene, but this link is also reinforced through the relationship between the film and its audience.

The primal scene is an embodied phantasy as it involves a combination of the senses: sight, sound and even a physical response, or rather erotic excitation, as in Freud's view it was a sexual event for the child. Like dreams, phantasies are not purely visual, rather they are multi-sensory, created by a psyche whose ego was formed through the surface of the body in the first stages of life. In his work on the primal scene Freud continually repeats his view that for the child the phantasy is one that involves a combination of sex and

violence, in the same manner that the films of Noé and the other directors of the New French Extremism attempt to portray 'real' sex and graphic violence, and often a mixture of the two.

Through their focus on the basic human interactions and raw emotions, such as violence, anger, sex, sexuality, reproduction, as well as their combination of animalistic behaviour with ontological questioning, the films of the New French Extremism appear to return to these narratives of origin that are primal phantasies. They are the stories created by children to explain the difference between men and women, the violence/enjoyment of the sexual act, the creation of the self. The nature of this questioning and the horror of its catalyst, such as the vision or phantasy of the primal scene or the sight of the genitals of the other sex, must be repressed, the query answered and then pushed aside, down into the unconscious.

However, narratives that were once repressed return in phantasies, dreams and obsessions. The need to express and explore these origins has not disappeared in adulthood, but has moved into the pre-conscious, available for those that desire to access it. The films of the New French Extremism, however, do more than just refer back to primal phantasies through their narratives. They also do this through the formal presentation of the works which accentuates bodily response in the viewer; it is thus not an exaggeration to claim that the audience does not just *watch* these films, they *feel* them as well.

Notes and References

[1] James Quandt, 'Flesh and Blood: Sex and Violence in Recent French Cinema', *Art Forum International*, vol. 42 no. 6, February 2004, pp. 127 - 128.

[2] Martine Beugnet, *Cinema and Sensation: French Film and the Art of Transgression*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

[3] Tim Palmer, *Brutal Intimacy*: *Analysing Contemporary French Cinema*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011, p. 5.

[4] Sigmund Freud, 'The Ego and the Id', in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Standard Edition, vol. 19, London: The Hogarth Press, 1961, pp. 25-6.

[5] Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, London: Karnac Books and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1988, p. 332.

[6] Matt Bailey, 'Gaspar Noe', http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/great-directors/noe/.

[7] See, for example, Adam Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

29 / Deleuzian Affect and the Transformative Film Experience: Lars von Trier's *Melancholia*

Sian Mitchell

Sensation and Affect

I first saw Lars von Trier's *Melancholia* at the 2010 Melbourne International Film Festival. As I sat in the audience watching the visually dynamic 'prelude', my initial reaction was exasperation due to what seemed like an absurdly extreme use of slow motion accompanied by Wagner's operatic 'Prelude' to *Tristan and Isolde*. By the end of the film I felt in a daze, numb perhaps, and while driving home I could not hold back tears. Unsure of what had triggered this bodily response to the film, I felt it worth exploring further within the broad scope of how audiences can be emotively transformed by cinema. Such an approach, analysing the transformative potential of cinema in relation ton the spectator in sensory and cognitive ways, suggests an

interrogation of film through affect and sensation, thus recalling Deleuze's seminal work on cinema.

Scholars writing of the film experience in terms of affect and sensation have also found the Deleuzian approach productive. Barbara Kennedy, for example, investigates her own related experience of art and artistic practice. Kennedy is struck by "*the intensity of feeling one has in that moment of brushstroke to canvas … the in-between energies that cannot be described*".[1] She goes on to suggest that:

"We can think of the visual experience of the cinematic, not only as representation of something with a 'meaning', but also as an aesthetic assemblage, which moves, modulates and resonates with its audience or spectator through processes of molecularity. It connects. It works through affect, intensity and becoming – and ultimately through sensation ... ".[2]

Even though Kennedy suggests that this feeling is from the perspective of the artist, this "*intensity of feeling*" can also be felt from the position of the spectator.

A recurrent thread in Kennedy's study, along with the work of other scholars in this area (for example, Anna Powell, Steven Shaviro, and Richard Rushton), is an acknowledgement of the value of shifting film analysis away from the more traditional modes of representational study, such as psychoanalytic paradigms and associated subject positions. Instead, these scholars aim to understand the film experience through an ever-changing fluidity of multiple positions that cannot be accounted for in the binary

oppositions that underpin a number of the aforementioned representational approaches.

Kennedy also questions how we can understand notions like pleasure, desire and subjectivity that work outside the already established cultural norms connected to post-modern subjectivity (fragmented selves, an interrogation of fixed identities and difference). Kennedy calls for a "*neo-aesthetics of the visual encounter of cinema* [that] *sees film as an 'event', as a processual engagement of duration and movement, articulated through webs of sensation across landscapes and panoramas of space, bodies and time*".[3] In a similar way, my aim here is to use *Melancholia* as a case study to begin an investigation into affect and cinema, through some broad brushstrokes at this stage.

This approach draws specifically upon some of Deleuze's ideas about the close-up within what he calls the 'movement-image', and feeling and memory in the 'time-image', as well as Kennedy's 'aesthetics of sensation'. Kennedy's work, and the more recent scholarly research utilising Deleuze, provides a point where the transformative filmic experience can be better theorised and understood. As spectators of cinema, we go on a journey through the frame, into the shot, moving through a series of shots placed together, sometimes aware of a sense time or a lack thereof, or perhaps even a distortion of time. We then move through those images somehow transformed.

Justine and Claire

Melancholia is a film beginning with a form of 'prelude' followed by two temporally distinct parts heralded by intertitles. Part I, 'Justine', follows the wedding reception of

Justine (Kirsten Dunst) and Michael (Alexander Skårsgard). Throughout this segment it becomes clear that Justine is dissatisfied, but with what in particular is unknown. We see her disappear several times throughout the reception: to put her nephew to bed, have a nap, and to have sex with the new employee at her job on the golf course where the reception is being held. At the end of Part 1 Justine quits her job and leaves her new husband. Her subtle descent into despair alludes to an internal, existential struggle rather than any specific external cause of distress and we can see the beginnings of her personal melancholia.

Part II, 'Claire', focuses on Justine's sister, played by Charlotte Gainsbourg, whom we meet at the reception as she attempts to hold things together. Whereas Part I draws cinematographic elements from observational documentary (handheld camera, more naturalistic lighting), Part II heightens the visual spectacle of a cataclysmic event: a planet is about to collide with and destroy the Earth. While Claire tries to take care of a now psychologically disabled Justine, as well her family, the looming blue planet named 'Melancholia' is ever present in the background, growing larger as it gets closer.

Claire grows more and more fearful of a collision with the planet. Justine, on the hand, embodies a fatalistic perspective: she both understands and accepts that the end is nigh. When it becomes clear that there is no hope, Claire's husband commits suicide, while she futilely attempts to escape with her son by using a golf buggy. Justine's sense of calm helps Claire come to terms with the inevitable. Claire, her son and Justine find an empty stretch of lawn, build a tent-frame from sticks and sit inside it, holding each other for

comfort and waiting for the end. The planet hits Earth. The screen goes dark.

Altered States

The sparing use of CGI and digital technology in *Melancholia* enhances its affective qualities, offering a dynamic sensory impact of visual effects and sound. It provides an initial method through which the film's intensity of feeling and its transformative and affective potential is heightened. In *Deleuze, Altered States and Film*, Anna Powell refers to how mainstream cinema has an ongoing interest in producing bigger and better modes of visual spectacle assisted by technology which can create spectacles of alterity, or a different/non-traditional mode of film perception. She suggests that "*even in conventional narratives, ecstatic and visionary sequences engineer audience participation*", thus inviting the audience into a mutually affective exchange with the image.[4]

The notion of 'altered states' suggests the spectator is in a mutable position and can be transformed on both sensory and cognitive levels. For Powell, one way in which this is achieved is through the aesthetics of special effects. In the opening images of *Melancholia*, von Trier enhanced the colour palette, one of the first and most apparent ways in which the film attempts to transport its audience into an altered state. This is in part what occurs with the visual style and spectacle of *Melancholia*, however it is also the juxtaposition of the hyper-stylised imagery with a documentary aesthetic that makes the images themselves classifiable in Deleuzian terms. The fluidity and interaction of these two seemingly disparate styles, their use of colour,

sound, tone, and effects within the film, reinforces the intensity of the spectacle.

The documentary aesthetic in *Melancholia* created by the handheld cinematography produces numerous close-ups of the main characters, which moves us from an objective position to a subjective one (and sometimes back again). In Part I, Justine's descent into melancholia is captured in the close-ups of her face. We first see close-ups of her smiling and laughing in the limousine with her new husband, followed by more close-ups of her throughout the remainder of the reception. The latter shots register the exhaustion she feels at having to keep up appearances for the sake of her family, and especially for her sister. Finally, towards the end of Part I, when her short-lived marriage falls apart, her face shows an almost complete nothingness, devoid of feeling. This kind of blankness in Justine's close-up is what makes the end of Part I also feel empty.

In Part II, we already have an understanding of where Justine is in terms of her illness; she has gone from melancholia into major depression. Once again, the use of the close-up is prominent, although it is the contrast between the close-ups of Justine and Claire that create the most affective moments. Once she has pulled herself out her depressive state, Justine's acceptance of the inevitable end is reflected in the calmness expressed on her face. This sense of calm is reinforced through the contrast evident in Claire's expressions of panic and fear, particularly at the moment when she discovers that Melancholia did not 'fly by' Earth, but instead is getting closer.

Sensory Transformations

In both Part I and II, therefore, the use of the close-up is integral to an understanding of how the image can produce affect. Deleuze proposes in his theory of the movement-image that the close-up shifts spectators between objective and subjective positions within the frame and that we can thus witness a character's subjective psychological experience. This is not to re-affirm a binary opposition between the objective and subjective, however, but instead to suggest that the audience moves through these positions at varying moments in the film.

In this sense, we also feel the sadness, emptiness, devastation and fear that Claire and Justine are feeling, creating a foundation for sensory transformation. The hyper-stylised imagery of *Melancholia*, particularly in the 'prelude', encompasses an intensity of sensation, as previously discussed, through the use of colour, visual effects, as well as Wagner's operatic Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde*. These images, once viewed in relation to the two subsequent Parts, become a disturbing and devastating experience in themselves.

In *Cinema 1*, Deleuze draws upon the work of Immanuel Kant in his positioning of German Expressionist cinema within the realms of the sublime. The sublime for Kant occurs when the imagination is confronted by something it cannot fully comprehend and is in awe of, but this sense of awe is devastating and painful. [5] Deleuze sees this kind of devastation in the work of German film-makers such as Lang and Murnau.

Their films, he argues, create an "*intensity which is raised to such a power that it dazzles or annihilates our organic being*".[6] The annihilation of the organic, of nature, is central to *Melancholia*'s tableaux within the 'prelude', and, of course, is the fundamental premise of the Earth's - and the narrative's - conclusion. The opening shots present the destruction of the world, but there is a sense of beauty accompanying the melancholy that radiates through each image. This sequence is a visual example of the Deleuzian sublime.

While *Melancholia* offers these examples of the Deleuzian movement-image, thanks to the focus on facial close-ups and the prelude's montage structure, we need to go further with this analysis into how time is also explored and manipulated throughout the film. Deleuze writes of a cinema that approaches time as direct, real and where the dominance of the sensory-motor schema is challenged. Although I have discussed the film in terms of affect, intensity and sensation, which points towards the film as a movement-image, I am in fact not entirely convinced that it is such.

Film as Time-image

While the use of the close-up engenders affect and the sensation of the sublime, there are indicators that point towards the film as an example of time-image and the different way in which the time-image is also affective. As a result, the film traverses both kinds of Deleuzian 'images', movement and time. It is the time-image, however, that transforms the spectator by rousing their social and collective memories.

Richard Rushton, for example, sees the films of von Trier as contemporary examples of the Deleuzian time-image by virtue of their ethical questioning. Rushton proposes that if the movement-image is characterised by a thematic battle between good and evil, a sense of moral judgement, von Trier's films remove such an imperative - they are constructed as open and subsequently make such an ethical distinction impossible. [7] For Rushton, von Trier reflects aspects of our lives that we don't want to acknowledge, thus challenging perceived ethical stances within our social interactions. In *Melancholia* this is evident in a family dealing with a member who is severely depressed, referencing a society's typically exclusionary politics in dealing with the mentally ill.

Quoting Rancière, Rushton acknowledges the exclusion of the sick in particular communities and the inclination in von Trier's films to portray social outcasts and ill characters: *"There is no status for the excluded in the structuration of the community. On the one hand, the excluded is merely the one who accidently falls outside the great equality of it all – the sick, the retarded or the forsaken to whom the community must extend a hand in order to re-establish the social bond. On the other, the excluded becomes a radical other, the one who is separated from the community for the mere fact of being alien to it, of not sharing the identity that binds each to all, and of threatening the community in each of us."*[8]

This description of the outsider is productive for examining how Justine relates to her family (her community). Her depression excludes her from participating within the family dynamic - she is alien to it. Throughout Part I, her actions leave members of her family concerned, frustrated and angry. In Part II, her fatalistic nature takes over and separates

her further, as, for instance, when she calls Claire's suggestion to drink wine at the apocalypse "*a piece of shit*".

For example, as Michael excitedly tells her about his plan for them to live in an orchard, he gives her a picture of it to keep. The importance of this orchard and their future together is clear for Michael, but Justine fails to match his excitement. Her response is to distract him sexually for a moment before leaving the room, abandoning the picture on the couch. The disappointment eventually registers on his face - his wife does not care because she doesn't know how; her illness makes her an outsider in her own marriage.

Justine's behaviour makes it difficult to identify with her, as she not only alienates her family, but the audience as well. The film appears to take this idea further though, in not just representing a mentally ill character, but also becoming the illness itself, embodying depression by challenging the spectator's own ethical position and by creating moments of discomfort and frustration. Along with Justine's family, we are Ranciére's community, being made to confront that which we normally would try to avoid or ignore.

Melancholia as time-image is also evident when focusing on the 'prelude', where the sequence itself acts as a shared memory. As Deleuze states of the time-image: "*The screen itself is the cerebral membrane where immediate and direct confrontations take place between the past and future, the inside and outside ...*"[9]. The film can thus be seen as an entity of shared memory. Much as in Deleuze's reading of the work of Resnais, the 'prelude' creates an ambiguous connection between past, present and future.

It is unclear whether the sequence is a dream or an example of a recollection-image, not being specifically demarcated as either. It perhaps ends up being closer to a recollection with similar images re-worked within narrative events, although it does not necessarily matter. The images (both visual and sonic) contain feelings of crisis in beauty, a fantasy or memory of the end of the world that seems connected to shared memory aiming to transform those who share it. It is the memory of the world of which we were all a part, shared by Justine, Claire, and the spectator.

It is the confluence of affective structures in the movement-image and time-image that I believe provoked my personal reaction to *Melancholia*. The integration of hyper-stylised formal aesthetics in the 'prelude' and the following two Acts with the ambiguity of time, together with the sequencing and construction of images that both distanciate and engage, are for me a starting point for further analysis of the relationship between film and the sensory transformation of the spectator.

Notes and References

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 114.

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 4.

[4] Anna Powell, *Deleuze, Altered States and Film*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007, p. 12.

[5] Richard Rushton, *Cinema after Deleuze*, London: Continuum, 2012, p. 7.

[6] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, London: Continuum International, 2005, p. 55.

[7] Rushton, *op. cit.,* pp. 141-143.

[8] Rushton, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

[9] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, London: Continuum International, 2005, p. 121.

30 / Reality Horror: The Abject

Erez Genish

Found Footage and 'Reality Horror'

Contemporary horror films often feature documentary-like material - reputedly 'found footage' – and in the process they find reflections of the cinematic apparatus, even the camera itself. These elements have assumed the role conventionally assigned to the traditional 'monster'. Where the classical horror genre features the *presence* of ghosts and demons, what the spectator now finds in their place above all else is the *absence* of an object. What produces dread in contemporary horror is not a 'thing' - the monster - but rather the cinematic form itself. It materialises in a series of 'reality horror' films largely released at the dawn of the new millennium.

The 'found footage' horror films are not, as sometimes thought, a phenomenon of the post-9/11 era, but rather probably began with Ruggero Deotato's *Cannibal Holocaust* (Italy, 1980).[1] The film revolves around a New York anthropologist discovering footage shot by an American documentary film crew who have gone missing in the Amazon; it transpires that the film crew tortured the tribespeople to create better images for their film.

The current flow of 'found footage' films, however, started shortly before the events of 9/11 with Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez's *The Blair Witch Project* (USA, 1999) and the genre has prospered since with films such as Verbinski's *The Ring* (USA/Japan, 2002), Peli's *Paranormal Activity* (USA, 2007), Balagueró's and Plaza's *[REC]* (Spain, 2007), and many others.

In its early evolution, the 'found footage' sub-genre was not engaged with the coverage of terror attacks in the media. In fact, films preceding 9/11 were inspired by the technological breakthrough of mass media. Unlimited access to images, of course, does not necessarily coincide with the idea of freedom, but may rather signify the enslavement of the audience by footage 'found' accidentally.

The term 'found footage', however, here refers solely to films claiming to display lost footage of horror. 'Reality Horror', on the other hand, refers to the endeavor of the sub-genre to bring documentary-style images to the screen, and includes any film that revolves around a discourse on the obsession of the media and digital media with the capture of 'authentic' images of destruction.

Tropes of the Abject

Following Kristeva's theory of the abject, we can say that the absence of the monster indicates the existence of a most dreadful zone, located outside of language.[2] The abject is not an identifiable 'thing', nor is it the 'thing' recognised as the monster, but rather it arises from cinematic form itself. This essay, therefore, argues that contemporary reality horror films deny the existence of a terrifying object in order to stress a crisis in the representation of the 'monster' in the coverage of terror attacks, particularly after 9/11.

The abject, the most terrifying non-object, situated in an obscure zone, has set itself free thanks to its reproduction and glorification within the images that the media have released without censorship, without setting bounds. From Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) to contemporary cinema, 'reality horror' films place the camera itself within their narrative to depict terror. While earlier films, however, generated a substantial object to carry the blame, contemporary films have eliminated the conventionalised 'monster' and prefer instead to embody the way in which the media exhibit the abject during terror attacks.

The first and most essential trope of the reality horror film involves the use of self-reflexive and 'documentary' material to depict horror, suggesting an essential relationship between media and 'real' horror. This refers to films presenting lost footage of hunts and massacres and hunts, the use of tapes, screens or camera equipment to terrorise victims, and characters filming horrifying images with their cameras. This definition indeed leads us to regard Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (UK, 1960) as the first 'reality horror'

film. Depicting a serial killer who uses his camera to record the expressions on the faces of his female victims as he kills them, the film has caused controversy and also inspired a cult following over the years.

The second trope exemplifies the sub-genre's approach to those who play an inevitable role in producing and manifesting the uncensored image. 'Reality horror' films frequently cast the spotlight on journalists, broadcasters, television hosts and media-savvy fans. Wetmore recognises this trope and dissociates the post-9/11 found footage films from those that went before, arguing that the earlier films focus on film-makers deliberately seeking out horror footage, while the later examples feature characters who come across the horror footage by accident.[3]

This claim, however, is not fully supported when we consider some contemporary reality horror films. Take, for example, [*REC]*, which features a TV reporter and a camera operator filming the night shift at a fire station in Barcelona for a reality show. During the coverage, they follow firefighters who enter a building to rescue a woman trapped in her apartment, but they soon discover that the residents in the building are infected with a mysterious virus that turns them into zombies. In contrast to Wetmore's argument, the crew neither arrives at the scene by chance nor demonstrates lack of skill in covering the action. They do not plan on running into zombies, but filming a night shift of firefighters still carries a degree of hazard for which they yearn.

The attack on Pearl Harbor occurred on December 7, 1941, but it took almost nine days before the media released film of the attack. The footage depicted the material ravages inflicted upon the American fleet, but did not exhibit images

of death and terror. On September 11, 2001, by contrast, when Al Qaeda launched a terrorist attack on American civilians, the media broadcast the event live, granting each viewer the opportunity to be exposed to the destruction of an historic American Icon. Images of the collapse of the Twin Towers were shown repeatedly, shot from a variety of angles and distances by a host of different cameras.

After 9/11, from the 2004 bombings in Madrid to the later incidents of terror in the Middle East, news channels and newspapers have been striving to feed their viewers arresting - and sometimes nauseous - images. Reviewing such images in relation to Kristeva's theory of the abject, one may conclude that the media have stimulated the dreadful abject and have violated the symbolic order that society struggles to maintain.

According to Kristeva, the abject, which appears prior to the period of the symbolic order, occurs in the process of separation at birth between the infant and the mother, as the child demonstrates its inability to differentiate between self and other, subject and object. The abject, located in an obscure boundary zone, threatens the existence of the 'I', which is unable to perform an establishment of the order. With a view to dismissing the abject, a third party comes along to restore the symbolic order and emancipate the child from the hold of the maternal.

The images of terror attacks and war zones restore the abject, which sets itself free in its endeavor to bring us back to the familiar yet horrifying territory where we lose the ability to distinguish the self. The abject consists of neither the images of the collapsing Towers nor of death and destruction in the Middle East. It is an unrecognised and

absent moment of the self as boundaries disappear between the subject that absorbs the images and the object that threatens to become the subject.

The Falling Man

The media promote the abject through images of destruction, which the 'I', the speaking subject, wishes to expel. Consider, for example, Richard Drew's photograph mournful photograph 'The Falling Man', capturing the last moments of a victim leaping to his death from the North Tower of the World Trade Centre. The picture provoked the abject, we might say, since most Americans could imagine themselves caught in a random terrorist attack, and could thus identify with the victim.[4]

The falling man is in one sense a mystery. He lacks an identity and a face. He is somewhere between life and death. His picture is obscure and vague as we are incapable of reconstructing the past and understanding what has happened. The picture signifies the loss of boundaries and evokes the possibility that we might be there instead of him. It does not mean, however, that the images of terrorist attacks and wars seen in the media stand for the abject or advocate it in any given way as 'reality horror' films claim.

First, the images contain a code that enables us to analyse and interpret them. When we look at 'The Falling Man', we are able, because of other images from September 11 attack and the sight of the North Tower behind him, to link it to the overall picture of the event. It is not detached from reality and that link assists us in expelling the abject. Second, the images come with commentary such as headlines and reports describing the visual. Mostly, the commentary

'tenderises' the abject by conveying a framing message, making it comprehensible by seeking out 'monsters' whose recognition will help to restore the symbolic order in the process of naming them.

In the case of Drew's photograph, the falling marks the separation from life of an unrecognised subject with whom we identify, but most of all, there is no a substantial monster to blame within the image. When releasing the first pictures of the attack on the World Trade Centre, the media could not associate it immediately with Al Qaeda or any other organisation, which left us agape and terrified, with no point of origination to cling to.

In covering the attack, CBS News Anchor Dan Rather pointed out the unsuccessful attempt of other reporters to link the attack to its agent. Emphasising a general inability to detect an immediate source for the outrage, his words underscore the dis-establishment of the symbolic order which automatically generates a descent into the abject: "*no one knows who's responsible for what happened today. And you may want to note that on previous occasions, first reports about who is responsible for what turned out to be erroneous. It will be many hours, perhaps days and weeks, before it can be sorted out who, in fact, was responsible for these actions today*."[5]

'Reality horror' films aim to provoke media efforts to 'tenderise' the abject, as they demolish the possibility of a restoration of the symbolic order. Unlike news media, which eventually pointed out the responsibilities of terror organisations for the events of 9/11, 'reality horror' films aim to ignore the sense of there being an actual monster because the terror they convey arises from the image itself, and the

associated loss of the self. The media, according to these films, have no interest at all in naming an agency for the sake of the symbolic order, but instead focus on generating more headlines and hence attention for the abject, which has become an entertaining product for the masses.

Monsters Present and Absent

The third trope of this sub-genre, which refers to the disappearance of the monster, has thus been shifted substantially because of this relationship between the media and terror attacks, the footage and the abject. The distinction between the pre- and post-9/11 'reality horror' films exists within the manifestation of the abject and the absence of the monster. Before 9/11 'reality horror' dealt with the obsessive and voyeuristic gaze of the camera within the narrative, but the abject was not intensified to such a degree that we were incapable of naming it.

A notable exception is *The Blair Witch Project* (Myrick and Sánchez, USA, 1999). The film features a non-object 'monster' and manifests the abject at a new level. The witch is not a tangible object and the rendezvous of the students with her raises more questions than answers about the enigma surrounding her. Thus, one may argue that the crisis in naming and recognising the monster in the media started before 9/11, but still, the vast upsurge of the 'non-existent' monster in 'reality horror' films came only in the period after the attacks.

By way of contrast, Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (UK, 1960), features a fully-present, human 'monster' - a psychotic serial killer with a name, Mark Lewis. He shares similarities with the reporter from *[REC]* in terms of their shared lust for images

of death, but she is not the monster generating the chaos. Even the zombies themselves are the victims of an unnamable virus. Indeed, the indescribable virus is a recurrent motif in zombie films, but *[REC]* distinguishes itself in two ways.

First, the film uses the camera within the diegesis to declare its uniqueness, which associates it with the 'reality horror' genre. Second, the film creates a sense of ambiguity in its ending, which raises questions about the cause of the virus. The audience learns from a recoded tape that there was an attempt to study the virus, but there were no clear answers that could shed a light on its origin or contribute to the search for a vaccine.

Punishing the Media

Punishment for those who promote the abject is an indispensable principle in the contemporary 'reality horror' film, pointing to an imperfect symbolic order marked by mass media's exploitation of images of horror, and media-savvy fans who witness terror attacks and upload uncensored footage on social networks. In *Cloverfield* (Reeves, USA, 2008), the witnesses of the unseen monster (unseen, that is, by the spectator) that tears down New York City were themselves incapable of capturing clear footage of what eventually killed them. In *The Blair Witch Project*, three films students die one after another without even managing to get a snapshot of the witch, and that alone casts doubt in the existence of a substantial, visible monster.

[REC], for its part, also re-affirms the abject, primarily in order to punish Ángela's gaze and her overwhelming desire for horror footage. In the final shot of the film she is dragged

into the darkness, losing the footage as the abject takes her away from the camera left on the floor. She pays the price of yearning for the abject, and it does not even grant her the opportunity to capture an image of it.

The screen goes dark and we hear Ángela's voice: "*We have to tape everything, Pablo. For fuck's sake*." These words reference the desperate ambition for immortality from which she appears to suffer. She has lost God and replaced him with the abject. She has neglected the symbolic order and demolished it for the footage. She has no interest in restoring the symbolic order, but just in naming the abject, finding a monster, so that she can reproduce it by means of an image.

Paradoxically, 'reality horror' films criticise the media for imitating their genre - that is, depicting violence and gore without the reconstruction of the symbolic order. They do not seek a monster to repress the abject. Instead, they manifest the pleasure of the voyeuristic gaze, creating images of ruins while there is nothing out there to blame. Yet, the absence of the monster in 'reality horror' films symbolises the complexity of the post-9/11 dilemma.

The audience's inability to name that which is, or those who are, responsible generates chaos in the symbolic order and wipes out the power of narrative as we once knew it. When Ángela and Pablo enter the room of the 'possessed' child in the closing scene of *[REC],* Christian symbols and paintings of the Virgin Mary cover the walls, but these items are castrated, unable to assist. Religion names the monster so that the Almighty can obliterate it, but as both have been abandoned, it has become the narrative of the abject and a weakened symbolic order.

Notes and References

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[3] Wetmore, *op. cit.,* p. 61.

[4] Nicolaus Mills, 'Images of Terror', *Dissent*, vol. 56 no. 4, Summer 2009, p. 77.

[5] Dan Rather, quoted in Amy Reynolds and Brooke Barnett, 'This Just In ... How National TV News Handled the Breaking 'Live' Coverage of September 11', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 80 no. 3, Fall 2003, p. 697.

7. Femininities

31 / The Pleasure of Appearances: Image and Narration in *Film Noir*

Linda Huszár

Introduction

This essay focuses on the narrative structure of American classical *film noir* during the 1940s and 1950s. Appearing to maintain the goal-driven attitude of classical narration, the *noir* narrative gently starts to derail its rational trajectory, opening up a new approach to cinematic narration. Yet my approach is not exclusively historical. I concentrate on *noir* practice itself, the dissembling subversion itself, which has a clear connection with the power of images to undermine narration. This is why *appearance* seems to be a suitable concept, linking ideas about the visible to an implicit story, an in-between phenomenon comprising both a surface-dimension (something to look at), and its disruption by

narrativisation (a story to understand). I'm trying to dislocate and dramatise this concept by confronting the images of the characteristic *femme fatale* with the increasing manifestations of (men's) narrative voice in a gendered battle for dominance.

A brief outline of my theoretical framework is followed by analysis of sequences from a symptomatic *film noir*, *The Lady from Shanghai* (Welles, USA, 1948). The film is narrated in a gigantic, confessional flashback by Michael O'Hara (played by Welles), an Irish sailor hired by the wealthy cripple Bannister to work on his yacht on a cruise from New York to San Francisco, via the Caribbean and Mexico, after Michael rescues his wife Elsa (Rita Hayworth) from robbers in New York's Central Park. In a complex series of manoeuvres, Michael is ensnared in a triple-cross involving Bannister, his business partner Grisby, and Elsa, ending the film as a man on the run, framed for a murder he did not commit.

An inspiring connection between the concepts of spectacle in feminist film criticism and theories of early cinema, focussing on ideas of the 'attractions', has been drawn by Scott Bukatman. The central idea of both conceptions is the spectacle, and thus the visual as a form of presentation that is categorically different from the representational mode of narration. My premise is that any cinematic representation can be defined by Bukatman's notion of spectacle, namely that it is "*an impressive, unusual, or disturbing phenomenon or event that is seen or witnessed*", but the narrativisation usually overwrites and smooths its effect.[1] Both sides, image and verbal narration, have their own appeals for the spectator: the first is largely sensational, the other intellectual and existential.

In *film noir*, however, the visual power happens to be a threat incarnated in the *femme fatale* and must be repressed. Even if *film noir* is not a particularly spectacular genre - compared to, say, the musical or the horror film - its strong visual style and, especially, the stress on images of women leads us to the question of spectacle. *Film noir* actually thematises and embodies the interplay of the two poles discussed above (presentation and the image, representation and narration) by creating and manipulating a multi-level play of appearances. By 'appearance' I mean the narrative manipulation of the visual layer: that is, when the visual (or sensational) presence gets affected by narrativisation, by the force of an exterior logic, or, we might say, when a story penetrates the silent surface of the image.

Although verbal narration is only one of cinema's narrative devices, it is striking how it dominates - or tries to dominate - in *film noir*, often by a voice-over narrative frame. The image itself is not true or false, it is only *present*, without past or future - and this unsettling visual presence must be conquered or at least challenged by logocentric verbalism. Not surprisingly, in *film noir* the image is strongly connected to the female character, and the narrative voice, typically, seems to be a male privilege.

While the connection between the image of the woman and visual or sensual pleasure, and the reason for having intellectual or existentual pleasure in narration, have been investigated and debated in Film Studies, it is less obvious why one should find any pleasure in forms of 'appearance' which have negative connotations (unsteadiness, lies, betrayal, etc.). I propose that *appearance* provides the spectator with a certain perverse pleasure of the spectacle,

but meanwhile helps us to maintain a secure distance by the narrative regularisation of the visual.

The Lady from Shanghai

The Lady from Shanghai, suggests Telotte, is a film driven by the conflicting forces of an urge for a linear narrative and the circular structure of desire incarnated in the woman (the spectacle): "*the narrative's concerns with circularity, fiction, and consumption all join together as a fascination with and a desire for certain things develop in parallel to an obsession with certain images and a need to narrate them*."[2] And so the spectacle is embodied in the *femme fatale* figure – that source of "*epistemological trauma*", as Doane describes her - and the ego is incarnated in the narrator, Michael O'Hara, as we can see in the very first scene of the film. [3]

The flashback narration is a posterior struggle, an attempt for correction in order to restore sense, a goal-driven narrative, since there and then, enchanted by the image of the woman, the protagonist wasn't in his right mind: "*When I set out to make a fool of myself there's very little can stop me. If I'd known where it would end I'd have never let anything start. If I'd been in my right mind, that is - but once I'd seen her, once I'd seen her, I was not in my right mind for quite some time.*"

His retrospective verbal narration is thus both a self-criticism and a self-defence, an attempt or a device to separate himself from the image. It is also important to notice that the voice (and the voice-over as well) always comes from within the self, enunciating a consciousness, while the image itself is the impenetrable surface. When the former tries to incorporate the latter, therefore, it must be able to disrupt that attractive surface and fill it up with its own interpretation.

The reason why the woman is so dangerous for the man, for the narrative, for the sense, is that she becomes conscious of her spectacularity, of being an alluring surface, and then uses her image-ness as a form of power. She intentionally acts as what Telotte calls an "*image of desire*",[4] parading her surface - it is surely not accidental that during the credits we see a waving, trembling water surface that is impenetrable by the eye, has no identifiable directions, and can cover anything. She may be the 'Lady from Shangahi' as the film's title suggests, but even her background is remote, unclear, and indeed inessential to this narrative set in a panorama of the Americas.

The retrospective narration, with its belated reflexions and reactions, thus marks an ironic distance from the action, producing a narrator who has no direct influence on the action through acting, but only a subsidiary power by re-interpreting it. This process is dramatised in the opening sequence where O'Hara is speaking ironically not only on the level of content, but on a formal level as well: he is, as it were, split in two by the commentating voice-over, alternately passing the word and then re-taking it from his acting character. In this sequence, after a few establishing shots of a New York evening, the camera tilts up from the shadow of the carriage on the pavement – at first in a long shot before closing in on a medium shot of the woman, accompanied by O'Hara's voice-over.

Here the soundtrack performs a strange transition: though the reverse shot reveals the protagonist actually escorting the coach (and thus declares the previous shot as his subjective view), the voice-over narration still holds the speech, and 'over-voices' himself (*Good evening" - said I*), then

commentates ironically on the situation, while his character in the frame is also speaking to Elsa - as we can see, but cannot hear. What we hear is the narrator's acrid self-commentary. By disrupting the image-voice unity of the present tense (in so far as is currently seen) action, 'real' action gets replaced by the act of interpretation and loses its autonomy – strongly influencing the spectator's attitude as well.

The present tense turns out to be past, it is all already over; the image gets dominated by the voice-over, overwritten with surplus meaning that doesn't result from the flow of images: it is the verbal narration, outside or beyond the image, that presses this meaning on it. Thus verbality, connected to the sense-making 'ego' of flash-back narration, establishes the presented scene and the woman as *appearances*. In a way the film is about how this narrating ego gets back its integrity: the elimination of the woman in the end is a punishment for provoking the necessary but dangerous splitting of the self.

Regarding Elsa

As a basic thematic motif, *appearance* permeates all human relations in *The Lady from Shanghai*, and the centre of the intrigue is the woman, using herself as a seductive surface, reflecting the very image of each one's desire, manipulating her surroundings by means of this mirror-mechanism. But this power is relative, closing her as well in a fixed position, forcing her fatalistically into the role of the *femme fatale*. True, at several points in the film it is possible to give the female character an alternative interpretation which does not accumulate as a sum total of these reflecting surfaces (as the closing sequence in the mirror-maze suggests), and which deals with the woman as a victim, too.

But the dominance of the narrative voice holds this version back, it never gets clearly explicit and rarely manifests itself – when it does, it is always represented in the absence of O'Hara's verbal narration and with an accentuated visuality. One of these visual anomalies appears when Grisby (also madly in love with Elsa) is watching her jumping into the sea from the rocks. The structure and the point-of-view are equally strange in the scene which begins with Grisby looking at Lisa through a telescope. Instead of changing from the close-up of Grisby to Elsa as a conventional method of creating a subjective shot, we first get a close-up of the the telescope's front lens itself, reflected in it a long-shot of a woman in silhouette preparing to dive into the sea from some rocks.

The telescope indeed comes to focus as a device, a prosthesis for the eye, but not in the conventional way. This 'impossible' shot – it is by definition not truly a subjective point-of-view shot, yet this is what it suggests. The pleasure of watching Elsa is our voyeuristic pleasure as well – and we are confronted with it for a fleeting but intense moment. Then, as he moves the telescope away we are suddenly confronting a very different human form, a close-up of Grisby as he smiles ironically, not to say perversely.

The simultaneous acts of a radical change between the two shots and Grisby's straight look at the camera (without any cut or camera movement) suggest sexual desire and also another kind of anticipation: we are as yet unware of Grisby's plot to fake his own death (a plot which backfires; he is indeed killed). In the remainder of this sequence we see a mixture of shots as Elsa sunbathes and dives again: not only point-of-view shots from the position of the unseen watcher

and audience, but even a view across Elsa's body to the source of the voyeurism.

In another revealing scene, at night on board the yacht, we again see Elsa's prostrate body at the centre of a subtle and complex series of exchanges with the three men. It starts out with Elsa, who wants to smoke a cigarette; she gives it to Grisby, but he hasn't got a match either. Then O'Hara lights the cigarette in the mouth of Grisby, who passes it back to Elsa, so that this symbolic object of exchange between the sailor and the woman (this motif runs throughout the film, binding them physically together) performs a complete circle. The scene simultaneously depicts the intricate relations among the characters, supported also by the claustrophobic tension of the yacht's enclosed space and shows Elsa as the centre of this web of intricate connections.

In a further relay, Elsa starts to sing a love song at the beginning of the scene and repeats it at the end after it is picked up by the drunken Bannister. She can be seen as a seductive predator, waiting at the centre of her web, deliberately manipulating her network, but also as fixed and hypnotised by the male gaze, with no chance of breaking out of the role of *femme fatale*. A close-up, shot from above, provides the visual climax of the scene. As the song ends, the camera settles on her face; her eyes are closed, the scene fades out. After the extreme intensity of this fascinating spectacle the face is gone.

Conclusion

In this essay I have tried to demonstrate, with the idea of *appearance,* a particular *film noir* symptom, namely the way verbal narration tries to overwrite and dominate the visuality

embodied in woman and her images, in order to let us savour visual pleasure without the threat of the emergence of a multi-level, heterogeneous film-material that might resist the dominance of the verbal narrative. Putting it back into historical context, we might recall that the very first pleasure of seeing moving pictures (for example, the 'cinema of attractions' associated with early film-making) is later overtaken by narrative potential of film (moving pictures can tell stories, and so we see the development of classical narrative devices).

Narrative patterns are then institutionalised, and film cinema language begins to even out the epistemological difference between the two aspects. First it takes shape as a conflict, threatening classical Hollywood narration (including the *noir* paradigm), then materialises in modern cinema as a kind of philosophy of the medium. As a transitional phenomenon, *film noir* emphasises and dramatises this relation and thus provides fertile terrain for further investigation of the sheer heterogeneity of the cinematographic medium.

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[3] Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis,* New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 3.

[4] Telotte, *op. cit*., p. 70.

32 / Post-feminism, Pleasure and the Spectacle: Tarantino's *Kill Bill*

Samantha Lindop

Introduction

This essay focuses on action heroine Beatrix Kiddo, played by Uma Thurman, in Quentin Tarantino's double feature *Kill Bill Volume I* and *Volume II* (2003, 2004), and explores how the character is constructed in relation to dominant post-feminist representations of women in Hollywood cinema. Although there are many forms of post-feminism (as critics such as Sarah Projansky, Chris Holmlund, and Rosalind Gill have argued), the kind of post-feminist discourse that prevails in popular Western culture is one marked by a series of contradictions and tensions in that it celebrates many of the gains of earlier feminist activism while simultaneously taking them for granted and even undermining them.[1]

As she appears in many screen texts, the action heroine enacts these paradoxes. She is active, powerful, and independent, but conversely she is also a highly stylised, eroticised spectacle designed for the objectifying, voyeuristic gaze. Underlying this conflicting rhetoric is a desire to re-stabilise gender power structures that have been disrupted by feminism. However, I argue that whilst Beatrix is visually exciting, *Kill Bill* stands out in that its protagonist is filmed in a way that elicits embodied, kinaesthetic pleasure that does not undermine the potency of her presence on screen through objectification or sexualisation. Rather, *Kill Bill* offers a different kind of pleasure in regard to the spectacle of the female form.

Post-feminism and the Action Heroine

Kill Bill opens with a high angle close-up shot of a visibly distressed Beatrix lying unceremoniously on her back on a wooden floor. The audience does not see the face of the man in the cowboy boots who approaches her, but the embroidered letters on his handkerchief reveal his name to be Bill. Terrified, Beatrix sobs and quivers as Bill slowly reaches down and tenderly wipes the grubby mix of blood, dirt, sweat, and tears from her battered face. Then he cocks his pistol and fires a bullet into her head at point-blank range.

This jarring opening scene, showing Beatrix in a distinctly unglamorous, unflattering manner, establishes the way she is presented throughout much of the films two volumes. More often than not she is covered in grime and body fluid (usually belonging to someone other than herself). Not only is she shot in the head, but she is sexually violated while in a coma, thrown around, kicked, punched, shot full of rock salt, and

buried alive. As far as physical grooming is concerned, her hair is generally lank and unkempt, she wears little if any make-up, and her clothing is for the most part masculine and functional.

Portraying women in this way is unusual in a post-millennial popular culture that has become dominated by a particular kind of post-feminist rhetoric which places a premium on physical beauty, glamour, and sex appeal. Although aspects of feminist accomplishment such as political equality, economic independence, and sexual autonomy are celebrated, so too, simultaneously, are issues that were of significant concern to 'second wave' activists. This includes the portrayal of women as objects designed for sexual contemplation. However, as Gill argues, this has been reconstructed in a way that encourages women to exhibit themselves as desiring sexual subjects who achieve a sense of power and autonomy by actively choosing to represent themselves in a seemingly objectified manner, a mode of self-depiction that Gill terms "*subjectification*".[2]

In relation to the action heroine, these figures are depicted as intelligent, active, resourceful, and independent. However, their power is undermined by the fact that they are also presented as what O'Day calls ultra-sexualised "*action babes*", who "*function simultaneously as the action subject of the narrative and the erotic object of visual spectacle*".[3] This is played out in an exaggerated, tongue-in-cheek manner, using parody as a guise for objectification, in McG's cinema re-make (USA, 2000) of the television show *Charlie's Angels* (ABC, 1976-1981), and his 2003 sequel, *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle*.

Whilst *Kill Bill* and *Charlie's Angels* are directly linked through the actor Lucy Liu, who stars as an 'Angel' in *Charlie's Angels* and who also plays O-Ren Ishii in *Kill Bill*, the two films differ dramatically in their representation of female characters. In *Charlie's Angels* the Angels are highly stylised spectacles of glamour and eroticism. Often, they are presented like soft-porn stars. They perform striptease and dress as dominatrices, massage parlour geishas, and Alpine milk-maids. Revelling in their sexuality, they not only flaunt it but continually use it to escape from dangerous situations by distracting the villains.

In *Charlie's Angels* and other films such as Frank Miller's and Robert Rodriguez's *neo-noir Sin City* (USA, 2005), and the fantasy/action films *Tomb Raider* (Simon West, USA, 2001) and *Sucker Punch* (Zack Snyder, USA, 2011), 'action babes' are associated with a strong visual and erotic impact that is designed to satisfy the voyeuristic gaze of the spectator. O'Day argues that such female representations "*allay their active masculine connotations by stressing the heroine's sexuality and availability in conventional feminine terms*".[4]

This way of presenting the action heroine effectively undercuts her potency and in turn alleviates the anxiety often generated by shifting gender power structures. Moreover, the 'action babe' also speaks to female audience members by implying that feminist power is predicated on female attractiveness and desirability. As with objectification, this is tied into the re-stabilisation of patriarchal social structure as well as serving the capitalist interests of consumerism that promote the consumption of goods and services associated with beauty and fashion by playing on - or generating - women's anxieties about maintaining a 'feminine' appearance.[5]

However, unlike the majority of films featuring 'action babe' heroines, *Kill Bill* stands out in that it does not de-fuse the threat of female power by offering the body of its protagonist as a glamorous, sexualised spectacle for the heterosexual male gaze. Nor does Beatrix espouse the idea that femininity and success are predicated on superficial aesthetic markers that require the purchase of expensive beauty treatments, apparel, and accessories. Beatrix looks spectacular in action, but she is never costumed in revealing feminine attire like that of the Angels, in fact for much of the time she wears a very functional yellow tracksuit almost identical to the one worn by Bruce Lee in Robert Clouse's martial arts film *Game of Death* (Hong Kong/USA, 1978).

She does not have glamourised or highly stylised hair and cosmetics, nor is she objectified, represented as a sexual fantasy, groped by the camera's eye, or positioned as the hero's love interest as action babes often are. The film does not even feature a male lead or a romantic sub-plot in any conventional sense, and with Bill remaining an off-screen presence for the entire first volume it does not invite Beatrix to be viewed through the eyes of a man who desires her. Therefore, it is difficult to read the film as a straightforward engagement with post-feminism as it has come to dominate popular culture.

The Carnal Sensuality of Film

Rather than offering Beatrix as a conventional object of visual appeal in terms of what Laura Mulvey famously describes as "to-be-looked-at-ness"[6], *Kill Bill* invites pleasure on an alternative visceral, kinaesthetic level. The objectifying voyeuristic gaze relies on distant observation, separating the observer from the observed. Here the object of

contemplation tends to be filmed in long-shot, directing the gaze at the entire body, providing the spectator with a sense of seeing without being seen. This mode of viewing creates a dynamic between the viewer and the viewed that is based on objectification rather than personification or identification.

Beatrix, on the other hand, is continually captured in close-up and extreme-close, the images of her intense and fragmented, providing a sense of proximity that de-stabilises voyeurism. Even when the camera does pull back, such as during fight scenes, it never lingers for an extended period of time. Instead, rapidly edited shots constantly shift angle, point-of-view, and distance in a way that retains a sense of intimacy and involvement by placing the spectator in the centre of the action.

These techniques, limiting the aesthetic distance between the spectator and the images on screen, engage the audience in what Sobchack defines as the "*carnal sensuality of the film experience*".[7] This describes the way the cinematic encounter can be felt physically, through muscles, tendons, and the entire body, such as when we tense our muscles, jump, feel our heart race, or have some other physical response to what is being played out on the screen.

Barker takes the argument that the audience comprehends cinema through their entire physicality a step further by contending that the film itself also functions as a kinaesthetic 'body' that acts in conjunction with the human form, allowing the latter to imagine life through the former. Barker draws on Sobchack's suggestion that the mechanisms and technological instrumentation of cinema - cameras, microphones, cranes, and so on - operates as the eyes, ears, and body of the film in conjunction with the film-maker and

audience. In this sense, camera movements, editing, film speed, special effects, and sound are all "*filmatic gestures*" that contribute to the film's "*body language*" - encouraging, demanding, and emulating a carnal response from the audience. Barker asserts something which is played out with particular intensity in the spectacular and explicitly violent fight scenes to be found in *Kill Bill:*

"*The empathy between the film's and the viewer's bodies goes so deeply that we can feel the film's body, live vicariously through it, and experience its movements to such an extent that we ourselves become momentarily as graceful or as powerful as the films body, and we can leave the theatre feeling invigorated or exhausted, though we ourselves have hardly moved a muscle*".[8]

Asian Action Cinema and the Carnivalesque

The profoundly graphic style of the film, particularly in sections involving combat, and the powerful carnal responses these images elicit, are clearly influenced by Asian action cinema. As Bordwell contends, Asian action cinema is particularly concerned with - and is very good at - arousing emotions kinaesthetically. Here scenes are generally very brutal, sensationalist, and thoroughly obsessed with extreme grotesquerie. This is deliberately designed to elicit strong feelings such as anger, disgust, fear, sadness, and indignation on the part of the mass audience.

The grotesque spirit of Asian action cinema does not exclude female figures, who often suffer terribly in this style of narrative.[9] Warrior women are thus not separated by their gender - they perform corporeal acts of strength and violence as much as male characters. One example is Toshiya

Fujita's action film *Lady Snowblood* (Japan, 1973), to which *Kill Bill* makes reference via the soundtrack in *Volume I*, the character O-Ren Ishii, the rape-revenge story line, and the animation sequences.

The grotesque forms a central component of Tarantino's creative style in several films. Ndalianis explores these themes as they play out in Tarantino's female-centred follow-up to *Kill Bill, Death Proof* (which forms part of the 2007 'Grindhouse' double feature along with Rodriguez's *Planet Terror*). Extending the work of William Paul in relation to grotesquerie in horror films such as Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* (USA, 1978) and Bakhtin's theories concerning the carnival spirit in sixteenth century feudal culture, Ndalianis argues that *Death Proof* enacts the spirit of the 'carnivalesque'.

Grotesque and inappropriate depictions, particularly relating to the body, are played out through the use of caricature, satire, hyperbolism, excessiveness, and exaggeration in a ludic fashion that makes them humorous rather than horrifying. An essential element of the carnivalesque is that social hierarchy is turned upside down through satirical parody which generates pleasure through the inversion of traditional rules. In line with this, the carnivalesque rejects all official perceptions of beauty and proper social behaviour.

Instead, interest is focussed on the intimate workings of the body. This includes images of blood, defecation, and dying. Like *Death Proof*, *Kill Bill* enacts the carnivalesque spirit with gusto, presenting the female body in ways that continually disrupt conventional expectations of how women should look and behave. But while these scenes are often outrageous and disgusting - such as during the fight scene

between Beatrix and O-Ren Ishii's schoolgirl bodyguard Gogo Yubari that ends with Gogo's head impaled on a nail-studded plank of wood, or when Sophie Fatale's arm is severed, causing blood to spurt profusely from the wound - they also provide excitement and a certain kind of pleasure on a carnal, visceral level.

Conclusion

Kill Bill stands out in its refusal of the kinds of conventional modes of viewing pleasure that have come to dominate mainstream popular Western culture. Rather than having recourse to the voyeuristic contemplation, objectification, and glamorisation of its heroine as is commonly the case in female-centred action movies, *Kill Bill* offers the possibility of an alternative form of gratification and excitement. By drawing on the carnivalesque spirit and the grotesque traditions that inform Asian action cinema, the film is able to offer alternative, active and enthralling representations of the female body that play with and disrupt dominant expectations of how women should look and act.

These visual experiences are intensified by combining them with film techniques that invite a sense of immediacy and involvement with the events taking place on screen, making it possible for the audience to enjoy and share Beatrix's force, grace, and power at a visceral, kinaesthetic level that excites the carnal sensorium. Crucially, this way of screening Beatrix, establishing a sense of identification with the character, enforces rather than trivialises or undermines her potency. As such the film provides an experience of dynamic, empowered femininity rather than one that relies on physical appearance, superficial aesthetic markers, or the male gaze.

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33 / Women, Media and Resistance in Contemporary Indian Cinema

Pradipta Mukherjee

Introduction

This essay examines representations of women in performance - women who are actors, fashion models or superstars, whose lives are constantly embroiled with media - in Mumbai and Bengali cinema. In India perhaps more than in other countries, because of the popularity of the Hindi film industry and the strong fan culture that exists, actresses are not merely performers, but major celebrities, whose aura is defined, produced, maintained and constantly negotiated by the media. The films discussed here are in a state of constant negotiation with how media images construct and also deconstruct representations of women, and also with their resistance to this process.

The essay further explores the framing of woman's sexuality and how this conflict is eventually resolved by her destruction, re-configuration, or re-location. The paradox that women encounter is that they are simultaneously present and yet absent in a dominant culture overwhelmed by the media. The essay looks at how media images of women are framed and later re-constructed, considering how certain films have attempted to redefine femininity, sexuality and masculinity in the changing context of post-modernity and post-global consumer culture.

I argue that the task of cinema is to foreground rather than resolve the duplicity of social technology or the 'ideological state apparatus' known as the media. The socio-cultural texts that are films both comply with and yet subvert established stereotypes, foregrounding, along with conventional pleasures, women's resistance as a disruption to the way in which meaning and pleasure are constructed in an entertainment industry dominated by men.

The films discussed are Madhur Bhandarkar's *Fashion* (2008), Aparna Sen's *Iti Mrinalini: An Unfinished Letter …* (2010), Milan Luthria's *The Dirty Picture* (2011), and Bhandarkar's *Heroine* (2012). These films are about the inner turmoils of female protagonists who are disgraced and even destroyed by the society that has played a major role in their making. Women in these films are constantly 'spoken of' while the woman herself remains 'inaudible', displayed as spectacle and yet un-represented.

In such films the female actress's body is a text which is stigmatised by gendered and sexualised significations in order to justify normative power structures. The prevailing issue is one of control, whereby the female subject is

'embodied' in society through agencies which seek to control her sexuality and its representations. This external agency is most clearly symbolised by the institutions of the media.

Fabrications of Femininity: *Fashion*

Madhur Bhandarkar's *Fashion* tells the story of Meghna, a teenager from Chandigarh who moves to Mumbai and rises to the top of the fashion business, but faces a difficult future when she becomes pregnant after an affair with her boss. The film shows the darker aspects of the fashion world and suggests something of what lies behind the glamour and façade of this spectacular form of 'show' business.

With increasing globalisation, films, print media and fashion magazines all inform each other in terms of style and presentation and depend on each other for the sake of perpetuating consumerist aspiration. In *Fashion,* Meghna's desperate survival strategy is to get photographed by a famous photographer. She has realised that, through his image-making powers, he will be able to re-inscribe her sexually and create for her the privilege of looking desirable.

In *Fashion,* photography acts as a power mechanism to ensure both Shonali's and Meghna's success. The brand they work for and represent ('Panache'), is reproductive of the same patriarchy that endeavours to pre-determine and control women's identity. Meghna and the model she replaces, Shonali, resist such an embodiment or commodification in a fashion world characterised by vacuous flamboyance and frivolity.

In the final sequence of *Fashion,* despite the bodily construction of her image in the traditional exhibitionist

manner, Meghna is not consumed or overtaken by the grand fashion show that pre-defines her role. Her capability to perform again with confidence subverts derogatory patriarchal definitions of her ability. It is through her performance that she transcends her assigned gendered status as a failed supermodel.

The more sombre Meghna who gazes at the camera and at the audience is the new Meghna who has undergone a journey of self-discovery and has re-built herself by countering the vices and injustices of the fashion world. She is the new Meghna who, through her strength of mind, has again carved a niche of her own in a male-dominated industry. As a result there is no overt flamboyance in Meghna's poised style and outlook. The final sequence of *Fashion* may be read as Meghna's statement of how women need to assert themselves, of how the glamour world has to appreciate the true worth of a woman's inherent talent.

Meghna's resistance is to men who treat women merely as commodities, cheapened in status by focusing on their physicality, making a spectacle of their body and sexuality. Her fashion statement is one that discards the frivolous, in favour of restraint, confidence and elegance. Her 'sense of fashion' no longer primarily relates to outfit, jewellery, hair-style or make-up but is more about her re-discovery of the self, a 'style statement' that now reflects in her deeper attitude and understanding.

Acting, Stardom and Reality: *Heroine*

Heroine is a behind-the-scenes account of the glamorous and scandalous realities of the celebrity world that film stars inhabit. Here, the celebrity actor Mahi Arora fails to find a

satisfactory fit between the characters she plays on screen and her 'real' personality. Behind the scenes she is shown battling depression and taking anti-depressants. In real life, the superstar Mahi is easily upset, highly emotional, confused, insecure, and vulnerable. As we can see, Mahi's stardom and glamour are constructs and artefacts of the media.

Her mentor Pallavi tells Mahi that as a star she need not try and become an actress, but after public taunting Mahi remains unhappy with her star *persona*. She has been socially disgraced for being a star and not an actress. In real life, her priorities keep changing. She seeks commitment on the part of Aryan (which he refuses). When another man, Angad, proposes, she becomes more career-oriented, even though her secretary warns her that "*the life of a heroine is short-lived*".

In *Heroine*, the politics of the cinema is integrated with personal politics. The film shows the life of a female star and again, the darker side of the film industry. As a failing actress she has recourse to cheap publicity stunts for her upcoming film, degrades herself in the process, and is consequently tormented by the media. She eventually quits the film world and finds happiness in ordinary life.

In *Heroine,* formulations of the feminine are completely consonant with traditional derogations of women, such as the claim (here represented by the character's bi-polar disorder) that she is irrational, often speaks incoherently, cannot concentrate on one thing at a time, is closer to her body or is more oriented towards pleasure than men. But Mahi resists such traits. She succeeds in overcoming depression and ultimately rises in her career as a highly

desirable star. Both *Fashion* and *Heroine* project women who re-write their bodies to move forward into uncharted territory.

Sexuality and the Body: *The Dirty Picture*

Through the character of Silk in *The Dirty Picture,* a woman whose star status revolves around her sexualised *persona*, Luthria showcases strategies of resistance and attempts to subvert hegemonic norms of Indian womanhood. Real-life actors Silk Smitha and Disco Shanti narrate the story of the meteoric rise and sudden downward spiral of those who have become such screen sensations. The film tells the life-story of actress and producer Silk Smitha (1960-1996) played here by Vidya Balan as a sexual icon who was exploited by the South Indian film industry of the 1980s.

The media try to tame Silk, treating her as a symbol of wanton female sexuality. The public display of sexuality also binds her career to the roles she procures or generates. The apparently decent and respectable society and its norms create the new Silk out of an ordinary woman, Reshma. Silk uses her sexual allure to her benefit as she rises from poverty. Gradually the glamour of the star is emphasised and becomes pleasurable in itself, a streamlined image of femininity and sexuality. She even poses a threat to the stardom of the reigning male superstar Suryakant (played by Naseeruddin Shah).

What the film celebrates and simultaneously criticises is the consumption and circulation of women's sexualised bodies. The film represents an informed, complex awareness of the power relations at work in commodifying female sexuality and, through the character of Silk, a knowing, deliberate

embrace of fetishisation. Silk's character defies commonly held stereotypes of women as either vamp or virgin. At the same time, the nature of the highly sexualised roles she has played in her films, and her involvement with the married Suryakant *et al,* is what enables the media to erase the boundary between her status as an individual and her fictional identities.

The fact that she is comfortable with her image as a highly sexual woman on screen is exploited by the media, which degrades her. Silk is the victim of a society that has made a star of an ordinary woman, highlighting her aggressive sexual presence on screen and her embracing of sexuality in real life. It is the selfsame society and its media that once constructed her as a powerful object of the sexualised gaze. Silk counters such an image through her own constructed image of sexual *bravura* in her personal life, something which is daring and potentially transgressive. In the 1980s, actresses were obliged to locate themselves strategically within limited sexual identities as either 'vamp' or 'virgin', or within a careful compromise between the two.

Silk's power lies in her sexuality, a sexuality which is not repressive, does not succumb to taboo, and does not refuse sex and pleasure. Her power incorporates resistance. Silk resists, embraces sexuality, and refuses to conform to hegemonic and patriarchal social structures. Silk is neither virgin nor vamp, and when female protagonists attempt to resist such crude forms of categorisation their rebellion is inevitably subverted and recuperated within patriarchal definitions of sexuality.

The Dirty Picture candidly exposes the duplicity of a world craving sex and excitement - but one which is in truth fearful

or simply ashamed to truly acknowledge this basic human need. The film exposes the hypocrisy of men like the successful big shot Suryakant, who desire passionate women like Silk but always behind closed doors. Silk is treated like dirt, and as everyone's dirty secret.

At the height of her fame and success the daring Silk damns the double standards of society, while the society relentlessly continues to criticise and reject her for her sexually explicit roles. The scene showcasing her performance as she entices and seduces her fans (largely men) demonstrates her understanding of, and resistance to, the media construction of unacceptable images of her sexuality. Her performance is a playful mockery of the duplicity of a society that both exploits and disavows her sexualised body.

When a fashion magazine sets itself up as a site for sexual regulation and surveillance, the celebrity Silk, who provides its subject matter, must in turn act within that space as self-regulator of her own sexualised image. But Silk never negotiates her sexuality with the media. The sense of rejection by society and by the media gradually and painfully overwhelms her. As a result her liberating attitude borders on the reckless, and she comes very close to self-destruction.

She is now disgraced, and virtually ostracised by society. Failing to find respect and true love in society, she ends her career by committing suicide in a patriarchal world that never appreciates her talent. The double conflict in Silk's case is resolved by the woman's destruction of her own body. Her death is a commentary on how a society thrives on artifice, of how a spirited, bold woman seeks sustenance in a world dominated by men. Silk's suicide is perhaps a symbolic

response to the same patriarchy that disciplines and regulates women's sexuality more widely.

Person and *Persona: Iti Mrinalini*

In *Fashion*, *Heroine* and *The Dirty Picture* there is a complex negotiation at work between the female protagonists as credible persons and our familiarity with their star *personae*. This takes us into broader areas of cultural study, where understandng the relationship of real person and character role, and hence of *persona* and image, leads to a sense of how the star has been constructed. *Iti Mrinalini* works in a different way altogether, by prioritising the spectator as the chief witness to the life of an ageing film star as she writes a suicide note before taking her life.

Mrinalini narrates her story through a voice-over which is autobiographical and confessional, with extended flashbacks revealing how she arrived at her present moment of crisis. She explains how, throughout her life, she has been a victim of media attention, something that she wishes to be spared at the moment of her death. Timing has always been important to her as a performer. If her coming into this world was through no choice of hers, she believes she has the right to choose the moment of her exit. Before ending her life she decides to destroy her memorabilia - letters, photos, and newspaper cuttings - lest they fall into the hands of the media, who may tell a different story.

As the film progresses we become entirely aligned with Mrinalini and acquire a privileged perspective on her private world. We see the entire story through this fictional character. Memories keep haunting her on the last night of her life. They unravel as a journey down memory lane as she

reflects on her life marked by relationships and betrayals, agonies endured, awards cherished. *Iti Mrinalini* is a meditation on a star's public recognition, fame, glamour - and also personal failures. It is about the crisis which confronts ageing actresses like her when they are replaced by younger rivals.

Conclusion

In a profound contradiction, the female protagonists of *Fashion* and *Heroine* are displayed in terms of spectacle and yet remain, in a deeper sense, unrepresented. Women, as real social beings, are not the same as 'the Woman', represented by the media, yet they are caught, experientially and conceptually, somewhere between the two. This is what happens to Meghna, Shonali and Mahi, who are bombarded by cultural fantasies of the 'Woman' in media and advertising, and who are expected to live up to those images.

These films present the paradox of stardom: the stars seem knowable, accessible, ordinary and yet, at the same time, extraordinary and only attainable in the everyday world of the spectator through the channels of desire and fantasy. Here lies a further paradox. As spectators we are lured into imaginary or illusory identification with a media-constructed world of glitz and glamour. Yet, still as spectators, we are also aware that the female body on show has been stigmatised by gendered and sexualised significations, and that the spectacle of glamour is just a façade. There are things that the frame hides from our gaze and hearing, rendering us disempowered and undermining what we have assumed to be the straightforward pleasures of the spectacle.

34 / Representations of Womanhood in Bollywood Cinema: Zoya Akhtar's *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobaara* and Gauri Shinde's *English Vinglish*

Gauri D. Chakraborty

Introduction

Indian Cinema is today one of the most prominent cultural ambassadors of the country. Over the last hundred years the medium has concocted its own mix of form and content. Bollywood is referred to as the representative of commercial Hindi mainstream cinema. Today the marketplace itself has variants - a complex landscape involving the vast expanse of the home-grown cinema, with its regional variations, and the ever enlarging Diaspora, including co-productions and even a dash of the Hollywood studio system. Bollywood is consumed by millions of Indians with diverse cultural roots and what we might call, following Tagore, nuanced Indian-ness.

The establishment of cinema as a patriarchal form in the Indian context ensured that the female dimensions of narrative have remained unexplored in most commercial Hindi cinema. In recent years, however, we have seen a dramatic rise – indeed, almost a turnaround - of narrative action concerned with powerful female protagonists.

While one of the reasons is the change in the socio-economic pattern of women in Indian urban space, another is the emergence of the female director, who is now an equal creative force in terms of the commercial discourses, or main business model, of Bollywood. The evolution of this counter-cinema within the mainstream reflects the medium's engagement with the real spaces and perspectives of women, both 'liberated' and 'sheltered'.

Whereas in countries where cinema has a greater commercial standing the woman is perhaps seen as 'body' while in art cinema she is seen as 'spirit', in Indian cinema she is understood as both. During the 1950s and 1960s, these aspects of body and spirit were divided across the simplest binaries. The 'vamp' was a figure to do with the body, willing to cross boundaries, not affected by guilt, a representation of a commodified version of 'woman'. The main lead actress was the 'spirit' - chaste, divine, and helpless.

In a visibly patriarchal society, it was inevitable that cinema would privilege male representations in narrative and a conspicuously 'male gaze' in the techniques it employed. Directors like Guru Dutt and Bimal Roy were thus exceptional in presenting their heroines of the 50s and 60s as multi-layered and complex, unlike the one-dimensional portrayals that came later.

The 'New Wave' cinema that emerged in India in the 1960s gave a new dimension to women characters, led to films like Satyajit Ray's *Charulata (The Lonely Wife,* 1963*)* and *Mahanagar (The Big City,* 1964*)*, Mrinals Sen's *Ek Aur Pratidin (And Quiet Rolls the Dawn,* 1979*)*, Shyam Benegal's *Bhumika (The Role,* 1977*)* and *Ankur* (*The Seedling*, 1974), and Mahesh Bhatt's *Arth* (*Meaning*, 1982). These renewed perspectives on women fell outside the mainstream, but inspired many.

Indian cinema has traditionally endorsed the traditional values of social order in terms of its women characters. The characters who abide by 'traditional' roles are shown to be happy and safe, while those who digress are punished or unhappy. Gender bias, quite visible in the often myopic and uni-dimensional cinema of the earlier period, slowly gave way in the era of globalisation to new cinematic representations as women's social roles gradually changed.

Towards a Kind of New Cinema

Though mainstream Hindi Cinema has been largely a male-dominated sector, key women directors have emerged over various periods. These directors helped to re-shape alternative impressions of woman on screen. The films of Aparna Sen and Sai Paranjapaye, for example, have re-interpreted and challenged previous stereotypes. The work of Mira Nair and Deepa Mehta - who have based their narratives in India but function within the larger domain of Hollywood or the independent cinema of the West - has also contributed to a fresh perspective.

Virtually all aspects of Indian life - the economy of daily lives, the role of the moneyed middle class, the realm of culture and relationships - are in the process of being transformed by

the profound forces of globalisation. The Indian labour market is seeing the rise of women in almost all professions. On screen, womanhood has frequently been associated with consumerism, where the signifiers are designer clothes and upper class *panache*. In terms of the body the changes have been to do with vital statistics, skin- and eye-colour, and the woman looking comfortable in her own being.

The presence or entry of foreign actresses/models has ensured that the new narrative now incorporates the 'global' look of the Indian woman, who still clings to traditional values even if a great deal to do with her cosmetic appearance had changed. A 'quasi-emancipation' ensued, whereby she found herself beyond the confines of the home, but still needed the hero to rescue her.

By 2012, female stars were enjoying runaway box office success. The year saw a significant metamorphosis of the 'woman' in mainstream cinema, with narratives which tilted both the 'story' and the 'gaze'. The most conspicuous example, *Kahaani,* directed by Sujoy Ghosh, is a thriller, based on a female-centred scenario in which a pregnant woman travels from London to Kolkata in search of her missing husband.

Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara

Zoya Akhtar's *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (*You Will Not Get to Live Twice,* 2011) generates a new paradigm for womanhood. It is also unique in that it features neither a theme-song nor a villain to create a climax. At first, it comes across as largely concerned with male friendship and a journey about male commitments, giving the impression that womanhood will be typically 'other'.

The premise is simple. A trio of young men who are close or have been very close have promised each other that when one of them gets married, they will embark on a bachelor adventure. Both the stress on bachelor status and the notion of the male 'adventure' here seem to belong to the patriarchal conventions of Indian society.

The young men reach their first destination, a beach. Against this natural backdrop, Laila, an Indian-American woman played by the popular British Anglo-Asian actress Katrina Kaif, is introduced and established in the story. She is all alone, content in her own self. She defies convention and stereotypical demonstrations of otherness.

Laila becomes a partner in the voyage of male self-discovery which is unfolding. She is a free-spirited character previously unseen in Indian cinema. Like most of the other female characters in the film, Laila has no second name. In a country like India, with its rich cultural diversity, Laila is just a 'female' beyond the politics of sex and gender; she is not a Singh, Kakkar, Raghuvanshi, Sharma, or Gopalan.

The name is also race-neutral. It has Hebraic and Islamic connections, but the film deliberately uses it without reference to religion, caste or creed. Serene and self-content, Laila is the character who embodies all the qualities of nature. Her character does not equate the pleasures of life with materialism. Her identity is not related to male figures such as her father, brother, ex-boyfriend or mentor. Laila seems to be both self-identified and self-validated. Her womanhood is fluid and is not in need of corroboration.

Varieties of Womanhood

Laila's temporary job as a diving Instructor expresses her love for nature. In a standard approach in Bollywood, the *mise-en-scène* of the sea or a body of water has been often used as a metaphorical trope for female sexuality, with the heroine showcasing her body in such an environment. In the hands of of a woman director, however, the visual spectacle here, in its choice of camera-angles and shot-scales, offers no such clichéd representations of the gendered body. Instead, the sea signifies a difficult terrain, and Laila has the grit and ability to cope with its depths, which even men consider a challenge. She is the one who teaches the men to value every breath they take.

The film also features other dimensions of womanhood in the figures of Natasha (Kabir's fiancée), Rahila (Imraan's mother) and Nuria (Laila's friend in Spain). Although partly 'empowered', Natasha still holds a traditional, socially fixed opinion of her responsibilities. The impression of women being caught in their own conditioning is reflected by the fact that Kabir is open-minded while she lives in the modern world, but that she continues to think like her mother. Laila stands out in this crowd. Laila is the 'new age' woman with a voice of her own. She is at peace with her role and her identity in defying the common perceptions of her gender.

The scene that can be truly termed revolutionary for Indian cinema where representations of womanhood are concerned occurs when the three friends bid adieu to Laila and she follows them on a motorbike to say a last goodbye. Laila borrows Nuria's motorbike (a male ride in the Indian context)

to stop Arjun's car; she gets off, and kisses him, saying "*I have no regrets*".

Laila's ability to reach out to 'her' man without the typical cinematic elements of remorse or guilt reflects on the new standpoint taken by Indian cinema in re-inventing the representation of women. Characters like Laila have increased in number in mainstream narratives. With the advent of the 'global' spirit, it is not just the 'attitudes' but also the 'body' of the Indian woman that has been re-located.

English Vinglish

Gauri Shinde's *English Vinglish* (2012) is a unique experiment in Indian Cinema. It brings together a star of yesteryear, Sridevi, with a first-time director, Gauri Shinde. The star who inspired generations of girls to wear chiffon sarees and get wet in the rain - a symbolic trope for the display of sexuality and representing women as an object of desire - appears here as an 'average' Indian housewife. Her character, Shashi Godbole, still lives a life untouched by globalisation, at least in the domestic sphere.

She epitomises the traditional qualities of a housewife who is unquestioning and committed. Traditionally attired, sensual without sexuality, dependent on her husband but with a residual sense of personal identity, she is the truly sheltered one. She is either not allowed to think beyond her home and children or has decided to abdicate her individuality for the larger good. Shashi Godbole is not 'subaltern' but simply 'ordinary'. She travels to New York to help with a family wedding and it is within this space and time that she is able to achieve her self-identity.

Initially taken aback, she starts to adapt to the stress on the individual in the post-modern Western world, something which she cannot find at home in India. The premise doesn't take her to another city or a more modernised sector in India such as Delhi or Bangalore. Emancipation and the woman's ability to survive without her male support system is the key point here; no 'quasi-empowerment' is suggested in the film. She is able to re-discover herself and to pass on her understandings of a woman's contribution to society to both her niece and her daughter.

The third phase of feminism seeks to re conceive identity and difference and their relationship. *English Vinglish* is an optimum representation of the same in its subtle interpretation of the difference between sex and gender. Shashi is burdened with the roles and responsibilities of her gender and has not been able to discover herself. Freedom from those duties and that milieu allows her to redefine her herself and her relationships with her husband and children.

Conclusion

The representation of womanhood in Bollywood has changed rapidly in recent years. Societal changes are displacing patriarchy. The emergence of female directors allows for freshness in these constructions. I predict that *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* will prove to be a pivotal film in changing the ethos of representation of womanhood. Though the film is about the personal identities and friendship of three male characters, the female writer and director offers an equally important interrogation of womanhood.

The film demonstrates that a counter-cinema can be created which challenges the assumptions of patriarchy. *English Vinglish* does a remarkable job of elevating the 'average' housewife of an Indian background to a person who is self–identified and self-validated. Within a changing and globalised production context and audience demographic a new kind of heroine seems to have emerged in Hindi mainstream cinema after a long period either playing second fiddle to men, or as representing the under-explored 'other' of traditional narrative.

35 / Violence, Fantasy and the Female Body: The Spectacle of *Tomie*

Chia-wen Kuo

Gender in the Field of Vision

The Japanese *Tomie* series of horror films, with nine episodes released between 1999 and 2011, is based on the popular *manga* by Junji Ito, featuring the fantastical female Tomie Kawakami. Overwhelmingly popular in Japan and other Japanophilic areas of Asia (such as Taiwan), Tomie, with her impeccable beauty, is provocative yet unobtainable; she is able to charm virtually any man whilst at the same time provoking his obsessive desire to kill and dismember her. But Tomie simply cannot be destroyed, since her corpse propagates thousands of clones. Tomie grimly calls into profound question the ideal of femininity within Asian culture, parodying the desirable aspects of Asian/Japanese womanhood and turning them into the stuff of nightmares.

At one level Tomie speaks to the global context of gendered violence. Women and minorities have been victimised and maltreated by in men in various cultures, as Russell and Radford remind us. In general, "*femicidal atrocity is everywhere normalized*" and even the FBI terms sex-killings as "*recreational murders*".[1] Where Tomie is concerned, in spite of the violence inflicted upon her she in turn embodies the worst nightmare for men, too. She cannot be truly killed; instead she returns to threaten male stability with an even bigger number of her doubles.

The Tomie series may also reflect fundamental states of psychic formation where gender is concerned. A Lacanian reading of subjectivity, such as that offered by Silverman, makes recourse to the notion of the splitting of the self into the components of '*I*' and *'me'*. In the broader context of what Silverman calls the "*dominant fiction*" of masculinity, man is the subject (*'I'*) and woman is the other (*'me'*). As perhaps in the case of Tomie, the male is eager to repudiate and banish the female in order to satiate a basic lack within male subjectivity in favour of "*an illusory plentitude*".

Where the *régime* of vision is concerned, crucial for the cinematic representation of Tomie, Silverman also differentiates between the 'look' and the 'gaze': the look requires wholehearted immersion with the object while the gaze remains at a detached distance from the object (the art of disavowal). The male spectator oscillates between the states of look and gaze in a *fort-da* game-play with the spectacle.[2] In the case of Tomie, man falls head over heels in love with her (via the look), then senses an urgent need to possess her and turns her into a dead object (via the gaze) so that he can confirm his grasp of self. Eventually he fails, and Tomie lives on.

The task of classical cinema, argues Halberstam, is indeed to gloss over the the "*dominant fiction*" of gender.[3] In this sense Tomie represents a mimicry of idealised womanhood: she is a masculine fantasy masquerading in human form. Tomie thus interrogates the gender suture within the mainstream culture of Japanese society. Tomie is not a 'real' woman, but a phantasmagoric creature that, paradoxically, actually thrives on femicide.

Japan and the Image

Japan has an unusually highly evolved form of image culture, as Donald Richie has shown. Reliant on the optical dimension, the Japanese, in a typically post-modern sense, experience sensations which sometimes take precedence over essential associated meanings. This goes back centuries to the assimilation of Chinese ideographs in written Japanese, which has created an image-making process in the Japanese mind with a penchant for "*the beauty of the ephemeral*". In the Japanese mind, a temporal frame of spectacle is doomed to perish at the moment of seeing.

In this aspect, Japan is a clear example of Debord's 'society of spectacle', and such cultural logics of post-modernity are further reinforced by the conciliatory nature of the Japanese temperament, which manoeuvres to "*suppress the content of ideas in order to accommodate the requirement of visual interest*". In this way, thing and image become inseparable, and the image can even take priority. The ideal woman is reincarnated as pure image, for example, in the video game *Tokimeki Memoriaru* (1994), which renders woman as a talking spectacle, complete with computerised utterances of "*I love you*".

Here Memoriaru becomes what Richie calls the *'quasi-female'* who is not burdened by *"the encumbrances of stories, plots or games*", reflecting a primary preference for visuality in the conceptualisation of Japanese femininity. However, in the absence of depth such visibility must be flattened out in order to achieve an affect that is totally innocent of irony; a T-shirt with English logos, for example, simply acts as a token of Westernisation where Japanese fashion is concerned. Any problems to do with "*ambiguity, dishonesty, irony"* must be excluded within the Japanese context in order to eliminate any traces of radical difference.[4]

When the ideal prospect of Japanese femininity is discussed, the cult of cuteness (*kawaii*) is invariably invoked. The popular icon 'Hello Kitty' is significant here. She has no mouth, no opportunity for verbal interchange. Without reciprocity, no meaning can be constructed, except for the endless representation of cuteness. Moreover, the allure of 'Hello Kitty' relies upon the lingering of perennial youth, everlastingly celebrated, just as the virtues of weakness, submission and humility in the discourse of Japanese womanhood. But the principles of domination and control are also emphasised by this self-contradictory virtue of deliberate frailty, whose purpose is to attain a state of conciliation and uniformity.

For her part, Tomie sums up, on the one hand, all the ideal aspects of Japanese womanhood: she is beautiful, subservient, tender and seemingly vulnerable, desirous of being needed and adored by others. But at the same time she is demanding, selfish, fickle, and has an insatiable need of favours from her admirers. She takes but never gives; just as with Hello Kitty, there is no reciprocity in her game of love. She has an imperturbable constancy, not only because she

never ages, but also because she continues to retain her impeccable beauty in spite of numerous mutilations, disfigurements and dismemberments, just like an indestructible cyborg.

But what about the woman who strives to become Tomie? In some of Ito's *manga* episodes, teenage girls feel compelled to get hold of some of Tomie's body-parts in order to absorb elements of Tomie until their own imperfect, flawed selves vanish and metamorphose into yet another perfect, flawless Tomie. Contrariwise, adolescent girls cooperate to eliminate Tomie in a jealous rage when their beloved boyfriends swoon at the sight of her. In terms of Japanese idiosyncrasy, this is known as "*dove-style violence*", which is a detached form of cruelty inflicted upon the isolated member within a group.[5] In Japan one is either 'in' or 'out' among his/her peers in a culture where hierarchy and community are highly valued.

The Female Subject

The female subject who positions herself as the love-object seeks access to self-love through another person's love for her. Here the woman is not only deified but also fetishised. Tomie embodies such a paradox in womanhood with a suicidal wish-fulfillment, and she compulsively arouses others' desire for her as if self-obliteration is her ultimate mission in life. The image of Tomie closes the gap between woman as the subject (spectator) and woman as the reflection in the mirror (spectacle). The price of such imaginary plentitude is bodily fragmentation.

To connect the ideal image and the fragmented body, a feminine 'prop' is required, such as lipstick, "*an obvious synecdoche of woman-as-spectacle*". Silverman cites the

example of Rita Hayworth in *Gilda*, who strips off her clothes to perform a metaphoric gesture of "*giving away to the body in bits and pieces*". Through the de-composition of self, Gilda glitters almost "*in a state of masochistic intoxication*".

Silverman's lengthy analysis of Ulrike Ottinger's *Bildnis einer Trinkerin* (*Ticket of No Return*, Germany, 1979) concludes by commenting on how "*the exteriority of the idealizing representation*" arouses violence in the spectator, and "*the beloved image becomes a hated rival and must be destroyed*".[6] The woman either ruins herself, or she is ruined by others because of sexual antagonism. The goal of self-ruin is a regressive return to the pre-symbolic space where identity is dissolved into bits and pieces. *Tomie* is a pedagogic fable which reminds us, in its dramatic collapsing of image and identity, of the dangers of female self-idealisation.

In discussing the relation between the gaze and the camera, Barthes suggests that in the case of the photograph one manages to propagate a spectacular form of bodily presence in the act of posing for the camera: the photograph is "*the advent of myself as other: a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity*".[7] The irony of Tomie as the representation of supreme female beauty is that once photographed she becomes horrifyingly grotesque; the beautiful Tomie appears monstrously deformed as soon as someone takes a picture of her.

The Recurrent Becoming of Japan

Jungi Ito's *Tomie* series can thus be seen as a disturbingly allegorical rumination on gender, and on the malleable essence of Japanese national identity. Within the allegorical framework in Japanese culture - in Japanese horror literature

and cinema, for example – bodies tend to lose the seeming integrity of boundaries. The Japanese social body is in a state of 'wholeness' has been eroded because the predominant forces of Westernisation have traumatised the Japanese psyche ever since the Second World War. In play here is an obsessive desire to regain a point of origin in order to return a scarred social body, through regression, to a pre-symbolic state. Such rhetoric is prevalent in the Japanese horror genre, as exemplified by the *onryou* motif (the avenging spirit). [8]

The main point, however, is that Japan also partly volunteers itself for such mortification of the cultural body. As Richie explains, we find an ethnic self-denial in Japanese popular culture following the Second World War, and de-Japanisation has become a major attribute of the aesthetic in contemporary Japan. This is why all *animes* and *mangas* feature characters who resemble Caucasians far more than the traditional Japanese; not so much straightforward copies of westerners as cultural hybrids or mutants.

We might well use the Barthesian notion of the 'assemblages of signs' to interpret Japanese cultural hybridity. In the case of transvestism in Japanese opera, a middle-aged man impersonates a young girl, and the idea of youth becomes a collage of various signifiers devoid of connotations. The middle-aged actor manipulates these signs simply to play the role. Equally, *anime* and *manga* reflect the Japanese absorption of westernisation in a reductionist way, whereby the idea of the westerner is disintegrated into a series of codes, then re-assembled like a Deleuzian 'becoming'.

Tomie, for her part, can also be seen as a Deleuzian creature that cannot be eradicated but which multiplies incessantly like a rhizome, echoing the cultural logics of Japanese post-

modernity in a deliriously globalised world without walls. A Nietzschean sense of eternal recurrence pervades Japanese post-modernity, since the Japanese language knows only the present tense. In the end, there's nothing left but a colossal array of proliferating images - just like Tomie and her clones.

Notes and References

[1] Jill Radford and Diana E. H. Russell, *Femicide: The Politics of Woman-Killing*, New York: Twayne, 1992, pp. 13-19.

[2] See Kaja Silverman, 'The Dominant Fiction', in Silervman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, New York: Routledge, new ed., 1992, pp. 15-51.

[3] Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monster,* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.

[4] Donald Richie, *The Image Factory: Fads and Fashions in Japan*, London: Reaktion Books, 2003, p. 12, 20, 23, 50.

[5] Thomas Weisser and Yuko Mihara Weisser, 1997, p. 21; see also Jay McRoy, *Nightmare Japan: Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema*, New York: Rodopi, 2007, especially ch. 4, 'A Murder of Doves: Youth Violence and the Rites of Passing in Contemporary Japanese Horror cinema', pp. 103-34.

[6] Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 65-7.

[7] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980), London: Vintage Books, 2000, p. 12.

[8] McRoy, *op. cit*., p. 20. See also Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011, *passim*.

8. Queerdom

36 / The Spectacle of AIDS: Mapping Indian Queer Cinema, 1985-2010

Sathyaraj Venkatesan

Introduction

Since the emergence of AIDS in India in 1986, Bollywood has produced only a small number of feature films that address the crisis. Given the fact that India has the largest HIV/AIDS population in the world, and considering Bollywood's decisive influence on very large segments of Indian population, it is perhaps surprising that there has been such a limited cinematic response to the epidemic. Taking these cues, this essay seeks to document Bollywood cinematic responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and to theorise the cultural implications of the films. In considering some of the social and cultural reasons for the limited nature of the output, I also situate, wherever appropriate, what we might call the 'politics of the moment' in relation to gender, sexuality and law as implied in these films.

Home Truths: Bollywood and the Virus

More than a mere film-producing industry, Bollywood, as opposed to the vernacular/regional Indian cinema, reaches and influences extremely large segments of Indian population, in the process reflecting on older ideologies and constituting the new. Particularly in the wake of liberalisation and privatisation in India, Bollywood plays an important role, as Tejaswini Ganti has commented, in "*constructing and defining dichotomies like 'traditional/modern', 'global/local', 'Western/Eastern' and even socio-cultural categories such as 'culture', 'nation', and 'Indian'*".[1]

Between 2000 and 2008, Bollywood acknowledged HIV/AIDS through a limited number of films: Manjrekar's *Nidaan* (2000), Sasi's *Ek Alag Mausam* (2003), Revathy's *Phir Milenge* (2004), Onir's *My Brother Nikhil* (2005), Kanchan's *Aisa Kyun Hota Hai* (2006), Rangayan's *68 Pages* (2007) and Nayyar's *Aasma: The Sky is the Limit* (2009). In this period there was growing public concern over the AIDS epidemic, particularly with the launch of the National AIDS Control Organization's (NACO) Phase III programme in 2006. While these films make use of Bollywood elements they also combine certain sensibilities of HIV/AIDS to constitute what could be generically defined as the 'AIDS movies'.

Though the terms, intentions, and dates are different, these films are polyvocal in that they engage and critique the government, non-state actors (NGOs, civil society), and the legal establishment. In so doing, they delineate forms of alienation and tribulation experienced by PLWAs (People Living With AIDS). One of the earliest Bollywood films to explore AIDS is Mahesh Manjrekar's *Niddan* (2000). Steeped

in melodrama, *Niddan* is one of the few films to explore blood transfusion as mode of transmission of AIDS. However, it took another four years for Bollywood to produce more enduring HIV/AIDS-based films such as Revathy's *Phir Milenge* (*We Will Meet Again*), 2004) and Onir's *My Brother Nikhil* (2005).

Bollywood's *Philadephia: Phir Milenge*

Inspired by Jonathan Demme's much-acclaimed *Philadelphia* (USA, 1992), Revathy's *Phir Milenge* addresses every single misconception and bigotry about HIV/AIDS. The film begins by introducing Tamanna Sahni (Shilpa Shetty), a successful advertising executive, who through her hard work and dedication creates success for her employers, T. J. Associates. Taking a break from her work, Tamanna attends a college reunion where she meets her former college sweetheart, Rohit Manchanda (Salman Khan), a U.S.-based musician, with whom she later shares some intimate moments. After their separation, Tamanna loses Rohit's phone number and in spite of several attempts to contact him his number is untraceable.

Tamanna's sister, Tanya (Kamalinee Mukherjee), meets with an accident and it is Tammana who donates blood to save Tanya. Later, to her shock, Tamanna learns from her doctor, Raisingh (Revathy), that she has tested positive for HIV. Her employer sacks her. Tammana is determined to fight back, but finding a lawyer is no easy matter, as many refuse to take on an AIDS-related case. Finally, after much persuasion, Tarun Anand (Abhishek Bachchan), guided by his former law professor, agrees to take on Tamanna's case.

After failure in the lower court, Tarun makes an impassioned speech before the High Court appealing for Tamanna, who is in good health, to be allowed to continue in her job. In the meantime, AIDS-afflicted Rohit returns from the US and dies in Tamanna's arms. The films ends on a positive note by showing HIV-positive Tamanna on the cover of a business magazine - projecting a redeemed and thriving image of herself in contrast to the popular perception of AIDS as entailing a person's disintegrative decline.

The film is significant in that it not only uncovers the irrational fears surrounding AIDS but also, for the first time, unflinchingly portrays work-place discrimination based on the illness. Instead of merely replicating and investing in an already over-determined homosexual figure (as in *Philadelphia*), the film moreover shifts the terms of AIDS debate to the truths of middle-class heterosexuality, particularly in relation to the way in which AIDS affects women. Akin to *Philadephia*, *Phir Milenge* also stresses the need to protect the rights of those most vulnerable to HIV.

India's Patient Zero: *My Brother Nikhil*

My Brother Nikhil (2005) broke the silence of the Bollywood film industry as the first mainstream Indian film to deal with the twin taboos of homosexuality and HIV/AIDS. While on the one hand the film grapples with homosexuality in a mature way without treating it as an aberration - especially in a Bollywood that has always made a travesty of gay sexuality – it also throws into relief the unspoken assumptions that permeated discussions of the disease in 1980s.

Set in Goa between 1987 and 1994, the film traces the story of Nikhil, the State all-round swimming champion, and how his life changes when he realises that he has contracted HIV. While telling the story of the homosexual relationship between Nikhil Kapoor (Sanjay Suri) and Negil De Costa (Purab Kohli), *My Brother Nikhil* also illustrates the various expressions of AIDS-related stigma and discrimination at the height of AIDS paranoia in late 1980s India.

Told in semi-documentary and flashback style, the film impressively portrays the homophobia and AIDS phobia faced by Nikhil both within his own family - except from his sister, Anamika Kapoor (Juhi Chawla) - and on various fronts including police, care-givers, friends, and colleagues as they discover his seropositivity. Directed and edited by Anirban Dhar (*aka* Onir), the film is inspired by the case of Dominic D'Souza, a gay World Wildlife Fund employee who was diagnosed as the first known HIV-positive person in India in 1989.

Discussing the source material for his film, Onir recalls having edited some documentary material on D'Souza and in particular "*his face, a face that had moved me, that haunted me*". Later, he adds, "*But I did not want to tell Dominic's story. Nikhil was born out of Dominic but ultimately became a different person*".[2] Onir pays tribute here to the influence of D'Souza but also distinguishes the story of Nikhil in order to make the film at once specific and also more generally representative of the abhorrent conditions faced by HIV-positive homosexuals in India, particularly during the early decades of the pandemic.

The film not only sensitively depicts the trials and tribulations of an HIV-positive homosexual but also captures the

ignorance, AIDS phobia and the threat of the unknown that defined the earlier responses to AIDS. In fact, initially considering HIV/AIDS as a 'foreign' disease, the Indian government was in denial and adopted punitive public health measures toward its HIV/AIDS victims. The absence of a public discourse on AIDS management and prevention also exacerbated the condition of seropositive individuals during the initial period of AIDS crisis.

While the film engagingly portrays the challenges of 'coming out' in India in the late 1980s it also offers a critique of the draconian Goa Public Health Act of 1985 and its amended version (1989) which granted the State powers to quarantine and isolate HIV-affected persons for any period of time. In fact, D'Souza was arrested under Goa Public Health Act and was even detained for sixty-four days in a filthy TB sanatorium. In thus portraying the life of Nikhil, the film outlines the repressive AIDS control policies adopted by the State and how such public health laws essentially violated the basic human rights of the citizen.

In so doing, the film suggests that Nikhil - and by extension, D'Souza - are as much victims of State violence as of AIDS. In reality, Lucy R. D'Souza, Dominic's mother, filed a writ before the Goa bench of the Bombay High Court arguing that the Goa Public Health Act violated her son's fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19(1)(d) and 21 of the Constitution of India. This was the first litigation on the issue of HIV/AIDS in India. In short, *My Brother Nikhil* reflects a period where human rights abuses based on HIV/AIDS were at a high level, while laws protecting the fundamental rights of PLWAs were non-existent.

Cultural Implications: 'Normalisation'

Beyond the pedagogic functions of AIDS movies, these films perform certain specific cultural functions in that they not only provide a voice and a context for the traumatic experiences of the PLWAs but also revise and critique the casually accepted and gradually congealed notions about the syndrome. Broadly, understanding the crucial role played by representations, these cinematic texts refrain from replicating clichéd narratives about HIV/AIDS, thereby creating a space for the interrogation of dominant renderings of the AIDS syndrome.

I do not intend to explain here the various 'aesthetic' strategies deployed in these films; I will concentrate instead on the larger cultural outcome of these films, namely the notion of 'normalisation'. 'Normalisation' in the context of AIDS is a specific set of interventions where the perceived abnormality/irregularity of HIV/AIDS and an exaggerated perception of threat are minimised, thus humanising the HIV/AIDS subject. Normalisation works at two levels in these films - at the emotional level, and in relation to the spread of the disease.

At the level of the emotions, normalisation works to replace panic, paranoia and phobia about AIDS with hope, love, dignity and respect, or, at the very least, stressing the need for thoughtful and empathetic treatment of HIV/AIDS-afflicted individuals. At another level, challenging the prominent myth that the condition only affects homosexuals, these films suggest that AIDS can also affect the general public, who were hitherto considered to be not at risk.

These films also seek to represent, in terms of both voice and body, a variety of marginalised and stigmatised communities (including gays, bar dancers, IV drug users, and the transgendered) who are being adversely affected by AIDS. The films thus specifically recuperate otherwise over-determined and culturally commodified images of PLWAs. Each film, in different ways, un-hinges and re-signifies the fetishistic images of AIDS and its mythologised relationship with vulnerability, sexuality and mortality. These gestures are not merely acts of political and subversive *praxis* but offer definitive ethical re-definitions of the social, cultural and moral interpretations of AIDS. The films re-align and re-organise the HIV/AIDS-afflicted at individual, inter-personal, and social levels, eventually constituting an enabling subjectivity.

Ideological and Material Challenges

Sex is a deeply entrenched but a taboo subject in Indian society and, generally, in South Asian cultures.[3] In India, Sexuality and its attendant concerns only recently became a political issue. Given that discussion of sexuality is a significant epistemological and discursive pre-condition in addressing HIV/AIDS and, as any issue on HIV/AIDS touches upon those still taboo and contentious questions of death, sex and morality, no mainstream film seems to deal boldly with such themes. This refusal to deal fully with sexuality and its various expressions in turn limits creative responses to the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Furthermore, Bollywood has yet to come to terms with AIDS as a disease affecting heterosexuals too. In fact, HIV/AIDS is not only mapped on to the 'other' but also is perceived as falling outside the cultural/social boundaries of the nation.

Bollywood is at best conservative and has often affirmed the dominant sexual order through a set of deftly developed cinematic codes: it is a key feature of a popular culture which indeed tends to be, I the words of Jerry Pinto, "*moralistic, middle-class and bourgeois*".[4] It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Bollywood would eschew the thematic of sexuality and HIV/AIDS. Except for documentaries and short films, Bollywood is often culturally resistant to HIV/AIDS as the subject for a storyline.

The lack of financial support for HIV/AIDS-related films is another challenge *"that confounds most players in Indian film, from writers to actors, producers and directors, and indeed even to financiers."*[5] For instance, when he came to make *My Brother Nikhil*, Onir observes that the subjects of homosexuality and AIDS "*did not interest the traditional financers and producers*".[6] As a result, *My Brother Nikhil* is one of the few commercial films funded directly by its director, cast and crew.

There is perhaps a final and less self-evident reason for this problem. This is to do with a simplistic and homogenised understanding of cinema-goers on the part of major producers and directors in Bollywood. The assumption that "*the masses come to the cinema* [only] *to forget their worries and dreary lives*"[7] also acts as a barrier in considering HIV/AIDS as theme for mainstream cinema.

Conclusion

Although Bollywood produces 200-300 films a year, it is yet to come to terms with the realities of HIV/AIDS as a significant health problem potentially affecting everyone. Notwithstanding Vito Russo's provocative comment that

"*AIDS has all the elements for a good movie - drama, passion, tragedy*" [8], Bollywood has not managed to produce a substantial body of AIDS-related films. Given the decisive influence that Bollywood wields over large portions of the Indian population, and considering its unique capabilities for educating and entertaining audiences, it is to be sincerely desired that the Mumbai film industry seriously considers the AIDS pandemic as a worthy topic for future consideration.

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[7] Sanjay A. Pai, '*Phir Milenge* (*We'll Meet Again*),' *British Medical Journal* (International Edition), vol. 329 no. 7466, 9 November 2004, p. 629.

[8] Vito Russo, quoted in Kevin J. Harty, '"All the Elements of a Good Movie": Cinematic Responses to the AIDS Pandemic', in Emmanuel Sampath Nelson (ed.), *AIDS: the Literary Response*, New York: Twayne, 1992, p. 114.

37 / Queerdom and Pleasure in Contemporary Malayalam Cinema

Rajesh James

Spectacle and Representation

As we know, in any instance of film-making, there is no such thing as a 'real' presence, only a representation or 're-presentation'. Every form of filmic image, as it purports to reflect reality, in fact perpetuates the seemingly innocent yet codified, apparently simple, and yet problematic tropes of dominant and subordinate ideologies. We unconsciously internalise the spectacle of visual culture which, it can be argued following Marcuse, indirectly constructs a form of one- dimensional identity. As Shohat proposes, films should therefore be examined "*not only in terms of who represents but also in terms of who is being represented for what purpose, at which historical moment, for which location, using which strategies, and in what tone of address*".[1]

This is particularly important in a society which increasingly appears to prefer the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, and appearance to reality, and where images have the power to determine basic psychic dispositions. According to Debord: "*The spectacle is ideology par excellence, because it exposes and manifests in its fullness the essence of all ideological systems: the impoverishment, the servitude, and the negation of real life*".

This points to Debord's influential understanding of the wider society of the spectacle: "*The spectacle is not a collection of images but a social relation among people mediated by images*".[2] Cinema in particular can be seen as a particular product of images manufactured within a given space of social relations. With all its possibilities, the cinematic spectacle recreates and represents reality with the aim of generating pleasure. Such images are not simply negative or positive, but rather they are the complex products of power relations even though they may claim to be 'real' and 'innocent'.

Malayalam Cinema: Images of Masculinity

As one of the major film industries of India, Malayalam Cinema - the cinema of Kerala, making films in the Malayalam language - makes claims to realism in its spectacular representation of the seductive female body, the towering superhero and the diminutive subaltern male. But in truth these representations constitute specific ideological frames for the understanding of particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas, and values. Malayalam Cinema, in spite of its various progressive trends, has in other words always been defined by spectacular paradigms which reinforce its chosen hegemonic assumptions.

Contemporary Malayalam cinema prefers to centre on brawny, *macho* protagonists. A normative male ideal is constructed – hefty and fair-complexioned – to gratify the egotistical fantasies of its implicit audience. Bodies which fail to achieve or even aspire to the assumed masculine 'normalcy' are designated as abnormal and incomplete. Such representations often create affective spectacles of pleasure which in reverse endorse the 'normalcy' of *macho* figures.

The queer body is one such – effeminate, transgendered or gay/lesbian. This is evident in a clutch of contemporary films like *Chandupottu* (Lal Jose, 2005) *Salt and Pepper* (Ashique Abu, 2011), *Ardhanari* (Santhosh Sowpernika, 2013) and *101 Weddings* (Shafi, 2012) that employ the spectacle of 'deficient' queer bodies to satiate the hetero-masculinist cultural assumptions of a typical 'normal' Keralan or *Malayali*.

Though Malayalam cinema is undergoing a thorough change both structurally and thematically, it is still dominated by a very traditional set of gendered and racialised values. Certain images are constantly redeployed to establish its ideological hegemonies. It endorses the image of a problematic queer body which is stereotypical and incomplete, thereby perpetuating the superiority of *machismo*. The essay critically analyses how the queer body is represented in these films as a violation of gender propriety and the psychic way in which its 'spectacular' status gratifies and nourishes the escapist aspirations and pleasures of its audiences.

The Recuperation of Effeminacy: *Chandupottu*

Such images, I contend, are regularly redeployed to reassure the heterosexual drives of the popular audiences, thereby

perpetuating the superiority of *machismo*. This is evident in *Chandupottu.* The protagonist of the film is an effeminate young man, Radhakrishnan, whom everyone calls *Radha* (a *Malayali* feminine name). The first half of the film explores his life as a dance teacher in a fishing village, his love affair with a young woman named Malu, and his eventual expulsion from the village for allegedly bringing bad luck. He is rescued and taken to a more modern beach resort where his new friends train him how to become a man. The rest of the film narrates how Radha returns to his village, defeats his opponent, and takes charge of Malu and the little boy born to her. He then enthusiastically joins a band of fishermen to go to sea to earn a manly living.

Radha is represented as a male who is lacking in masculinity. This 'lack' is what sets the narrative in motion and captures the audience's attention. Radha's presence becomes a form of spectacle, with his squeaky way of talking and his effeminate mannerisms. It becomes more intense in Freddie's attempt to train Radha in masculine manners, which only results in a ludicrous caricature of the hyper-masculine *persona* of the *macho* male star of 1970s Malyalam Cinema, Jayan, and which becomes a source of slapstick humour.

In another scene a group of men forcibly undress him to check whether he is a man or woman, appealing to the spectator's curiosity to understand the gender of an effeminate man. The narrative transforms such images of lack into a gratifying spectacle whose very continuation appears to generate and perpetuate pleasure. In the final shot of the film Radha jumps into a fishing boat, assuming the role of a working man, as if his earlier nature was imperfect. The film thus conforms to the conventions of

mainstream Malayalam cinema by obliging an effeminate protagonist to fall in love with the heroine and father a child.

This incident in the film infuriated some of the queer groups in Kerala, who challenged the authenticity of such representations. They claimed that the film made a laughing stock of them by portraying Radha as a ridiculous caricature. A Kannur-based group filed a case against the film, claiming that since its release they had faced harsher social discrimination. They alleged that, like Freddie and his friends in the film, people had started ill-treating them and even assaulting them in a bid to 'cure' their effeminacy. But the director tried to quell the protests by saying that that the protagonist of the film is not queer but simply an effeminate male, and that his effeminacy was the product of a faulty upbringing.[3]

Effeminacy as Comedy: *Salt and Pepper*

Such a representation of effeminacy is not exactly rare in contemporary visual culture in Kerala, where the spectacle of the effeminate male has been a recurring component in the comic interludes in a number of recent films. In almost all such cases the character is marginal to the narrative, and functions as the 'other' - reinforcing, by contrast, the true femininity of the upper caste heroine or the normative patriarchy of the hero. Typical here is *Salt and Pepper*. The film features Babu (played by Baburaj) as the chief cook to Kalidasan, an archaeologist. The text expunges all the conventionally masculine and villainous qualities associated with Baburaj, presenting him as effeminate.

He is spectacularly introduced in the film with his unusual demands for face cream in the background of a butcher's

shop - a marked departure from the hyper-masculine roles he has played in many films. On another occasion he is introduced to the middle-aged hero in the background of a *pennukanal chadangu* - a South Indian pre-marriage ritual - where he is performing the typically feminine kitchen routine of grinding flour. This particular role was celebrated in Kerala because of Baburaj's effeminate mannerisms - in spite of his *macho* figure - and his comic way of imitating typically feminine gestures and body language.

As Connell reminds us, masculinity is a relational social practice.[4] By picturing an effeminate character and making his presence as a spectacle in contrast to a *macho* figure, the film asserts the superiority of the heterosexual hero. *101 Weddings* also presents an effeminate character, Jyothi (played by Jayasurya), as a foil to the other masculine figures in the film. He is represented as a conspicuous 'other' to be looked at and smiled at, while the characters played by Kunjako Boban and Biju Menon, two popular South Indian actors, are the epitome of suave and charming Keralan masculinity.

The film's release was marked by the circulation of posters in which Jayasurya, an actor from Kerala, enacts Raja Ravi Varma's famous painting 'Shakuntala', which depicts a character from the *Mahabharata* who pretends to remove a thorn from her feet while looking for her lover, Dushyantha. This intertextual reference underlined the essentially comic qualities attributed to his character. The film constantly contrasts his effeminacy with the *machismo* of other male figures in the film. Ironically enough, the character has come to be seen as one of the outstanding comic characters in the history of Malayalam cinema.

The Spectacle of Otherness: *Ardhanari*

As can be seen from this example, in spite of its technical brilliance, the Malayalam film industry is still overwhelmingly conventional in outlook. Although directors like Madhupal, Jayan Cherian, Shyamaprasad and Sawpernika dare to discuss some unexplored and unconventional issues, in the end they typically confirm existing moral codes and preconceptions. Sawpernika's *Ardhanari* is a brave if flawed move in a new direction.

The film dramatises the inner conflicts of Vinayan, who has a male physique but female emotions. Ridiculed and shamed by friends and family, he joins a community of *Hijadas* (a transgender group) in the temple town of Tamil Nadu. He is forced to leave, however, when he is wrongly thought to be involved in the murder of a fellow *Hijada*. Betrayed and misunderstood, Vinayan is mentally broken in the end. The film concludes, futuristically, in 2020, with Vinayan thinking about the meaning of being a *Hijada*.

As an unconventional film dedicated to the life of *Hijadas*, Ardhanari is an adventurous effort which is to be welcomed. Unfortunately, the film relies on cardboard cut-outs of transsexuals and can only represent them as noble victims. Most of the *Hijadas* in the film, as Calpernia Addams notes, are worn-out caricatures and the narrative peppers their story with a bit of drama, a smirk, and a moment of justified revulsion or some sweet progressiveness that generates pity.[5] The film makes their life a spectacle of otherness, warranting our sympathy.

Cinema has become a revolutionary medium in Kerala, opening up a new political space. Under the sway of patriarchy, however, it remains, locked into traditional codes where gender identities and power relations are concerned. Gratifying and nourishing the escapist aspirations of its audiences, the Malayalam film industry presents the spectacular image of a problematic queer body which remains, so far, stereotypical and incomplete. The welcome increase in queer characters on Keralan screens reflects a positive shift towards a greater awareness and understanding of the queer community. Nonetheless, queer characters are still tokenised and stereotyped. The question of representation, in qualitative terms, remains unresolved. [6]

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38 / Lesbian Film and Television: Popular Culture and the Tourist Gaze

Maria Golinelli

Introduction

The display of queer identities may have become more common in contemporary popular culture, but the commercialisation of images of homosexual people is driven by its own rhetoric and ideology of representation. To analyse this issue, this essay examines a selection of prominent lesbian-themed films and television programmes - *Mädchen in Uniform* (*Girls in Uniform*; Sagan/Froelich, Germany, 1931), *Desert Hearts* (Deich, USA, 1985), *Lost and Delirious* (Pool, Canada, 2001) and the US TV series *The L Word* (2004-2009) - which have captured public attention regarding the visibility of discourses on homosexuality.

I suggest a different reading in which these narratives, which enact the experience of searching for and finding the 'other', do so through the perspectives of main characters who might usefully be described, in a special sense, as 'tourists'. Drawing upon the work of John Urry, I will reflect on the processes through which the associated 'tourist gaze' is set up and processed, and the discursive legitimation which it receives.

Urry proposes that tourism and its 'tourist gaze' is generated and developed through difference: it is the gaze created by visual imaginary inside a place, where the viewer is an external subject of the environment: "*Tourism results from a basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary. Tourist experiences involve some aspect or element that induces pleasurable experiences which, by comparison with the everyday, are out of the ordinary*".[1] Urry thus interprets tourism as extraordinary activity, an inversion of the ordinary that not only involves social practices, but also separates them off from what is encountered in everyday life.

The Spatial Construction of the Tourist

Mädchen In Uniform takes place in an Austrian boarding school for girls. The adolescent Manuela von Meinhardis is sent there after her parents' death. At the school, she meets a teacher, Fräulein von Bernburg, for whom she develops intense and dramatic feelings. In Deich's *Desert Hearts* (1985), Vivian Bell leaves New York and travels to Reno, escaping not only from the city itself, but also from an unsatisfying marriage. The opening scene shows Vivian descending from the train, welcomed by Frances, at whose ranch she is supposed to stay as a guest. There, Vivian meets

Cay, a young lesbian. The film follows Vivian and Cay as they gradually come together, living out a tumultuous love affair.

In *Lost and Delirious*, three years after losing her mother adolescent Mary Bedford moves to an all-girls boarding school in the hills of Canada. She shares her room with two teenagers in love, becoming the witness of their secret lesbian relationship and also a close friend of one of them. *The L Word* pilot (2004) centres on the aspiring young writer Jennifer Schecter, who moves to Los Angeles from the Midwest to find fortune and live with her boyfriend. Exploring the city, she comes into contact with a group of lesbians, who involve her in their love affairs.

In addition to their portrayals of lesbian relationships these texts share similar forms of narrative structure. The arrival of a new, 'foreign' girl articulates the very first sequences: the films show us their journeys to new places, and then their subsequent psycho-sexual adventures in queerness. The main characters leave their homes and ordinary lives to explore unconventional contexts and to experience the novelty that queerdom has to offer.

Protagonists arrive at either institutions such as boarding schools (*Mädchen in Uniform*, *Lost and Delirious*), or cities such as Reno (*Desert Hearts*) and Los Angeles (*The L Word*). Transported to these faraway worlds, they are placed in new environments as spectators of a reality that must be discovered. They have to pass through boundaries and travel in space: initial scenes set in train stations recreate this sense of crossing thresholds, complying with Urry's model of disruption between ordinary life and sites of leisure.

These examples thus have a rhetorical tendency to allocate queerdom to the domain of subculture and, furthermore, to subaltern space. Dorms, colleges, Reno and West Hollywood come to figure as a sort of social compartment, the given stage where homosexuality occurs. Virtual spheres of homosociality are thus relegated to particular places in the retro zones of public existence; heterosexuality is assumed to be the norm of the dimension beyond, from which the 'tourist' characters have come.

The location of same-sex desire spatially distant from the hetero locus of 'home' creates a discrepancy between the two zones and their inhabitants which could be understood in terms of Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia'. The concept is intended to capture the sense of those heterogeneous spaces of difference that lie at the edges of society. Homosocial zones function as sites which are symmetrically reversed from the ordinary, creating counterfactual dimensions "*in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed".*[2]

This further confirms the main characters' experiences as a form of tourism. As heterotopia, the queer world is characterised as an open space in a relation of co-existence with the external dimension.[3] Connections are established insofar as the queer world remains available and accessible as a tourist destination to the subject on the move. The tourist is allowed to enter and wander in the queer world, while lesbians are relegated to a state of immobility, fixed in their destination.

The configuration of spaces perceived as extraordinary not only accounts for the marginalisation of homosexuality, but also produces legitimacies and social hierarchies, establishing

which subjectivities are be considered out of place, not having the right to transcend and occupy space beyond the boundary. The politics of space then matters when the subject is constructed in terms of both sexual and also social deviancy. Space is managed to reassert the ontological and cultural dissonance of queer identities, placing individuals on the margins and assigning them to particular domains. The creation of a lesbian female world configures heterotopic dissonance. The circumscribed lesbian place is assumed as an 'other' dimension that waits for the subject who is able to discover and reveal its specific exoticism. These elements will be key in the construction of the tourist gaze.

Visual Dominance: The Tourist Gaze as Male

According to Urry, the tourist gaze *"is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience. Such aspects are viewed because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary*."[4] The crucial characteristic of tourism, then, is the search for novelty, the aspiration to go beyond conventions to find something unusual and adventurous. For the extraordinariness that it expresses, homosexuality itself seems to call for tourist visits. The main character enters a world that is given as something worth seeing. Participation in such a realm allows the development of an insider understanding of the queer lifestyle, reducing it to the status of cultural commodity on display.

Ethnographically-oriented study of the 'other' is a semiotic process which includes the identification of signs of belonging, or of being an outsider: *"The gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs."*[5] The tourist experience can thus be seen as a search for queer

singularity, in which existing symbols can be projected and worked out. Thus, in the contact with the tourist, queer individuals must invoke their otherness, express and make explicit their homosexuality. But the exploration of queer exoticism must take into account the fact that the authenticity that tourism aims to bring out is not immediately apparent. It has to be discovered on the backstage of the lives of others: "*Queer difference is not immediately visually verifiable (like racial otherness often is); thus 'The L Word' begins its tour by providing queer bodies by displaying them engaged in queer sex acts*".[6] The curious eye of the tourist accedes to private spaces; homosexuality is exposed to the tourist gaze through voyeuristic perspectives.

Lesbian subjectivity thus works as event, a source of contemplation and visual participation for the tourist. In the pilot episode of *The L Word*, a central scene sees the Jenny watching two women having sex in a swimming pool. Bamboo fences represent the glass that divides and, at the same time, connects subjects: they surround the frame, isolating individuals and making them visible, thus conveying the central focus on the homosexual act. In this way, the perspective of the occasional watcher is strengthened, reasserting Jenny's status as external subject of the scene.

The tourist's aim is thus expressed as the wish for visual proximity, for pleasurable participation in private space. Voyeuristic episodes are thus framed as cultural contact zones, where interactions with queer reality can happen in an attempt to obtain totalising knowledge of queer people. Venturing into homosexuality places the tourist on a level of governance, since the tourist's participation in the lesbian world is structured through manipulation and visual consumption.

The act of looking is presented as the prerogative of tourist characters, placing them in a powerful state of dominance, while queer individuals are the passive object looked at. The voyeuristic component of the tourist gaze eroticises the 'other' and assigns the role of visual spectacle to the lesbian women. Queer subjectivity is reduced to erotic contemplation, exposed to constant hyper-sexualisation and homogenisation, flattened out to become simply what the tourist desires to see.

This means that the vision of women involved in sexual acts is inextricably associated with another figure who participates in the scene, while remaining outside the field of vision. From the non-mutuality of the gaze it follows that the tourist is shaped by masculinity. Belonging to the bearer of the look, the tourist gaze is then arguably co-extensive with the male gaze. Similarly, the tourist has the active role of forwarding the story: the tourist rules the scene and emerges as the representation of power in an additional sense.

Trajectories of Identification

The centrality of the tourist's perspective outlines trajectories of identification for the spectator beyond the screen. Plots follow tourist agendas and lines of action. The viewer is driven to adopt the point of view of the pivotal figure, sharing implications of power and pleasure: "*As the spectator identifies with the main male protagonist, he projects his look on to that of his like, his screen surrogate, so that the power of the male protagonist as he controls events coincides with the active power of the erotic look, both giving a satisfying sense of omnipotence.*"[7]

The tourist in *The L Word*, Jenny, invites the audience to join her in witnessing the sexual act. Jenny's looking sutures the spectator's gaze to hers and frames the naked women in the fence's vertical structure. For a moment, the two gazes are unified without breaking narrative verisimilitude. Through the eyes of the tourist, lesbian sex is made the recipient of the spectator's look. Queerness is displayed as a spectacle not only for the tourist, but for the audience as well. The fluctuation of omniscient perspectives and close-ups of Jenny makes the voyeuristic scenes capable of evoking and directing the desires of the spectator.

The identification with tourist characters is also facilitated by the fact that presumably the audience shares with them the origin and the cultural background that establishes the social reasons for travelling. If homosexuality is something that has to be revealed and understood, the viewer, probably unfamiliar with queer culture, is equally a tourist and therefore sympathises with the tourist figure on the screen.

Telling stories of the 'other', in this sense films work to acculturate their 'straight' audiences, allowing them to feel as if they are discovering authentic knowledge of the exotic lesbian. The effectivity of film narratives shares with tourism the fetishisation of the experience of 'being there', while simultaneously distancing the viewer from the viewed. The audience is 'moved' and at the same time 'fixed': at once an insider and an outsider, a participant and a voyeur, as the tourist gaze sets up a constant vortex of immersion and distance in its mediations of queer identity.

Where film and TV are concerned, tourist looking, characterised by a distanced and dominant gaze, is thus the lens through which homosexuality can be viewed. The

tourist's presence convenes queer subjectivities and classifies them within a field of view. The tourist gaze, controlling the process of visual consumption, functions as a filter for public intelligibility, the proper socio-semiotic framework through which queerdom is placed, known and signified.

Conclusion

Lesbian subjectivity has often been discussed as a latent, ghostly figure in visual culture. The condition of invisibility and marginality has been the object of theoretical debates for many scholars. In the films discussed here, we see a shift in emphasis, since lesbianism is no longer a sub-text, but centralised and made the main question of these narratives. But, in spite of the possibilities which they offer to 'straight' audiences for discovering more about queer identity, and for queer audiences to feel more validated by what they see, these films remain unrepresentative of queerdom.

The notion of the tourist gaze demonstrates how Hollywood cinema still ascribes to queerness the condition of silence and otherness. The ideology of representation revolves around the creation of a convincing distant world, in which protagonists can perform the tourist role. In this regard, the tourist gaze plays a central part in bringing queer culture to prominence: it turns to be an important representational strategy for facilitating the communication of homosexuality.

But the evidence of queerness perceived by the tourist gaze cannot be mistaken for reality. Rather, my study reveals how queerdom is both instrumentalised and distorted by the very existence of the tourist and his/her gaze. The fuller definition of lesbian subjectivity can only take place through acts of explicit enunciation, which have the aim of highlighting the

deviance and the otherness of the subject. In its chain of merely fleeting glances, the tourist gaze functions as a system of objectification in which lesbianism is articulated as a narrated subject that can be easily spoken and visually consumed in popular culture.

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9. Religious Identities

39 / Pleasure, Spectacle, Religion: Cinema and Christianity in America

Nathalie Dupont

Introduction

In the wake of the tremendous box office success of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), Hollywood studios showed renewed interest in faith-based films. This essay explores some of the ways in which contemporary American Christian cinema industry, which the author has chosen to call 'Godlywood', has taken advantage of this, therefore reflecting how American Christian niche culture has crossed over into the mainstream. Since the beginning of the 21st Century, 'Godlywood' has indeed been more visible on American screens as some companies, whose films used to be limited to the confines of the church, also started working with Hollywood studios. This cooperation gave birth to

'Godsploitation' films that did not always fulfil their producers' expectations but nevertheless showed, to the delight of conservative Christians, that 'Godlywood' was here to stay and could even achieve box office success. The pleasures of the spectacle could thus be Christian too, albeit with some limitations.

The New Medium of Film

At the beginning of the 20th Century, many American Christians welcomed the new medium of film, especially progressive Protestants linked to the Social Gospel that was associated with the so-called Third Religious Awakening in America.[1] Progressive Social Gospel pastors saw in cinema a new way to increase their congregations as religious services became less boring. Moreover, it was a way to spread God's Word among increasingly dense and anonymous urban populations at a time when the country was facing a large influx of immigrants - some of whom were illiterate and/or did not speak English.

In the eyes of progressive middle-class Protestants, cinema would also help maintain American social cohesion, while defending and spreading WASP values among immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. Not everyone agreed on the use of film, however - the Southern Baptist Convention, for example, though part of the Evangelical movement, was against it. Nevertheless, filmed Passion Plays became recommended Sunday shows at the end of the 19th Century, and were even included in some vaudeville theatre programmes, while silent films also began to be shown in churches and temples.

Various publications such as *The Moving Picture World*, *Nickelodeon* and *The Western Catholic*, written and published by people of the faith, advised pastors and priests on what they could show to educate and convert. It led to *The Moving Picture World* coining the term 'nickeclesia' (the 'nickle church') as a more religious and respectable version of the far too secular nickelodeon.[2] But the goal was to expand congregations, rather than to promote individual pleasure. Showing films in places of worship was thus a means of strengthening congregations, while allowing consecrated buildings to supplement commercial cinemas - that, it was very much hoped, would not supplant temples or churches as centres of social life.

As pastors and religious leaders complained about a lack of proper Christian films, a kind of Christian film industry soon developed. However, Christian production and distribution companies came up against the realities of the film market and the difficulty of building a sustainable business model. For the small Christian film industry and its limited market, it thus became difficult to meet production costs, notably after the addition of sound proved popular in mainstream cinemas thanks to *The Jazz Singer* (Crosland, USA, 1927). Logistical problems, combined with the need for profitable distribution, eventually made the situation even more difficult and ended the short life of the early Christian film industry.

In the 1920s, some church officials also started having doubts about the use and the utility of the medium. The pleasure of the spectacle could indeed lead to iconolatry and idolatry, and thus cloud the very truth religious films were intended to reveal, while the medium might well become more influential than the pastor or the priest at his pulpit. Therefore, in the 1920s, films were gradually banned from places of worship,

while pastors and priests turned to the radio as a less expensive and less problematic medium. As radio sets were now widespread in American homes, the word, ideal for proselytising without any unwanted visual interference, thus definitely outweighed the image.

The Impact of Television

The arrival of television in American homes launched a new era. Evangelist Billy Graham started appearing on TV in the 1950s and launched his own film production company, World Wide Pictures, in 1952. Later on, satellite and cable technologies led to the creation of numerous Christian TV channels that needed more films to broadcast, thus re-kindling the idea of a proper Christian film industry. This was especially true among Evangelicals, whose numbers grew after WWII, and who were keen to seize every opportunity to spread the Gospel.

As a consequence, a bigger and more visible Christian film industry that could really be called 'Godlywood' developed, and it even crossed into American mainstream culture at the end of 20th and the beginning of 21st century, when time seemed ripe for what came to be seen as Christian niche culture. In 1999, *Entertainment Weekly* labelled Christian media culture as "*entertainment's newest boom industry*"[3], and in 2003, for example, the market for Christian books enjoyed an annual increase of 32%. The *Left Behind* series of books is an example of how successful Christian culture could be: they became best-sellers on the *New York Times* best-sellers list, attracting both a Christian and secular readership. Christian music also started appearing on mainstream billboard charts.

The growing Christian niche industry thus included publishing houses, newspapers, radio stations, TV channels, Internet sites, theme parks, music labels and of course a network of churches and mega-churches. That network was interesting for 'Godlywood' as it often included up-to-date facilities for film exhibition and covered the whole country, while being more important than all U.S. cinema screens put together. In 2000, there were 37,396 commercial cinema screens in the U.S.A., but more than 220,000 Evangelical and mainline Protestant congregations, each with its own place of worship, including more than 600 mega-churches. [4]

Godlywood

'Godlywood' is made of several companies that seized the new favourable opportunities to produce or increase the number of documentaries and films primarily destined to be shown in churches and mega-churches, as well as to be viewed on the DVD players of the faithful. Among the latter, the most conservative of them shunned cinemas and Hollywood films altogether because of their offensive content. Examples of 'Godlywood' films include *Left Behind: the Movie* (Sarin, USA, 2001) and *Left Behind II: Tribulation Force* (Corcoran, USA, 2002), which were successful in mega-churches and then in the allied Christian video market.

Some 'Godlywood' productions then made their way into mainstream cinema circuits. This was the case with *The Omega Code* (Marcarelli, USA, 1999), the adaptation of a novel written by televangelist Paul Crouch. It was produced and distributed by Christian independent companies, notably Gener8Xion Entertainment [*sic*], run by Matthew Crouch, Paul's son. *The Omega Code,* involving the search for codes hidden within the *Torah* which reveal the truth of past and

future events, was released on 304 mainstream screens, mainly located in the American Bible Belt area where the film was widely advertised by Paul Crouch's Christian Trinity Broadcasting Network channel, with its ability to reach about 75 million American households.[5]

The Omega Code was produced on a budget of $7.5 million and ranked tenth at the U.S. box office when it was released on October 15, 1999. It eventually grossed $12.61 million, which turned it into the most profitable independent film of 1999, a success that naturally brought it to the attention of Hollywood and was followed by the surprising box office success of *The Passion of the Christ* in 2004.[6] *The Passion* is not a 'Godlywoood' production *per se* as it was never meant solely for the Christian niche market, but its $83.85 million opening gross and total $370.27 million once again emphasised the increasing popularity of cinema dealing with religion, and the work of 'Godlywood'.

One Night with the King (Sajbel, USA, 2006) is a further example. Recounting the story of the Biblical Esther, who became Queen of Persia and saviour of the Jewish nation, the film was produced and distributed by Gener8Xion Entertainment, and was marketed to conservative Christians whilst also enjoying some mainstream exposure. The film was released on 909 screens in October 2006 in the key markets of Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, Chicago, Boston, Miami, and also, of course, across the Bible Belt.

One Night with the King was cleverly marketed as a family-friendly film alternative to the horror films that traditionally flood American screens at Halloween. The film ranked ninth with a box office of $4.1 million and a screen average of $4,533 when it was released. It stayed in cinemas for eight

weeks and eventually grossed $13.4 million - against a production budget of $20 million. Distributed on video by Fox Home Entertainment, it then earned a further $13.4 million, overall a partial success.

Facing the Giants (Kendrick, USA, 2006) is also worthy of mention among 'Godlywood' productions. The film was co-produced by Sherwood Pictures, a 'Godlywood' company created by the Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia, where the film's writers and director, Alex and Stephen Kendrick, were associate pastors. *Facing the Giants* tells the 'underdog' story of an American football coach and his team at a Christian High School. The film was produced for a mere $100,000 - many people working on the film for free - and initially targeted Evangelical audiences.

Facing the Giants was released by Samuel Goldwyn Films and Destination Films on September 29, 2006 on 441 mainstream screens and ranked twelfth, with a surprising opening gross of $1.3 million, i.e. 13% of its total gross box office of $10.18 million. It was then released on video by Sony and made $12.5 million. Many Christian congregations were invited to use the DVD in churches, together with study guides made available to pastors and ministers.

Other 'Godlywood' pictures include *Fireproof* (Kendrick, USA, 2008) about a fireman trying to save his marriage, *October Baby* (Andrew and John Erwin, 2011) about a young woman who learns she is the adopted survivor of an attempted foeticide, and *Not Today* (Van Dike, USA, 2013) produced by Friends Media, an arm of Friends Church of Yorba Linda in California, about a rich young man who goes on holiday to India and whose life takes an unexpected turn after he at first refuses to help a starving man and his daughter.

When crossing over into American mainstream cinema, however, many 'Godlywood' films are often found too moralistic and preachy by mainstream audiences who prefer to enjoy the more entertaining pleasures of the spectacle. For the Christian cinema industry, therefore, and more particularly for the Evangelical wing, the question became one of finding a way to be more attractive for mainstream audiences while spreading God's Word, at a time when Hollywood was also paying more attention to the booming Christian niche market. The conjunction of both interests thus led to 'Godsploitation'.

Godsploitation

In the wake of *The Passion of the Christ*, Hollywood turned an interested eye to faith-based films and jumped on the bandwagon of 'Godsploitation', as studios tried to widen their traditional audiences at a time of declining box office returns. Subsequently, studios started producing and/or distributing for both mainstream and Christian markets. For example *The Gospel* (Rob Hardy, 2005), a modern take on the prodigal son parable, was co-produced by Rainforest Films, Screen Gems and Willpower Production, and released by Sony Pictures.

The soundtrack featured well-known Afro-American Gospel singers, and the film's marketing also targeted the Black Christian community. The modestly budgeted $4 million production opened on 969 mainstream screens on October 7, 2005, when it ranked fifth at the box office. It stayed seven weeks in cinemas and eventually grossed a satisfying $15.78 million. Another example is *The Nativity Story* (Catherine Hardwicke, 2006), co-produced and released by New Line Cinema, a subsidiary of Time Warner.

The film tells the story of Christ's birth and even premiered at the Vatican.[7] It received a blockbuster release on 3,083 screens, but the $35 million production eventually disappointed with its $37.63 million gross. Included in 'Godsploitation' are also studio-produced films that target both mainstream and Christian audiences. Their more or less Christian sub-text has led to some specific niche marketing handled by specialised companies like Grace Hill Media and Motive Entertainment, and targeting conservative American Christians.[8]

Walden Media's film franchise based on Christian apologist C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Adamson, USA, 2005), *Prince Caspian* (Adamson, USA, 2008) and *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (Apted, 2010) thus entered the list of blockbusters destined to entertain both mainstream and conservative Christian audiences - the first two co-produced and released by Walt Disney Pictures, the last handled by Fox 2000 Pictures.

The Blind Side (Hancock, 2009) is another example of Hollywood's espousal of 'Godsploitation' as the film also targeted the Christian niche market with its story of a homeless Black boy who becomes a successful American football player thanks to the help of a caring white southern Christian woman and her family. Co-produced by Alcon Entertainment for $29 million and released by Warner Bros. on 3,110 screens in November 2009, *The Blind Side*, with its mixture of Christian and sporting themes, eventually grossed $255.95 million and won Sandra Bullock the Oscar for Best Actress at the 2010 Academy Awards.

Other studio titles in the domain of 'Godsploitation' include Disney's $35 million *Secretariat* (Wallace, USA, 2010), which

grossed a disappointing $59.70 million at the U.S. box office. The following year, *Soul Surfer* (McNamara, USA, 2011) fared much better. Produced for $18 million by Mandalay Vision and Affirm Films, and notably featuring AnnaSophia Robb, Dennis Quaid, Helen Hunt and Carrie Underwood, the film was released by TriStar Pictures, a subsidiary of Sony Pictures, on 2,240 screens on July 21, 2011. The film's surfing theme was also well-timed for the summer holiday season, and the film immediately ranked fourth at the box office with a solid screen average of $4,789. It went on to gross $43.85 million.

Other films, such as *Prometheus* (Scott, USA, 2012) that include a questioning of God and religion, *Man of Steel* (Snyder, USA, 2012), whose almost Christ-like superhero led to a niche marketing targeting Christians, and *Noah* (Aronofsky, USA, 2014), can also be included among studio films surfing on the wave of 'Godsploitation'. Studios tread the Christian path very cautiously, however. For example, Walt Disney Pictures, clearly annoyed, refused to comment when the trade press started publishing articles on the Christian niche marketing for *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Hollywood studios simply want to widen their audiences and improve their financial results in a field driven by market forces. The pleasure of the spectacle must be kept intact, without any hint of proselytism spoiling it and antagonising mainstream cinema audiences.

For their part, some conservative Christians dislike Hollywood's obvious courtship, which they find too aggressive and commercial, and they blame Evangelicals for becoming mouthpieces for Hollywood and for selling their souls to the studios. Some conservative Christians feel used by the latter and almost soiled by what they see as

manipulation - and worse: "*At the end of the day, we don't want the church to become a prostitute of business*." [9]

Conclusion

'Godlywood' films became more visible at the beginning of the 21st Century. The economic and social factors of the time favoured their greater visibility, even enabling them to cross over into American mainstream culture. But the phenomenon has its limits, first in America where those films must not alienate mainstream audiences who do not go to cinemas to be preached at, and then abroad, where typical 'Godlywood' films hardly ever reach the screen (but they were never intended to do so in the first place).

As for films linked to 'Godsploitation', their Christian subtext is only used in niche marketing targeting American conservative Christians, while it is obliterated in foreign markets where such films are simply marketed as typical Hollywood productions, as was for example the case with *The Chronicles of Narnia* franchise. 'Godlywood' and 'Godsploitation' are typical American cultural phenomena whose scope is therefore limited to the North American continent in a global context dominated by market forces.

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40 / Another 'Other': The Muslim Woman in Hollywood

Ahlam Tariq

Introduction

Muslim women have often been portrayed in stereotypical terms in Western media, a subject which has attracted much critical attention and which has become yet more pressing since the events of 9/11. This essay examines the depiction of Muslim woman as what Mohja Kahf calls the "*negative female ideal*" in contemporary American media.[1] I examine this notion by focussing on *Pretty Persuasion* (Siega, USA, 2005) in the context of its excoriation by Jack G. Shaheen, in his studies of post-9/11 representations of Arabs in Hollywood Cinema, for containing "*the most offensive*" of all the portrayals of Muslim women in Hollywood, where such women are routinely "*humiliated, demonized and eroticised*".[2]

The film centres on false allegations of sexual harassment brought against a Beverley Hills teacher by his pupils Brittany and Randa at the prompting of their manipulative friend and aspiring actress Kimberley. The aim of this essay is to study the representation of Randa, the Muslim girl who plays one of the two supporting roles in the film, as compared to the second support role, that of Brittany. I will particularly focus on how the representation of Randa as helpless victim facilitates the film's more positive representation of Brittany.

The film has often been classified as a black comedy or satire, but it tries to deal with so many issues that its attempts at satire are somewhat obscured; instead it leaves the audience shocked at some of the things which are said in the film, without any real justification being given. For example, in *Pretty Persuasion* a key figure, Kimberly, has several racist things to say about Arabs but more important, this is done at the expense of Randa, who is portrayed as a fool who does not even understand what Kimberley is saying.

Western Narratives of Muslim Women

Western narratives, according to Kahf, have always situated the Muslim woman as 'other' or 'different' in order to justify their own position concerning gender, self and identity. She argues that the "*core narrative*" of Western media in dealing with Muslim women is that they are "*victimised*". In medieval times, she says, Muslim woman were portrayed as "*aggressive*" and as "*exuberant termagants and queens*". Despite portraying them as strong-minded and defiant, such texts aim at "*subduing the Muslim woman not to liberate her*".

Gradually in the 17th Century the veil and the harem become key aspects of Western representation as the image of Muslim women as a wanton gradually disappears in favour of a new type of image. Eventually, by the 18th Century the Muslim women is portrayed as an "*oppressed creature*". She "*may be a willing accomplice, or she may be escaping her victimization*". The Muslim woman as victim then becomes "*the common axis undergirding a wide variety of western representations*".[3]

Kahf explains that tradition of representing the Muslim woman as a negative female ideal is in opposition to the representation of Western women. When the Western ideal for women was to be submissive, the female Muslim characters of that era in Western literature were represented as aggressive and exuberant. But when the ideal for the Western woman slowly changed in Europe and the ideal in culture and literature became that of the independent confident character, Muslim women started to appear as victimized and oppressed characters.

Kahf concludes that the narrative of Muslim women as victimised characters remains visible in Western literature today. She claims that all representations of Muslim women presented to the U.S. reading public are in fact stereotypical images of women facing gender oppression. According to her, the Muslim woman is conventionally seen in three main ways: as "a *victim of gender oppression*", as an escapee from *"her intrinsically oppressive culture*", and as "the *pawn of Arab male power*".[4]

Where *Pretty Persuasion* is concerned, the situation of the Muslim character Randa is illustrative. Since she is already in the West, her problems do not involve a large-scale social

régime but stem from her relationship with another teenage girl, the vengeful Kimberly. To use Kahf's terms, she is the *victim* of Kimberly; she *escapes* the humiliation of the outcome of a false allegation by committing suicide; and she also becomes the *pawn* of Kimberley's power in the school when she agrees to take part in the false allegation against Mr. Anderson. Hence Randa's character is made up of a group of stereotypes fused together into one.

Power Relations: Randa and Kimberly

The lead character in *Pretty Persuasion* is Kimberley, who with her extraordinary intelligence and planning manages to manipulate everyone around her. My focus here, however, is on the Muslim character Randa through comparisons with Brittany, and in terms of their reactions to the protagonist, Kimberly. The representations of Randa and Brittany are intertwined, and the suicide of Randa allows Brittany to become the film's eventual heroine.

The character of Randa is introduced when her Middle Eastern parents drop her off in a car. She is shy, plain, wears a headscarf, and steps out quietly. Randa keeps her head down for most of the film and it is first noticeable in this scene. Compared to her peers she is different and unusual. At this point Kimberly is upset about an audition and is also seen looking at Brittany and her boyfriend. This is the context in which she approaches Randa and offers her friendship. She does this in a rather condescending manner, but which Randa does not question.

Kimberly also very eloquently explains how their relationship will work in terms of power: "*symbiotic*", she says, "*the whale and the little fish that sticks on it*". Randa has no

objection to this, as she seems to be a mindless, shallow person, with no ability to judge and understand her condition on her own or help herself. As Marnia Lazreg has pointed out, Western representations of Third World women imply that these women are in need of rescue from Western society because they are seen to be unable to recognise and understand their own condition.[5]

From this point onwards Randa is subject to Kimberley's ridicule. Randa not only puts up with it but also fails to even understand that she has been subjected to such treatment. Kimberley is indeed portrayed as a mean and highly manipulative young woman who tends to be able to get away with saying offensive things in a very polite tone, but at no time does Randa have the slightest objection to, or understanding of, what Kimberly is up to.

Different Supporting Roles: Randa and Brittany

Brittany, by contrast, at least once in the film shows signs of being shocked at what Kimberly is saying, and even Kimberly's stepmother realises this, and protests against Kimberly's offensive slurs. It is only Randa who is not smart enough to have the slightest understanding of what is truly being said. The satire intended by the film is evident when Kimberly explains to Randa that although she has respect for all races she is happy that she was "*born white*" and of all the races in the world her "*last choice*" would be "*Arab*". These remarks betray her hypocrisy. This is one of the few moments when the script is able to satirically uncover the anxieties and prejudices Kimberly has about other cultures.

It is Kimberly who suggests that they bring a false sexual harassment case against Mr. Anderson so that all three can get revenge on him. Kimberly also reminds her friends that the reporter Klein is at the school at this time, which will also help to attract media attention and make them famous. Brittany, for her part, despite hating Mr. Anderson, is the most hesitant to join in, but Randa does not show any kind of remorse and immediately agrees to go along with the false allegations that Kimberly plans to make. Ironically enough, this is the only time when Randa strongly asserts her own opinion. The fact is, however, that once again Randa is easily led and manipulated.

Kimberly has already planned for these allegations to be uncovered, because she wants Brittany to admit the truth about them in court. Kimberley wants to make Brittany suffer, and manages to make that happen. When this happens, Brittany's boyfriend Troy dumps her. The repercussions for Randa, however, are much more grievous and even fateful. Her father is angry at her and shouts at her. Randa comes back to pick up her books from the school, goes into her classroom and takes off her scarf, the only scene when we see her without it.

Tragedy follows. She writes "*We are all sinners*" in Arabic on the blackboard, and shoots herself in the head. Randa's removal of her headscarf may be seen as the act of liberation from the standpoint of a Western viewer's desire to 'lift the veil', penetrating the hidden secrets of the Orient and 'liberating' the Muslim woman in the process.[6] Yet it is manifestly tragic that 'liberation' here immediately gives way to suicide, in a characteristically negative take on the fate of Muslim women. When all hell then breaks loose, Brittany, although devastated, has the strength to move on. Randa,

still 'different' and 'other', has no other option but to end her life.

Conclusion

I assert that Brittany becomes the heroine of the film precisely because Randa is the victim. Randa's act of committing suicide makes Brittany the survivor. Brittany is the one who is strong enough to fight back and intelligent enough to be able to eventually figure out Kimberly's machinations. Also Brittany's character has more depth than Randa's, which is stereotypical and depth-less. Is she a shy girl who is afraid of Kimberley? Or is she the girl who just wants to fit in and ends up doing what the other group members do? Or is she so afraid of failing her English exam that she goes along with the plan to file the false sexual allegation?

The audience never really sees the 'back story' of Randa. Who is this girl? Why does she commit suicide? Is her home life so miserable that she finds no other way but to end her life? In *Pretty Persuasion* we only see Randa once with her family after she is expelled from school. Her father tells her how she has "*brought shame upon the family*" and that "*today is as if I have no daughter*". The audience is expected to understand what these words mean to Randa because the words 'honour' and 'shame' are thrown into the conversation.

But this is really just an angry scolding by a father whose daughter has lied in court. Her parents do not in fact disavow her; they come with her to pick up her things from school. I ask again, why does Randa commit suicide in *Pretty Persuasion* ? Only one answer is appropriate: Randa commits

suicide because she is a Muslim woman. We might say that she belongs to a world of stereotypes in which a Muslim woman in the Western media, when placed under unexplained pressures of this kind, tends to opt for victimhood of this extreme kind.

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41 / The Re-mediation of Religion in Nigerian Cinema

William Onogu and Damian Amana

Introduction

This essay seeks to interrogate the impact of the visual media on the framing of religious content globally, and in Nigeria in particular. It postulates that in the ambience of a new culture defined as visual, the rhetoric of visual language strongly influences the mode of representation. Visual language and its associated logic demands a spectacular mode of representation and re-mediation. This poses a problem for aspects of culture that cannot be seen, such as notions of the 'spiritual'. Discussion of two films - *End of the Wicked* (1999) and *Power must Change hands* (2011) - reveals that the use of techno-special effects is assumed in the logic of film-making in Nigeria to render visible that which is beyond the physical realm.

Modern media contribute to the question of visual culture through a variety of techniques, with screens large and small now a commonplace feature of daily life and an endemic aspect of human interchange. The essay predicts that representation of religion within the ambit of evolving visual cultures may well be obliged to follow the logic, language and profit-making drive of show-business in general.

Numerous scholars in media ecology have described an essential *rapport* between cultures and the communication media employed within them. From Debord and McLuhan to the new theories of of re-mediation and media ecology, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that human beings have a reciprocal relationship with the media they employ. In his struggle for survival and self-improvement human beings produce technology, but the technology thus produced does not leave them on a neutral ground.

The technology does not remain a mere instrument of use but contributes in a reciprocal manner to changes in the human condition. In Debord and Postman, for example, the prevailing cultural turn privileges a new epistemology.[1] In the Nigerian scenario, the old African visual culture has been amplified and promoted by video films and by the industry that has grown around them, nicknamed 'Nollywood'.

Nigerian Video Films

The term 'Nigerian video films' defines a range of dramatic features that do not fit into the classical notion of cinema but have an important role in Nigeria. The earlier cinema tradition gradually died partly because of problems to do with finance and technology and above all because of the more manageable option provided by the video films. A number of variables gave birth to the upsurge in the video

film in Nigeria. These include the oil boom and the subsequent diversification of the Nigerian public sphere; the decline and virtual disappearance of celluloid; and the emergence and increasing popularity of video technologies in Nigeria.[2]

As a result, Nigerian video films "*are something between television and cinema and they do not fit comfortably within the North American structures of either*".[3] The video film is in fact a leading art form in contemporary Nigeria. Though relatively young, it has become a prime-time entertainment medium in Nigeria and beyond. The video film has become a major medium of entertainment and relaxation within Nigeria and its diaspora, even if the growth and acceptance of the medium was unanticipated in Africa.[4]

Scholars and economists are currently engaged in debates as to how to measure the progress of Nollywood against other national film cultures such as Hollywood and Bollywood. Some go so far as to suggest that the Nigerian film industry is second in financial scope only to Hollywood, with more than a thousand titles a year being released.[5]

In Nigeria films have become an agent of socialisation into Nigerian culture. It has been argued that the video films represent a fecund sociological field where Nigerian popular culture and the African imagination becomes accessible. As Ogundele has argued, "*the ubiquitous presence of the video play in Nigeria, plus its popularity, point to its importance as a new medium for the production, dissemination and consumption of one specific form of popular culture*."[6]

Nigerian video films have a dynamic relationship with the culture, providing a new arena in which old and new cultures

can be negotiated. Virtually all aspects of the Nigerian life are represented in them. From domestic issues to political affairs, from business ventures to social issues, the Nigerian video film tells its story with a characteristically intense degree of human emotion and extravagant drama.

Religion in Nigerian Video Films

One aspect of Nigerian life that has come to occupy a disproportionately high place in the video films is religion. As Ukah has noted, Nollywood is awash with religious symbolism.[7] Haynes concurs: "*The supernatural appears routinely, as even the most 'modernised' of Nigerians may have recourse to 'traditional' magic when under the sort of stress to which these melodramatic films routinely subject the protagonist.*"[8] The popular religious imagination at work in the video films assumes a Manichean form of dualistic spiritual/physical warfare between the forces of good evil, with the human arena as war zone.

Even in the representation of affairs which are not particularly religious, religious undertones are never far away. In the world of the Nigerian video films, the line separating the immanent from the transcendent is indeed very thin. The gods may affect the affairs of men, but the actions - and inaction - of the actors can in turn activate the favour or disfavour of the gods. The physical and the spiritual are not categorically divided, the world is a continuum.

A distinctive character of the religiosity of the Nigerian video films consists in the pragmatic and dramatic demonstration of karmic divine justice that must reward the innocent. This is precisely where the problem lies: how is it possible to demonstrate the presence and function of the invisible spirit

in a video-visual culture, regarded at an earlier stage by Debord as the society of the spectacle, and later critiqued by Postman in relation to the era of widespread mass entertainment and show business?

Processes of Re-mediation

The basic theoretical frame for this interrogation is the theory of re-mediation. As propounded by Grusin and Bolter,[9] the theory holds that new media have the ability to re-fashion the older ones. As McLuhan had earlier argued, the content of new media is, in fact, old media. The thesis of re-mediation however, posits that a new medium does not only assume the older media as its content but that, equally, new media also re-fashion older media within their system, in the process re-framing and re-purposing the material.

Re-mediation tries to improve on the quality of the content of the earlier media through a double logic of immediacy and hyper-mediacy. Re-mediation proposes to represent reality *qua* reality, as if unmediated. A recent case in point is to do with the level of involvement and immersion promoted by 3D. Under re-mediation, new media promise to grant a more immediate and unalloyed encounter with reality. Immediacy "*dictates that the medium itself should disappear and leave the audience in the presence of the thing represented.*"[10]

The video films under discussion re-mediate the old religious culture through their visual grammar. The logic of re-mediation in this instance, like the complex nature of convergence itself, is multifarious. Religious experience is re-mediated in and through the script, the actors, the plot, the montage, the recording technology, and finally through

viewership. This essay suggests that the re-mediation of religion in Nigerian video films flows with the visual, spectacular grammar of the audio-visual medium so that even naturally invisible aspects of reality are given some form of iconic, spectacular visibility through what we might call 'techno-reality'.

Teco Benson's film *End of the Wicked,* for example, is the tale of spiritual warfare between the Children of God, born-again Christians, and Satan and his demons. The film is sponsored by Liberty films, a wing of Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries. Like the film itself, the theology of Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries, founded by Evangelist Helen Ukpabio, centres on the protection of their freedom of the from all that enslaves them. Satan and his agents take advantage of people who are not born-again Christians. A simple fellow, Chris, is manipulated and harassed by the witches' coven where Chris's mother initiated his children. The film employs a great deal of computerised effects to render, in dramatic terms, the often invisible aspect of the religious domain.

Representing the Supernatural: *Power Must Change Hands*

This tendency recurs in *Power Must Change Hands,* the 2011 Nigerian video film by Dozie Eriobu. The film centres on a conflict between the forces of God and his innocent people, and the forces of evil represented by an evil cult - Okosisi and his disciples, who trade fortunes by changing stars and killing others to inherit their wealth. The title itself communicates a confusing message. 'Power Must Change Hands' has long been known within Nigerian Pentecostal circles as the title of the monthly prayer and fasting programme held on the first Saturday of every month at all 'Mountain of Fire and Miracle'

(MFM) Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. The monthly programme has a Christian chorus that is well-known in Nigeria:

"*Power must change hands in my life*
no matter what the devil may say [twice]
in Jesus' name, in Jesus' name, in Jesus' name."

It is the belief of the MFM theology that suffering, poverty and all forms of evil and disaster are the works of the enemies of Christian people - the Devil, his demons and their agents. As such, a commitment to spiritual warfare - marked by calling down fire to consume the enemies of the Christian people, or commanding their enemies to die - is a basic aspect of MFM liturgy.

The film opens with a shot focusing on a figure in silhouette. A man is revealed, in the early dawn, carrying a little pot with three red candles wrapped in a piece of red cloth. The man is chanting incantations in what seems to be a spell on an unknown figure, Bony Nwafor. The camera pans from the first figure to another man still in the dark, chanting incantations with a little black pot, and invoking the god Okosisi. He prays that Okosisi will transfer another man's wealth to him. The next scene reveals a man dying from what seems to be a sudden heart attack.

We visit a town hall meeting of the sons and daughters of Umuagwu, the people of Agwu. Discussion focusses on the handling of the dead following a wave of unexplained deaths in the community. Discussion of the deaths is treated with some levity by the elders, who claim that their sons and daughters in the city are dying because of their reckless urban lifestyle. The death of Charles, the leader of the group, is masterminded by the secret cult. His deputy, Gozie,

assumes the mantle of leadership. When he refuses to join the cult, Gozie is threatened by a strange encounter - a vulture appears in front of his windscreen, causing him to have an accident. He reaches hospital but soon dies. The doctor (who is also a pastor) orders the body moved to the morgue, but he is suddenly inspired and holds back the body of Gozie.

At that moment, amidst the tears and prayers of his family and loved ones, the 'dead' man sneezes and splutters and comes back to life. In the suspended state between life and death, he sees a vision of the evil ones who are attacking and killing their people. The doctor/pastor has a similar revelation. The various deaths have been caused by a manipulation of the worship cult by evil men following Okosisi. The cult members have acquired the power to transfer the fortunes of others to themselves. It is the same cult that has attempted to kill Gozie, the dead man who has come back to life. Gozie's spirit is summoned to the cult meeting to be killed, but a benevolent old witch whom he has helped saves him.

Visualising Spiritual Conflict

The combined inspiration and faith of the resurrected Gozie and the pastor doctor initiate the final battle of 'power that must change hands'. Against many odds, a deliverance crusade is organised by the pastor/doctor and the president of the youth union, Gozie. Those who confess and repent are saved but those who do not are visited by the wrath of the God of Gozie and the pastor/doctor. The final battle takes place at the foot of the Iroko tree, the abode of Agwu.

The conflict between the chief priest of Agwu and the pastor is marked by a techo-realistic display of power. The chief priest sends a swarm of bees to attack the pastor, but the latter orders the bees to return. The chief priest of Agwu is destroyed and the deity is driven from the tree. The born-again members of the village fell the Iroko tree and indeed power changes hands. The name of the village is changed from 'Umuagwu' to 'Umuchi' - from 'the people of Agwu' to 'The people of God'.

Throughout the film, strange and spectacular manifestations are used to dramatise the presence and actions of the cult members, the pastor, the priest, Agwu and the Christian God. The opening scene is marked by the appearance of what looks like the face of a god realised through special effects; thunder and lightning respond to the actions of the two cult members at the beginning of the film; the cult members are able to transform themselves at will into vultures.

Prior to the final battle between the cult members and the Christians, some of the cult members are able to turn themselves into beautiful women to distract the Christians from their mission. Similarly the actions of the pastor and the Christians are also marked by spectacular intervention: thunder and lightning strike the cult members. These phenomena occur throughout the film; the invisible spirits and their actions are mediated visually and in spectacular fashion through the employment of techno-realities and special effects.

Conclusion

In a visual ambience where visuality becomes a predominant mode of cultural representation and perception, there is a reciprocal relationship between the culture and the media it employs. However, the visual grammar poses a problem for those aspects of life which do not subscribe naturally to the logic of the visual. In the Nigerian video films one of such non- visual aspects relate to the things of the spirit. In the case of the Nigerian video films, the invisible world is re-mediated, in other words, by means of a visual grammar which involves computer-generated special effects and techno-reality. In this video logic, committed to a spectacular techno-reality, the attempt is to render the invisible religious aspects of life more visual and dramatic.

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Part 3: Locations

10. Mediated Cities

42 / Poverty as Spectacle? Victorian Magic Lantern Shows and the Urban Poor

Lydia Jakobs

The Rise of the Magic Lantern

In Media Studies the magic lantern is often relegated to technical histories of the film projector, as one of its more primitive ancestors. Instead it should be considered as a medium in its own right, with its own production infrastructure, genres, topics and modes of presentation, some of which influenced early films and film audiences.[1] This essay offers an overview of the history of the magic lantern up to the late 19th century, together with a case study of a Victorian lantern slide-series dealing with urban poverty.

Throughout its history the basic apparatus of the magic lantern has undergone numerous technical and optical improvements, but the lantern was always constructed following the same simple principle described by Deac

Rossell: "*The magic lantern is not a complicated instrument. It consists of a light source, a transparent image-carrying slide, and an enlarging lens, disposed in that order in a line ... so that their combination would throw a greatly enlarged image of a transparent slide onto a wall, a piece of cloth, or even a cloud of smoke.*"[2]

The first magic lanterns appeared in the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark in the middle of the 17th Century and quickly spread all over Europe and soon around the world, aided in no small measure by religious missionaries. Since the light sources for these early lanterns (candles and oil lamps) were comparatively weak, the images could only be projected over short distances and remained fairly small. So did their audiences. Magic lanterns formed part of the private scientific/curiosity cabinets of the well-to-do and were common accessories of the curiosities presented by itinerant 'Savoyards', the so-called 'galantee' showmen.[3]

In the course of the 18th Century, brighter light sources allowed ingenious lantern operators to hide the apparatus behind half-transparent screens in order to frighten audiences in darkened rooms with elaborate apparitions. These *phantasmagoria* shows were thrilling spectacles that included moving images - thanks to projectors mounted on wheels that were pushed towards and pulled away from the screen, minimising or enlarging the image respectively - and eerie sound effects.[4]

Magic lantern spectacles of a more scientific and respectable nature were presented at the Royal Polytechnic Institution in London from 1841 onwards. By then the use of limelight as an illuminant enabled longer-distance projection, and a printing process using copper plates allowed for the mass

manufacture of identical slides that could then be manually coloured or altered. If two or more images were superimposed on the screen (using biunial, triunial or multiple lanterns) and faded into one another, the stunning effects of the 'dissolving views' were produced, for which the Royal Polytechnic soon became known - night scenes turning into day, summer landscapes into winter. The dimensions of these shows were spectacular: according to W.F. Ryan, the screen at the Polytechnic measured 60 square metres, six gigantic lanterns projected on to it, and the Institution's new theatre, opened in 1848, held audiences of up to 1,000 people.[5]

The images on the glass slides used for projection were painted and coloured by hand until the second half of the 19th Century, when it became feasible to produce photographic slides. This allowed for a new quality of realism and introduced new subjects into the repertoire of slide-makers. The so-called 'life model slides' were series of photographic images with costumed actors who posed in studio settings in front of painted backdrops, surrounded by props.[6] These black-and-white photographs were then coloured by hand during post-production. They illustrated pivotal scenes from Biblical stories, songs or literary works by well-known authors.

'The Road to Heaven'

During lantern performances, the source text (or abridged versions of it) would be read or recited, the slides serving as illustrations of the spoken word. One example is a ballad by George R. Sims, 'The Road to Heaven', which was first published on Christmas Eve in 1882 and adapted as a life model slide-series by at least two slide producers before

1890. It relates the tragic story of a street urchin who, in looking for the 'road to heaven', only finds the bottom of the River Thames and later dies in a children's hospital. George Robert Sims was an English writer whose poetic works were enormously popular source texts for life model slide-series. Sims was a prolific author who published long-running theatre plays, an even longer-running column in a weekly newspaper, tear-jerking ballads, comic and detective short stories, and reflections on his life and times.

He also modelled for one of Madame Tussaud's wax figures, and once famously campaigned for a completely ineffective hair restorer. His ballads often depicted social ills like child poverty or adult drunkenness, or dramatic and heroic episodes on the bounds of respectable society (among sailors, street artists, and itinerant puppeteers). Sims found inspiration for his characters during tours of the London slums where he accompanied a School Board Officer on visits to the homes of the London poor.[7] Both in its structure and its theme, 'The Road to Heaven' is a typical example of Sims' interpretation of the ballad form.

It is a monologue by a first-person narrator who relates the story of little Mike to one of the doctors at the hospital where the boy died. In rather anti-climactic fashion, it begins after the boy's death and then flashes back to the circumstances of his "*dreadful fall*" into the Thames (line 4).[8] The narrator claims to have stumbled upon Mike and another street urchin in one of the stone recesses of London Bridge on Christmas Eve. (His motivations, however, seem dubious; he claims to have lost a favourite dog and to be looking for it near the bridge, but after he spots the two boys the precious animal is never mentioned again. He also makes a conscious effort to stand hidden in the shadows while listening very

carefully to every single word of their conversation, but claims to have missed the actual events of the fall.) Unseen by the two waifs, he overhears them talking about heaven, which one describes as "*that place where ye're dressed in white / And has golding* [sic] *'arps to play on, and it's warm and jolly and bright*" (ll. 39-40).

The unnamed narrator relates the children's tragic fates. One, Jack, is an orphan whose drunken grandmother sends him on the streets to earn a living by singing songs. The other, Mike, has two drunkard parents who send him out to beg with a bad leg. He asks his companion, who goes to Sunday School, about heaven and how to get there, and Jack points down "*to where the cold Thames water surged muddy and thick and brown*" (l. 62). Moments later, according to the narrator, the boy seems to lose his balance and falls into the water beneath, hitting his head on the stonework of the bridge.

What sounds like a terrible story clearly unsuited for children's entertainment is then turned into a tale of salvation: the boy is brought to the hospital where he regains consciousness long enough to comically mistake white-robed patients for angels, and his elderly doctor for God. He believes he has found his way to heaven and can die happily, as the last stanza suggests: "*This is the day of scoffers, but who shall say that night / When Mike asked the road to heaven, that Jack didn't tell him right? / 'Twas the children's Jesus pointed the way to the kingdom come / For the poor little tired arab, the waif of a London slum*" (ll. 93-96).

The ending, like most of the ballad, is ambiguous. Death as salvation for poor children who are morally pure and innocent is a common motif in waif stories and in Sims'

ballads. However, the fact that the protagonist perhaps commits suicide and does not seek or receive religious conversion of any kind undermines the supposedly Christian message of the ballad. To resolve this ambiguity, the lantern slide manufacturer Bamforth issued an alternative reading to accompany its life model slide-series for this ballad.

The Bamforth Version

Written by resident author Robert Craven, a surgeon active in the temperance movement, the Bamforth reading resembled Sims' ballad in plot and style but was written to accompany the existing slide images, not adapted from the original text. The main difference is that in Craven's reading, young Mike is corrected in his misunderstanding of "*the road to Heaven*" before he dies of his injuries, and is taught that "*through death alone the soul is freed, / But that to reach the realms of endless day / Our Saviour Christ is the only way*".[9]

This message is much more suited to the demands of Bamforth's customers, who were mainly religious and temperance organisations. The surviving slides from two distinct versions of the life model slide-set 'The Road to Heaven' by Bamforth also make for an interesting contrast. In one, only the two boys are depicted as they sit on the stone bench and talk, and as Mike falls. In the other version, the narrator character is shown watching them and watching the fall.

One depiction puts the poor characters at the centre, while the other displays the whole scene as it might appear on a theatre stage. One has the viewer share the perspective of the narrator, the other has him/her observe the observer. The cameras of the time were not light-sensitive enough to

truthfully re-create the evening setting of the ballad or reproduce the shadows that the narrator might hide in, and as a result all the images were shot in a fully-lit studio. But it may have been an artistic choice to leave the narrator out of the picture rather than to put him in plain sight.

The Temperance Context

Although it is only mentioned in passing, alcoholism is clearly identified as the reason the two protagonists live and sleep on the streets of London. This made the ballad and its adaptations relevant to the temperance movement, especially its address to the working class. In many cases, children were the addressees of temperance messages, as they were thought to be more susceptible to, and not yet corrupted by, the demon drink.

The Band of Hope was an organisation that offered suitable activities to its young members (like magic lantern shows or outings to the country) if they signed the pledge to remain abstinent.[10] The fate of Mike and Jack, the protagonists of 'The Road to Heaven', could serve as a cautionary tale to both children and adults of how drink could corrupt people and destroy their families. This is evidenced by a report of a Band of Hope meeting where this slide set was projected.

The Surrey Mirror of 26 March 1892, p. 5 reports on a Senior Band of Hope meeting held in Redhill on 22 March. The audience would have been older than the usual groups of children at their temperance meetings. During the event, total abstinence was promoted with all the tools of modern marketing: portraits of "*eminent men*" who were supposedly abstainers were projected on to the screen, "*scientific*" evidence was presented by a Dr. Ridge, who had made

experiments that "*showed that a small quantity of alcohol did a vast deal of harm. Drink had no strength in it; it was but a stimulant*". This was followed by an appeal to the listener's purse: insurance companies' returns "s*howed the abstainer to be the longest liver, and consequently they could take him at a much lower premium than a moderate drinker*". The performance culminated in the emotional manipulation of a reading of 'The Road to Heaven', illustrated with lantern slides.

This can be considered a fairly typical temperance event: instruction (lecture) was combined with an entertainment (reading) that reiterated the message of teetotalism in a somewhat less obvious fashion. While the magic lantern was more of a visual aid at Band of Hope meetings (alongside blackboards, printed material, and, later, films), there were also entire evening programmes composed of sequences of slide-sets that had the projected image at their centre. *The Aberdeen Weekly Journal* of 17 December 1890, p. 7, for example, reports on a "*limelight entertainment*" on 12 December in the Public Hall in the local village of Kincardine O'Neil.

Here, one Robert Calder showed his "*splendidly arranged programme*", which included, among other items, three illustrated ballads by George R. Sims - among them 'The Road to Heaven'. The programme combined informative images (in this case a set about Mary, Queen of Scots) with entertaining and comic ones (with one set called 'The Mad Umbrella'). Visual effects like chromatropes (where rotating discs with colourful patterns created kaleidoscopic images) and dissolving views were added to showcase the skill of the operator and what was called "*the eccentricities of the magic lantern*".

Lastly, the *Oxford Journal* of 7 January 1893, p. 5 has a short report of an event on 3 January at a local mission chapel, where a Reverend Oake gave a talk on various religious subjects "*illustrated with dissolving views*". The report also mentions "*a short set entitled* 'The Road to Heaven'". This "*very touching story of a poor little city waif*" could be enjoyed alongside the "*light refreshments*" that were handed around during the "*pleasant and enjoyable evening*". Certainly "*heartily singing*" the hymn 'Safe in the Arms of Jesus' did wonders to ease the misery of the "*poor little city waifs*".

Varying Reception

For the narrator in Sims' ballad 'The Road to Heaven', poverty is a spectacle, something to watch but not engage with – only when it's too late and the boy has fallen into the water does he call for help. The two poor boys are something to peer at and listen to from the safe distance of the shadows, adorable and non-threatening in their quaint ideas of heaven. His positioning mirrors that of the magic lantern show audiences, who can derive pleasure from and be entertained by these images. They can admire the quality of the slides or the ability of the ballad reciter, and study poor characters - even feel sympathetic to them - without having to actively engage with them.

On the other hand, representatives of temperance organisations used dramatic stories like 'The Road to Heaven' to emotionally engage young audiences and enrich their factual lectures with fictional stories that their audience might more immediately relate to in order to drive home the message of complete abstinence. There was a desire for pseudo-realistic images of poverty that were shown not only

for the purpose of instruction but also for their entertainment value, accompanied by images, texts and sometimes songs.

'The Road to Heaven' is only one example of a lantern slide-set that was used in varying exhibition contexts by various organisations or persons for widely different purposes. It could serve as a dramatic illustration of the dangers of alcohol, intended to scare young children into abstinence; it could provide a glimpse of picturesque poverty for audiences who were better off; or it could illustrate dramatic recitals of a well-known poem by aspiring young ladies everywhere.

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43 / The Uncanny Pleasures of the Urban Spectacle: *Marvellous Melbourne - Queen City of the South* (1910)

Federico Passi

Dreaming the City

On 29 January 1911, the Perth *Sunday Times* featured a story entitled 'The Vision' about a man from Melbourne who reportedly had a peculiar experience while attending the King's Picture Garden in Perth. The man, recently arrived from Melbourne to acquire some land, woke up during the screening of *Marvellous Melbourne: Queen City of the South*, the core of which is a spectacular opening sequence featuring two 'phantom rides' shot from the front of a cable tram. When the man opened his eyes, after being awoken by a friend during this first film of the evening programme after the interval, he firmly believed he was elsewhere:

"*… he was apparently in Melbourne, running along on a St. Kilda road tram. The illusion was perfect, the clanging of the*

bells and the rapidly-approaching city making even the wide awake audience feel as they were adjacent to the banks of the Yarra."[1] Convinced that he was in Melbourne itself, continues the article, the man told his friend that he just had a bad dream: he had dreamed they were in Perth. But now that he was awake he was happy to find himself in Melbourne (as the view of St. Kilda Road and the approaching Princes Bridge was confirming for him). So entranced was he by his vision that it reportedly took "*seven yells of the peanuts boy*" to persuade him that Western Australia was an "*incontrovertible reality*".

This essay argues that the spectacular opening sequence of *Marvellous Melbourne* can be productively read as the cinematic manifestation of an urban uncanny. It is uncanny in the sense of its perceptive doubling of reality as implied in the story of 'The Vision'. More broadly this story also alludes to the possibility of a shift in realist representation from a cinema of external attraction to a cinema based on the 'inner' experience of travel. As for the uncanny feeling of the double, "*the whole thing*", writes Freud, "*is purely an affair of 'reality-testing', a question of the material reality of the phenomena.*"[2] At the same time this film is also instructive as a cultural artefact produced, exhibited and experienced at a time when quite different representations of Melbourne (in terms of its urban design) were competing with each other and/or being reconciled.

Melbourne and the City Travelogue

Marvellous Melbourne - Queen City of the South is the first documented city-film about Melbourne. The thousand-foot travelogue, produced by British-Canadian Cozens Spencer and filmed by Tasmanian Ernst Higgins, was released at the

Olympia in Melbourne on Tuesday 22 November 1910.[3] Aimed at the then profitable market for city travelogues, the film was composed of a series of spectacular views constructing Melbourne as a modern city rich in life and movement.

The opening day programme initially announced that the film contained a "*Panorama of Melbourne*" followed by a view of "*Magnificent Boulevards*" and by the display of the main buildings and leisure venues. On the following Saturday, in an explicit acknowledgement of the popularity of the 'phantom ride' views, the film was promoted as "*Melbourne in Motion*". When it opened in 1910 at Spencer Wirth's Olympia, *Marvellous Melbourne* replaced a programme of travelogues called 'Tours of the World' which had been popular in Melbourne since 1907.

This amounted to not just a change of programme but implied a development based on a shared aesthetic within the travelogue genre. Both programmes involved 'phantom ride' sequences. The 'phantom ride' was a type of shot popular in early cinema created by placing the camera in front of a moving vehicle, initially a train. It was one of the first types of shot to provide the spectator with a masterly, subjective point-of-view and offered a quintessential experience of the industrial age, linking together the movement of the train and that of cinema.[4]

After the fading of their early popularity, 'phantom ride' sequences enjoyed a renaissance after 1904 thanks to 'Hale's Tours of the World'. The 'Tours' represented a new type of film exhibition based on a mechanical invention which provided the realistic illusion of actually traveling on a tram or on a train carriage. It was presented in St. Louis in 1904 by

George Hale, patented in 1905 in the United States as 'Pleasure Railways', and soon commercialised as 'Hale's Tours of the World'.[5] 'Hale's Tours' arrived in the UK 1906 and in Australia the following year (first Sydney, then Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth) under the shortened names 'Tours of the World' and 'The World's Touring Car'.

The Stationary Journey

This form of entertainment combined a small cinema of 66-70 seats in the shape of train carriage (in Australia, a Pullman car) with a back-projected programme of travelogues, consisting of phantom rides shot in spectacular destinations. The carriage had a patented mechanism simulating the shaky movement of the real vehicle. The locked view and the insistent repetition of the visual pattern created a hypnotic effect, enhancing the reality of the experience. Given the illusionistic nature of the setting, the filmed phantom ride worked as a visual decoy.

It captured and attracted the attention of the eye while the other senses were distracted by the physical experience of the carriage: the voice of the ticket-collector/guide, the wind blowing, the sounds of bells and of the track. The settings therefore were artificial but the experience was quite real, conflating imagination and reality. It is apt to propose, with Rabinovitz, that 'Hale's Tours' was "*more than movies; it was also about the physical experience of motion itself, an incorporation of the cinematic into perceptual experience that located meaning in the body of the spectator.*"[6]

Building on this tradition, the tram sequence in *Marvellous Melbourne* was aimed at conveying an enhanced experience of the city. The edited footage helped to produce an

imagined sense of continuity and density in relation the urban space it represented, something which was perhaps lacking and less exciting in terms of the daily reality of encounters with this city environment. The impression was popular enough to be echoed in the advertising by the subtitle "*A Sight that Will Fire Your Patriotism*" (supplementing "*Melbourne in Motion*"), thus suggesting a further important theme to do with national identity within the spectacle of movement.

To achieve the 'larger than life' effect the film translated the illusionistic strategies of the phantom ride to the large screen. In the sequence of *Marvellous Melbourn*e only some of the perceptual experiences of the 'Tours of the world' were still at work. While the physical experience of movement conveyed by the carriage of the early 'Tours' was gone, the pattern of the visual sequence and the aural effects were transformed into a spectacle that inherited the experience of the 'Tours' and proposed a visual illusion of subjective motion. Key ingredients such as sound and the projected image were maintained; the moving carriage had to be imagined by the spectator.

Movement became the key strategy of the narrative, and it was a movement enhanced by rough, jump-cut editing. The tram footage was compressed to omit most of the slowing down and stopping of the tram. The aim was to help the shots maintain a constant speed, to provide a seamless illusion of repeated movement. And the fixity and the continuity of the movement was indeed unreal: for Bruno "*the camera becomes the vehicle, that is becomes, in a literal sense, a spectatorial means of transportation*".[7] In *Marvellous Melbourne,* however, the fixity of the camera's gaze takes the process a step further. Not only are the

spectators transported, but they also share the experience of the vehicle. Turned into a travelling tram, the camera at the same time mimics the mechanical fixity of the machine.

Mechanical Subjectivity and the Uncanny

The phantom ride sequence is introduced by a bird's eye panorama over the centre of colonial Melbourne shot from the top of the fire-brigade tower. The panorama is followed by a fifty-second view of trains arriving at and leaving Richmond Station. The dance of puffing trains introducing the tram phantom ride moves the spectator from the southern St. Kilda Road towards the city, mimicking the experience of accessing the city from the sea. The shot produces one of the most spectacular and revealing introductions to the urban space of Melbourne to have appeared on screen as from the wide, deserted St. Kilda road, still without trees or buildings, the viewer slowly approaches the skyline of the metropolis.

The size of the buildings in the city centre grows by the second while the camera approaches the grid along the boulevard-to-be. The 'camera-tram' crosses the main Princes Bridge and enters the city grid, proceeding in between the tall buildings of central Swanston Street and, then along Collins, Melbourne's most prestigious street. The fast and improvised visual 'becoming' of the city, the sudden switch of density from empty urban space to a crowded main street, reveals the speed of the city's growth.

The sequence is studded with descriptive titles, its rhythm differed by a series of static views of institutional monuments: town hall, post office, parliament, and law courts. What appears unfamiliar and hypnotic about this

sequence, even today, is the experience of being in motion, not just as passengers but as a subjective mechanical unit. And the uncanny emotion arises from the excess of realism, which enhances and de-familiarises the daily perception of the city.

In the final part of his essay on the uncanny Freud pays considerable attention to the matter of setting limits on his definition of the phenomenon: "*Not everything that fulfils this condition - not everything that recalls repressed desires and surmounted modes of thinking belonging to the prehistory of the individual and of the race - is on that account uncanny*".[8] The experience of being *in* the shot, not just looking at it and being attracted to it, connects with the essential, almost banal, element Freud was after.

In the world of representation, the uncanny feeling is most likely to occur when the realist setting effaces "*the distinction between imagination and reality*". This mainly occurs when something imaginary is presented in a realist representation "*such as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality*". As here, for example, where the imaginary experience of being riding on a tram is duplicated, made possible through a screened virtual reality. But to be truly uncanny this feeling has to be perceived as subjective. Many characters and situations may be uncanny on the page, but the lack of empathy with the character, adds Freud, prevents the feeling from being uncanny at all.

The mechanical subjectivity of the shot, looking at the city with the fixity of a tram, triggers a mechanism of empathy with the industrial identity of the city. The bodily perception of being turned into a machine running on a track along the city grid also evokes a more traditional uncanny feeling of

being non-human. The position of the camera, at one with the tram, forces upon the gaze of the spectator the uni-punctual perspective of the industrial object: the subjective gaze of a machine, which can only move forwards or backwards. The eyes of the spectator are, in a sense, disembodied and have the feeling of responding to a mechanical input, of becoming a visual function of the city's tram network.

The City that Never Was

Marvellous Melbourne performed not just the role of a contemporary city-film but also functioned as a kind of cultural time machine in its appeal to older mythologies of the city. It celebrated the industrial identity of the temporary new capital of Australia and it re-connected with the nickname 'Marvellous' bestowed upon Melbourne in the 1880s in its colonial and post-Gold Rush heyday. The boom was followed by a financial crisis and depression in the 1890s, then by a gradual recovery, eventually giving rise to a city which was more conservative and English in character, more sympathetic to the new 'Garden City' movement and less keen on its past industrial identity.[9]

Marvellous Melbourne worked against that trend by re-organising the city image around the narrative of the modern industrial centre. From the title the travelogue linked the present Melbourne with its 'marvellous' past, giving a novel reading of the city's urban identity during its transformation from Victorian metropolis to provincial business town. In a succession of quick city views, less than a minute long, the film proposes a structured and densely populated urban pattern.

The views are based on a centrifugal movement from the centre (monuments, stations, trains and trams), to the periphery (with leisure sites involving football, the agricultural showground, and a parade on the Yarra river). We end at the shipyard in the bay, and the beaches. Transport, city life, colonial architecture and natural resources are orchestrated to appear as if they are the by-product of a single progressive design.

This way of looking at the city grid started at the peak of colonial Melbourne in 1885 and disappeared with the demise of the cable system in 1939. In this period Melbourne, the new capital of the Australian Federation since 1901, was influenced by the ideas of the 'City Beautiful' and 'Garden City' movements. The ideas were mostly cosmetic and changed the look of the capital city more than its actual urban design. Trees were planted, streets turned into boulevards, and the city as filmed and promoted became more and more bucolic after 1910.

The film turns what is ordinary about the city into something extraordinary. In Melbourne's cinematic history the urban spectacle is curious, as the city's ordered grid seems to prefer the non-theatrical to the spectacular, the private to the public. Melbourne, in particular, has a tradition of lacking an iconic presence in film. The cinematic history of the city has shown a resistance to moving the camera along the perspectives of the grid, preferring less spectacular static shots or altogether avoiding the idea of the city as a main character. Absent from fiction films until the late 1950s, the image of the city has been characterised in news and documentaries as lacking in iconic views, perhaps responding

to a resistance to the urban spectacle which was already encoded in its pragmatic urban design.

Melbourne was founded in 1835 and planned around a grid-iron urban nucleus without squares. The orthogonal crossing of streets produces a repetitive visual pattern characterised by narrow perspectival views and distant vanishing points. In the light of this un-theatrical tradition the enhanced experience of the city presented in *Marvellous Melbourne* is unusual and unfamiliar. The immersive city-view of the tram sequence, today more frequently available in museums and *médiathèques*, appears to recall, therefore, an improbable visual past, a memory never really lived. Even the unrestored, fragmented and incomplete way in which the sequence is presented to the contemporary audience betrays a relationship which seems not unproblematic.

The film is not commercially available, and does not exist in a restored version, nor is it easy to access in high resolution. Of the many versions none seems able to bring back the effect of the early screening with live audio. An early incomplete VHS release (1988) has been discontinued. The recently instituted Melbourne Museum exhibits, out of context, a fragmented version of the sequence to introduce the Colonial section of the exhibition. An unrestored full version is available today online in low resolution from *Archive.org* and *Youtube*, a cinematic ghost with added sound. Only the one-off silent screening in a sold-out programme at the 2011 Melbourne Film Festival seemed to come close to the uncanny movement of the original - the spectacle of a city photographed in a movement which seems to contradict the privacy of its character.

On one level, then, the core scene of the film, its phantom ride, generates a spectacular hyper-realism which constructs an over-familiar Melbourne within an unfamiliar condition of spectatorship, still the same city but mediated through a fixed mechanical eye attached to the city grid. On another conceptual level, the tram-driven view engages with the industrial urban subtext and returns colonial memories removed by the then new policies of the 'City Beautiful' movement. Both levels contribute to produce a spectacle which actively works against the core organising principles of the city's founding urban design.

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44 / Projecting Canberra: Centenary Pleasures and Displeasures

Jennifer Brown

Centennial Canberra

Canberra is one of those rare cities which is able to claim a foundational moment, a precise date and time of birth. The development of Australia's capital as a fully planned city was the solution to a decade-long argument between its parent cities, Melbourne and Sydney, over the seat of government of the new Federation of States declared in 1901. The strategy of building a new capital from the ground up on traditional Ngunnawal country[1] was advanced in 1911 via an international design competition for a city plan. The winning entry came from American architects Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahoney Griffin, who conceived an urban design that would be sufficiently flexible to meet growth and changing needs over time as well as use to take advantage of the topography of the natural landscape on which the new city would be built.[2]

Canberra was officially founded at noon on 12 March 1913 in a well-documented hilltop spectacle of pomp and ceremony: speeches were delivered, the name of the capital announced, foundation stones laid with golden shovels, and a show of military strength was provided by the Light Horse Brigade, which trotted in formation across the open sheep paddocks to the accompaniment of a twenty-one gun salute.[3] The event was recorded on film.

A century later, the landscape surrounding Capitol Hill where Foundation Day took place is radically changed: laid out, colonised, fully architectured as the hub of a nation. The axis of power between government and military is highly visible as a line of gardens, pathways, and avenues that run from the flag-pole atop Parliament House down to the lake and across to the War Memorial at the foot of Mt. Ainslie. This axis crosses a second one at right angles just south of the lake: a stretch of iconic national cultural institutions – library, galleries, museums and the High Court of Australia.

This is the site of *Enlighten Canberra 2013*, an event in the year-long centennial celebrations and the third iteration of an annual arts festival that features large-scale projection of digital images on to five key public institutions. For while the transformation of the Canberra landscape is itself dramatic enough, it is perhaps even surpassed by seismic developments in the realm of media and communications over the past century. In this essay I discuss the Canberra projections of 2013 in relation to broader issues and trends in the fast-developing creative media practice of mapping images on to buildings and other features of urban environments after dark (with or without a soundscape). In the interests of brevity, I use the acronym PIMA - *projecting images + mapping architecture.*

The Emergence of PIMA

PIMA first emerged as a form of public arts practice from the early 1980s in North America and Europe with the work of pioneers such as Krzysztof Wodiczko, Jenny Holzer and Rafael Lozano-Hemmer. The landmark works of these artists are part of a broader breakaway movement of video and performance art, moving out of the white cube of the gallery and the black box of theatre and cinema, and into a diverse array of urban environments.[4] Wodiczko in particular used projection as a means to raise probing questions about the design of urban environments and their often alienating and disempowering effects.[5]

Along with others developing experimental creative practices, these artists also used new media to engineer a fundamental re-conceptualisation of art's status as an object with commodity value in favour of notions of art as conceptual, performative, relational and ephemeral. Their work was politically charged, employing critical strategies that addressed site-specific issues and/or inviting active participation of audiences in creating content. Their projection works continue to provide reference points for art with a critical edge in today's rather more confused arena where advertising has heavily appropriated earlier *avant-garde* forms.

PIMA began to appear in many part of the world in the first decade of the 21st century with the advent of increasingly powerful and affordable digital projectors that were easy to use with laptop computers and, later, other mobile devices. Video artists began to enjoy unprecedented freedom in

deploying these new technologies to explore the existing surfaces of the city as a vastly expanded exhibition space and to create works that commented on, intervened in, or invited reaction to the particular locations in which they appeared.

Scrutiny of contemporary practices in PIMA at different locations around Australia in 2013 reveals three main levels of engagement. First, and most prominent, is the public mega-spectacle typical of major urban arts festivals with substantial budgets. These commonly feature large-scale works on iconic buildings such as the Sydney Opera House and are created by expert teams of professional designers with high-end technologies at their disposal. Active players in this league are The Electric Canvas and Spinifex Group based in Sydney, and Illuminart of Adelaide.

The second layer of engagement is the community arts festival, often an annual event, which fosters collaborations between artists working with new media and community groups or organisations. An example here is Melbourne's Gertrude Street Projection Festival, in which around thirty artists/groups participate each year in collaboration with local retail outlets and residents to mount a wide range of works along a ten-block stretch of a single street.

The third layer encompasses diverse independent artist-projectionists often working with self-funded equipment, professionally or otherwise, on freelance installations and commissions. Possibly the most successful independent Australian PIMA artist is Craig Walsh, who, sponsored by Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art, conducted a *Digital Odyssey* tour around the country in 2011, teaching master classes and making PIMA works for arts festivals at disparate locations along the way.

The rise of such practices has prompted debates about the politics and aesthetics of using architectural façades as screens, appropriating surfaces that were not originally intended for this purpose. Projected images may simply conceal the underlying architectural forms or may not be pertinent to a building's appearance, purpose, history or environmental context. [6] Their presence, even though temporary, may actually serve to obscure rather than enhance a sense of space and place and unavoidably create a new zone of ideological negotiation and contestation. It is with such concerns in mind that we turn attention to what transpired at Canberra's 100th birthday party.

The Electric Canvas

The Electric Canvas has been commissioned to produce works for *Enlighten Canberra* for each of the past three years. The company has a distinctive style that portrays both figurative and abstract images with clear sharp edges and high-contrast vivid areas of colour as well as clever mapping and animated manipulations of architectural features. Images are generally cartoon-ish animations that offer a site-specific response to the tectonics of the projected building, its functions, and/or the lives and objects it houses.

The Electric Canvas designers are masters of what, by now, have become somewhat clichéd images simulating the appearance of walls crumbling and disintegrating, of fire or water gushing from solid stone, of time speeding up through the fast moving hands of an illusory clock, of a building becoming suddenly transparent and filling up with sky or sand or sea. Throughout their *oeuvre*, the everyday forms and surfaces of the buildings in use are over-written by the scale and intensity of the projected images.

Enlighten Canberra organisers, however, settled on a brief that is distinct from that of most other festivals around the country. For one of the buildings, the National Gallery of Australia (NGA), the Electric Canvas is commissioned annually to create a PIMA work from a current international exhibition showing inside at the time of the festival. In 2013, this was a touring show from Paris titled *Toulouse-Lautrec and the Moulin Rouge*. For the other four buildings to be projected, The Electric Canvas team was required to collaborate with and mentor local Canberra artists who do not necessarily have any projection experience. Each year five artists from diverse forms of visual practice are selected through a call for expressions of interest.

The NGA PIMA drew on painted images from the Toulouse-Lautrec show hanging on the walls inside the gallery. The Electric Canvas performed a range of incisive manipulations in order to map these on to the irregular exterior façade of the building as a series of static slides, re-shaped to fit oddly shaped surfaces and collaged in repetitions. A certain wry humour and democratic ethos pervaded the public exposure of these exotic French treasures as free entertainment writ so excessively large. There was undeniable pleasure in the spectacle of free play with canonical works, transposed to a contemporary idiom and set up cinematically outdoors in the dark night and out of context in a foreign city, a globalised world playing with art and architecture as ready-mades in which any chance conjunction will do.

In fact, the NGA did not stop at rendering its exterior walls with these images, but popped them out into real life and facilitated an accompanying soundscape with a simulated 'Moulin Rouge' along the street outside. An installation involving pavement bars and cafes featured suitably attired

staff serving up Gallic refreshments to the lively accompaniment of tunes from the era. The crowds flocked and yet a palpable absence lurked beneath this carefully engineered celebratory milieu. The distinctive architecture of the National Gallery, the rich collections of objects and images housed there, had disappeared beneath the expanse of towering French characters and period scenarios, not to mention the *kitsch* theatre of the street.

What are the ethics of space and place that might have been attended to here? Is success at generating a populist sense of communal jollity by any means whatsoever all that really matters in countering accusations of élitism in the art world? What kinds of projected images, on this centenary occasion, might have emerged out of the unique character of the building itself - its odd angles, upward sweeping lines, folding surfaces, unexpected openings? Could these perhaps have been a departure point for creating projection artworks commensurate with this place?

And what of the extensive collections of images and artifacts gathered from the territories and communities that the NGA primarily represents, its extraordinary collections of past and present works from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, for instance? Surely the centenary celebration of the nation's capital might have featured some sense of the country's artistic history and ongoing cultural achievements rather than resorting to blatant promotion of a visiting international show? The NGA projections are a telling instance of how architectural projection events sponsored by government and commercial partners in major arts festivals more often than not conflate multiple agendas - commercial, communal, artistic - that are perhaps not easily reconciled.



Figure 1. Toulouse-Lautrec at the National Gallery of Australia [Photo: Jennifer Brown]

An Alternative Model

Enlighten Canberra 2013 put its alternative model for creating PIMA works into action with a collaborative partnership between The Electric Canvas and five artists with diverse forms of visual arts practice: Eleanor Gates-Stuart, Betty Holdsworth, Houl, Martin Ollman and David Sequeira. This model offers a different set of possibilities from the first part of the brief by combining the technical expertise of a high-end design team with the autonomous vision of the independent artist.

It creates openings for disrupting the tendency of PIMA to lapse into crowd-pleasing clichés that aspire more to the simple pleasures of the spectacle than to act as potent

sensory provocations with conceptual nuance. Partnering artists of diverse interests, agendas and sensibilities with the skills and resources of professional design teams has the potential to draw PIMA back to the more critical edge of its history while moving it forward with new and powerful technological means.

Artists were required to develop four to five works for at least two of four buildings: The National Library, The National Portrait Gallery, Questacon Science Museum, and the Museum of Australian Democracy. They were to respond to a brief from each institution in line with its respective mission statement and with access to material collections, current exhibitions and, significantly, expert staff. There was no requirement for the artists to collaborate with one another, so the development of final works was a matter of individual artists creating partnerships with the institutions and with The Electric Canvas.

The resulting works were varied in their thematic preoccupations, aesthetic elements, and modes of engaging the features of each building. Yet there was a disappointing similarity of 'look', with most works displaying the stylistic stamp of The Electric Canvas: total coverage of architectural surfaces, use of sharp edges and vivid high-contrast saturated colour – this even in Ollman's collages drawing on black-and-white photographic archives from Old Parliament House.

The artists worked almost exclusively with still rather than moving images, and none of the works incorporated sound. This lack of boldness in engaging with the digital medium suggests that artists did find it easy to not move away from familiar material terrains and tended simply to translate

works from one medium to another, rather than exploring the potentials of an entirely new expressive modality. Perhaps the high level of dependence on the technical team in realising ideas inhibited experimentation.



Figure 2. Houl on the Museum of Australian Democracy [Photo: Jennifer Brown]

There also appeared to be some lack of willingness to tackle contentious issues, events and debates likely to have emerged through research within each of the four institutions. Despite stylistic similarities, thematically the works were un-coordinated and sat strangely together on each building, some far more responsive to them than others. Some artists may perhaps have adapted pre-existing works and followed their own idiosyncratic lines of flight into reverie and personal myth with only odd, tangential

references to the building on whose walls they were writ so large.

Ironically, the most successful negotiation of the challenge to create artistic works with grit and yet also to satisfy institutional agendas was to be found in the cartoon-like images produced by Houl. These works playfully depicted the cultures represented in the buildings on which they appeared by using a contemporary street art idiom, yet the underlying intent was serious critique. Works with the least relationship to their walls were the dream-like 'states of mind' of Betty Holdsworth, which appeared to renounce the business of connecting with place altogether.

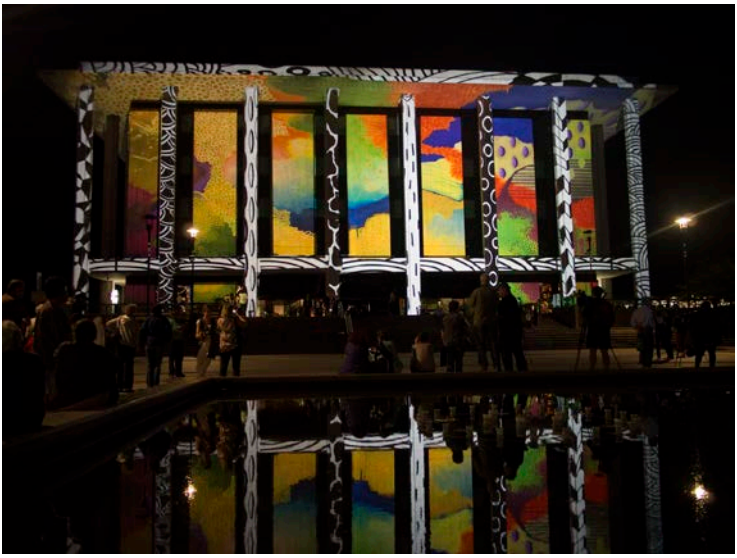


Figure 3. Betty Holdsworth on the National Library of Australia [Photo: Jennifer Brown]

It could perhaps be the case that commissioning artists' works for PIMA in large urban festivals is an inherently flawed project in terms of fostering works of artistic integrity with a critical edge. Artists may perhaps feel constrained by the expectation of catering to an impossibly broad target audience which includes children. They may perhaps be compromised by implicit promotional agendas that seek to present the city's iconic buildings as a 'branding' exercise for tourism.

For artists, meeting multiple agendas in a festival event is a complex process and those who develop a commitment to working with large-scale PIMA as a medium will need to gain substantial skills in learning to balance the demands of the site with the integrity of their own artistic vision. What does emerge with clarity from *Enlighten Canberra 2013* is awareness of the complexity of projection works as multi-layered cultural artefacts, as a grafting of creative endeavours inevitably shaped by many hands.

The early projection works of Wodiczko remain as landmarks, even in the face of today's overwhelming proliferation of events with spectacular PIMA effects that de-construct and re-construct the architectures on which they appear. His works have been labelled 'counter-monuments' or 'counter-spectacles' in their efforts to draw attention to the history, cultures and political ramifications of particular buildings and their environments.

As cultural interventions, suggests Susik, their intent was to destabilize official hegemonies and rigid social systems and to reveal the identity of the selected building or monument rather than "*veil it in a cloak of projected costuming*".[7] It is noteworthy that much of Wodiczko's work occupies only part

of the building rather than covering it completely with projected content, so that the structure itself is also given prominence.

Susik's critique of architectural projection as an expressive form sits within broader ongoing debates about the constitution and mediation of human relations in commodity cultures saturated by images, the 'society of the spectacle' famously identified by Debord. Susik suggests that, in developing a critical discourse of architectural projection as art, we need to inquire into the ways in which specific works offer the kinds of *détournement* that Debord advocates as a means to resist the de-humanising impacts of commodity culture. Alternatively, she says, we need to be wary of how architectural light projections may serve to reinforce "*the replacement of human relations with an exchange of representations in a spectacle-oriented society*".[8]

It remains to be seen whether or not PIMA events of the future will offer the "*relational space*" identified by Scot McGuire as urban areas enhanced by shared social rituals and symbolic connectivity.[9] It may be that they simply serve the inverse scenario, catering to an audience of passive consumers unable to discriminate meaningful art from crass commercialism in the inundation of image flow. What is clear is that much scholarly work remains to be done in addressing the challenging questions raised by this ever-evolving medium with its rich potential. This work will need to attend to debates in Cinema Studies and Media Studies, as well as in architecture, urban planning, design, and arts theory, drawing together in the process themes and issues that are inherently interdisciplinary and hybrid.

Notes and References

[1] Lyall Gillespie, *Aborigines of the Canberra Region*, Canberra: Wizard, 1984, pp. 1–25.

[2] On the Griffins, see http://www.griffinsociety.org/index.html.

[3] Melanie Sim, 'It Sounds like Canberra: Foundation Day', radio broadcast, *666ABC Canberra*, 3 March 2011. http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2011/03/09/3159321.htm.

[4] Abigail Susik, 'The Screen Politics of Architectural Light Projection', *Public,* vol. 23 no. 35, 2012, pp. 106-119.

[5] See, for instance, Wodiczko's comments in relation to his use of projection to create anti- or counter-monuments that reveal the hidden voices of the city's disposed, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.,1988 at http://www.art21.org/images/krzysztof-wodiczko/hirshhorn-museum-washington-dc-1988.

[6] Catrien Schreuder, *Pixels and Places: Video Art in Public Space*, Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2010, p. 88; Susik, *op. cit*., p. 109.

[7] Susik, *op. cit*., p. 113.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[9] Scott McGuire, *The Media City: Media, Architecture and Urban Space*, Los Angeles: Sage, 2008.

45 / Love, Anxiety, and the City: Woody Allen's Europe

Wu-Tso Lin

Allen the Existentialist

In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard speaks of the human condition as follows: "*Love hopes all things - yet is never put to shame. To relate oneself expectantly to the possibility of the good is to hope. To relate oneself expectantly to the possibility of evil is to fear. By the decision to choose hope one decides infinitely more than it seems, because it is an eternal decision*."[1] These remarks by the key proponent of Existentialism seem to define the outlook to be found in the films of Woody Allen, that ageing but endlessly persistent film-maker with over forty films and numerous related literary works to his credit, in which, amidst all the existential and often comical anguish and confusion, love and hope are regularly chosen above fear and shame.

Although Allen is famous for his irony and disenchantment, he has also discovered a certain contentment within unhappiness, a form of meaning in a meaningless existence. In this essay I show how these ideas are explored in three of Allen's recent films in which, as an American film-maker, he deals with the rather different urban landscapes of Europe, and their accompanying challenges to individual identity and personal interaction, especially where romance is concerned.

Vicky Christina Barcelona (Spain/USA, 2008) is a film about two American women and their entanglements with a Spanish artist during a summer in Barcelona. *Midnight in Paris* (Spain/USA/France, 2011) tells the fantastical story of a nostalgic American screenwriter who travels back in time each night during a vacation to Paris. In the four episodes which make up *To Rome with Love* (USA/Italy/Spain, 2012), American and Italian characters are brought into a variety of connections with the themes of love, sexuality and personal identity and the relationships between the real world and the representational worlds of opera and the cinema.

Europe and America

Each of the three films involves a forthcoming marriage, and shows how this is interrupted in some way by American interactions with Europe, its people, and its culture. They also show the American characters having a change of perspective because of those interactions. In *Midnight in Paris*, a nostalgic screenwriter, Wilson, finds himself magically traveling back to the 1920s each midnight, and meeting the writers and artists of the period who have influenced his creative life. To Wilson, his return to Paris is seen as a pilgrimage to the holy city of art and culture, while

his fiancée views the experience much more superficially, on the surface enjoying the sights and spectacle but experiencing no great change of character because of it.

In *Vicky Christina Barcelona*, Vicky is a practical American with more traditional views on life and love, while Christina, a spontaneous and outgoing character, jumps at the opportunity to engage in new, exotic experiences. Both characters fall for a passionate European artist, although for different reasons. He entices Christina by catering to her spontaneous playful nature. She moves in with him, becomes entangled in a dramatic threesome when the artist's ex-wife enters the picture, and discovers her creative nature. Vicky however, similar to Wilson's fiancée, is unable to overcome her basic American cultural programming, and comes through the experience fundamentally unchanged.

In *To Rome with Love* we see practical American utilitarianism clashing with classic European humanitarianism. Jerry, played by Woody Allen, hears Giancarlo, the father of his daughter's European fiancé, singing in the shower, and feels inspired to bring his gift to a wider public. Giancarlo's simple, independent outlook on life is demonstrated as he ends his dream career after a very successful performance. In this European trilogy, Allen brings American and European culture together and, through a focus on marriage, explores the friction and anxiety which is generated when these two cultures clash. It also presents the differences in the way American travellers perceive, and are affected by, their encounters with local culture.

The City as Stage

As Lewis Mumford suggested long ago, the city is a complex site of representation: "*a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theater of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity*".[2] While the environment influences this social drama, Mumford sees it as a well-designed stage set, facilitating and intensifying the performance of the actors upon it. Mumford claims that in "*its very opportunities for social disharmony and conflict, the city creates drama; the suburb lacks it.*"[3]

Allen turns the issue of urban representation in the direction of love and romance, choosing cities strongly associated with this theme, especially in the case of Paris and Rome. The cities themselves take on significant roles as characters walk around them - just as Allen enjoys doing in real life - viewing and admiring their historic and artistic qualities. At times, the urban landscape commands as much attention as the human characters themselves. In *Midnight in Paris* Wilson asserts "*No work of art can compare to a city!*"

The themes of anxiety and love pervade most of Woody Allen's works, and his latest films are no exception. He takes a realistic tour of the subjects in his films, instead of depicting the fairy tale romantic side of relationships; he shows the complicated array of emotions and conflicts that develop when two people come together in the name of love. The treatment of marriage in American culture is a highlight in each of his films, and we see how those traditions clash with more simple European views.

In *Midnight in Paris*, Wilson's in-laws take him shopping, and try to convince him to buy an exorbitantly priced chair. There is a sense of trying to get the most out of the marriage as possible, as if the marriage is a sort of business transaction. In *To Rome with Love*, Allen's character is also infatuated with his in-laws' status, career, and outside factors, whereas his European counterparts are more interested in personal beliefs, such as supporting trade unions, and living a lifestyle that is pure and simple.

In line with his more humble simplistic outlook on life, he shuns fame as a source of anxiety, breaking the very American myth that fame is a dream worth dreaming. In *To Rome with Love*, Giancarlo, who lives a rather mundane life, wakes up one morning to discover he has become a national celebrity, and he is subsequently chased day and night by paparazzi. In *Midnight in Paris* Allen portrays a nostalgic concept of love, whilst in *Vicky Christina Barcelona*, he challenges the proposition that triangular relationships are without negative consequences.

This is done in a light comic style that contrasts with the darker side of the issue. In his 1975 film *Love and Death*, Allen expresses his view on the contorted and contradictory relationship between love and anxiety as follows: "*To love is to suffer. To avoid suffering, one must not love. But, then one suffers from not loving. Therefore, to love is to suffer, not to love is to suffer, to suffer is to suffer. To be happy is to love, to be happy, then, is to suffer, but suffering makes one unhappy, therefore, to be unhappy one must love, or love to suffer, or suffer from too much happiness - I hope you're getting this down*".

Questions of Culture and Finance

As a film-maker in quest of finance, Allen has a very pragmatic relationship to Europe: "*I wanted nothing more than to be a foreign filmmaker, but of course I was from Brooklyn, which was not a foreign country. Through a happy accident I wound up being a foreign filmmaker because I couldn't raise money any other way …. When I raise my money in Europe, I raise it under circumstances that are extremely good for me artistically. And because of that I'm able to do a film like 'Match Point'. If I had to go in and sit down with studio executives and say, 'Look, I want to do this serious film about this family', they would look at me and say, 'Where are the laughs?' Or they would see their money vanishing down a well someplace*".[4]

Allen's appreciation of the European context for film-making contrasts with his highly candid and extremely negative vision of an American system driven by the profit motive, as he explained in a 1979 interview for French TV: "*You know, the whole American culture is going down the drain, you can't turn on a television set and see anything, or walk in the street and not find garbage, or neighborhoods that were formerly beautiful now have McDonald's in them, and it's all a part of an enormous degeneration of culture in the United States.*

He continues by commenting on a "*terrible ugliness" that is "gradually overcoming all the big cities in America. This ugliness comes from a culture that has no spiritual center, a culture that has money and education, but no sense of being at peace with the world, no sense of purpose in life. They don't know what they're doing, or why they're here.*

They have no religious center, they have no philosophical center, and so they act, they do what's expedient at the moment. They have no long view of society. They only have the view of quick money, and kill the pain of the moment, and so instead of dealing with the real problems that exist, that are complicated, they sweep them under the rug … to escape confrontation with the unpleasant realities of the world".[5]

The three films discussed here offer us we clear examples of the stereotypical facets and attributes of the American psyche that include utilitarianism and rational Epicureanism. In his films Allen presents a superficial concern for the ego and a desire for immediate satisfaction and gratification emerging from his American characters. By contrast, Allen portrays Europeans as having an abundance of spirit with greater independence and interesting stories. He suggests that they are more humanitarian, with a deep and flourishing culture. We can say that Allen's European trilogy not only compares European culture to the American, but also contrasts the modern and classical worlds in the process.[6]

Notes and References

[1] Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love: Kierkegaard's Writings*, vol. XVI, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 248. Kirekgaard is adapting St. Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians*, ch. 13 v. 7.

[2] Lewis Mumford, 'What is a City?' (1937), London: Routledge, in Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout (eds.), *The City Reader*, London: Routledge, 5th. ed., 2011, p. 93.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

[4] Woody Allen interviewed by Dave Itzkoff, 'That's Amore: Italy as Muse - Woody Allen on Italian Movies and *To Rome with Love'*, *New York Times*, 15 June 2012, at www.nytimes.com/2012/06/17/movies/woody-allen-on-italian-movies-and-to-rome-with-love.html.

[5] Woody Allen Interviewed by France Roche in *Woody Allen, ou L'Anhédoniste le Plus Drôle du Monde* (Mény, France, 1979).

[6] See Sander H. Lee, *Woody Allen's Angst: Philosophical Commentaries on His Serious Films,* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1996.

46 / The Changing Patterns of Film Consumption in India

Vaishali Diwakar

Introduction

Cinema is perhaps the major reservoir of the urban experience in India. In the context of cinema as a set of socially embedded practices, this essay attempts to study particular aspects of 'film culture' in India, specifically in the area of film exhibition and viewing behaviour. It seeks to understand the changing patterns of film consumption in urban centres, and the preference amongst the urban middle classes for particular spatial sites predicated on social separation.

The essay focuses mainly on the city of Pune in the period since the 1990s, and subsequent changes in cinema viewing practices. In recent times we have experienced massive changes in Indian urban life. In the era of globalisation and

economic liberalisation, the urban landscape has undergone a rapid transformation as new markets, malls and entertainment places were set up with a view to build a powerful consumer economy. [1]

The contemporary period has seen new types of production centred on communication and information technology. By definition, all of these transformations have definite implications for the cinema.[2] In 1997 the first multiplex came into existence in India, a site of urban leisure which demands to be examined. In India, spending on leisure services and goods has increased many times since 2000. I would like to argue that in a country like India it is not only our individual histories but also our collective sense of certain places and moreover collective experiences which play a major role in inhabiting film as a culture.

Historical Perspectives

Popular cinema in India caters to an audience whose diversity is vast. Popular Hindi cinema until the 1980s was mainly the cinema of the working class and lower middle class. Mainstream cinema remained the cinema of the masses. Hindi popular cinema solicited a mass audience that cut across social divides. Rather than target niche markets as Hollywood movies do, Indian films had typically taken on this diversity with a broad appeal. The popular Indian film may therefore be described as a pastiche, as it is constructed like a variety show, with something for everyone rather than as a seamless and linear narrative following a single theme. In this sense cinema does not produce a homogenising effect, rather, plural audiences construct differentiated experiences.[3]

With the advent of multiplexes in the late 1990s, single-screen theatres appeared to be threatened with extinction. The multiplex experience marked a significant shift in film viewing practices, marked by new forms of embodied pleasure, spatial segregation, and new genres of films. It was predicted that there would be a shift from the cinema of the masses to a cinema of upper class *élites*. To some extent the Hindi cinema viewership did change its characteristics; the initial success of multiplexes has been driven by the middle class audience to which they cater. To understand the drivers of this success, it is important to note how multiplexes became the markers of middle class leisure practices.

There is no homogeneous middle class in Pune, however, let alone India as a whole, which experiences multiplexes in an homogeneous manner. In fact, there are different layers of the middle classes and therefore of viewing spaces -multiplexes and other kinds of theatre - which generate a layered experience of cinema viewing. We will explore how these various layers of the middle classes are similar and yet distinct in terms of their cinema viewing practices. The emergence of the new urban middle class for which consumption was, it is clear, a major marker of identity correlated with the development of multiplexes in the city of Pune.

The Layered Nature of Viewing Spaces

This study started with a notion that the multiplexes were acting as a disruptive force, forcing out the single-screen theatres, whose demise seemed imminent. In scholarly articles and in popular discourse, multiplexes were at the same time acting as the saviours of Bollywood and regional

cinema. The ethnographic data and the survey results, however, seem to point to a much more varied and nuanced reality.

Viewing spaces (multiplexes, biplexes, single-screen theatres) cater to a specific audience characterised by a particular demographic and socio-economic background. A specific kind of audience follows particular viewing practices, needs suitable facilities within the viewing space, and has a taste for an appropriate kind of content. The classification of the major viewing spaces in Pune based on these criteria reveals a very interesting picture of the layering of audiences and viewing spaces in Pune (see Table 1 below).

What is evident is that the multiplex as a viewing space cannot be analysed as a monolith. The duality of multiplex and non-multiplex experience also seems to be much more dispersed and driven by the type of audience. The rupture in the film viewing experience that was predicted in the wake of the arrival of the multiplexes has given way to a much more layered film viewing practice based on the type of audience to which a viewing space caters.

From the very old single-screen theatres which still survive in the city - some dating back to 1933 - to the very latest multiplex with 4D experience which is still being commissioned, there is a wide variety of viewing spaces within Pune. The viewing practices and their distinct audiences have evolved over last couple of decades as the variety of viewing spaces developed within the city. According to Munt, consumption makes culture, but the manner in which this happens is dependent on the histories and biographies - of groups and individuals – already in circulation, though of course these are in turn also transformed by the practice.[4]

Table 1

Film Exhibition Practices in Pune, India

Sr	Type of Viewing Spaces	Special Facilities Provided		Audience Profile	Notable viewing practices	Techno-logy	Ownership
1	Magarpatta Theatre (4D 15 screen)	Activated chairs	Yet to start	Expected audience IT professionals, new upper urban middle class		UFO, Dolby sound, 4D	Corporate ownership
2	PVR/ Cinemax Located in big shopping malls	Shopping,huge food court, comfortable arrangements Online booking	Latest releases—mainly topics related to metro life, family bonding, regional films appealing to new middle class	Software professionals in newly developed suburbs close to IT Parks. Cosmopolitan audiences.	Corporate shows, Kitty parties	UFO, Dolby sound, 3D	Corporate ownership
3	Inox/ Esquare/ R Deccan	Branded shopping outlets, food courts, book shops, gaming, fully reclining chairs, Online booking	Latest Bollywood releases, Marathi/ Telugu /Kannada films for migrant IT class from these regions	IT and professionals from other industries, business class. Youth from nearby university and colleges. Cosmopolitan audiences	Family gatherings, Corporate shows, Birthday celebrations, Hanging out	UFO, Dolby sound, 3D	Corporate Ownership
4	Citypride Kothrud / Abhiruchi Singhgad Rd.	Limited shopping options, Supermarket, Limited food stalls and food options, Online booking	Regional cinema mainly Marathi appealing to new middle class, Regular Bollywood and off beat cinema.	Pune's brahmanical upper middle class who differentiates itself from the new migrant IT audience	Family get together, major life events, All women gathering, Grocery shopping	UFO, Dolby sound, 3D	Veteran Cinema Exhibition Owners

Table 1

Film Exhibition Practices in Pune, India (cont.)

6	Biplexes—Mangala, Rahul	Basic facilities, Non AC	Latest releases—action cinema, Marathi regional cinema more appealing to the youth, lower middle class	Youth, lower middle class	Mainly movie watching	UFO, Dolby sound, 3D	Veteran Cinema Exhibition Owners
7	Single screen theatres: Neelayam, Laxminarayan, Alankar	Bare minimum facilities, small food counters	Action films, drama, Marathi films mainly about double meaning jokes, tamasha, films with rural setting	Youth, families from nearby working class localities, rural travelers	Mainly movie watching	UFO, Dolby sound, 3D	Veteran Cinema Exhibition Owners
8	Alka, Vijay, Prabhat	Bare minimum facilities, small food counters	Mainly regional Marathi cinema, English original as well as dubbed films. Film festivals for children.	Pune's traditional middle class residing in the core city dwellings.	Mainly movie watching	UFO, Dolby sound, 3D	Veteran Cinema Exhibition Owners
9	Alpana, Apsara, Shrikrishna	Dilapidated conditions, torn seats	C grade films, Bhojpuri, Tamasha based Marathi films	Mainly located in or near red light areas	Movie watching	UFO	Veteran Cinema Owners

Viewing practices are as much constituted by the viewing spaces as they constitute that space. Further, while being somewhat porous, the layers of the Pune audiences identified in this study are significantly distinct and rarely would we see a cross-over where audiences from one layer would frequent viewing spaces from any other layer. This essay then addresses changes in cinema viewing practices, and their continuities and discontinuities with the pre-multiplex era. More important, I consider which practices steer clear of the 'rupture' models mentioned earlier.

Cinema-going in Pune

Pune is located in central India, about 150km from Mumbai. The city is considered to be the cultural capital of Maharashtra, a state with a progressive image. Pune has always been known as a city of pensioners - a city which is never in hurry, a city which is the centre of education, a city sometimes called the 'Oxford of the East'. Pune has been a prominent player in the history of India's automotive industry, resulting in a large influx of engineering talent from across the country.

The IT and technology outsourcing services industry, which has grown dramatically since the 1990s, has put Pune on the world map. IT has created a completely new class of professionals with significantly different socio-economic profiles. Many members of this aspiring and emergent middle class perceive the malls, business districts and multiplexes as signs of economic growth, confidence and potential membership of the 'world class'. There is hence a growing amnesia where the degree of underlying poverty is concerned.

Borrowing from Srivastava one can claim that the Indian history of middle-classness, in Pune particularly, is the story of a number of different groups with differing attitudes to what it means to be 'modern'.[5] It is also a history of the social anxiety that seeks to differentiate the 'true' middle classes from the pretenders, and fake modernity from the 'authentic'.

The first three layers described in Table 1 represent the classic multiplex audience, the multiplex experience and viewing practices. The audience comes from the 'world class', IT professionals primarily. This urban middle class is the torch-bearer of the 'India Shining' image for rest of the world. In this class of audience there is a distinct amnesia towards the poverty which surrounds them. Culturally, the new urban middle class is much more at home with Western value systems and modes of consumption than the one with industrial roots.

The Multiplex Audience

The identity of this class is more defined in terms of its consumption practices. The image of the new middle class represents an idealised national standard of living to which other social groups can aspire and which they can perhaps achieve through practices of consumption. Further, as Fernandes has argued, the production of the identity of the new middle class is linked to a politics of spatial purification which centers on middle class claims over public spaces as the State itself participates in the creation of a new middle class identity.[6]

The next layer, the Citypride Kothrud multiplex, is located in an area associated primarily with the urban brahmanical middle class, which considers itself the 'original' upper class,

upper caste 'Punekars'. They are typically highly educated and consider advanced education as a social marker and a major investment for a better life. They don't consider themselves as part of the consumer class but as a conscientious middle class with a sense of moral propriety. In fact, they consider IT 'world class' consumption as obnoxious.

The experience within these multiplexes is primarily to do with film viewing - regarded as necessary for image-building in the modern world, to assert a claim over modernity through the culture of film viewing. Films with alternative themes from Bollywood and the new Marathi 'sensitive' cinema are first screened here. While shopping opportunities and coffee shops are available here, these remain at the periphery of the 'aesthetic' film viewing experience. There are supermarkets in these multiplexes dedicated to grocery shopping but with a very limited degree of 'leisure' shopping.

The 'Jai Ganesh' and 'Fame Akurdi' multiplexes are located in suburbs with manufacturing industrial units and factories and related residential areas. These suburbs have grown in infrastructure with the development of manufacturing industry, with a large, educated, professional migrant population from other parts of the country. This population has distinctly lower spending power than the IT group, with their high levels of disposable income. In terms of aspiration, however, they would indeed like to behave like the IT class, eschewing the image traditionally associated with the working class. The multiplexes symbolize the involvement of the migrant working class in the new affluence.

Biplexes like 'Rahul' and 'Mangala' primarily attract lower middle class youth and families thanks to low ticket prices. The audience wants to be differentiated from the rowdy patrons

of the single-screen theatres – in effect, to be part of the middle class. Historically, these theatres were single-screen venues which in their heyday attracted a middle class family and youth audience. As a response to the multiplex onslaught, these theatres were renovated as biplexes, with upgraded infrastructure and facilities.

Audiences for Single-Screen Cinemas

The audience profile, though, went through a major change, and today people involved in the BPOs (Business Process Outsourcing companies), lower-grade IT workers and lower middle class families form the core audience. According to the manager of 'Rahul', who has more than 30 years' experience in the business, the venue has lost its past glory in terms of a "*decent*" audience, but still it is economically viable.

Single-screen theatres like 'Neelayam', 'Laxminarayan' and 'Alankar' once saw the middle class families and nearby college crowd as their primary audience. Today working class families and young people from the nearby slums are their core patrons. This often rowdy crowd - which makes no pretence to be part of the middle class, and has no aesthetic interest in cinema - forms the audience for these theatres, as the author witnessed at a screening which involved dancing on the benches/chairs, together with loud shouts and whistles from the audience.

The 'Prabhat' and 'Vijay' single-screen theatres have a very committed audience living in 'old' Pune. Members of this middle class and sometimes working class audience are not very affluent but identify themselves as the torch bearers of 'Punekar' cultural identity. They consider the new suburbs, with their 'development' and migrant population, as the

domain of outsiders who are polluting the culture of Pune. Simple living and high thinking sums up their sense of self-identity. This audience is not a very staunch fan of Bollywood but considers viewing 'good' regional language films as part of their cultural practice. Many cultural and family traditions have arisen around these theatres.

The owner of 'Prabhat' theatre shared his perspective on the relationship of the cinema with its Pune audience. 'Prabhat Theatre' suffered losses for years, but continued to exhibit regional language films - even though they had an option to sign up with Warner Brothers for Hollywood product - since the "*bikini-clad women*" in these films would not be "*culturally suitable*". The owner proudly insisted that the emotional connection of the audience with the theatres goes beyond commercial considerations.

Conclusion

All of this amounts to the fact that the distinct practice of film viewing is commonly exchanged for a consumer practice where film viewing is but one option among many or one possibility to combine with other activities.[7] Whilst there have been many accounts of consumption that have challenged the 'negative' and 'passive' associations of consumerism, and provided a more nuanced analysis of particular practices, the specific alignment of 'consumption' and 'cinema' produces a particular *frisson*. Cinema, historically conceived of as a specific cultural practice, is re-configured in the context of the multiplex as a leisure pursuit, as a more general and hybrid activity.

While this re-configuration of film viewing as a cultural practice is evident in a certain section of the audiences in

Pune, a fine aesthetic of film viewing has also developed as part of the culture. Across caste and class boundaries, audiences have developed a sensibility towards 'good' cinema and 'good' film viewing experience - unadulterated by any other activity apart from the business of film viewing itself.

Cinema has been in fact a unifying force and has aided the formation of a secular Indian imaginary. On the other hand, the sense of disdain for multiplexes in the comments made by audiences also stems, to a certain extent, from a sense of the dilution of a unifying film culture. The perception of the nation that comes from involvement with a multiplex cinema is in contrast to notions of 'unity' and the 'India shining' image.

As the site of cinema viewing is now increasingly dispersed, so too, it follows, is the image of the nation. While developments in Internet TV and individualised, mobile-based consumption continue to evolve newer viewing practices, the ethnographic data available demonstrates that what I have referred to as 'unadulterated' viewing practices continue to be sustained after nearly two decades of multiplex evolution.

Notes and References

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11. Narratives of Nationhood

47 / Pleasures of Recognition and Mediation in the Spectacle of the Nation

Jennifer Coates

In the wake of Japan's unconditional surrender in World War II and the Asia-Pacific wars, the nation was traumatised by defeat and occupation (1945-1952). As ensuing national anxieties played out on cinema screens across the nation, impoverished Japan nonetheless experienced a golden age of film production, attendance, and viewership. How can we explain the attraction of national cinema at such a time? Miriam Hansen has argued for film as an aesthetic or "*reflexive horizon*" upon which the trauma of change can be "*reflected, rejected or disavowed, transmuted or negotiated*".[1] The importance of film at this low point in Japan's national history was thus perhaps predicated on the cinema's ability to reflect the anxieties of the viewer.

At the same time, film could also resolve trauma by re-inscribing painful themes into a conventional narrative arc with a positive resolution. As defeat and occupation caused viewers to reconsider their national affiliations and their country's place in the world, domestic film production was in this sense the site of a pleasurable recognition and mediation of national identity, as film texts worked to reflect Japan's post-war state and to hone it into a coherent national image.

Affect and Trauma

My research into the critical reception of popular film in early post-war print media suggests that many Japanese films spoke to their consumers with a particular intensity which was contingent on their role as "reflexive horizon" during national crisis. I use contemporary writing on affect to theorise this intense communication between film and audiences. The term 'affect' is commonly used to refer to a particular intensity of experience in sensory phenomena. Affect in the cinema is contingent on sensory factors such as sight and sound as well as on film narrative. The image, with its privileged relation to emotion, is the site of strong affect, which I understand to be both emotional and visceral in nature and evidence for which has been uncovered by my research into the popular film magazines of the early post-war period.

While expressions of trauma and memories of suffering on film can be cathartic, affect can mediate trauma by breaking the cyclical repetitions of its representation. According to Deleuze and Guattari, repetition in the generic or reoccurring motif creates an "*expressional value*" which imbues the repeated motif with heightened affect.[2] Affect is therefore produced and emphasised by repetition. The traumatic re-

presentation of unpleasurable or anxiety-laden imagery therefore has heightened affect in its very repetition. However, this affect can also "*serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension*" - in short, towards the resolution of trauma.

I suggest that screen imagery which expresses trauma can also mediate that trauma as a form of 'working through'. I approach film texts as both symptom and mediator of viewers' anxieties. This relation of film to viewer is clear during periods of crises, particularly national crises, as large groups of the nation/viewership share similar concerns at such a time. Lauren Berlant argues that aesthetic representations carry heightened affect during periods of crisis, as "*when the terms of survival seem up for grabs, the aesthetic situation turns to the phenomena of affective disruption*".

For Berlant, affective narrative and imagery represent and mediate crisis in the production of the nation: "*What nations do, how power works - is derived from stories constituted by catching up to a crisis already happening in worlds that are being shaped by a collectivity that is also caught up in making and apprehending the present moment."* [3] I understand attempts to represent post-war Japan on film in similar terms; that is, as the citizens of a post-war nation attempt to re-imagine and rebuild a national identity in the wake of defeat.

The Schizophrenic Spectator

The post-war viewer of these images is schizophrenic in the sense described by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, who argue for "*multiple registers*" of spectatorship, understanding the spectator as "*fashioned by the text itself; … by the (diverse*

and evolving) technical apparatuses … by the institutional contexts of spectatorship … by ambient discourses and ideologies … The actual spectator as embodied; raced, gendered, and historically situated."

While we must consider representation of post-war Japan as potentially traumatic to the 'actual' viewing subject as described by Shohat and Stam, we must also acknowledge the pleasurable aspects of film-viewing for the post-war spectator, as outlined in the constitutive factors described in the earlier stages of Shohat's and Stam's description. The coercive power of the film text to fashion the spectator noted in their first point can provide a pleasurable experience where film style is used to constitute the viewer as part of a national collective. The technical apparatus of film posits the viewer as the locus of a pleasurable spectatorial fascination.

The institutional context of spectatorship similarly affects the viewer in a pleasurable manner in the context of post-war Japan thanks to the camaraderie of the film theatre in the early post-war years. Finally, the film text appeals to the spectator constituted by the discourses and ideologies of post-war Japan. In this way, the spectator positioned by the film text itself, by the experience of consuming film, and by external factors can experience pleasurable interactions with the film text which balance the unpleasure of traumatic narratives of war and defeat.

Shohat and Stam argue that "*spectatorial positions are multiform, fissured, and even schizophrenic*" as "*the same person might be crossed by contradictory discourses and codes*", implying that the processes of personal identification with protagonists and stars are not one-dimensional, but can

occur variously and multiply in relation to a single text. I understand affective identification as a product of film style, which invites emotional investment in the film as a whole by making the audience feel.

Affective Identification

At this point it is useful to consider what we mean by 'identification' in relation to film, and how we might theorise the relationship between film and the experience of viewing it. I do not suggest that the viewers of post-war Japanese cinema imagined themselves as identical to the protagonist, as this would be an untenably traumatic position within the historical context of Japan's defeat and occupation. However, I am interested in thinking of ways in which the viewer's investment in traumatic imagery and narratives is secured. To this end, I aim towards a theory of 'affective identification' which can explain how films with traumatic imagery or difficult narrative themes can find a popular audience base.

Affective identification is based on factors other than narrative, which secures audience identification with the protagonists or main themes of a film text and invites investment - both emotional and in the form of time and attention committed to viewership - from a diverse audience which is variously conditioned as Shohat and Stam describe. Affective identification is achieved by the use of music, soundtrack and particularly striking imagery which invites emotional investment in the film as a whole.

The viewer troubled by traumatic representations of the Japanese nation can then simultaneously, as a 'schizophrenic' spectator, actively participate in or adopt other spectatorial positions in regards to the film text. Spectatorial attitudes are

created both simultaneously and involuntarily as "*the viewer of hegemonic cinema might consciously support one narrative or ideology, yet be subliminally seduced by the other fantasies proffered by the text*".[4]

Kurosawa's *One Wonderful Sunday*

Kurosawa Akira's *One Wonderful Sunday* (*Subarashiki nichiyōbi*, 1947) is an example of a text which manipulates this kind of spectatorship, reflecting the bleak conditions of 1947 Japan within the affective visual and aural codes of romance and nostalgia. The film directly engages with the post-war context of poverty, defeat and occupation, with English-language signs in the background of many shots and references to film-going as a cheap date for the impoverished central couple. The opening shot shows heroine Masako, played by Nakakita Chieko, pressed up against a train window in a contorted position, signalling the film's realistic representation of the trials of post-defeat life and the departure of her characterisation from previous 'feminine' models based on poise, beauty and elegance.

Contemporary critics commented on Nakakita's plain appearance; however her moving performance distracts attention from perceived 'defects'. "In a natural performance, she expresses love (*shizenna engi no naka ni aijō o hyōgenshiyō toshite rōdō wa takaku*) which seems warm and pure (*aijō wa atatakasa kiyorakasa*), and so one doesn't think of her physical limitations (*kanojo no yōshi no genkai to iu koto o kangararenai*)".[5] Like the pre-war modern girl, Masako wears Western clothing and sports a permanent wave; however her dress is used to underscore her poverty rather than to create a sense of glamour.

Masako's trench-coat is bedraggled and pitifully insufficient for the winter weather, while her hair is repeatedly soaked by the rain. The couple's pathetic appearance is emphasised in repeated shots of their feet in broken, leaking, school-style shoes which reinforce their lack of glamour. Poverty translates to a distance between the couple, as in the first shot of the two together in which they lean against two away-facing walls on a street corner.

The two are further distanced by his association with 'reality' and hers with 'dreams'. This is linked to his participation in Japan's Imperial expansion effort; as Masako observes, "*You used to have dreams too, before the war*". Her identification as a dreamer touches on the gendered resentments common in war memory in which ex-soldiers regard non-participant civilians, particularly women, as having their 'innocence' safeguarded by the soldiers' sacrifice in war.

The Audience and the Screen

Kurosawa's film ends on a positive note, however, as child-like innocence and hope is restored to the couple and by extension to the audience, in the final scene set in a deserted outdoor auditorium. The couple attempt to collectively imagine an orchestra playing the symphony they have been unable to attend, but their ability to conjure up the fantasy is uncertain.

High-angle shots of the two emphasise their vulnerability in the freezing auditorium as their first attempts fail. Masako's assumption of a 'feminine' supporting role was popular with critics, who noted her 'supportive' qualities over other aspects of her characterisation. However, she also takes an active role in producing affect for the viewer. Ascending the

stage, Masako speaks directly to the camera, pleading with the audience to join their fantasy and make it 'real' in a scene representative of "*the poignancy of the times*" (*surudoi genjitsu*).[6]

As the camera zooms in sharply for maximum affect, she pleads tearfully, "*Help us dream beautiful dreams. Do it for young lovers everywhere*". This appeal to the spectator breaks the fourth wall and affects the viewer in its unexpected deviation from the dominant realist style of the film, since, as Elena del Rio reminds us, "*affect proper coincides with the actor and the film's openness to often anomalous, unexpected, and always expansive expressions of emotions*".[7]

Masako's plea for the couple to be recognised as 'real', embodied beings mirrors the spectators' recognition of themselves in their image; an impoverished viewer on a 'cheap date' at the cinema could not but be moved by Masako's appeal to the universal aspects of their condition, as were critics. The reflection of everyday post-war hardship, combined with child-like innocence in Masako's characterisation, indeed incited "*great emotion*" (*ōkina kandō*) in the audience.[8]

In many ways, this scene is allegorical of the pleasures of post-defeat film for viewers, in that its "*sense of fantasy*" is "*beautiful*" though the reality it represents is harsh.[9] The viewer or critic willingly identifies with the couple, despite their lack of glamour, because they are presented in a "*touching*" (*ijirashii*) manner which is charged with affect.[10] I want to suggest that the affective language of film can mediate harsh representations of the nation in crisis in this way to render traumatic imagery pleasurable.

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48 / Textuality, Language, and the Family in the Era of Post-modernity: The Case of Greek 'Weird Wave' Cinema

Maria Komninos and Yannis Lambrou

Introduction

This essay attempts to establish, by examining three notable Greek films, that the so-called Greek 'Weird Wave' embodies elements of post-modernism, depicting the family in a new way and proposing a new, alternative form of language. The three films - *Strella* (international title: *A Woman's Way*, Koutras, 2009), *Dogtooth* (Lanthimos, 2009) and *Attenberg* (Tsangari, 2011) - are compared with films by modernist Theo Angelopoulos, a defining film-maker of the preceding 'New Greek Cinema' period, which began at the fall of the Greek *junta* in 1974 and was followed by the Greek 'Weird Wave' in the last decade.

We attempt to show that, compared to the modernist films of Angelopoulos, these three films mark a departure from

the classical Oedipal scenario, both as the driving force of their narratives and in their portrayal of the family. Furthermore, it is pointed out that, through post-modern practices like pastiche and the use of language forms like gay slang and non- or pre-verbal expression, the three 'Weird Wave' films do not only defy poetry, crucial to both Greek literature and the New Greek Cinema, but also challenge Oedipal family structures and language-based narrativity.

The Post-modern, Psychoanalysis and Textuality

Two basic demands of post-modern art, if we follow Lyotard's famous formulation of 1979, are that the post-modern puts forward "*the unpresentable in presentation itself*" and that the work produced by a post-modern artist is not governed by *"pre-established rules"* and should not be judged *"according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work*".[1] Following a different line of thought, Jameson calls for a post-modern text in which "*the effort at self-consciousness … juxtaposes, to its own pertinent philosophical repudiation … the very concept of self-consciousness*".[2].

Combining Jameson and Lyotard, we would conclude that a post-modern text should defy storyline and plot, for what else is narration other than a self-conscious and therefore point-of-view account of linear events governed by "*pre-established rules*" and denying "*the unpresentable*"? Furthermore, the unfeasibility of applying "*familiar categories*" to the post-modern work of art as formulated by Lyotard means that post-modern artistic expression rejects genre, as genre has long been a defining category in art. And finally, Jameson's denial of self-consciousness within the post-modern annuls the self-importance placed on the artist

by *auteur* theory, as an *auteur* can clearly only exist as self-conscious and present within his work.

In order to theorise the Oedipus complex within realist film narrative, which seems to deny post-modern demands for a non- self-conscious putting forward of the unpresentable, one should look into the work of psychoanalytic film theorist Laura Mulvey. As Mulvey claims in an essay pivotal to contemporary film theory, "*sadism demands a story, depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end*".[3]

If, based on Mulvey's observation, we attempt a return to Freud, and specifically to his text *The Economic Problem of Masochism* (1924), we will discover that sadism cannot exist without the Oedipus complex, as sadism presupposes the imposition of the superego on the ego[4], both agencies of a personality directly succeeding the Oedipus complex. True to Freud, Mulvey equates the narrator - or, in cinematic terms, the film-maker - with a superego which sadistically controls its subject matter, thereby producing a story with a beginning, a middle and an end.

Following these considerations, one may claim that realist film narration places the film-maker in the position of a superego that controls narrative and gives it realist form. In similar fashion, Teresa de Lauretis relates conventional film narration to a subject and its implication in, or dependence on, "*the social order, the law of meaning*".[5] If we interpret de Lauretis here in a Lacanian way, we may observe that order and law are fully dependent on Oedipal structures, as no superego and, consequently, no law of the father, could emerge without the Oedipal scenario.

Furthermore, since from a structuralist perspective the Oedipal scenario signifies the attempt of a child to put order in its observations of the role of each of its parents in relation to itself, the narrating subject perpetually attempts through his storylines to comprehend Oedipal relations, regardless of whether such storylines explicitly portray family relations or not. Or, as Barthes puts it in *S/Z*, Oedipus, through the narrative structures that followed his attempt to solve the riddle of the Sphinx "*mythically impregnated all western culture*", thereby making narrativity the western norm.[6]

Modernism, History and Heroism: Angelopoulos

An internationally acclaimed *auteur* with a distinct personal style, Theo Angelopoulos made his mark with epic transpositions of ancient Greek myths to modern settings. On the other hand, grand meta-narratives like Marxism, typical according to Lyotard of modernity, form the basis of Angelopoulos' political statements, along with the family woes of heroes inspired by Greek mythology. In an epic like *The Travelling Players* (1975), however, Angelopoulos resolves the contradiction of both portraying his heroes as part of the ancient myth of the *Oresteia* and simultaneously historicising them by placing them in a specific historical period. Unlike the heroes of tragedy, they are not caught up in processes of psychological contradiction but are affected and changed by history itself.

Thus Angelopoulos sets up a modernist text in which spectators are summoned to become producers of new interpretations of history, yet within the framework of the grand meta-narrative of Marxism. Films like *Ulysses' Gaze* (1995), where an ex-Marxist, tormented by his own family

past and the loss of his ideology after the fall of the Berlin Wall, re-invents himself as a modern Ulysses travelling around the war-ridden Balkans of the period, can be seen as linear representations either of Oedipal trajectories or of the film-maker's own tormented search for an identity.

Although the narrative in *Ulysses' Gaze* is set in a post-modern, war-torn Balkan peninsula, the fact that it is structured around the self-conscious gaze of a director identifying with the main character is typical of a modernist signifying practice, which can never redeem the optimism of the quest of *avant-garde* film-makers for captivating the innocent look.[7] What may be said to act as catharsis in Angelopoulos, however, is poetry, as exemplified by *An Eternity and a Day* (1998), where the main character finds a bigger, redemptive purpose through his exchange of poetic words with a boy and his quest for meaning in the work of 19th Century Greek poet Dionysios Solomos.

The catharsis of *An Eternity and a Day* culminates in an epic homecoming reminiscent of Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* (1957), where the main character returns to his roots. Nevertheless, the use of language in the *oeuvre* of Angelopoulos does not go beyond the limitations of linear narrative or poetry, however cathartic the latter may be. Therefore, it never evolves into something radically iconoclastic in the post-modern sense.

Oedipal Scenarios Revisited: *Strella*

The case of the contemporary Greek 'Weird Wave' seems to be different. While Oedipal conflicts are central within its structure, they seem to be challenged in a number of post-modern ways.[8] The subjects of these films, we might say, are,

in true post-modern style, de-substantialised, as the wholeness of old egos, including that of the *auteur*, transmutes into a fractured construct fashioned by the media. This media-conscious cinema is largely ironic towards its characters and linear narrative is challenged by pastiche, probably the most typical expression of post-modernism.

Pastiche is here understood as non-ironic mimicry and random cannibalisation and mixing of styles and genres of the past, confounding highbrow and popular culture.[9] And finally, traditional language in the Greek 'Weird Wave' defies narration by diffusing into the non-verbal or pre-verbal seemingly unconnected and not necessarily communicable language games.

Strella is at first sight a narrative, plot-driven film with an Oedipal scenario. After fourteen years in prison, Yorgos, a middle-aged man, begins a sexual relationship with Strella, a young trans-sexual. Yorgos was jailed for killing his nephew, who had sexually assaulted his son. In the course of the film it turns out that Strella is actually Yorgos' son, the one who was assaulted, and that she has purposefully pursued a sexual relationship with her father.

When Yorgos finds out, father and child are set for a final confrontation. Eventually though, in what seems to be an ironic happy ending which defies any known resolution of the Oedipus complex, father and child decide to live the rest of their lives as a couple, sharing their home with a number of other trans-gendered people.

Thus, contrary to the films of Angelopoulos, in *Strella* the Oedipal condition evades its re-affirmation. Furthermore, *Strella* does not always follow a classic plot-driven narrative.

The main form of narration in the film is pastiche, mixing, like Almodóvar, modernist melodrama with Fassbinder-esque queer film clichés, along with Disney-like cartoon sequences of Yorgos dreaming of himself in a stereotypically queer way as a squirrel running free in the woods.

Yorgos thus appears as a fractured, gay, and violent subject, heterogeneously constructed by macho tradition, but also by pop culture and the media. And finally, probably the most defining form of dismissal of classical Oedipal structures in *Strella* is the use of language. Gay slang is, along with gay *kitsch* aesthetics, ubiquitous in the film. In a defining moment, where Greek familial tragedy and the ensuing Oedipal structures seem to simultaneously collapse, Mary, an old, dying trans-sexual acting as Strella's mother, admits to having had a sexual relationship with her uncle, while warning her 'daughter' that, according to ancient Greek sissies of the likes of Sophocles and Euripides, sexual union with one's father is a form of *hubris* (an insult to the gods).

If we recall Lyotard, the contradictions represented by Mary seem to conjure up language games, typical of post-modernism, which defy rational speech acts. And while still there, the subjective view of gay director Panos Koutras, as well as a traditional plot with a beginning and an end, seem to be lost within the heterogeneity of genres and the irony of an apparently happy ending which would never be possible in the grandiose formalism of Angelopoulos.

The Prison House of Language: *Dogtooth, Attenberg*

Dogtooth on the other hand portrays a family home where the children, well into their late teens or even twenties, are kept by their parents, in typical Oedipal terms, completely

sequestered from the outside world. The children are taught false word meanings aimed mainly at appeasing their urges towards freedom and sex. For example, they are told by their parents that "*excursion*" is a highly durable material used to make floors, and that the word "*cunt*" means "*large lamp*". The reversal of this Oedipal scenario emerges through Christina, a young woman brought into the home by the father to cater for and thus appease the son's sexual drives.

Christina asks the older daughter to perform cunnilingus on her. The older daughter accepts, initially on condition that Christina gives her a headband and later some videotapes. After watching the videotapes, the older daughter changes considerably. She starts to heterogeneously re-construct herself through the media she has watched, performing in unintelligible and nonverbal ways scenes from the videotapes, which as we infer are from *Flashdance*, *Rocky IV*, *Jaws*, and an unspecified film by Bruce Lee.

Like Yorgos in *Strella*, the subject of the 'older daughter' in *Dogtooth* is constructed discordantly by popular culture, through a performance of a pastiche of various films, whereby actors' lines with no apparent connection to one another mix with a boxing scene from *Rocky* and a violent re-working of the choreography in *Flashdance*. These scenes culminate in the film's ending, where the older daughter locks herself in the boot of her father's car, making her way out of the family home and into freedom - or asphyxiation. We never find out if she survives. As in *Strella*, the dubious ending seems to overturn the Oedipal scenario along with pastiche, references to popular culture and a use of 'new speak' language, conditioning the children like Pavlov's dogs.

Similarly, in *Attenberg*, Marina, a young woman living a de-sexualised life in a boring, sterile industrial town with her dying father, seems to find meaning in her mimicry of the animal sounds that she hears in the documentaries of Sir David Attenborough that she regularly watches. She engages in this non-verbal mimicry along with her father, whom she imagines without a penis. Quite often, father and daughter play a language game whereby they hurl at each other random words with no apparent connection.

In this mixture of animal sounds, unconnected language morphemes and de-sexualised father-daughter relations, in which a father is pictured without a penis, Oedipal scenarios demanding a linear narrative and sexually potent parents are severely challenged. The whole film seems more like a collection of sketches involving a certain number of people than a narration of their life-stories.

Pastiche makes its presence again, both in the mimicry of Attenborough's documentaries and in the dance-like, silly walks - alluding to Godard's *A Woman is a Woman* (France, 1961) and to Monty Python's 'Ministry of Silly Walks' sketch (1970) - which Marina takes along with her sexually promiscuous friend. Popular culture appears to have infiltrated Marina, too, as Attenborough's documentaries have decisively formed her along with songs of synthpunk band Suicide, which appear to be about the only music she ever listens to. Yet pastiche-inspired, non-linear narrative ceases when Marina's father is about to die. Only then does the classical Oedipal scenario emerge, as without her father, she consummates at last her relationship with an engineer and becomes a sexually active woman.

Conclusion

In order to conclude this assessment of the Greek 'Weird Wave' in relation to post-modernism and the *oeuvre* of Theo Angelopoulos, one has to confirm that the genre certainly represents a shift towards the post-modern and a defiance of linear narrative form. Grand narratives or eschatological meta-narratives like Marxism, envisioned elsewhere as ideals, are simply not there, and language is de-constructed.

In the words of Lyotard, narrative function seems to be "*losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements - narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on*".[10] Yet in these three films the Oedipal scenario and the ensuing family woes are totally reversed, along with classical linear narration. Indeed in *Strella* we have an Oedipal trans-sexual luring her father into a sexual relationship, but once the transgression is revealed, they live happily ever after.

In *Dogtooth* the father, unlike Oedipus' father Laius, never lets his children either grow or go away, until the older daughter revolts and is either killed or liberated. Finally, in *Attenberg*, the most ironic of the three films, Marina resolves her Electra syndrome by having her best friend Bella make love to her dying father. Thus the mechanisms of fetishistic scopophilia, often used to provide visual pleasure for the audience, are shattered when the shy heroine finds true love and affection in a most unexpected way.

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49 / Spectacle and Subversion In Trenchard-Smith's *The Man from Hong Kong*

Juanita Kwok

The Man from Hong Kong, the 1975 feature film written and directed by Brian Trenchard-Smith, was the first Australian-Hong Kong co-production. Capitalising on the popularity of Bruce Lee, the film brought the *kung fu* phenomenon to Australia in the character of Inspector Fang Sing Ling, who comes from Hong Kong to assist Australian police with an extradition in a drug smuggling ring, but instead ends up busting the drug boss himself.

The film's advertising promised its audience "*All action and great fun*" and the film delivers thrilling fight sequences, spectacular scenes of hang-gliding over Hong Kong and Sydney, and white-knuckle car chases and explosions that pre-date and outdo *Mad Max* in their visual excess – all real stunts performed by Jimmy Wang Yu and stuntman *extraordinaire* Grant Page without the aid of special effects.

Whilst the spectacle is what has garnered most praise, the film also serves as a counterpoint to the earlier stereotype of Chinese masculinity in Australian cinema, replacing the marginalised, de-sexualised, disempowered, subservient Chinese with the exaggeratedly sexualised, empowered, aggressive and unrestrained Chinese character of Fang Sing Ling.

There is little doubt that Fang Sing Ling (played by Jimmy Wang Yu), would not have existed were it not for Bruce Lee. However, he was well established in Hong Kong before Lee entered the scene. *The Chinese Boxer* (1970), which Wang Yu directed and in which he starred, is the first major film to devote itself to *kung fu* and is a primer for the clichés and conventions of the Lee films.[1] There are also significant differences between the empowered and sexualised character of Fang Sing Ling and the legally disempowered, inarticulate migrant characters of Bruce Lee's films.

My focus, however, is on representations of Chinese masculinity in Australian feature films made within the period of the 'White Australia' policy of 1901-1973. I begin by examining those representations within the context of the policy as it evolved and as it was dismantled, which coincides with the Australian film industry in its early flourishing in the first decades of the 20th Century through to its mid-century decline and then onwards to its renaissance in the 1970s.

Australia and the Chinese

At the time of film's arrival in Australia in 1896, anti-Chinese sentiment and racial determinism were at a height. By 1901, 77.2% of the population was Australian-born, while another 20% were born in the United Kingdom or Europe. The

population of Australia was overwhelmingly white, and the country wished to keep it that way. The newly federated nation indeed defined itself as an exclusively white nation through its first act of parliamentary legislation, the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901.

While this and later instances of legislation were primarily concerned with ensuring the racial homogeneity of Australia through deportations and by preventing the subsequent immigration of non-whites, they also operated to restrict the movements and associations of those Chinese who remained in Australia and other non-whites (including Aborigines), to limit opportunities for non-white reproduction, and to deny them the privileges of citizenship. The representations of male Chinese characters - Chinese females being largely absent - in Australian feature films of the early period then predictably echo the discourses of the 'White Australia' policy.

The British short film *Attack on a China Mission* (Williamson, 1900) was one of the first imported films to be exhibited in Australia, but home-grown anxiety about the threat to the white family and nation featured in the invasion film *Australia Calls* (Longford, 1912) in which Australia comes under attack on land and sea by an unnamed Mongolian force. Although it would seem that the narrative was prompted by anxiety about growing Japanese power, the film played on earlier fears of invasion by the Chinese and cast doubts on the loyalty of the Chinese in Australia.

As no copy of this film survives, it cannot be properly assessed, nor can films such as *The Double Event* (Lincoln, 1911) and *Satan in Sydney* (Smith, 1918), though it would seem that the Chinese and Chinatown operate as

synecdoches for vice and corruption in these films. *Thunderbolt* (Gavin, 1910) appears to be the first Australian film with Chinese characters. In the surviving fragments, three Chinese men on the road to the goldfields, played in yellow-face by European actors, are accosted by the bushranger Captain Thunderbolt, who shoots at their feet to make them jump, and proceeds to steal their clothes. A comic role is a recurrent feature of Chinese representation in the early films.

A Girl of the Bush

In Franklyn Barrett's popular 1921 film, *A Girl of the Bush,* the Chinese character Sing Lee (played by Sam Warr) is the cook on a sheep station who spends his time chasing the Chinese laundry-maid. His failed courtship parallels the real romance of the film between the white hero and heroine. Sing Lee is emasculated by his failure in the courtship stakes, and by the physical and verbal bullying the station-hands mete out to remind him of his place. When he fails to prepare a meal because of his romantic dalliances, the station hands declare, "*We'll have to deal it out to that blanky Chinkie*".

The character of Sing Lee also serves a narrative purpose. He witnesses a murder but his failure to report it results in the hero of the film being wrongly accused and tried for the murder. When Sing Lee confesses that he witnessed the murder and is confronted by the station hands as to why he didn't report it, he replies "*Maybe ole man killum me too*". Sing Lee is dragged on to a coach for a race to the courthouse to give evidence that will clear the charges.

The emphasis in this film on the physical and legal control of Sing Lee mirrored a reality for those Chinese Australians

whose employment, movements and relationships were regulated by the legislation of 'White Australia'. In spite of the unusually high incidence of films which stress family relationships in Australian cinema of the 1920s and 1930's, Chinese family relationships are absent in these films.[2] For the most part, Chinese males in early Australian films are characterised as aging and emasculated, reinforcing policies inhibiting non-white reproduction.

The Birth of White Australia

The most notoriously anti-Chinese film to have survived is *The Birth of White Australia* (Walsh, 1928). Financed and produced by the people of the rural town of Young, the site of anti-Chinese riots in the gold-rush era, the film links a series of documentary vignettes and recreations of key episodes of white settlement to celebrate the role of the town of Young in establishing a White Australia.

Doubtless inspired by Griffith's *Birth of a Nation,* which had enjoyed a seven-week season in Australia in 1916, *The Birth of White Australia* shared the racist ideology of Griffith's film, but lacked the high production values and structured narrative. As the film failed to find a buyer at its preview screening, it was not commercially released in Australia. The film cannot perhaps therefore be considered significant in Australian film history.[3] Yet while *The Birth of White Australia* may have been anachronistic, it is not unique in its display of racial anxiety.

Hall's *Lovers and Luggers* (1937) sets a romantic adventure story in the exotic locale of the pearling industry on Thursday Island in Australia's far North. The ethnic mix of Thursday Island forms a backdrop to the action, which centres on a

jaded London pianist's quest to compete for the affections of a socialite by diving for a pearl. At this time tensions on the island had come to a head with a protracted lugger strike by Torres Strait Islanders in 1936 to gain control of their passbooks and wages, and with growing concerns over the commercial activities of the Japanese in the industry and their military expansion abroad. The racial hierarchy of the film reassures audiences of the *status quo* of white hegemony.

The Japanese have no presence in the film and racial anxiety is deflected on to the Chinese, who are seen to be firmly kept in their place. Like the faithful islanders, the Chinese domestics and lugger crew labour obediently for their white bosses in uniforms of white singlets and shorts; white men in crisp safari suits drink at the Metropolitan, while the Chinese drink at China Tom's.

The Chinese entrepreneur Charlie Quong (played in yellow-face by Claude Turton) adopts the uniform of the whites and buys a lugger, but his attempts to rise above his station are undermined by his exaggerated Chinese accent and his crumpled safari suit, and he is killed off in a tussle after he attempts to steal a pearl on board the lugger.

The 1970s: An Era of Change

After *Lovers and Luggers*, films with Chinese characters in an Australian setting disappear from Australian cinema altogether until 1971, in a period which coincides not only with the demise of the Australian production industry but also with the Production Code in the United States, which prohibited the depiction of interracial relationships.

By the end of the 1960s, attitudes towards immigration were changing and the White Australia policy was in the process of being dismantled. In the arts, the counterculture openly challenged censorship, parodied the old isolationist attitudes and sexual conservatism, and experimented with new ideas of national identity. The reappearance of the Chinese man in four Australian films of the 1970s was markedly different from the disempowered and de-sexualised Chinese of the earlier films.

Demonstrator (Freeman, 1971) is a story of inter-generational conflict set against the background of an Asian security summit hosted in Canberra. In a sub-plot of the narrative, an outspoken delegate to the conference from an unnamed Asian nation (played by Hong Kong actor Kenneth Tsang) has an affair with the secretary to the Minister of Defence. Despite its ambitions, the film held limited appeal for a commercial audience and it flopped at the box office.

The little-known *Gentle Strangers* (Holmes, 1972), which focuses on the difficulties faced by Asian students in Australia, did not even make it as far as the box office. Against the wishes of its director, the film was cut down to mini-feature length and released only through film libraries and television. At the beginning of *Mad Dog Morgan* (Mora, 1976) there is a scene in which Dan Morgan witnesses a brutal anti-Chinese attack on the gold-fields. Morgan flees along with the Chinese, and this incident marks his entry into his career as a bushranger.

Challenging Stereotypes: *The Man from Hong Kong*

While these three films challenged stereotypes, *The Man from Hong Kong* was the most commercially oriented and

arguably the most subversive in challenging the values of the popular audience. In writing the screenplay, Trenchard-Smith envisaged a film which would subvert the action film formula: "*What if Dirty Harry came to Sydney and wrecked the place after a Bond-style villain? What if the villain was played by former James Bond, George Lazenby? What if the hero was Chinese and the Australian characters reacted to his activities with typical Asian stereotypes - that would be an interesting genre cocktail I thought, shaken not stirred of course*".[4]

The film's hero, Fang Sing Ling, is empowered both in the legal and physical sense. He has a legal mandate which gives him unrestricted freedom of mobility. Although his Australian police colleagues attempt to rein in his activities, he is not subject to their authority, and sets his own rules. He is also their physical superior, which is highlighted through the intercutting between scenes of Fang's physical prowess and the torpor of the Australian police.

Unlike the Chinese of the earlier films, Fang Sing Ling is not constricted by a lack of English. Fang's command of English is in marked contrast with the poor English which served to exclude the Chinese in the early films, echoing the notorious Dictation tests, developed to exclude non-whites in the White Australia policy era. Caricatured Chinese speech or the use of the obfuscating "*No savee*" as a cover for suspect activities provided the butt of jokes in films such as *A Girl of the Bush,* where Sing Lee's proposal to the laundry-maid was made ridiculous by his poor English.

Whilst racial insults are still flung around in this film, they are no longer passively absorbed. In one scene, frustrated by Fang's success in getting ahead with the case, Australian

detective Morrie Gross tells Fang to back off, adding "*This is Australia mate, not '55 days in Peking'*". According to Trenchard-Smith's script, Fang was to snort derisively and walk away, but Wang Yu insisted on changing the script so that he instead points menacingly at Gross and says "*Hey, don't give me any shit*", whereupon Gross backs down and apologises. (It is perhaps worth noting that in the version of *The Man from Hong Kong* released for the U.S. market as *The Dragon Flies*, this scene was cut, ostensibly because the audience would not be able to decipher the accents.)

Sexuality: Reversing the Stereotype

While the humour in *A Girl of the Bush* comes from ridiculing the notion that a Chinese male could make a suitable sexual partner or husband, in *The Man from Hong Kong* Fang Sing Ling is portrayed as sexually attractive and active, engaging in two sexual relationships with white Australian women. Given the limited time that the action genre allows for the development of relationships, the sex is contextualised within relationships and is mutually desired, pleasurable and visceral.

Meaghan Morris has noted that "*In the economy of mid-1970s sexual representation, these sexually forthright women are not unusual … at the same time it was not common in 1970s Australian cinema for white women to be smitten on sight by Chinese men*".[5] But Trenchard-Smith commented of these scenes: "*I had a point to make. Generally it's a white hero bedding Asian girls in this type of picture. I wanted to emphatically reverse that stereotype*."[6] The sexualised hero of *The Man from Hong Kong* satirises the sexual stereotypes of the Chinese, and for a change, the audience laughs with him, not at him. In the scene when Fang is making love to

Angelica she murmurs "*Mmm, this is good*", to which he replies "*What did you expect, acupuncture?*".

If in interview the director acknowledged that commercial success rather than social criticism was the motivation behind the film, he more explicitly critiqued the notion of white cultural superiority is in his futuristic *Dead End Drive-In* (1986). Hero Tony and his girlfriend become trapped in a drive-in cinema from which there is no escape. Tony's girlfriend is seduced by the lifestyle within the drive-in, which offers free beer for the men and free hair-dos for the women.

She becomes a willing prisoner along with the other denizens of the drive-in who are motivated into action only by the opportunity for a fight and the arrival of a truckload of Vietnamese refugees which prompts them to set up a 'White Australia' movement. If *Dead End Drive-In* engages with debates around Australian masculinity, car culture, phobic narratives and the 'White Australia' policy, so too does *The Man from Hong Kong*, but ten years earlier and with greater humour and success.[7]

The hyperbolic character of Fang Sing Ling does not represent the real experiences of Chinese Australians, nor does it escape the cinematic paradigm of the tragic interracial relationship. Yet in playing out the liberation of the Chinese man from the legal, physical and sexual restrictions which had long confined him in Australian cinema, *The Man from Hong Kong* is one of the few films to cinematically engage with a popular audience on the political and social changes that marked the end of the 'White Australia' era. *The Man from Hong Kong* strives for what Morris calls "*an imagined Australian cinema that might no*

longer be bound by spaces or genres of national trauma and marginalization"[8]. It is a pity that the social dialogue this film opened and the path it forged for co-productions were not followed in the subsequent direction taken by Australian cinema.

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50 / South Indian Cinema's Tryst with Politics: A Critical Analysis of Pre-independence Telugu Cinema

Vamshi Krishnareddy

Most of the academic scholarship that deals with the Telugu cinema's affiliation with politics starts in the 1980s. These writings tend to conflate the cinema with the electoral politics of the day, especially by means of the star system. Several Tamil film historians, however, notably Theodore Baskaran and Randor Guy, have traced the origins of nationalist politics and the role of cinema during the freedom struggle.[1] In this essay I look at various political, cultural and economic aspects that influenced the Telugu cinema of that period. The question of genre, and the ideological conflict that existed in early Telugu cinema between the film producers who represented the feudal or Zamindari system

and peasant-*cum*-trading castes, must be critically examined at this juncture to understand both the politics and the transformation of the Telugu film industry from feudal to peasant.

I choose the first two films by director Gudavalli Rambramham - *Malapilla* (*An Untouchable Girl,* 1938) and *Rythu Bidda* (*The Farmer's Son,* 1939). These films stand at a crucial juncture of the history of Telugu cinema. During this period, mythological films predominated and any attempt made to make 'social' films was seen as unprofitable enterprise. Most of the mythological films made huge profits, irrespective of the actual content of the film. 'Social' films, by contrast, could only command a modest degree of attention from the educated and urban class.

The reason for taking the 1930s as a focal point for my research is because the arrival of the talkies had a major impact on the dialogue between audiences, journals and newspapers. The talkies offered up a new version of the public sphere, and new potential foundations for democracy.[2] According to Sivathamby, the cinema hall was the first performance venue in which all Tamils sat under one roof. The gathering was based on purchasing power, not caste hierarchies.[3] The absence of caste barriers seems to be new phenomenon with the arrival of public cinemas. There is hence an intrinsic relationship between film exhibition, consumption and democracy in India.

What kind of ideologies lie behind early Telugu film-making and its impact on the public sphere? Since the early talkies coincided with the rise of the nationalist movement, the new cinema audience became a microcosm of the nation. The concepts of community, nationhood and society were

propagated by the early film-makers in their 'social' films. The masses were mobilised for the explicit mission of anti-colonial struggle and nationalism: in parts of Andhra, film exhibition and political meetings took place in the same public spaces. I hypothesise that along with nationalist politics, there were various caste and ideological conflicts in the 1930's which were expressed in the early talkies. Seen in this light, *Malapilla* and *Rythu Bidda* can be understood as explaining and justifying some of the major socio-political transformations of the time.

Malapilla: Romance and Caste Conflict

During the 1930s, the All India Congress had dropped its Civil Disobedience Movement in order to join the legislature. They had taken up the issues of Khadi and the welfare of Dalits (*Harijanodyamam*). At the same time, from the outset Congress was not keen on using the cinema for propaganda purposes, whereas the Justice Party and the Dravidian Federations (who were anti-Brahmin and anti-Hindu) were very active in promoting their ideology through cinema. Various castes that were seeking political power fought against the Brahmins in a campaign which included the Tamil film industry.

With the support of the Justice Party, Gudavalli Rambramham had drawn attention away from the mythological in favour of the 'social' films, and had espoused radical themes in his work. *Malapilla* was released in 1938 amidst these important changes. It is a love story in which a Brahmin boy falls in love with an 'Untouchable' girl and it deals with the social evils of the time. I would like to extend the existing argument of Gandhian politics to the aberration

of caste conflict and the non-Brahmin movement with reference to *Malapilla*.

The issue of integrating Harijans into 'Hindu society' is clearly a major concern of the film. The film opens with a scene in which Congress activists enter a Dalit hamlet, invoking Gandhi. They decide to agitate for the right to enter the village temple and to gain access to the village pond. Even as the antagonism between the Congress Dalits and the village Brahmins grows, the protagonist of the film, Nagaraju, son of the temple priest, and Sampalata (Kanchanamala), a Dalit girl, fall in love. The growing intimacy between the lovers is contrasted with the increasing tension and threat of violent confrontation between Dalits and Brahmins.

The lovers elope to the modern urban space of Calcutta in order to take up jobs with the British government. Meanwhile the anti-untouchability agitation enters a critical stage with the Brahmins preventing the Dalits from using the fresh water resources of the village. A non-violent strike supported by the farmers of the village, and the Dalits' rescue of the priest's wife from a fire, prompts the priest to open the temple to the Dalits. Hearing this news, Sampalata and Nagaraju return from Calcutta; Dalits enter the temple; the marriage is ratified.

In this film the love story and the drama of caste conflict runs in parallel; the former does not contribute in any significant way to the resolution of the latter, in spite of the fact that Nagaraju's love for a Dalit girl is in itself presented as a mark of his modernity and big-heartedness. In fact the eloped lovers are almost completely cut off from the happenings in the village and only a radio announcement about the opening of the temple to the Dalits brings them back.

Initially we are given the impression that the contrast between the attitudes of the conflicting castes and the lovers, as well as the timing of the latter's first meeting, is an indication that the romance is central to the resolution of the caste conflict. We soon realise, however, that the romance has a distinct trajectory of its own and the lovers abandon the village for a modern space - Calcutta - in which caste differences do not threaten their love.

The prohibition of physical contact is an important signifier of the operation of caste prejudice in the film, and the crucial importance of the romance lies in its defiance of the prohibition against touch. On this theme an interesting discussion takes place between the two sisters, Sampalata and Anasuya, about whether Nagaraju will touch them. Anasuya confidently states, "*those who have studied English do not have such inhibitions"*. Touch is frequently deployed to signal intimacy between the lovers.

Running parallel to Nagaraju's transgression of caste boundaries, inspired by English education, is the more political, Gandhian, struggle whose victory becomes imminent when two Dalits, Munayya and Nagayya, rush into the head priest's burning house and carry his trapped wife to safety. Nagaraju's modernism, which takes him to the quintessentially modern city, is neither condemned nor ridiculed. Nevertheless it is inadequate to resolve the crisis in the public domain, which requires the intervention of Chowdarayya.

Beyond Caste: The Politics of Chowdarayya

Chowdarayya is an upper caste Congressman (his name suggests that he is a Kamma, a non-Brahmin and non-Dalit)

who organises the Dalits against the Brahmins, but who also preaches to the latter and reforms the former. Early in the film he is shown as the sole representative of the Dalits. He is thrown out of the house by his landlord for this but he merely says that he is a 'harijan' and without any fuss goes to the Dalit hamlet. The migration of the 'caste Hindu' to the hamlet is an indication that he has shed his caste and is thus qualified to reform both Brahmins and Dalits: the nationalist subject does not have a caste.

His speeches to Sharma play an important role in the Brahmins' transformation. In the last, he convinces Sharma that there are 'untouchables' in every caste. Simultaneously, he persuades the Dalits to 'civilise' themselves in order to acquire the moral authority to challenge the practice of untouchability. It is only Chowdarayya who is in this position to overcome the ancient excess of caste. Neither the transformed Dalit nor the reformed Brahmin is allowed to stake a claim to this privilege. However, the character of 'caste-less' Chowdarayya must be seen in the context of Gandhian-nationalist politics. His character is an epitome of the Gandhian politics of *Satyam* ('Truth') and *Ahimsa* ('Love') and this is symbolised when he is wounded while stopping the mobs of Dalits and Brahmins.

While the 'caste-less' Congressman can be read as a symbol of Gandhian ideals, his character should also be understood in the context of non-Brahmin or anti-Brahmin politics during this period. It is quite possible to explain the intentions of the character in terms of Ramabramham's proximity to the non-Brahmin movement and to his own caste origin as a Kamma. As already noted, Ramabramham had long associations with the non-Brahmin movement and the Justice Party and had

worked closely with prominent non-Brahmin leaders in the Madras presidency.

Rambramham's first film, *Malapilla* received a major contribution from screenplay writer and eminent non-Brahmin intellectual Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu, who also belonged to the Kamma caste. Hence the film can perhaps partly be seen as a Kamma attack on the Brahmin community. A detailed analysis of *Malapilla* will certainly establish, caught up with the issue of nationalist politics, the subtle reflections of caste conflict between Kammas and Brahmins.

The first scene starts with Chowdarayya entering the Dalit hamlet as a saviour from outside. The very naming of the character symbolises the caste affiliations of Chowdarayya and makes a subtle reference to the politics of the non-Brahmin movement. The second scene establishes the social stratification in the village in which Sharma warns Nagaraju not to attend Congress meetings. Chowdarayya, who propagates the ideals of Congress, is, as mentioned, seen as 'caste-less'.

The ideological conflict is presented as a between 'caste-less' Congress reformers (understood as Kammas) and dogmatic and conservative Brahmins. Malapilla and the Dalits, who are the main subjects of the film, become mere spectators, while the caste-less, Gandhian figure of Chowdarayya becomes their mouth-piece. The other castes in the village are significantly absent. Except on a few occasions, people belonging to different castes are ignorant of the developments in the village. The characters in the film suggest that there are only two castes in Kalyanapuram, and the conflict is limited exclusively to Dalits and Brahmins.

Resisting the Feudal: *Rythu Bidda*

The positive response he received to *Malapilla* encouraged Gudavalli to come up with another challenging theme that is concerned with farmers - *Rythu Bidda*, one of the first revolutionary films in Telugu. The story is about a peasant who rebels against the Zaminadari system. In *Rythu Bidda*, social conflict leads to a different kind of resolution. While it shares many similarities with *Malapilla*, the most striking difference is that unlike the Dalits in the earlier film, the farmers here are seen representing themselves. This has a great deal to do with the fact that this group is represented as being predominantly upper caste or of peasant castes (but non-Brahmin), and being fully capable of making its voice heard.

Unlike the Dalits, the farmers are not made to undergo a process of self-reform led by outsiders. The agent of the reformist initiative here is Narsi Reddy (Bellari Raghava), himself a member of the farming community. The significant difference in the representation of the Dalits and farmers underscores the relationship between caste and self-representation. The film works to produce the normative nationalist subject as a member of the non-Brahmin upper castes (two of the farmers' representatives, Narsi Reddy and Rami Reddy, have caste suffixes to their names, similar to Chowdarayya in *Malapilla*).

Their nationalist aspirations are emphasised by the opening song, which declares that farmers are the backbone of India. Even as it establishes the farming community as the centre of the nation, the film re-shapes the social order in the village, transforming the existing relationships and creating a new order devoid of antagonism. The way in which this order is

established is the subject of the film. Here, the character of Narsi Reddy is contrasted with the values of the feudal Zamindar system throughout the film.

The film begins by asserting that he is a man of considerable social standing, naming him as the leader of the farmers. He demonstrates his worth by undergoing an ordeal of endless suffering instead of abandoning his principles. It is as if he qualifies to be the leader of the people because he suffers more than anyone else. In fact Narsi Reddy's authenticity as a farmers' representative rests on his ability to face hardship on behalf of the other farmers. The film does not depict the difficulties faced by the farming community (although the opening song and subsequent songs by a sage repeatedly dwell on the misery of the community). The only evidence of this provided by the narrative is the hardship experienced by Narsi Reddy's family.

The family's suffering is therefore crucial for underscoring the representativeness of Narsi Reddy, both as a typical example of the farmer brought to grief by the oppressive Zamindari system as well as in terms of Reddy's stature as the spokesman of the class. Notable in this regard is Narsi Reddy's frequent generalisation of his condition as being typical of the entire community. For instance, when offered a bribe to support the Zamindar candidate in the election he says, "*At least now you should realise that in civilised society the farming community [Rythu Jati] alone remains free of corruption*".

It is necessary that he be seen suffering - by the spectator as well as by the farmers and their opponents - in order for him to become the representative of the community. When the Zamindar's men confiscate Narsi Reddy's cow and injure his

daughter, the villagers are shown commenting on the injustice and brutality of the act, verbalising the spectator's own response. It is clear that the election of the farmers' representative, and by extension the acquisition of political power, although seen as being important, does not lead to a solution of the larger problem of Zamindari oppression and the social divisions which it causes.

Agents of Transformation

It seems that the film anticipates independence and goes on to imagine the nation as a unified community. This involves the complete reformation of the Zamindar, achieved partly by transferring the responsibility for the oppression of the farmer to his servant and brother. Like the priest in *Malapilla*, the Zamindar emerges in a positive light largely because of the greater evil done by others. Both these films open with songs exhorting what are apparently their target groups, Dalits and farmers, to wake up.

Interestingly, in both films issues to do with agency are introduced from the very beginning in the form of Harijana Seva Sangham (an association working for the Dalits) and Rythu Sangham (a farmers' association). *Rythu Bidda*'s opening song is accompanied by panoramic shots of the rural landscape interspersed with scenes of village life: agricultural activity, cock fights, and so on. A prayer to a pair of bullocks by the family of the protagonist immediately follows the song and soon after we are shown dozens of farmers tilling the land. The opening sequences of these films are interesting because the oppressed groups are on the receiving end, and agency comes from outside the village.

The space we see on the screen is thus one that has to be transformed: its inhabitants have not yet woken up from darkness. Indeed the space is rendered visible by the agency that will transform it, the Seva Sanghams. Further, the camera goes on to identify and name the nationalist subject who will play a key role in this transformation even as he is repeatedly punished by the object(s) of reform. The gaze of the camera is thus a transformative/reformist one. What appears on the screen will be reformed by the very act of the technology of rendering it visible. This is not only true of the oppressed groups - who will be organised and have their problems solved - but also of the oppressors, for they too will change for the better in the course of the film.

Notes and References

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51 / New Developments in Pakistani Cinema

Ahmad Bilal

Introduction

The Pakistan Film Industry, nicknamed 'Lollywood', once made an average of 100 films a year. In the 1970s and 1980s, especially, film production was prolific: in the peak year of 1970 some 124 films were produced and the number of cinemas was around 1,300. However, in the last two decades it has been facing a continuous decline, and in 2012 not a single Urdu-language film was released. [1]

The traditional form is known as '*masala*' - all kind of spices mixed together in a dish - involving a single plot-line delivered through a variety of genres, similar to the Bollywood model. Bollywood, for its part, has become the world's biggest film cluster in terms of output, and is doing

well in Pakistan, but the related films from Lollywood have been continuously diminishing in popularity.

In the face of this decline, films like Shoaib Mansoor's *Khuda Kay Liye* (In the *Name of God*, 2007) and his *Bol* (2011) have enjoyed box-office success across Pakistan as well as in India. Films such as these do not follow existing trends and have worked as a source of inspiration for the new generation of film-makers. A new kind of Pakistani cinema has been evolving which has its roots in TV drama, pop music and the fashion industry. I call it 'emergent cinema'.

Very little material is available about the recent history of the Pakistan Film Industry. My research looks at the fifty-year period from 1947 to 1997 before considering subsequent developments in terms of 'established' cinema (what we might call 'old' media) and the 'emergent' cinema associated with the contemporary era of media convergence.

I look to a new cinema which can bridge the gap between the two. In this essay I consider key films such as *Khuda Kay Liye* and *Bol*, together with Lashari's *Waar* (2013) against the background of decline. I do so with the help of qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews with key industry personnel which help to address the socio-political context and its impact on the films and film-makers.

The Film Industry in Pakistan

Lahore, the cultural hub of Pakistan, has enjoyed the status of the second most important film city of the sub-continent after Bombay. The first silent film made in Lahore, Shankradev Arya's *Daughters of Today* (1928), was made just over a decade after the release of the first feature film from the sub-continent, Dadsaheb Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra*

(1913), produced in Bombay. Pakistan is a recently formed country, and its film industry has been showing progress in the fifty years since Partition in 1947.

The medium of film has never been fully acknowledged by policy-makers, although a certain control has always been exercised. In the beginning, some individuals created studios, technological facilities, and opportunities for talent to grow. However, there has been no concerted effort to construct an industry.

Dictatorship has also been considered as one of the biggest reasons for the intellectual and industrial decay of Pakistani film. In 1977 Pakistan was placed under Martial Law. In the regime of Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, such features as the re-distribution of power, political and religious censorship, government control, intellectual curtailment, and the lack of financial investment had an inevitable impact on cinema.

Eric Egan has pointed to the Indian dominance in the region and its threat to Pakistani cinema. He also highlights the drawbacks of policy-making, as it only aimed to maintain the *élite* and in a way tried to control the film industry.[2] It can be argued that policy-makers were never serious about the cinema industry and that cinema was always considered as a 'boys' night out' kind of activity.

Policy-making, education and technical growth have thus been neglected. These factors have combined to limit the scope of film subjects to love stories or to narratives concerned with action and violence. As a result the link between established cinema and society has been weakened, and then further damaged after 9/11. Traditional films were not situated within the socio-political landscape of Pakistan.

The global 'War on Terror' on the North-West border of Pakistan has been continuously damaging the economy and peace of the country since 2001-2. Former Finance Minister of Pakistan Shahid Javed Burki reminds us that the official record shows losses of up to 5% of the country's GDP, or $9 billion a year - six times the amount of annual U.S. aid.[3]

He further mentions the rise in terrorist attacks on urban centres, which have killed more than 15,000 people over the last six years. The society has suffered greatly from the 'War on Terror' and has been divided on the basis of religious sectarianism or political affiliation. This has had a highly negative impact on the 'established cinema' of Pakistan, with the number of films dropping to zero in 2012.

The 2002 Media Liberation Act

In contrast, 'emergent' cinema, taking a more direct approach, has tried to focus on basic social issues. Indeed, the post-9/11 scenario has been the catalyst here. Cara Cilano, for instance, considers *Khuda Kay Liye* to be one of the strongest fictional responses to 9/11.[4] The film has enjoyed box office success in Pakistan and has also opened the doors to the Indian market after a break of more than four decades.

In Pakistan, the success of this film has been linked to the superior picture quality and sound of the film. Indeed, this success has highlighted technology as one of the main weaknesses of traditional Pakistani films. Syed Noor, for his part, also suggested to me in interview that every industry is producing formulaic films whose only difference is in the area of technology.

The idea that the technology can provide a solution to the dire problems facing the film industry is also linked with the accessibility of new and convergent media in the country. The Media Liberation Act of 2002 broke the State's monopoly on electronic media and TV broadcasting. It led to a boom in Pakistani electronic media and gave it new political clout. Before media liberation there were only two State-controlled television channels in Pakistan, whereas now there are as many as 90 independent television networks.

Thanks to this expansion, new digital technology is available at relatively low cost and this has also broadened the base of human resource. The changes brought about by the Act have equipped programme-makers with new digital technology, and have created public awareness of the major socio-political issues of the day, in turn broadening the market for the new 'emergent' cinema.

The 'War on Terror'

The 'War on Terror' on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, the rising tension with India on the Eastern border, and growing violence in the society, are but a few of the major issues. However, precisely how new and convergent media can benefit the film industry is still to be fully understood.

Khuda Kay Liye deals with the sufferings of Pakistani family members in the post-9/11 world at the hands of both Islamic fundamentalists and the U.S. Government. This conscious effort to create a link social reality has an impact on the form of the film. It feels, at certain points, as though drama is being grafted on to documentary.

The film has been criticised for being too concerned with 'issues', with the characters and the incidents in which they become involved simply being used as tools to elaborate certain points.[5] For example Mansoor, a music student from Pakistan, interacts for the first time with his American class-mate Jenny:

Jenny: "*So where is your country on the globe?*"
Mansoor: "*My country is called Pakistan*."
Jenny: "*Right, Pakistan. Where is Pakistan on the globe?"*
Mansoor: "*Well let's see. I will just show it to you. Ok. This is Iran, that's Afghanistan, that's China and that's India and Pakistan … in the centre.*"

Here, the ideology of co-existence as well as nationalism is tackled with clarity. The film-maker has respect for all the neighbouring countries, but as a true nationalist he places Pakistan right in the centre.

He also points to the fact that Pakistanis are fighting the American 'War on Terror', even though Americans are not even perhaps conscious of Pakistan's borders or its existence. These subjects have never been discussed in traditional cinema and cannot be shown in the *masala* genre. As Mansoor himself explained to me in 2012, he used the film as a tool to explain obvious issues that have nonetheless been ignored by experts as well as by the masses.

'Established' and 'Emergent' Cinema

Established film-makers mostly learned their art from their colonial predecessors, and transferred these skills and assumptions to their successors. They have been following the old sets of rules and have mostly relied on their hands-on training.

The acceptance of *Khuda Kay Liye* provided an alternative path for film-making and a new way to link a story-line to actuality. The subsequent success of *Bol* (2011), Mansoor's second film, with its story of a woman sentenced to death and re-telling her life-story, pushed the boundaries further and inspired a new generation of film-makers.

The new generation is also not satisfied with the approach of the international media, because it has damaged the image of Pakistan. Many young Pakistani film-makers complain about the international media, as it places greater emphasis on the negative extremes of the country, while their concern is to show the 'normal' society of Pakistan.[6]

This desire has also motivated the new emergent cinema to target the global audience and in some cases, English has also been used along with Urdu. *Kuda Ke Liye* is partly in English, while 70% of the dialogue of *Waar*, the story of a retired security office who returns to save the country from terrorist attack, is also in English.

This has already led to a discussion about the relation of a national cinema to the national language. However, the success of these films, especially the record-breaking earnings of *Waar*, have to some extent answered questions about the audience response and box-office potential of these films in the local market.

Conclusion

A gap - in terms of ideology, practice and addressing socio-political issues - has been observed between the emergent and the established cinema. Shaan Shahid admits that there is a gap between trained film-makers and the educated

practitioners, and his mission is to bridge that gap. Shahzad Rafique also categorises the films of Shoaib Mansoor as representative of a different kind of cinema. Although both these forms of cinema are dealing with the same society and the same set of issues, their responses are quite different.

For instance, established cinema considers Government support as one of the key factors for revival. In contrast, Mansoor believes that the availability of digital technology is what will boost the medium. He predicts that a better cinema will evolve very soon. By contrast, some practitioners consider that 'new' media are simply following the 'old', and that they are in fact doing no more than to refine the same old product. Another concern with modern digital technology is that it has an impact on regional boundaries.

Mansoor's aspiration for what he calls a "*bigger cinema movement*" with the help of new and convergent media can be fulfilled only if technology is utilised to strengthen the other side of society. Policy-makers and educators should play a conscious role in evolving the art of film-making. Technology in the hands of the common man or woman can broaden the available human resource and can also provide a voice for the majority.

Indeed, there are points of convergence or conjunction that aren't acknowledged in this relationship of old and new styles. This gap needs to be conceptualised at the aesthetic, historical and technological levels. Therefore, the future objective of this research is to observe the newly 'emergent' films in relation to 'established' cinema and to discover the concepts and techniques which may help to bridge the gap between the two.

Acknowledgment

I am most grateful to leading figures in the Pakistan Film Industry for granting me interviews in the course of 2012, from which I have quoted here: directors Bilal Lashari, Shoaib Mansoor, Syed Noor, Shahzad Rafique, director and actress Samina Peerzada and actor, director and producer Shaan Sahid.

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12. Cultural Memory

52 / Questions of British National Identity and Scottish Devolution in *Chariots of Fire*

Lindsay Davies

Politics and the Olympics

In 2012 the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) wanted Scotland to enter its own team at the London Olympics, affirming its commitment to the principle that Scotland should be a stand-alone nation. The Games themselves offered an inclusive vision: in the opening ceremony, singing children in Ireland, Scotland and Wales were quickly subsumed by Danny Boyle's epic re-creation of England's "green and pleasant" land. While there was protest over the proposal that the Scottish Flag should not fly over the Glasgow football stadium venue, and some Welsh and Scots team members offended by refusing to sing the UK National Anthem, the 2012 Games passed without major incident.

This gathering of nations, however, has frequently been marred by violent acts or used as a forum for bans, boycotts and protests. In 1920 Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary and Turkey were barred because of their role in WWI. Hitler used the Games to showcase the claimed superiority of the Aryan race in 1936, while in 1948 Japan and Germany were excluded. In Munich in 1972 the Black September guerrilla organisation murdered eleven Israeli hostages and one policeman in an attempt to secure the release of 200 Arab prisoners from Israeli jails.

Apartheid South Africa was excluded from the Games from 1966 until 1992, and 1980 the US led a Western boycott of the Moscow Games in protest at the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. In 1984, The Soviet Union retaliated by boycotting the Los Angeles Olympics. The troubled journey of the Olympic torch in 2008 reminded us again that politics and sports seem to be inseparable. London 2012 had promised to be no different – but on this occasion the anticipated political upset lay within one nation: the fabled unity of Britain since 1707 was under symbolic challenge from the independence movement spearheaded by Scotland's ruling SNP.

Hugh Hudson's *Chariots of Fire* (UK, 1981) is set in the context of the VIIIth Olympiad held in Paris 1924. The film was in production as the USA/Soviet Union controversy brewed in 1980. Consequently, a preface was added to the second draft of the screenplay of *Chariots* expressing disdain for the intrusion of politics into sport. "*These are sour days in Olympic history*," it reads, before going on to praise earlier times when "*the young people who gathered under the five rings did so of their own volition … fired by their own purpose, inspired by their own dreams and seeking only to test*

themselves, on their own behalf, against the fastest, the strongest, the highest on earth".[1]

The real-life athletes whose stories are told in *Chariots of Fire* are obviously examples of such young people. The preface extols Eric Liddell and Harold Abrahams' athletic triumphs as the victory of the individual over the political. Their stories in the film, which are slightly distorted but basically factual, show each of them battling the English Establishment over a matter of personal principle. Abrahams, a Jew, runs to prove his worth as Englishman against the prejudice of the English ruling class.

Liddell, the son of Scots Protestant missionaries, refuses to run a race that is scheduled on a Sunday, despite pressure from the Olympic Committee to put duty to country first. He eventually runs and wins, on his own terms, on another day. The film's left-leaning politics, from the film-makers' point of view, adhered in this resistance to the bigoted Establishment (Abrahams) and a guilty post-WWI national pride (Liddell). By emphasising individual triumph, however, the film inadvertently opened itself up to political ambiguity.

Chariots of Fire and Thatcherism

After only modest success on its initial release in 1981, *Chariots of Fire* surprisingly went on to win Best Picture and three further Academy Awards the next year. "*The British are coming!*" declaimed screen-writer Collin Welland triumphantly at the 1982 Oscar ceremony. Within a month, this patriotic cry was rendered literal in the very different context of the Falklands Crisis. In response to Argentina's seizure of the British colony of the Falklands, Prime Minister

Margaret Thatcher sent British warships to re-take the islands in a show of military force. In the midst of the crisis, which produced an outpouring of patriotic rhetoric and flag-waving among the Establishment and the populace, the *Daily Mail* announced that Thatcher would clear her schedule to watch a special screening of *Chariots of Fire*.

Director Hugh Hudson and Producer David Puttnam were both perturbed at the film's appropriation by the Thatcherite Right. Puttnam remarked: "*What really upset me was that the film in terms of its content is extremely anti-establishment. It's about, if you like, the corruption of the establishment. And somehow or other that message got completely washed to one side in this notion that it was a flag-waving triumph*".[2]

The story of Harold Abrahams, however, lends itself overtly to Thatcherite ideology. Abrahams challenges the bigotry of the English Establishment as ethnic outsider who makes known his disgust at the privileged old boys' network that dismisses ambition and effort as "*plebeian*" In a scene where he is scolded by the Masters of Caius and Trinity College, Cambridge, for employing a professional coach, he accuses them of holding "*the archaic values of the prep-school playground*", declaring "*I believe in the pursuit of excellence, and I'll carry the future with me*".

But the problem with this attack on the governing Conservative *élite* is that Abrahams' individualism is a ringing endorsement of the very concept of meritocracy which lay at the heart of Thatcher's policies. The grocer's-daughter-from-Grantham herself exemplified Abrahams' belief that success belongs with those who work for it. "*I believe we should judge people on merit and not on background*" she said. "*I*

believe that person who is prepared to work hardest should get the greatest rewards …That we should back the workers and not the shirkers".[3]

The political implications of the film, with its rich and contradictory mix of anti-establishment protest and flag-waving patriotism, thus far exceeded the film-makers' intentions. James Chapman, however, rightly cautions against interpreting *Chariots of Fire* as a mere Thatcherite parable, since to do so "*is to read back in to the film knowledge of what Thatcherism was to become by the mid-1980s … the rhetoric of national greatness that came to be so indelibly associated with the Thatcher government was very much a product of the Falklands War and was much less in evidence before 1982. It was as much the (accidental) timing of* [the film] *as any intent on the part of the film-makers that allowed it to be appropriated by the right*".[4]

Nationality and Religion: Eric Liddell

The first half of *Chariots* cuts fairly evenly between the stories of Abrahams and Liddell, the former set against the magnificent architecture of Cambridge University and the latter against the lush hills and valleys of Scotland. Both settings work to shore up an image of glorious Britain that later, in the context of the Olympic competition, is realised in the British Team that promotes *esprit de corps* over local differences.

However, while most critics have examined the Liddell narrative as the representation of a conflict between religious rights and national duty, the association between Liddell's Protestantism and his Scottishness should not be underestimated. For in spite of its bucolic representation in

the film, Scotland is perhaps the key political focus in the film where today's audience is concerned.

Our first encounter with Liddell is at a local Highland Games in 1920. The camera sweeps across the scenery before homing in on fresh-faced children mingling with muscular men in tartan. Honoured guest Liddell, who is introduced as a national rugby star, expresses to the crowd his delight at the landscape, "*the heather on the hills*" and affirms publicly that, although he is "*Oriental born*" he is and always will be "*a Scot*". Liddell's birth in China, to Scottish missionaries, is perhaps an initial challenge to the idea that he is the representative Scotsman in this film, but it can also be seen to strengthen this idea. As Graham Walker notes, in the first decades of the 20th century, Presbyterianism was

"*a driving force behind an imperial identity which viewed the Empire as a means of showcasing and enhancing Scottish natural talents and virtues. Presbyterianism was central to a moral outlook which galvanized Scots to meet the challenges of empire building, missionary work, wealth creation and governance. Scotland's partnership with England in this imperial mission did not attenuate Scottish nationality; rather Scots considered their Scottishness to be complemented by wider British identification*".[5]

Chariots of Fire insists on the Scottishness of Liddell's virtues. They are the Scottish Presbyterian virtues of hard work, self-denial, abstinence and humility. The scene in which the Liddells leave chapel underscores the point. Scottish Presbyterianism is affirmed by the landscape, the humble grey stone church, and the various kilted worshippers. And non-conformist values are displayed by the strict adherence to the rules of the Sabbath when Liddell gently rebukes two

boys for playing football on the Lord's day. His observance of the Sabbath is strongly reinforced by his sister Jenny, who is fearful that he may neglect their missionary heritage.

The Heritage Film

In its depictions of British life, *Chariots of Fire* heralds the arrival of the 'heritage' movie, "*a style rather than a genre of British film-making that privileges pictorialist mise-en-scène, focuses on narratives of predominantly upper-class life, and is temporally set (usually) in the first half of the twentieth century*".[6] The heritage film, as an Eighties phenomenon, harked back to a pre-war Britain of privilege, Empire, and soft-focused landscapes.

The film's depictions of Scotland, however, conform to the competing traditions of cultural representation often referred to as 'Tartanry', involving a nostalgic image of a bygone Scotland dominated by national regalia and ethnic sterotypes, and 'Kailyard' ('cabbage patch'), involving the sentimental depiction of Scottish life as small-scale, parochial, and deeply religious. Both these traditions have become staples in cinematic depictions of Scotland, regularly accompanied by a picturesque backdrop of mountains and glens. While purporting to represent traditional Scotland, however, these national motifs were actually the product of the 19th Century.

As Geoffrey Wheatcroft tartly observes, "*for many non-Scots 'Scotland' immediately conjures up the Highlands, Rob Roy, Braveheart, kilts, and bagpipes … but the numerous tartans sold to every gullible American tourist named McSomething are the inventions of astute Victorian businessmen*".[7] Despite the inauthenticity of these national 'traditions', the Scottish

Nationalist Party, from its founding in 1934, employed them as something that differentiated Scotland, in attractive ways, from England and the Union. The implied historical association of highlanders in tartan with the Jacobite rebellion and earlier battles for independence are part of the attraction.

In 1995, for example, the SNP enthusiastically endorsed Mel Gibson's Hollywood epic *Braveheart* (USA, 1995) as a cultural justification for its policy of independence, despite the film's factual distortions of Anglo-Scottish medieval history. And the association of virtue that accompanies Kailyard Presbyterianism also had political value. Presbyterianism was long felt to be the national religion of Scotland, and the Nationalists were at one time seen as a Protestant Party - so much so that SNP was jocularly said to stand for "*Sorry, No Papists*". More crucially, Presbyterian values were set against the decadence and luxury of those in the governing class, who since Union in 1707 had ruled Scotland from the South.

Chariots of Fire: Historical Context

The makers of *Chariots* chose the traditional tropes for its Scottish scenes because they fit the nostalgic vision of Britain it promotes. But it was also a choice that drew attention to Scottish Nationalism, which had taken centre stage in political events concurrent with the film's inception. The screenplay's first draft was completed in April 1979. A month earlier, on March 1, the Scots had voted in a Referendum on devolution called by the UK's Labour Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan.

The winter of 1978-79 had been disastrous for Callaghan's government as trade union militancy stepped up in response

to an attempt to stabilise the economy by means of a policy that limited wage increases to five per cent. With unemployment spiralling out of control, British workers went on strike in unprecedented numbers, with disastrous national consequences. Additionally, Callaghan was faced with restless Scots increasingly wishing to separate themselves from the floundering Union.

Devolution looked attractive, as a goal in itself and as the first step towards national independence. The British Labour Party was divided over devolution, but Callaghan thought it useful, if for no other reason than it kept the SNP on his side. The Nationalists themselves, however, were also divided: should they continue supporting the government in the hope of achieving independence, or was devolution a compromise that would pre-empt the real goal of Scottish freedom?

The response of Scottish voters to the Referendum was apathetic. Some blamed this on a failure of national self-confidence brought on by Scotland's World Cup football humiliation in Argentina in 1978. But others assert that the political and economic context was by far the leading cause of the failure of the Referendum. James Mitchell concurs: "*Just when confidence in Britain was at one of its lowest points in post-war history, Scottish home rule was thwarted because it was not seen as an alternative to British decline but was associated with it*".[8] In the wake of this failure, the SNP wanted the Government to repeal the Bill, now viewing it now as an English 'red herring' and as a diversion from the nationalist cause.

In response to Callaghan's delay in acting, the SNP moved a vote of 'No Confidence' against the Labour Government. A General Election followed, as did Thatcher. She had

expressed cautious support of devolution at the time of the Referendum; but once in power, she had no time for it. To her, the Conservative Party was not an English Party but a Unionist Party. As Mitchell explains, "*Her attitude to Scotland was based on her belief that Scottishness got in the way of her project to reverse decline and put the 'Great' back into Britain*".[9]

Chariots of Fire enacts this recouping of Scottish nationalist feeling in the interests of British unity. As the film develops, the values of Scottishness established earlier are supported by Liddell's 'authentic' training methods (running over heather-covered hills, through shady glens, and along the pristine sands of Scotland's windy coast) and the soaring virtues of his victories followed up by humble preaching, in lilting Scots, to the crowds who had cheered him on. Moreover, at first, he runs emphatically as a Scot: Scotland against Ireland, Scotland against France.

At this latter meet, Stewart Tartan swirls as bagpipes play and Scottish integrity is contrasted with continental cheating. Liddell is tripped by a French runner, but gets up and races to victory, providing one of the film's chest-on-tape thrills. But later, when the 1924 team congregates, Liddell is caught in a dilemma that leads to the film's most overtly political scene.

Liddell and the British Establishment

The clash between Liddell's religious conscience and his duty as member of the British Olympic team is presented in highly political, indeed nationalistic, terms in a dramatic scene invented for the film. Confronted by the prestigious British

Olympic Committee (two Lords, one Duke, and a Prince), Liddell is greeted by the Prince of Wales, who remarks on the Scotsman's skill as a rugby player, wryly noting that he and Liddell "*are on the same side at last*". But the drama of this scene develops out of Liddell's stubborn refusal to be persuaded by such pleasantries, by the intimidation of the é*lite* classes, or by the noting of his patriotic duty. In response to the Prince of Wales' appeal to their "*common heritage*", Liddell replies: "*Sir, God knows I love my Country, but I love God more*".

This stand-off between stubborn non-conformist Scot and the Anglican Establishment is resolved by the intervention of Lord Andrew Lindsay, an invented character at the centre of the film's 'heritage' tendencies. By contrast with Abrahams' rigorous professional work-outs and Liddell's amateurism, Lord Lindsay jumps hurdles on his own estate, with a glass of champagne balanced by his butler on each one. The narrative, complicit in his allure, elevates him to the role of saviour: Lindsay offers to bow out of his second race (having already won his silver medal) and let Liddell run it instead.

Through an act of *noblesse oblige*, the British Olympic team, threatened by a stubborn Scot, is unified by the decency of Lindsay, and the patriotic agenda of the film's final scenes is assured. The British team represents national unity and social cohesion: English and Scottish; Anglican, Jew and non-conformist; aristocrat, upper class and middle class - all are unified in the British medal-winners Lindsay, Abrahams, and Liddell. This is what is celebrated by the famous credit sequence of the runners on the beach - an *esprit de corps*, in the words of the Master of Trinity to Abrahams earlier, that subordinates individual success to British, but more precisely *English*, glory.

My main point is ultimately a simple one. To see *Chariots of Fire* as entangled with the ideological complexities of Thatcherism, its meritocratic boosterism on the one hand and its patriotic traditionalism on the other, is understandable but requires a degree of historical amnesia. When this film was being made, and when it was released, the policies and patriotism of Thatcherism had not yet been established. However, in response to Scotland's straining at the leash, issues of nationalism within the Union had not only been headline news but also had been instrumental in Thatcher's election as Prime Minister.

The film-makers did not intentionally politicise the film in this way. Rather, I think that in 1981 *Chariots of Fire* constructed an image of Scotland from forms, conventions, and assumptions already circulating in the culture that meaningfully resonated with concurrent political events. It seems likely that such events were recalled as initial audiences watched the film north of the border.

Yet if the film symbolically re-enacts the absorption of stubborn Scottish separatism back into the Union, history tells us that this was temporary. As Thatcher's *régime* took hold, she became a hated figure in Scotland, where unemployment soared and Scottish industries suffered. Ironically, Thatcher herself paved the way to Scotland's devolution: she was "*the central factor in the rebirth of nationalism and home-rulery*".[10]

An independent Scottish Parliament met in Edinburgh in 1999 - for the first time since 1707 - and in 2014 the now ruling SNP were narrowly defeated in the Scotland-wide referendum on independence from the UK. In a landslide victory, however, they won 56 out of 59 Scottish seats in the

May 2015 UK General Election, and now form the third largest party in British politics. The Scottish independence issue thus continues to be a pressing issue for the future of the United Kingdom, re-contextualising and re-vivifying the Scots dimension of *Chariots of Fire*.

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53 / Pleasures of Nostalgia, Problems of Authenticity: 1970s America in Crowe's *Almost Famous*, Linklater's *Dazed and Confused*, and Scorsese's *The Last Waltz*

Justin Harrison

By comparing the nostalgic elements of three American 1970s-based films, we can better understand the period's history, both imagined and re-imagined. The three films each variously promote a nostalgic interpretation of their events which disturb their would-be authenticity, in the process distorting their own value as insights on the period. Two of the films, Richard Linklater's *Dazed and Confused* (1993) and Cameron Crowe's *Almost Famous* (2000), are fictionalised memoirs of their authors' youth in the 1970s, while the third, Martin Scorsese's *The Last Waltz* (1978), is a concert documentary film produced within the decade itself.

All three films aim to make audiences feel sentimental, in particular about its own youth. In delivering pleasant nostalgia, these films complicate - sometimes knowingly, sometimes not - the audience's understanding of 'real' history. *Dazed* and *Almost* are period pieces; The *Last Waltz* is a document of re-worked provenance, some of whose altered construction is on display. *Dazed*, through impressionistic, short scenes, follows several teens through a day and night on the last day of school in an unnamed American city in May 1976.

Set in 1973, *Almost Famous* is a more traditional and sentimental coming-of-age story following William, a precocious fifteen year-old boy who gets hired to write an article on an up-and-coming band for *Rolling Stone* magazine, and follows his efforts to stay true to the principles of journalistic integrity in the face of the awe he feels towards rock stars and their scene. *The Last Waltz* is a film of The Band's last public performance, in late 1976, interspersed with interviews with band members filmed after the event. It's a nostalgic celebration of a bygone era, namely the 60s youth of the Baby Boom generation, while serving as a revisionist, gate-keeping narrative of The Band's historical significance.

These works at times present the past in ways that neatly match our expected cultural stereotypes, reminding us of Jameson's argument that nostalgia films cause an estrangement from history. Indeed, cinema's mediation of the past raises issues of provenance, authority, and authenticity, which, in its "*pastiche of the stereotypical past*"[1] can encourage an a-historical reading of what went before. By placing the memoirs next to the documentary in this study, it is hoped the foregrounded nostalgic elements of the

films will enable us to better assess the authenticity of these narratives while still enjoying the films as spectacles of pleasure.

The Nostalgia Mode

Jameson suggests that nostalgia films "*restructure the whole issue of pastiche and project it onto a collective and social level.*"[2] Accordingly, historicity has been replaced by a new, aesthetic 'nostalgia mode'. The nostalgia mode satisfies a desperate craving for history while reinforcing and replacing the past as a "*fashionable and glossy pastness*".[3] Writing of George Lucas's *American Graffiti* (1973), Jameson claims that it "*set out to recapture*" the "*mesmerizing lost reality*" of a bygone era.[4] The films under discussion here are likewise intent on recapturing and recreating a naïve and mesmerising past.

Reflecting on popular music, Plasketes argues that, since the 1980s, "*'Re' has been the predominant cultural mode. This condition is an endless lifestyle loop of repeating, retrieving, rewinding, recycling, reciting, redesigning and reprocessing.*"[5] In this cultural mode we have been "*infatuated with the familiar*", a familiarity which film-makers like Crowe and Linklater can rely on as they construct their pastiche of re-purposed and retrieved impressionistic images and sounds. This familiarity prepares the audience to expect and receive that which is pleasurable, without too much critical thought.

These films invite us into their individual nostalgic modes in different ways, though their chosen focus on our youth makes all three particularly ripe for the pull of nostalgia. Crowe and Linklater directly tell stories of (more or less) adolescent good times, where teens are front and centre,

with, in Crowe's case, a number of twenty-somethings along for the carefree adolescent life that rock- and-roll stardom offers.

Linklater presents an ensemble of teenagers spending their time with no particular focus or ambition. Scorsese, in an overtly commemorative way, invites the boomer generation, now in its adulthood in 1978, to re-visit its shared youth with a central agent in their generation's popular music and political sensibilities of protest, social justice, and change, as embodied by The Band's lyrics, folk instrumentation, and affiliations with the doyen of this particular folk world, Bob Dylan.

Crowe's fictionalised memoir provides a sense of safe haven in a knowable past of stereotypes and light pastiche of music, clothes, and props evoking a light-hearted 'remembrance' of the past. The film is at times affecting, comic, and sentimental. Boym claims that Hollywood cinema, generally, "*both induces nostalgia and offers a tranquillizer*."[6] Certainly *Almost Famous* induces in us an almost catatonic nostalgia, a seamless, easy ride into a glossy feel-good past where no one really gets hurt.

Crowe's film thus neatly fits Jameson's observations on the way nostalgia films risk delivering the 'past' "*through stylistic connotation, conveying 'pastness' by the glossy qualities of the image and* [specific eras] *by the attributes of fashion.*"[7] However, Crowe's film is nonetheless able to deliver a pleasurable and particularly poignant film by hewing closely to a nostalgic coming-of-age text. As Speed observes, "*the nostalgic or rites-of-passage teen film is set in the past and structured around the protagonist's acquisition of greater maturity ... The acquisition of maturity is equated with*

greater understanding of past events, and a new capacity to face the future."[8]

Almost Famous certainly fits this coming-of-age, rites-of-passage template. We are drawn nostalgically to the film's setting, the rock and roll world of early 70s America, but we also grow nostalgic for our own youth, our own coming-of-age. Youth is ultimately what this film represents, the growth through knowledge experienced in some form or another by all the film's significant characters. Lured into a sort of temporal vacuum of nostalgia for a re-imagined past, like a fantasy world of fun-loving rock-and-roll, the audience is invited to project its wistful feelings for its own youth.

Music and the Meanings of the Past

However, *Almost Famous* suffers, in its pastiche, from what Shumway calls the "*postmodern image-society, in which images are supposed to replace any more substantial understanding of past or present*".[9] In addition to glossy scenes of showy exemplars of period dress, Crowe's use of music, while one of its main charms, risks replacing substantial descriptions or explanations of historical context and general narrative. Through their lyrics and/or mood, the songs which make up the film's soundtrack often act as descriptive shorthand to move the story along.

Indeed, famous music adorns virtually every scene, acting as a guiding agent in the establishment of emotional tone. For instance, Crowe uses music to demonstrate the shared love of music held in common by the characters and how it will conquer all, including conflict. In one scene, the main characters are moved to communally join in singing Elton John's 'Tiny Dancer', in the process overcoming a rift in the

band. Crowe uses feel-good music rather than dialogue to demonstrate this emotional arc. The past that comes down to us through films like these is the past that has survived a cultural popularity filter, which can exclude and leave behind other historical attributes that for whatever reason did not make the final cut.

Early on in the film, the protagonist as a young boy is given his older sister's collection of records, being advised by her that they will set him free. We watch him flipping through a series of classic rock-and-roll titles, signifying to us a shared and pre-established cultural experience with all these masterpieces of rock music. Connecting with these and other cultural stereotypes and Hollywood formulae, Crowe is able to deliver a historically-set film that is completely knowable by an audience detached from the setting by some thirty years. This past is familiar to us, as it confirms what has since been glamourised from the era.

Memory and Generation

The nostalgia here is a more fantastical one than in, say, Linklater's film. In *Almost*, the events in the characters' lives are truly significant ones, as if the protagonist is entering a dream-world of invitations and intimate opportunities not available to other people like him. *Dazed*, on the other hand, is all about the mundane, the idle, the typical exploits and moments of American teen life. It is from this collective, shared sense of experiences that *Dazed's* nostalgia truly emanates. Linklater couches this more nuanced film within the concerns of a day in the life of a typical small town American kid: school hi-jinks, sports, and partying.

As Davis has observed, there is in general a particular nostalgic fondness for the teen years.[10] This is an almost liminal point in our lives, he argues, before we are forced to take on the anxiety of the unknown and the responsibilities of adulthood - obligations of career, family, and advanced education. This later period of development and experience is unsettling, as it involves the new and unfamiliar, often in relatively quick succession. Thus the teen period is appealing as a safe return to a simpler time, both in terms of an understanding of the world and of our contributions in it. And so the idleness of Linklater's characters' lives appeals to us as both a familiar and carefree time in our lives.

In *The Last Waltz*, the nostalgia is directly tied to the portrayal of the concert and its recording on film as marking the end of an era. The Band had always traded on folk traditions in both its lyrics and anti-rock star, rural associations in lifestyle (for instance often posing in pastoral settings in promotional photos), folk instruments, and dress, as well as the bygone era of 50s rock-and-roll. Scorsese feeds on these old-time associations to reinforce the nostalgic mode of his film.

The Band's concert performance and re-telling of stories in interviews enshrines nostalgia for them but also for a generation who grew up with them and identifies with them. Scorsese starts the film with the concert's final encore before 'flashing back' to other songs, thus animating and reinforcing the backward gaze which will characterise the film. Indeed, the concert can even be seen as elegiac, the end of an era which The Band is laying to rest, while the band members themselves seem "*morose, exhausted, played out*."[11] Thus the audience is also made to feel nostalgic for the end of its own youth.

The Authenticity of Social Interaction

One of the most authentic aspects of all these films is the subtle display of social interaction which we witness, especially among the characters in *Dazed and Confused*. They are morally ambiguous - one character can be both ugly and good in the film - and, in a sense, 'real'. We see the main characters who we are meant to empathise with as they quietly distance themselves from less pleasant characters, subtly exiting scenes at crucial moments to remove themselves from an unappealing event to come. In this way Linklater is effective at deploying an impressionistic style to capture and convey the individual moments in the characters' lives, creating something like the snippets of memory we might keep of our own lived experiences.

Linklater has characters come in and out of scenes, sometimes as leading players in a given scene, sometimes as incidental characters, in a deft reflection of a teen's rise and fall within a fluid social hierarchy. The representation of very subtle status indicators, showing us who's who in the pecking order, is one of the main strengths of the film. The film is thus very ambiguous in its portrayal of the social ladder, that crucial element of high school life.

It is always there on display, but it is not emphasised. One of the film's great and unique strengths is that Linklater does not pass judgment on any of the characters. He does allow us glimpses of how a given character's peers judge him or her, but even these moments, though telling and incisive, are understated, such as when the older high school drop-out repels two-thirds of a trio of smart friends while at the same time being found attractive by the third.

Lending it some of its authenticity, the nostalgia of *The Last Waltz* is to a strong degree also a yearning for social and political relevance. The Woodstock era, so uniquely and deeply associated with social upheaval, is in a sense coming to a close with this film. The Band came out of the Sixties, which valued spontaneity and authenticity, as opposed to the calculated, polished glam of the 70s. There is a sense of authenticity being related to tradition as a bulwark against change, or against commercialism, as may be the case in the world of rock.

The Band, in their ambivalence towards fame, and the historical/traditional themes of their lyrics, exemplified this aspect of authenticity. The physique and clothing of Band members, their understated live show, and their mundaneness in offstage interviews, also make a contribution. In contrast to the sculpted physiques of the actors portraying rock stars in *Almost Famous*, The Band consists of guys who are pasty and scrawny, with bad teeth, and who are in many cases nigh unintelligible owing to both the knocks and the indulgences of the rock-and-roll lifestyle.

Reflexive Fabrication

Scorsese challenges lighthearted nostalgia more than Crowe and Linklater. On one hand Scorsese is providing nostalgia through a representation of an idealised past, and on the other he is providing a documentary that is ostensibly revealing a more true representation, which he both provides and questions. By showing not only documentary sounds and images but also by drawing attention to their fabrication, Scorsese appears more trustworthy in his present tense, cinematic construction of the elegiac, of

nostalgic past-ness. This concert is marking the end of some sixteen years on the road as a touring band. Thus the film is an attempt to solidify the legacy of The Band and to close this era on a positive note. As such, the whole enterprise of the *Last Waltz* is an effort in historiography, providing general narrative contours for posterity.

Scorsese demonstrates a sort of truth while displaying the artifice of constructing a nostalgic feel in the stop and start of certain interview segments. For example, in the opening interview, as if to immediately alert the audience, Scorsese consciously cuts the film in such a way as to demonstrate that choices are being made here in terms of what is included, and what is being cut. This fabrication is viewed through the inclusion of a false start on a reply and the re-asking a question in order to challenge the original answer.

Scorsese places such an authorial imprint on the film that it rises beyond simply being an archival document; rather, it transforms into a work of 'Scorsese' art through its artistic, thematic, and aesthetic construction.[12] For instance Scorsese almost entirely excludes shots of the concert audience. For a concert film this is rare, if not unique. For the film audience this technique creates an intimacy with the band which certainly could not be there in this way for the thousands of 'live' audience members in the original concert hall.

In the process, Scorsese is constructing something other than a concert-going experience. He is creating an intimate portrayal of a band in performance, focusing on the experience of the band members undergoing a demanding performance in the spotlight while adapting on-on-the-fly to an ever-shifting line-up of guest performers. By focusing the concert footage exclusively on the performers, balanced with

the band members' interview footage, Scorsese is bringing to the fore the lives of the band, the life of rock-and-roll, extending it out beyond simply a loose rock concert film. *The Last Waltz* then becomes a document about the intensely personal life of rock rather than a narrower document of one night's performance.

Each of the three films then provides a distinct glimpse into how nostalgia interacts with its counterpart, authenticity, sometimes with more smoothness, sometimes with greater friction. Taken together, these three films go some way towards describing the lures and pleasures of nostalgia in mainstream film. We are able to buy in more easily to the myths, both large and small, offered in these films because, as Boym suggests, past eras are "*ideal animals for the nostalgia industry because nobody remembers them*".[13] Thus America in the 70s, an era for so long defined in shorthand as superficial and bland, with its polyester fashions and soul-less disco music, can be seen nostalgically, now that a few decades have passed. All three directors are encouraging the audience to 'remember' the past for nostalgia's sake, but they are doing so on their own terms.

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54 / Martial Arts Spectacles and Cultural Memory in Trans-local Hong Kong Action Cinema

Esther C. M. Yau

Introduction

Within a few short years following the 1997 handover by the UK, Hong Kong has re-branded itself as 'Asia's World City', in addition to its political status as China's Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). The glittering waterfront skylines of Hong Kong and Kowloon, already visual statements of capitalist modernity, continue to rise vertically. For forty-five minutes each evening, the skyscrapers are animated by colourful laser beams shooting rhythmically from the top of sixty buildings on both sides of the harbour.

They turn Hong Kong's Victoria harbour into a virtual 'sky-screen', which, along with synchronised electric music, is the site of a spectacular 'Symphony of Lights' which draws

tourists to dine at harbour-front restaurants and projects a picture of prosperity in the HKSAR that has its precedents in the colonial era. Created by the new digital technologies, the display enjoys the support of the corporations that have made Hong Kong a financial centre connected to regional and global networks. The nightly spectacle anchors an image of Hong Kong in the corporate dimensions of the cityscape.

In *The Society of Spectacle*, Debord poses the idea that the relationship of spectacle to time is marked by consumption of images connected to a "*paralysed*" (or one may say, simulated) relationship to history.[1] Applying this view to the scenario above, one may say that for the tourists of Mainland China who go to Hong Kong for luxury shopping, take pictures by the Bruce Lee statue, and enjoy the Victoria harbour phantasmagoria, the experiences are merely mesmerising; effacing history, they make no connection between the city's colonial past and its present.

In this essay, I discuss the martial arts spectacles of Hong Kong Cinema to consider something other than mere paralysis. Using the lens of cultural memory and the capacity to evoke cognitive capacity, my essay takes these spectacles as a point of departure from which to discuss the paradoxical recognition of the traumatising forces of modernity and the embrace of technology. Take, for example, the films of Bruce Lee, and the numerous scenes in which the protagonist overcomes humiliation with his martial arts body.

The Spectacle of Martial Arts

These films take on symbolic meaning by referencing colonial pasts and nationalist sentiments, yet in trans-national consumption this has lend to racial empowerment as well as

to simple admiration of martial arts skills. Chang Cheh's classic martial arts film, *The One-Armed Swordsman* (1967), enacts traumatic injury and displacement in a wounded male body to re-fashion modern masculinity on screen. This can be taken as a symbolic response to the conflicting pressures of conformity and individuation. Romantic and anti-romantic visions have also appeared in Hong Kong action cinema and martial arts films when they made a masculine turn in the 1980s.

This essay considers the martial arts spectacle in a Hong Kong trans-local film in relation to the genre's mixed cultural memory. In particular it focuses on the references, the digital kinetics, and the trauma story in the film *Dragon* (*Wu Xia*, 2011). The film is directed by Peter Chan and appears among a larger corpus of trans-local action cinema and martial arts/sword- play films that include such titles as *Ip Man* (2008), *Bodyguards and Assassins* (2009), and *The Grandmaster* (2013). Whereas the movies of Bruce Lee and Chang Cheh have put Hong Kong cinema on the world map since the 1970s, more recent titles are trans-locally made in Mainland China with native Hong Kong directors and artists working with Mainland Chinese writers and talents.

Many draw from the legacies of martial arts cinema to assert the brand name of Hong Kong, which is not unlike the way digital spectacles affirm the metropolitan identity of Hong Kong in the 'Symphony of Lights' display. In industrial terms, they are made as blockbuster movies with an average production budget of around US $20 million per film. Star salary and publicity usually take up a large portion of the budget. Critics have taken note of the absence of local Cantonese expressions and sentiments in these films, along with self-censorship and government censorship. The terms

"*(auto-) Mainlandization*" and "*Sinophone translocality*" have been coined to analyse the changes in Hong Kong film industry since the mid-2000.[2] Still, the films' cultural memory is mixed rather than mono-cultural as they continue to reference martial arts classics along with American media.

Wu Xia (Dragon)

On global screens, the success of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) established a pattern whereby martial arts combat figures are both beautiful and intense, for example in the duel between the characters played by Chow Yun-fat and Zhang Zi-yi as they balance on the tips of bamboo branches. Fight scenes beautifully rendered on film such as that between the characters played by Maggie Cheung and Zhang Zi-yi in *Hero* are virtual rather than actual, with the emphasis on stunning visual beauty.[3] Aesthetics become a major marker of the trans-national appeal of swordplay and martial arts films to an art-house movie audience, whose members are otherwise not fans of martial arts features.

The success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *Hero* have prompted later productions to take advantage of talent and resources drawn from the film cultures of Hong Kong, Taiwan, mainland China, and the U.S. As a trans-local Hong Kong film *Dragon* thus exploits the new economic, material, and cultural resources of Mainland China's expanding commercial film culture. The adoption of the name *Dragon* as the English title for the trans-local film whose Chinese name is *Wu Xia* is one small indication that it seeks to recoup costs and make profits in the China market and also gain access to global screens.

The story of *Dragon* is to do with paying a price for the freedom to choose one's identity and way of life. The son of the Clan of 72 Killers works in a paper mill and is a dutiful husband and father. But when Jinxi inadvertently reveals his martial arts skills and alarms an official investigator, the past begins to catch up with him. Clan members appear in the village and insist that Jinxi is the 'Dragon' (*Tang Long*) of their Clan.

The fierce fights that ensue confirm Jinxi's possession of superior martial arts skills, even though he fights to remain in the village rather than to eliminate his clan members. His presence now poses a potential threat to the community and an official investigator seeks to lock him up. A similar story is familiar from American Westerns; the man of violence has to pay a price and may not be assimilated to the community of peaceful citizens. Here, the price is physical mutilation.

An early scene in the story introduces some thugs going to rob a village store. They are killed when Liu Jinxi, a mild-looking worker and family man, resists them by what appears at first to be brute force. The resulting death of a thug who is a wanted criminal raises the suspicions of Detective Xu Baijiu, who goes to the village to investigate. Xu Baijiu shrewdly reconstructs the scene of the fight between Jinxi and the thugs and points out that each small sign left behind in the store reveals an extraordinary application of martial arts skills.

Xu Baijiu's detective work leads to a re-play of the first fight scene in which he appears as a silent observer while the replay resembles that of a crime scene investigation. The critical moments of the initial fight are shown in slow-motion, accompanied by Xu's voice-over explaining the movements.

This approach, according to some critics, is taken straight from the opening scene of *A History of Violence* (Cronenberg, USA, 2006) though there are obvious differences; in general, stories about hidden pasts coming to haunt the present are of course common in many films.

The Reflexive Spectacle

With the narrative as conduit, two kinds of martial arts spectacles are delivered. In the crime-scene investigation setting, an initial fight scene that appears to be about brute force alone is re-played in slow-motion to reveal the trajectories and physics of bodily movement through space. The scene simultaneously analyses and reconstructs the strikes and moves by breaking down the action, and it also amounts to a demonstration of the intricacies of fight choreography involving bodies and objects in a crowded space.

This approach incorporates a reflexive view of the mechanics of a martial arts scene. Whether derivative or not, it demonstrates that explicit incorporation of reflexivity in mainstream cinema is a part of production culture as observed by John Caldwell's study.[4] In this film, the reflexive approach serves as a demonstration and orientation for viewers, enabling them to appreciate the creativity at work in fight choreography and to prepare themselves for the swift martial arts fights in the later scenes - when no re-play or break-down is provided.

A later scene of combat between Jinxi and two clan members involves high-speed movements, kicks, and blows, ending in a chase with flights across the village roof-tops. The scene involves complex staging, rapid cutting, wire-work, and

digital effects. It is a case of the fight spectacle moving the story along rather than as pausing the narrative. For fans of the genre, the martial artists and their fights are what they come to see and the narrative is simply a peg on which to hang gratuitous fight scenes. The pleasure of looking, as argued by Paul Bowman in relation to Bruce Lee's *kung fu* films, is bound up with the fantasy of an invincible body that can be attained through actual martial arts practice.[5]

The martial arts spectacle can thus been seen as prompting the desire to train the body to achieve the strength to deal with the limitations of ordinariness and even social injury such as race- or class-based humiliation. The story of *Dragon* reveals that here, ordinariness is barely a cover for the skilled martial artist, who adopts an ordinary identity in order to abstain from violence but who cannot avoid repeating acts of violence when called upon. The fist fights and kicks inevitably result in injury within the story (as well as for the actors during production) serving in turn to temper - but not entirely eradicate - the fantasy of possessing an invincible body.

Digital Kinetics

In a recent study of martial arts fan activities in cyberspace, Dorothy Lau takes note of their use of Web 2.0 technology to re-make and up-load their favourite fight scenes as mash-ups taken from different movies. An example is a fight scene depicting Donnie Yen in motion juxtaposed to that of Keanu Reeves fighting in *Matrix* to make immediate cross-references, and it establishes a new kind of digital aesthetics.[6] A participatory space is made available through the digital technologies such that fans may choose to re-invent their participatory relationship with the stars in

cyberspace instead of taking physical training to get the kind of 'invincible' body possessed by the star.

Whereas studies of martial arts and sword-play films often take for granted the notion that the audience buys into fantasies about the superior strength of martial arts skills, there is little concrete basis for this assumption. Indeed, although the popular reception of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* has established the name of Ang Lee in the West, many in China remain sceptical about the film's fantasy world of sword-play. *Dragon* incorporates the audience's potential disbelief by starting with an investigative sequence centring on detective Xu Baijiu. The reasoned account here is later supplemented by digital images of simulated blood-flow inside the human body under attack. Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI) is used here to depict its internal movement through virtual channels inside the body.

At one point, detective Xu drives an acupuncture needle into the flesh between his front shoulder-bones. He accounts for this gesture as an application of traditional Chinese medical knowledge of "*qi*" (breath) to regulate his emotions: he once witnessed a recalcitrant criminal of a tender age who had coldly poisoned his own parents to death, and he practices acupuncture on himself to eliminate any empathy for criminals and so that he can be an effective investigator. Acupuncture, well-accepted in Mainland China, is the pretext here for the incorporation of CGI to imagine the human body in what amounts to a 'medical' vision of martial arts.

Martial arts special effects use a variety of technologies. Recent films have been regarded as digitised *kung fu* movies.[7] In *Dragon*, the digital kinetics of CGI validates martial arts action by connecting the latter to acupuncture

practice. This redundant demonstration may not alter the audiences' scepticism, though it indicates the film's reflection on the genre's fantasy-based myths and potential audience scepticism. The story seeks to change scepticism into empathy by means of shock and also family drama, as when Jinxi pays the price for having his arm cut off and fights his father. A digital kinetics that purportedly sustains reasoning and distance is then tempered by the degree of empathy that Xu comes to feel for Jinxi – which in turn brings about his own death while he is helping Jinxi in combat.

The film's final fight scene takes place between Liu, the rebel son, and his monstrous father, head of the Clan of 72 Killers. Before returning home, Liu Jinxi severs his left-arm to stop the clan from claiming him as one of their killers. In *The One-Armed Swordsman*, the protagonist from a humble background has his arm unexpectedly cut off by the daughter of the martial arts master. She falls for the protagonist and pushes him to a duel in a clumsy gesture to keep him from leaving her. The severing of the arm in *Dragon,* on the other hand, is a gesture by means of which the protagonist breaks his connections to an inheritance that comes with his previous identity as 'Dragon'.

Before he can become who he chooses to be, Jinxi has to fight his father, a cruel patriarch who comes to claim his grandson (i.e., Jinxi's/The Dragon's son) to perpetuate the future of the clan. The intense life-and-death combat that ensues culminates in the film's finale. The monstrous father is played by Jimmy Wang Yu, who made his name playing the original one-armed swordsman and who appeared in several martial arts classics. For those who follow the genre, this is also a fight between trans-national star Donnie Yen and the veteran actor Jimmy Wang Yu, and a homage connecting the

martial arts films of the 21st century with earlier examples of the genre.

Conclusion

The martial arts spectacles in *Dragon* comprise the conventional components of stars, fight choreography, and special effects. They contain mixed cinematic references, including old and new martial arts classics from *The One-Armed Swordsman* to *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* along with Westerns and crime dramas. My analysis takes note of the conventions and genre idioms without arriving at a dismissive or pessimistic view of the spectacles. The film is reflexive towards the scepticism of its Mainland Chinese audiences where the fantasy-based genre is concerned. Instead of drawing upon scenes of erotic interest and female beauty to gain acceptance, the film links itself to the cultural memory of injury in *The One-Armed Swordsman* and has a narrative of trauma involving scenes of brutal killing and self-amputation.

Along with the monstrous patriarch and the rebel son who undergoes deliberate self-wounding comes the cultural memory of martial arts films as a popular genre in Sinophone literature and cinema. Drawing on the work of Jameson, Bhaskar Sarkar has observed that martial art films are narratives of modernity and that as such they create a kind of cultural memory in cognitively mapping the forces of modernity.[8] Along this line, I suggest that the single-armed body not only arouses a memory of their generic legacy, it also connects up the films as cognitive maps of the memory of tradition - something which is both traumatising and also a springboard for the search for a new identity. In these respects, a genre-based cultural memory complicates the

simpler notion we found earlier in Debord concerning the relationship between spectacle and 'paralysed' memory.

I would argue that this discussion of the spectacle should be supplemented by awareness of real-world resistances against its putatively paralysing powers. My example of 'resistance' in this context comes from participation in a city-wide protest against the conditions for Hong Kong container port workers in the spring of 2013. Protests were staged in front of a corporate building that is a participant in the Symphony of Lights'. Even though the nightly spectacle kept going during the protests and continues since, its ability to disguise the reality of social relations has thus proved to be susceptible to active challenge and disputation.

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55 / The Politics of Memory in Spanish Fiction and Non-Fiction Film: A Comparative Analysis

Norberto Mínguez-Arranz

Introduction

Spain has a very traumatic past as a consequence of the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent Francoist dictatorship. As a consequence of the repression imposed by Franco, the representation of those traumatic events has in turn been very problematic. Nevertheless, in the context of the Spanish Historic Memory Law and the contemporary identity crisis, in recent years new cinematic readings of Spanish history have been produced.[1] In this essay I explore the contribution made by Spanish fiction and non-fiction film to the process of remembering and representing the past and offer a comparative analysis of the different strategies each macro-genre uses to achieve that purpose.

The first consideration must always be that fiction and non-fiction are different types of one and the same thing: they are audiovisual representations. Fiction is basically oriented to narration and entertainment. In representing the past, whereas fiction is not very much concerned with historic precision or scientific objectivity. It simply aims for realistic credibility and uses narrative structures to simplify events and characters that in the historic world operate in a more complex relational pattern.

The main purpose of non-fiction, on the other hand, is to preserve an aspect of historic reality. This function can be based on an interrogative or analytic attitude, and can become involved in a process of research into the causes and consequences of those events. So non-fiction tends to be expository or reflexive and it usually supports a thesis with informative or didactic purposes. In many cases this means that narration, in non-fiction, has a less dominant role than in fiction. Documentaries that deal with the historic past should obviously be based on a direct and truthful relationship between the image and what it represents.

The important things for fiction are plot, character, and dramatic development. It is not uncommon for a fictional character to have a moral or psychological dimension that is wider than the historic objective data to which he or she relates.[2] Sometimes history acts as a mere background against which to place events and characters; but even in these cases the film cannot help but make a reading of the historic past. Placing fiction in the context of well known historic events forces the scriptwriter to add new and attractive elements for the audience. Nonetheless, given the fact that Spain has atraumatic past, drama is a very frequent genre for historical fiction.

Documentary is not so involved in constructing characters as it is in the presentation of social actors who speak for themselves (like a witness or an expert). Non-fiction represents the past with a multiplicity of voices and materials, making it easy to integrate documents and testimonies from the past and the present, and producing as a result a more complex and potentially conflictual memory. Fiction is more homogeneous because everything is filtered through a narrative machine that looks for transparency and continuity.

The sense of a constructed text is usually stronger in non-fiction, where the purpose is to create not so much a story that seems to be told by itself, but rather the elaboration of an argument made with documentary evidence. I think that the fiction/non fiction dichotomy can contribute with more precision to our analysis of cinematic representations of the past not only because each option responds to a specific rhetoric, but also because the relations between the text and its referents follow different logics that correspond with the expectations of different audiences.

Spanish Film Production 2000-2010

As Juan Carlos Ibáñez points out, in the first decade of the century a new generation of spectators in Spain didn´t have a direct experience of Francoism or the Civil War. There was also a new generation of directors and screenwriters (like Alex de la Iglesia) who felt themselves to be far from those conflicts and who preferred to portray more recent historical periods, or those who play with memory from a trans-national perspective (like Isabel Coixet or Alejandro Amenábar).[3] This decade began with the second term of office of José María Aznar (2000-2004), a Conservative Prime

Minister who supported a revisionist policy that even today vindicates the achievements of Francoism.

At the same time the Opposition turned so-called historic memory into a key element of the political debate, one that was to take on major prominence during the first term of Socialist Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004-2007). This was a period of strong economic growth which favoured the production of audiovisual content that has historic memory as a main impulse. In Spain the economic crisis that began in 2009 caused a significant drop in cultural investment and a shift of social interest to other concerns more related to the present or the future rather than to the past.

Between 2000 and 2009, Spain produced 1,318 films. Only 4% dealt with topics related to the Civil War (this fact would seem to invalidate the idea that the Spanish Civil War has become the most important cultural industry of our country). 70% of these films were documentaries and 30% fiction. Most of these stories were set far from the War itself (the War is just a background), or after it. All Catalan production on this topic were non-fiction (which amounts to 50% of productions in this genre), whereas the production of fiction was concentrated in Madrid (80% of the fiction films on this topic). Most directors of these fiction films were veterans, with younger directors working mostly in non-fiction.[4]

Los niños de Rusia and *Entre el Dictador y yo*

My analysis starts with discussion of two non-fiction films. *Los niños de Rusia* (*The Children of Russia,* Camino, 2001) deals with two important issues: the causes and consequences of the Spanish Civil War, and the politics of

memory, how the war is represented and remembered. The film tells the story of the children who were evacuated to the Soviet Union during the War. Its director, Jaime Camino, could be considered as a representative of the older generation of Spanish film film-makers. *Los niños de Rusia* combines interviews with eighteen elderly Spaniards and black-and- white archive footage filmed during the 1930s and 1940s in Spain and the Soviet Union.

In 1937 the Republican authorities and many Spanish families were afraid of the effects of the War, but at the same time they thought that the victory of the Republican troops was close. Three thousand children were sent to the Soviet Union so that they could spend the summer in a safe environment. The adventure turned out, sadly, to be much longer than expected. The film tells the story of these children in Russia and also of the traumatic homecoming of some of them. But representing the past is complicated. It is not 'out there' to be visited and as though it were a foreign country; it always has to be reconstructed in the process of representation. This re-constitution is usually subject to tensions which I think *Los niños de Rusia* has been able to balance.

The film strives for objectivity and its subjects are capable of analysing without anger what happened to them. Their narration, like the whole film, maintains a good level of sobriety, making this film a good example of how testimonial cinema, with all its limitations, is an effective tool in complementing the work of academic historians. Another interesting aspect of the film is how the editing sometimes gives the impression that its subjects are talking to each other; it seems as though they are telling their stories but at the same time the others are listening, which makes the film a kind of therapeutic exercise. These people need to talk,

they need to tell a story that has been silenced for too long. And I think this healing effect also reaches the film's audience.

Entre el Dictador y yo (*Between the Dictator and Me*, Barrero *et al*, 2005) is another work of non-fiction, comprising six short films directed by film-makers aged under thirty who make a personal investigation of different remains legacies of Francoism (Juan Barrero, Guillém López, Sandra Ruesga, Elia Urquiza, Raúl Cuevas and Mónica Rovira). All of them are aware of the fact that their discourse is very personal and spoken from the present. They address questions to the past that in many cases don´t get an answer. Some of these short films include domestic footage to highlight the gap between history and memory. Familial memory is visible through domestic film, but there is no easy access to wider history.

The great historical narratives have been replaced in this film by a local, partial and hyper-subjective memory and sometimes by just silence. *Entre el Dictador y yo* makes an effort to learn things about the past, but in the end it tackles a subject that cannot be fully narrativised. The film acknowledges that the past cannot speak for itself without mediation. It shows a linguistic problem which is essential in the post-modern text, since its language is outside the territory it tries to describe. The problem is how to explain Francoism without its rhetoric; the result is a fragmentary and highly self-conscious text.

New Forms of Memory: *Soldados de Salamina*

Fiction films in this period deal with a great variety of topics, from the anti-Francoist guerrilla in *Silencio roto* (*Broken Silence*, Montxo Armendáriz, 2001) to the victims of the

repression in *Las trece rosas* (*The Thirteen Roses*, Emilio Martínez Lázaro, 2007) or the complicity with Franco of the Catholic Church in *Los girasoles ciegos* (*The Blind Sunflowers*, José Luis Cuerda, 2008). Post-Civil War Spain is the preferred setting instead of war-time itself. There is a wider presence of young main characters, probably because cinema is trying to adapt to a new audience that has neither direct knowledge of the past nor suffers from prejudice or fear to pose questions about history. Fiction films of this period represent a struggle to vindicate the memory and the heritage of the defeated, and a will to recover Republican values. This is why, self-evidently, recent Conservative governments in Spain tend to have a poor relationship with the cinema industry.

Soldados de Salamina (*Soldiers of Salamina*), a fiction film by David Trueba (2003), is an adaptation of the 2001 novel by Javier Cercas. The film tells the story of a writer, Loca Cercas, who tracks down the details of a true story from the last days of the Spanish Civil War. The writer and founder of Falange, Rafael Sánchez Mazas, faced a firing squad along with fifty other prisoners, but managed to escape. A Republican soldier, apparently one of those searching the area for the escaped prisoner, found him, but allowed him to get away.

Cercas pieces together the fragments of a story plagued by contradictions and mysterious characters. This is a very specific narrative, but it succeeds in representing the feeling of the period. First of all, It is not exactly a film about the Spanish Civil War but a film about the memory of the war. It combines two temporalities: the past that is being recalled, and the present into which memories are brought forward (this is somenthing usual for documentaries but rather

extraordinary in fiction films of this period). Secondly, it deals with events and characters hardly touched on by Spanish cinematic fiction.

Soldados de Salamina is a drama that takes real events and historic characters as a starting point. It is interesting to note that the character who reconstructs memory is not a historian but a novelist and a journalist. The fact that she is a female character points to the new role for women in the writing of historical memory. She is not a direct witness of the events remembered. She is a young woman (34 years old, like the director) and doesn´t cling to the prejudices of previous generations about what and how to remember. The film is heterogeneous in terms of its audiovisual material and its characters (some real, others fictional and others dramatised) and it delivers a memory that is self-concious concerning its limits and complexity. It recognises historical silence and contradiction, as well as the evocative power of subjectivity. It is in the end a type of memory with no room for the epic.

Conclusion

Recent Spanish fiction cinema is dominated by a subjective memory that leaves behind a more historiographic form of memory and brings us closer to a 'post-memory' period in which protagonists and witnesses of the events are, or will be, no longer alive. Documentary films share this tendency towards a subjective discourse. The people portrayed in them are not protagonists of history; they speak for themselves in order not to tell an absolute truth but rather to recount a personal and traumatic experience that they have been obliged to keep silent about for a long time. In so doing,

these documentaries insert the memory of different subjects into the collective narrative of the past.

We can read these fictions and documentaries as a symptom of contemporary times, insofar as it is the present that shapes their representations of the past. They indicate that Spanish society has not yet come to terms with the trauma of the Civil War and of Franco´s Dictatorship. Precisely because we don´t have an institutional and shared narrative by means of which to represent what happened, these films can be considered as sites of memory that provisionally cover the absence of an institutional narrative yet to be created. They create a public sphere where it is possible not only to remember but also to discuss and reflect upon the past.

These films are a contribution to a deeper knowledge of the history of Spain, showing that the truth can be highly complex, often built upon the suffering of many people. They are aware that truth is not something absolute that we own, but rather an aspiration or even a mission. They show that even if the past cannot be changed, it can still be represented with truth and honesty. We simply have to consider the past not as a battlefield for the interests of the present but as a field for reflection and representation, and one that offers the opportunity to build a more habitable future.

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13. Scenarios of Conflict

56 / Politics, Propaganda and Film Form: *Battleship Potemkin* and *Triumph of the Will*

Wajiha Raza Rizvi

Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (Germany, 1935), at one level a documentary record of the 1934 Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg, is known as one of the lethal ideological weapons associated with Hitler's authoritarian political *régime.* The film uses lyrical everyday imagery to give a realistic form to the world presented by inter-cutting Nazi Socialist imagery with medieval art forms, images of festivity, and a human touch: a woman with mouth and eyes agape, a child, a cat, and smoke at dawn. The film was unusually successful in shaping national and international opinion because of its naturalistic way of reporting actuality. Marshalling the social memory and collective perception of the German nation, the film subsequently generated the greatest moral controversy in cinema history over the purpose and nature of so-called 'documentary' cinema.

Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (USSR, 1925), on the other hand, reconstructs through the power of dramatic montage an episode in the 1905 Black Sea mutiny which includes the notorious massacre of civilians on the Odessa Steps. Both films were designed as national propaganda. *Potemkin* conceived as part of a cycle of films celebrating, in the wake of the successful Russian Revolution of 1917, the 20th anniversary of the earlier, failed Revolution. *Potemkin* is clearly and directly agitational in form and content, *Triumph* is constructed to support a national political agitation through its surface character of tranquility.

Both films distort historical events to create specific ideological meanings. Their acclaimed 'realism' creates a popular ideological cinema which aims to transmit political verities, but which also transcends mere State ideology through film form. Unlike *Potemkin, Triumph of the Will* claims to report the historical truth by using actual, incontestable footage in strict chronological order. The result is an overwhelming emotional spectacle of National Socialist imagery that mixes the concepts of ideology with mythology to project Hitler's singular, charismatic persona.

The Spectacle of Nazi Propaganda: *Triumph of the Will*

Triumph of the Will opens with assuring sequences that follow a slow, mystical rhythm over subdued music and alternate between the shots of Hitler's plane and the columns of faithful followers in the ancient city. The sequence reflects Hitler's promise to rebuild Germany under his wing as the shadow of his lone plane touches the city. The shadow of this iconic German 'eagle' becomes a focal point as the whole of the ancient city breathlessly peers upwards

to their saviour as he gazes down through the skies to re-assert his pledge of recovery and renovation. This sequence is evidence of Hitler's appeal as he comes to stir up ancient Nuremberg with his dynamic promise to launch a Third German Empire. While the crowds hail his arrival, the third-person visual narrative suddenly shifts to Hitler's point- of-view as he reviews the parade. This scene focuses on serenity and apparent peace.

Battleship Potemkin contains an inter-title - "*Revolution is the only lawful, equal, effectual war*" - which refers us to an external authority, Lenin, whereas in *Triumph of the Will*, we witness unlimited fascination with a present hero who can be acknowledged in the flesh. Several low-angle shots of Nazi symbols against the sky reflect the prioritisation of war aims in the lives of the masses; metaphorically, they also reflect the higher position of the Nazi leaders and a lower position for the people of the metropolis. The 'will' of the individual is subsumed into a greater 'will' as the nation fulfils Hitler's ambition to unite Germany for all time. The mood of collective heroism is similar to that of *Potemkin*, but has a greater emotional and psychological impact. Their difference lies in the covert turbulence which lies under the controlled calm of *Triumph of the Will.*

Riefenstahl's manipulation of standard cinematic techniques transforms soldiers, volunteer workers, the ancient city and its inhabitants, the party leaders, and the decorated officers into a singular totality; only the saviour figure is singled out as an individual. The simplification of film form leaves behind a complex sweeping statement of the content: the unified body of men, women, and children is dedicated to the cause. Their happiness rests on Hitler's promise to rise above the

humiliation of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and to resurrect a glorious nation.

The symbolic imagery of the Teutonic, with its fire and smoke as well as thousands of flickering torches, is used to celebrate the union of earthly people with the *Führer*. Shots of the eagle and the swastika linger before we switch to a low-angle shot of marchers as they head up into the sky. The close shots of Nazi emblems repeatedly emerging symbolise the passion for the insistent and reliable pomp of Nazism; the common people simply come and go. All, including Hitler, seem to be possessed by a preoccupation with symbolism and hierarchy.

Like *Battleship Potemkin*, *Triumph of the Will* uses precise editing to display compositional movements with flawless rhythm and continuity in terms of light and formal geometry within the *mise-en-scène*. Riefenstahl maintains the documentary tradition yet her subjective vision dissolves the distinctions between reality and fantasy. *Triumph of the Will* brings together the mobile cinematic techniques of Griffith and Gance, and Eisenstein's editing techniques, with what Riefenstahl referred to as "*Herr Gaede's sound tables and the Steenbeck table technique*" to set the tone of the film through the various subdivisions of its five major segments.[1]

The sequences covering Hitler's Arrival and the Night Rally establish Germany's fascination with the Fuhrer and his Party. The City Awakening, Youth Encampment, Folk Parade, and Congress Opening sequences strengthen the aura of fascination and comfort associated with Hitler. The coverage of the Labor Corps Review and Lutze's address to the S.A. confirms the emotional impact of the support for Hitler and the settlement of issues pertaining to the Röhm affair. The

Hitler Youth Rally, the Review of the Army, and Night Rally of Political Leaders sequences authenticate the unlimited support for Hitler's consolidation of executive authority, while the S.A., S.S., N.S.D.A.P. reviews, Hitler's address and the Closing Rally sequences enhance the psychological appeal of a singular national totality.

Re-Making History: *Battleship Potemkin*

By contrast with the structure of *Triumph of the Will*, *Battleship Potemkin* presents itself as a take on the traditional five-act drama. In 'Men and Maggots' sailors angrily protest against rotten meat in a sequence hinting at male impotence through extreme violence and uncompleted action as a frustrated young sailor smashes the same plate twice against a table[2]; *Triumph of the Will,* by contrast, maintains a sense of powerful male muscularity, self-control and composure throughout.

In the second segment, 'Drama on the Quarterdeck', great psychological tension is created when marines are summoned to execute the protestors, and the mutiny begins. Here wide shots are juxtaposed with extreme close-ups as the ship's old, white-bearded priest pompously prays for the condemned. This inter-cutting between the priest tapping his palm with a crucifix and a junior officer nervously patting the handle of his sword hints at tensions between Church and State in Tsarist Russia, just as Riefenstahl later renders a tension in the German case.

It also points to an oppressive parallel between the crucifix and sword as the former eventually is left stuck in the deck when the priest is slain. This sequence creates extreme psychological tension through the rapid inter-cutting of shots

of varying scales and lengths in a tonal montage. This emotional peak ends in a trough of sombre nocturnal calm. Compared to this treatment, in *Triumph of the Will* the psychological tension is linked to a mythological aura and a determinate ideology of war.

The third segment of *Battleship Potemkin,* 'An Appeal from the Dead', sees the dead sailor Vakulinchuk lying in state on the harbour mole. Eisenstein intercuts shots of the harbour with studies of mourners as they file endlessly across the breakwater, in the luminous haze of the fog, in an expression of solidarity between the sailors and the townsfolk. The famous sequence which follows on the Odessa Steps, with the dreadful massacre of citizens by Tsarist troops, is perhaps the most powerful montage sequence in the history of cinema. The sequence embraces the mechanical and primitive temporal lengths of metric montage, involving the rhythmic montage of soldiers' feet descending the stairs, in murderous martial unison, to create a high degree of "*contrapuntal tension*".[3]

Riefenstahl uses similar editing techniques to achieve a natural effect while reconstructing the historical truth. In a montage of close shots of the churning, plunging pistons, rotating camshafts, waves, battleships, squadron, canons at the port, and the huge muzzle canon of the 'Potemkin' we conclude with the climactic and eventually triumphal 'Meeting the Squadron' sequence, where the 'Potemkin' waits to know if she will be joined in solidarity by other vessels. Reversing the truth of history, the mutiny is represented as successful.

Dialectical Montage

In *Triumph of the Will,* Riefenstahl explores the philosophy of Eisenstein's dialectical montage. According to this theory, a montage sequence contains a montage cell or a thesis in juxtaposition to its opposing visual content or antithesis that "*produces a synthesis that in turn becomes the thesis of a new dialectic*"; the visual opposition involves cognitive assumptions on viewer's part and relates to a conflict of ideas, "*linear directions, planes, volumes, or lighting*" that lead the viewer to simultaneously, but not sequentially, perceive the meaning of the film.[4] This dialectic functions at the psychological level and does not necessarily follow the technique of narrative logic. The outcome is a highly developed form of cinematic rhetoric which transcends the mere recording of an event.

According to Cook, Eisenstein believed that "*This dialectic is a way of looking at human history and experience as a perpetual conflict in which a force collides with a counter force*".[5] In *Triumph of the Will* the dialectic takes the form of alternations throughout the film between Hitler and his followers as he inspires and is inspired by them, and they take inspiration from him whilst in return fuelling his will to power. In the case of Riefenstahl this recurring pattern of thesis and antithesis in fact largely maintains the hierarchy of narrative form through shots and counter-shots, directional high-angle shots of the leader and low-angle shots of his followers.

The dialectic of *Potemkin* creates a direct physical collision of thesis (victims) and antithesis (Tsarist troops), whereas *Triumph of the Will* defines the potential of perpetual human

conflict in history through a conceptual collision of determinate ideologies. In *Triumph of the Will*, the thesis (Hitler) and antithesis (followers) synthesise an overtonal montage reflecting a Nazi ideology of war. The threat of a German unison under Hitler is far greater than the collective heroism of *Potemkin* as the mythology of the saviour rules the collective perceptions of the mob.

Triumph of the Will overcomes smaller disagreements pertaining to Röhm in favour of a collective will to fight the greater disagreement with the Allies and with former German leaders. Where *Potemkin* is a depiction of physical trauma, *Triumph of the Will* reflects the determination to physically combat the psychological trauma of a nation. *Potemkin* powerfully mirrors the weak moments of human tragedy, whereas *Triumph of the Will* reflects the powerful fanaticism of a cherished will as German men, women, and children happily embrace the ideology of war.

In *Potemkin*, child plus mouth equals scream; in *Triumph of the Will*, child plus mouth equals a motto. In the first a woman with a mouth agape is expressing shock, in the second a fascination with Hitler, and his racism and anti-Semitism. In the first, the thesis and antithesis forces render a direct physical collision of protagonists and antagonists as they move towards each other. In the second, the thesis and antithesis movements of the saviour and his followers fuse together in a mutual cause.

Trauma and Resolution

The first materialises the physical, psychological, and intellectual trauma of a desperate conflict while the second clearly aims at rising above these traumas through its

unlimited 'will'. In the first, the militia follows the fleeing citizens while some plead and protest. In the second, the people come forward to express absolute unanimity with the State and the military. The first cries out against agony, whilst the second cries to blissfully embrace agony. The first is a story of direct local action and reaction, whilst the second is the story of a greater national reaction against external forces. The first is depiction of chaos, the second an organised determination.

In *Triumph of the Will,* Ruttmann's opening titles visually follow Eisenstein's metric montage pattern in juxtaposition to an aural tonal montage. The metric montage begins with 'On September 5, 1934' and develops in a series of titles. Underneath the metric montage, the aural tonal montage develops from mournful notes to a triumphant tone as the title '19 Months after the Beginning of Germany's Rebirth' appears. This difference in visual and aural montages creates a new kind of collision and a greater 'overtonal' montage.

The film follows an up-and-down pattern from the opening to the closing sequences, for example, the crowd hailing Hitler's arrival (peak) and the city awakening (trough). The most important peak in the film captures a transformation in Hitler's character; his calm and composed persona gives way to that of an agitated figure waiting to resume his speech during the closing rally. Hitler asserts his agenda: "*The best of the German race, in proud self-confidence, have courageously and boldly claimed the leadership of the Reich and Nation*." A reaction shot of the Nazi leaders confirms their assurance of the claim. The film ends with a long shot of the crowd enthusiastically singing the *Horst Wessel Lied*, and a huge swastika.

Riefenstahl develops the film's structure around National Socialist imagery, streamers and flags bearing the swastika symbol, the faithful soldiers and volunteer workers, and the decorated Nazi leaders. These images are edited in the form of an overtonal montage to create an idyllic impact, reflecting, what Rollins refers to as an "*inborn love of regimentation and harsh discipline*".[6] Hitler wanted active bodies with passive brains to hail him and follow his commands. The desired kinetic and kinaesthetic vigour is borne in the choreography of rhythmic images: speeches by Nazi leaders, their names beaming through the symbolic darkness of the screen, marching men, swastikas, German eagles, crowds.

The intense emotional impact combines with the sublimely romantic, the overtonal with the kinaesthetic, through anatomical compositions of individual bodies in movement and the collective motion of the unified body of the German people. Riefenstahl creates a concise structure heavily relying on psychological stimulation for achieving defined goals. The Nazi movement was both a political movement and also a *psychological* movement to emotionally involve Germans in the drama of war. Following the formal if not the political model of *Battleship Potemkin*, *Triumph of the Will* also controls the physical and emotional conduct of its viewers through direct physical and emotional sensations.

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57 / Trans-national Cinematic Encounters in Critical Times: Germany and Japan in World War II

Iris Haukamp

This essay discusses moments of transnational cinematic encounter between Germany and Japan, focussing on the circumstances of two films appearing on German screens and their reception: Arnold Fanck's *The Samurai's Daughter* (*Atarashiki tsuchi*, 1937) and Yutaka Abe's *Burning Sky* (*Moyuru ōzora*, 1940) were produced in Japan and shown in Germany between 1937, while Japan was already engaged in militarist expansionism, and 1942, when both countries were fighting on multiple fronts.

Edward Said theorised Orientalist discourse as serving to establish an identity for the coloniser and to legitimise the assertion of power over the colonised. But in the case of the German reception of these films, we are dealing with a

manifestation of Orientalism directed inward, rather than outward to the Other. Moreover, these films were co-productions in the widest sense.

They are not typical examples of Orientalist representations of otherness, but instances of the medium's inherent trans-nationality. They also make a case for off-screen, personal trans-national encounters, their impact on the production process and, eventually, on the films' reception. Both sides, the German and the Japanese, had their own agendas, something rather different from the lack of agency attributed to the Orientalised subject of representation associated with earlier theories.

The Samurai's Daughter

The Samurai's Daughter originates in an intricate network of agendas. Japanese attempts at launching the products of a thriving film industry on foreign, that is to say Western, screens in a concerted, industrial manner had so far failed. Unbridgeable cultural and representational gaps were seen as the main reason for this in both Japanese and German discourse. The matter of film export had become a national concern with Japan's emergence as a new political and military power.

In 1935, importer of Western films Kawakita Nagamasa enlisted a German director, Arnold Fanck, with his Western aesthetic sensibilities, for a co-production. The product was supposed to show Japan 'as it really was', while at the same time attracting foreign audiences and distributors. Fanck, as stipulated by the contract, wrote his script in Japan. He held the upper hand where his Japanese consultants were concerned in relation to the image of Japan as he saw it and

as he wished to convey it. Eventually two films were made, one for the German-language market and one for other overseas markets. It is with the former version that I cam concerned in this essay.

The plot, set in contemporary Japan, focuses on a young man, Yamato Teruo (Kosugi Isamu), who returns to Japan after eight years of studying in Germany. Following a crisis of re-adaptation to Japanese customs, he eventually marries the girl, Mitsuko (Hara Setsuko), he had been promised to since childhood. The final scene shows the young couple, now with a baby, working in the fields. Japan's 'puppet state' Manchukuo is represented as both an option for Japan to supply its population and as a task of building up an infrastructure in Japan's 'wild western' empire.

The notion of expanding one's living space was of course not unfamiliar in a Germany concerned with *Lebensraum*. Neither were ideologies demanding the subjugation of the individual will to the communal goal, represented by a single figure of authority. Indicative of the intricate connection between the political and the cultural sphere, the film was awarded high priority by the State. For the Berlin *première* in March 1937, Minister of Public Enlightenment and Information Goebbels instructed the press to report favourably on the film.

Contrary to 'classical' Orientalism, the reviews stressed commonalities, rather than differences: "*Very similar to us, in Japan a people without living space endeavours to awaken all the powers of the blood, the ancestors and the great past and then to provide them with the modern means of technology, so to speak, so that technology may serve the eternal life of the whole, the community, the people*."[1]

This proclamation of similarities is all the more remarkable when considering National Socialism's highly pronounced commitment to racial demarcation. Higson, exploring dialogues between and within national cinemas, points out the possibility that "*the foreign commodity will not be treated as exotic by the local audience, but will be interpreted according to an 'indigenous' frame of reference; that is, it will be metaphorically translated into a local idiom*".[2] Seemingly similar ideological backgrounds facilitate this mechanism. But recognising the same logic elsewhere also naturalises its validity and thus reinforces the hegemonic order.

Intercultural Projections

The stressing of commonalities served politico-ideological goals in Germany rather than legitimising colonial occupation of Japan as the represented territory. Identity emerges from the field of tension between hegemonic discourse and counter-discursive voices and, because of the constantly shifting boundaries of identity, the Other never stays the same. This change affects representations of the Other, intended to serve subjective goals.

Traditionally, 'Japan' carried feminine representational connotations, *Madame Butterfly* being the prime example of this discourse. Yet, at this particular historical juncture, the project of militarist Fascism required masculine, martial qualities. And, coming back to the German reception of *The Samurai's Daughter* - its title already alluding to martial valour and yet also inscribing family and femininity - these qualities were also desirable in one's new political ally.

After the *première* in Berlin, the press noted: "*The heroic ideal of the hardened, masculine, man, the unquestioning subjugation into the völkisch community and the burning love*

to one's fatherland are characteristic of the Japanese". Fanck's lengthy scenes on a volcano, where Teruo rescues his fiancée Mitsuko from an attempted suicide, showcase Teruo's physical prowess. The press comments display a certain degree of astonishment about his "*powerful masculinity*"[3], that together with the technical progress of Germany's new ally contradicted the traditional picture of the orientalised Other.

Hierarchical Orientalist gendered dichotomies, however, remain intact. Teruo's 'lack' of understanding of his own country's tradition constructs Germany as intellectually and morally superior when the female German journalist Gerda Storm (Ruth Eweler) is placed as Teruo's mentor. A woman signifying the masculine part of the Oriental binary, upsetting the traditional *Madame Butterfly* romance, implies that the two countries can be allies within the frame of hierarchical monolithic blocs of East and West, but never equal lovers. Through her profession, Gerda actively produces knowledge about Japan that is showcased through her eyes. Observation and subsequent knowledge production represents the Other through the observer's point of view.

Representation is a matter of power, and improving the discursive standing of Japan in Germany was an undertaking pursued by very heterogeneous institutions and individuals, both related and unrelated to National Socialism. Indeed, the stereotyped image of Japan in many ways embodied the values propagated by National Socialism. The perceived antiquity of its values, that either 'coincidentally' bore resemblances to or were articulated into a relationship with the German hegemonic discourse, made them suitable for emulation in Germany.

Burning Sky

In 1940, a prominent member of German-Japanese society travelled to Japan to make several cultural films. Erwin Toku Bälz (1889-1945), son of the former German physician of the Japanese Crown Prince, Erwin Bälz, had become very active in promoting a specific image of Japan in Germany, drawing heavily on old samurai values and presented as a model for Germany to follow. While Bälz was in Japan, a spectacular aviation film was released in September 1940: *Burning Sky* depicts the training of young pilots and their eventual engagement in air battles in Northern China.

As in Germany, the use of film for the propagation of attitudes and values was acknowledged, and the film was openly supported by the Army Ministry and "*Supervised by the Army Aviation Headquarters*". It was a great success in Japan, running for four weeks, and received an award from the Minister of Education. In one scene, the protagonists are scolded for over-indulging on bean-jam buns. All concede that their bodies do not belong to themselves but to the great Japanese Empire. It is a logical step from here to dying for the greater cause. In a forerunner of ritualised death scenes in military films of the time, a dying soldier (Tsukita Ichirō) apologises for his inability to carry on with his mission.

Reciting the values called for by *The Imperial Rescript for Soldiers and Sailors* - loyalty, propriety, valour, fidelity and simplicity - his final utterance is "*Tennō heika banzai*" ("*Ten thousand years to the Emperor*"). The national flag is superimposed and the scene resolved by a cut to the airfield. In interplay with the music and shots of airplanes lifting off for yet another mission, this corroborates rather than questions the training and inculcation of values in soldiers

who eventually lose their lives. They die for a greater cause and are enshrined as gods, as the introductory titles empashise: "*Respectfully dedicated to the heroic souls of the wild army eagles that, resting as gods, eternally form the empire's foundation walls*".

In early 1941 Bälz became involved in producing a version for Germany. In the highly politicised discourse of the time, what presumably had been a matter of adding sub-titles quickly evolved into a question of the power over self-representation. The film was to be presented by the Japanese to Hitler, and in an Italian version to Mussolini, in summer 1942 to mark the military alliance. Bälz re-edited Abe's film according to his perception of the anticipated effect on German audiences: "*Abe has added overlong sentimental scenes … into the essentially purely military plot … This completely unmade the otherwise positive impact of the good scenes. The dashing soldiers became maudlin adolescent boys, virtually contradicting reality*". [4] Bälz's changes were supposed to toughen up both the represented Japanese and the Japanese position in German discourse.

In line with the proclaimed ideological congeniality and in a spirit of military cooperation, the Japanese ambassador and various representatives of the political and military *élite* attended the première of this gift by the Japanese Army to the *Führer* and the German people in Berlin in June 1942. Reviews stressed similarities between Japanese and German soldiers in terms of strict training and military toughness and, more importantly, in terms of character: "*Bushido, the old Japanese spirit of heroism and sacrifice, puts the living and the dead into the service of the Tennō* [Emperor]*"*.[5] They draw on pre-existing discourses on Japan and the Japanese,

such as for example in Bälz's publications of his father's essays.

Bälz's participation in the film is unmentioned and hence a German, 'inauthentic' impact on the Japan which is represented is denied. This 'Japan' is used to encourage German soldiers and those at the home front precisely at a time when the tide is slowly turning against Germany. The attack on the Soviet Union had by then resulted in heavy losses, and the Royal Air Force had begun their bombardment of German cities. But the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 had raised the ally's image: Goebbels had already drawn connections between the Japanese military successes and the "*Bushido spirit*", as well as between both countries' military outlooks, in a speech to film experts on 28 February 1942.[6]

He praised the "*religious enthusiasm*" of the Japanese, which gave them the ability to topple empires much bigger and richer than their own. The year marked a renewed effort to mobilise and claim a kinship to the samurai stereotype in attempts to stabilise a collective national ego through the recognition of ideologically articulated traits of the self in others. This stress on the ally's strength in the face of one's own weakness, however, led to unexpected and remarkably rational responses. After one screening, a mother asked her young son: "*Do you also want to crash a plane into another plane or ship, kill the people in there and die a miserable death yourself one day?*'.[7]

The Intelligence Service criticised the screening of such films to German soldiers because the heroic deeds of their Japanese allies depicted on the screen caused "*something like inferiority complexes*" among the troops, who felt that

they could not keep up with these "*Ultra Teutonic*" Japanese *kamikaze* pilots or mine-sweeping frogmen.[8] As in 1937 with *The Samurai's Daughter*, the belief in inherent Japanese bravery was not questioned. But in 1942 the war had become a reality, and the people knew the horrors of the Front.

Japanese Masks, European Fantasies?

So far, it would be easy to dismiss these representations as serving German objectives and as "*European phantasies behind a Japanese mask*".[9] This phrase had been used in 1937 to describe previous films about Japan, with the distorted stereotypes of which *The Samurai's Daughter* had, allegedly, succeeded in breaking. I have shown that this was not the case; 'European phantasies' shaped both the film and its reception in Germany, as they did with *Burning Sky*.

However, *Burning Sky*, in its Japanese context, was not an unproblematic film either, and addressed similar issues as were pointed out in Germany, negotiating the issues of the loss of individualism and death for a higher cause: "*Thrilling dogfights and burning patriotic passion raise the spirits of the home front to a fever pitch.*"[10] The film was selected for export to the Axis allies to convey a specific image of Japan. The alterations it underwent during the process were spontaneous and symptomatic of a power play over representation, as had been *The Samurai's Daughter* in 1937.

In the films' German contexts, stereotypical Orientalist representation of the Other still takes place, but an imperialist intention of direct control of this Other was replaced by the matter of control over the process of representation. As in classical instances of Orientalism this was exclusively motivated by and directed towards the

representer. In these two cases, however, the representers were 'Occidental' Germans as well as 'Oriental' Japanese. The very real agency displayed by the Japanese agendas in these trans-national encounters adds to criticisms directed against Said's theorising of the Orient as a purely discursive and moreover powerless construct.

My discussion of the production, exhibition and reception of these two war-time films has pointed towards the complex ways in which cultural representation interacts with social experiences, even more so in trans-national contexts. The examination of trans-national flows of - and within - cultural representation can help us look beyond stereotypes, on- and off-screen. In so doing we may observe the heterogeneity of individual agendas instead of simplified national ideologies, even in the case of works produced in such critical times.

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58 / Images of National Identity: France's Lost Wars in the Films of Pierre Schoendoerffer

José Maurício Saldanha-Álvarez

France, Nation, Empire

Early in the Second World War the rapid advances across Europe by German troops were widely devastating, especially for France. The collapse of France at the hands of the *Wehrmacht* in May 1940 could not be compensated by the later victories gained in Italy, on the Rhine and on the Danube. After 1945, certain sectors of the Army and French politicians wanted to keep the colonial empire as an instrument of power for a country ruined by war but in the following decade, the defeat suffered in Indochina in 1954 and the withdrawal from Morocco and Tunisia was to lead to the independence of these colonies.

It would be different with Algeria, however, since with its million Europeans and a departmental administrative structure, it was part of the metropolitan territory of France. Evolving from guerrilla warfare the Algerian insurrection had the support of Tunisia and Nasser's Egypt. In France, Algerian independence was consolidated in 1961-2 thanks to the support of French public opinion, left-wing political parties, and De Gaulle. In his view Algerian Muslims could never become *Bretons* or *Provençals* and the prosperity of France would be established not by the possession of colonies but thanks to the increase of technology and national wealth.

The professional military, opposed to the de-colonisation of Algeria, and feeling once again betrayed by politicians and by the country, organised a *coup d'état* in 1961 to overthrow De Gaulle and to keep French Algeria. This desperate manoeuvre failed thanks to the firmness of the country in supporting its old general and the government. Through the films discussed in this essay, the French film-maker Pierre Shoendoerffer (1928-2012) wished to pay tribute to his dead comrades, soldiers defeated in the lost colonial wars.

Re-Colonisation and Resistance

After 1945, the re-colonisation undertaken by France in the Far East clashed with Vietnamese insurgents. Meanwhile, the supremacy of Communist China after 1948 provided the People's Army, the Viet Minh, with the military support that defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. After this time the American

presence intensified in Indochina, replacing that of France, and decidedly supporting the corrupt Diem Government. This paved the way for the second Indochina war, which ended in 1976 with the capture of Saigon by the Viet Cong.

The Algerian war, however, was simultaneously an insurgency against France and an internal fight among Algerians as well as being a conflict fought between the French themselves. Despite the bold political manoeuvring of the FLN (National Liberation Front) and its armed wing, the ALN (National Liberation Army), the French won on the battlefield. Gratified, the officials involved thought they had correctly applied the lessons learned in Indochina.

The FLN, meanwhile, with Islam and Third-Worldism as ideological supports, used terrorism aimed at intimidating and winning over the still undecided Algerian population. Brutal actions against European civilians pushed France into unleashing an indiscriminate repression that deepened the separation between the Algerian and the French communities, still incited by right-wing terrorism on the part of the OAS (Secret Army Organisation). After independence in 1962, an exodus of one million European *colons* was followed by the massacre of Muslim *Harkis* who supported France.

By contrast, the conflict in Indochina, fought far from the metropolis, and considered a 'dirty' war by the Left in France, saw Viet Minh guerrillas evolve into a competent People's Army. After the French army was swept from the Chinese border, Paris dispatched

General De Lattre De Tassigny (considered by his opponent General Giap, to be a brilliant soldier). He intended to lead the conflict - impossible to win militarily – towards a political solution and to create a Vietnamese national army despite the veiled hostility of the USA that sustained the French war.

Aware of the importance of public support for an unpopular war, he created a press corps, and a section of cinema, where the director Pierre Schoendoerffer became an apprentice. His films discussed here – *La 317ème Section* (*Section 317*, 1965), *Le Crabe Tambour (The Drummer Crab,* 1977), and *L'Honneur d'un capitaine* (*A Captain's Honour*, 1982) – deal with the trauma resulting from the colonial wars and act as a remedy to help heal the wounds of the nation through the power of the cinema. The films have been selected for their overall quality and for the visual pleasure provided by their careful cinematography, whose poetry, as we shall see, gives nature a leading role.

Section 317

Section 317 narrates the saga of a small military unit, a synecdoche for the whole French Army in combat in Indochina. The film is set in May 1954, with the fall of Dien Bien Phu imminent. The French, facing an attack by the People's Army, order the unit - composed of Laotian back-ups and European subordinate members - to evacuate. The Section's Commander is an idealistic young lieutenant named Torrens, played by Jacques Perrin, whilst Bruno Cremer plays the war veteran, Willsdorff, a Sergeant of Alsatian origin who, under the

German occupation of 1940-1944, was recruited to a Wehrmacht Division on the Russian Front.

Upon reaching a river, they spot what they take to be a small contingent of Vietnamese soldiers. After opening fire, they discover to their horror that they've targeted the advance guard of a division of 12,000 battle-hardened fighters. Thus begins the *Anabasis* of *Section 317*, as they seek to escape from the tenacious grip of their relentless stalkers.

They receive help from local people who sometimes flee, intimidated by the Viet Minh. After numerous trials and tribulations they succumb to an enemy attack just as they reach their destination. Torrens and his men are run down in a deadly ambush at the edge of a waterfall. Willsdorff flees, leaving Torrens to die, whilst the narrator explains that the Alsatian will eventually perish in the Algerian war.

Le Crabe Tambour

Le Crabe Tambour narrates the last voyage of a French destroyer, the *Jauréguyberry,* before de-commissioning. The ship and its Commander, who is terminally ill with cancer, are carrying out their final mission, supporting fishing vessels off the icy coast of Newfoundland. The film is based on Schoendoerffer's 1976 novel of the same name, and on the exploits of the famous French Navy officer Pierre Guillaume. The film's cinematography - the work of Raoul Coutard - communicates the cool colours of the Arctic landscape, perhaps suggesting the existential void in which the characters find themselves.

During the trip, the Commander and the ship's doctor recall their time in the Far East when they met a young naval officer, Willsdorf, nicknamed the *Crabe-Tambour* ('the 'drummer crab'), as he navigated the rivers of Indochina. He'd sit with his cat, enraptured by the music played by the ship's bugler. Captured by the Viet Minh and released at the end of the war, 'Crabe' found himself in Africa.

He attends the funeral of his brother, killed in Algeria, and becomes embroiled in yet another world of colonial turmoil. He is imprisoned after taking part in the attempted *putsch* against De Gaulle's government and its negotations with Algerian rebels, an action which destroys his friendship with the Commander. Fifteen years later he is back at sea in charge of a fishing boat in the North Atlantic.

When the *Jauréguiberry* comes across Crabe's boat, the destroyer's Commander invites him to a rendezvous, but he declines. Their farewell is marked by the bugle call of old, marking the end of the friendship and of the life of the Commander, who returns to his base to die of cancer, while the *Jauréguiberry* proceeds to its de-commisioning.

L'Honneur d'un Capitaine

L'Honneur d'un capitaine moves between the Algerian War and the present day. Between 1954 and 1962, thanks to the addition of reservists to the army, a total four million French soldiers passed through Algeria. This bloody conflict traumatised France and led to a long-term war of words; the struggle was referred to as

either the 'enforcement of order' or 'pacification' until as late as 1990, when the 'war' officially recognised as such in France.

The troops involved were not professional soldiers as in Indochina but teenagers called up from their homes and schools to be hurled into the maelstrom of an implacable conflict. In this brutal civil war within a war of national liberation, the practice of torture became widespread. Schoendoerffer, according to some of his critics, treats it superficially in his films.

In *L'Honneur d'un capitaine*, the action fluctuates between a court-of-law and the battlefield. In other key examples from film history, the court-of-law is a metaphorical arena where the memories which are revealed help strengthen narrative tension, unfolding a drama which often leads the protagonists from the enclosure of the court to the cathartic ending when the truth sets people free.

In this case the film begins when the young widow of an officer killed in action in Algeria is watching a TV debate about the conflict. One of the participants, a left-wing professor and activist, accuses her husband, Captain Caron, of being a well-known torturer. Outraged, she decides to sue for slander on behalf of her son, a cadet at the Military Academy.

Whilst investigating the details of her husband's military past, she discovers a poignant documentary about the War in Indochina. Visiting the French Alps, where Caron joined the Resistance against the Nazis, she hears the old combatants profess to be fighting for

the symbols of French national identity represented for them by their church towers. In the discussions that take place in court, this notion returns in the context of Algeria: the ANL declare that they will fight against the French in order to preserve their national identity, which for them is writ large on the minarets of their mosques.

During the trial, the soldiers of the battalion of the *chasseurs alpins*, now much older men, recount the painful scenes that they witnessed when they were young. They report that, on the eve of the arrival of Caron, the company suffered an ambush by Algerians, led by a decorated veteran of the French wars. By way of revenge, the soldiers butchered a humble, local Algerian tailor, an FNL informant. The defence lawyer is insistent that Caron was the person responsible for this murder. The defence, however, makes it clear that the captain only joined the Company the day after the murder. Caron is again accused of murdering another prisoner after a deadly ambush suffered by the troops.

The *chasseurs alpins* re-grouped and captured an enemy solider at the top of a hill. Caron, down in the valley, ordered the soldiers to bring the prisoner down for questioning with the words *"Le prisonnier, descendez-le*" ("*bring down the prisoner*"). When the soldiers on the hill requested a confirmation of the order, the captain confirmed: "d*escendez-le*". His words are interpreted colloquially as 'kill him'. Upon hearing a burst of gunfire at the top, the distressed Caron asks: "*What happened?*" The answer comes: "*We have killed the prisoner as you commanded*". Following further adventures in pursuit of his elusive enemy, Captain

Caron is killed. The trial ends with the professor absurdly convicted, while Captain Caron is acquitted of torture.

Representing War

The last great battle of the war in Indochina, Dien Bien Phu seemed to America as a *beau geste* that marked the Viet Minh triumph over the ineffective European way of waging a war. America, with its efficacy, solid determination and high moral values, would prevail in Vietnam according to films such as *China Gate* (Fuller, USA, 1957) and *The Quiet American* (Mankiewicz, USA, 1958, re-made by Noyce, UK *et al*, 2002).

Could the images of French incompetence disseminated by the media in the 1950s have influenced the conduct of America in the South-East Asian conflict? In decrying the French military experience in Indochina, however, the U.S. ignored the tenacity of the Vietnamese people and their organisation as well as the nature of the terrain, the climate, and thousands of years of history.

Of course, the American war in Vietnam was televised, unlike the French colonial wars, footage of which was only seen displayed in cinemas. Preserved in the national archives of ECPAD (the *Etablissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense*), they are currently of great notoriety. The images of war hardly circulated on TV in the France of 1958, where the audience amounted to a modest 800,000; by 1962, when the war came to an end, there were more than three million.

The broadcasts were produced by official networks subject to censorship by the Ministry of the Interior. The national crisis of the Fourth French Republic and the birth of the Fifth Republic, the immorality of politicians, and the sometimes rogue greatness of the military in the lost wars, led from the 1970s onwards to a flood of publications and films designed to re-think the wars from an historical distance.

The resulting works analyse the trauma of defeat, study the strategies of the winners, exposing the obscenity of torture, and the brutal abandonment of a population who were confident that the settler would be eternal. Others exalt the French combatants who fought in Indochina in a theatre of operations four times larger than that which confronted American military power.

In the films of Schoendoerffer, French national identity is projected on to ordinary men who were to lose their place in the nation that they helped to build and the history they helped to write. Perhaps that is why the director's final film, *Dien Bien Phu* (1992), which features both French and Vietnamese military personnel, has symbolically rescued this memory and turned a tragic page in the history of the nations involved.

Acknowledgment

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59 / *Generation Kill*: Representing Moral Complexities in the First Stages of the Iraq War

Serena Daalmans

Introduction

Today, the stock-in-trade of television programmes is what Dant has called "*the moral dilemma that is presented in a way that cannot be dealt with by reading off from a modernist code of ethics*".[1] In other words, television today often presents narrative forms that avoid simple moral outcomes. In its conceptualisation of the first stage of the Iraq war, however, the HBO miniseries *Generation Kill* (2008, prod. Ed Burns and David Simon) works rather differently. Based on the 2004 book of the same name by Evan Wright, the series adopts a dual and hence morally complex structure, enabling viewing from both proponents and opponents of the war.

On the one hand it glorifies Marine bravado, courage and brotherhood and on the other hand it stuns and shocks with dramatic evidence of atrocities committed, and of the utter lack of planning in the guidance of the Recon Marines.[2] Through this structure, Wright's journalism of attachment and the multiplicity of views enabled by a large ensemble cast, *Generation Kill* carefully and straightforwardly illustrates the moral complexities that permeated the actions of the Recon Marines in the invasion of Iraq.

It is this idea of emergent moral complexity that is explored in this analysis of the TV series *and* the original source material by Wright. In *Generation Kill* we encounter the face of modern war, the cocky, obnoxious members of the First Reconnaissance Battalion that would form America's shock troops in the Iraq War, through the experiences of Evan Wright as an embedded journalist for *Rolling Stone*.

Although the material is focused on the first two months of the war, the analysis of the problems that the Marines faced and the choices they had to make will be used to outline the representation of the moral framework as it evolved in the first stages of the war. This moral framework will be discussed based on the following concepts: military codes surrounding the use of violence, the necessity of 'othering' and 'brothering' in a war, as well as the inescapability of our own moral compass.

Questions of Morality: Killing and Othering

When thinking about morality and the military, or morality and an *élite* unit like the Marines, the first thing that comes to mind is the violent nature of the profession. In the context

of war, as we know, violence that would otherwise be morally impermissible becomes allowable in a special way by virtue of its collective, societal, and political character. This idea is neatly captured by Sergeant Espera when he offers his assessment of the battalion's performance: "*Do you realize the shit we've done here, the people we've killed? Back home in the civilian world, if we did this, we would go to prison*".[3] This unstated command of war is ever-present in the lives of the Marines represented in *Generation Kill*. The culture of Marines revels in the ultimate societal taboo (i.e. killing) - from their war cry '*Kill*!', the idea of "*getting some"* (i.e. the opportunity to prove themselves), to their personal comments on the nature of their corps and their duties.

With the declaration of war, the moral denunciation of the Other as both a deadly menace to the existence of the country as well as the upholder of an abhorrent moral code becomes central to public discourse. The need for othering, de-personalisation and even de-humanisation in a war arises from the moral code of civil society, in which the respect for another person can be seen as modernity's religion of humanity. It isn't enough to provide military recruits with weapons and basic incentives to kill; this emergent sacred belief of the worth of the individual has to overcome or be overcome by, the need for military efficiency. This was aptly underscored by the results of the Marshall study of World War II veterans, which concluded that over three-quarters of soldiers refused to fire at the enemy even when their own lives were at stake.

In *Generation Kill* this kind of othering is present (especially in the use of the word *'Hajis'*), even though Lieutenant Fick says that these Marines are not comparable to their World War II counterparts: "*I'll say one thing about these guys.*

When we take fire, not one of them hesitates to shoot back ... These guys have no problem with killing"[4]. Even though these Marines don't hesitate when it comes to killing - perhaps the de-humanisation of the terrorist enemy has grown even more effective than that of Nazis in World War II or Communists in the Vietnam conflict - they still struggle with their guilt over killing fellow human beings at one point or another.

Soldiers are often criticised for their disregard of the humanity of the enemy when they call them by names such as '*Gook*' and '*Haji'*. However, it is through the use of specific euphemisms and sanitising language that violent activities can take on different (more innocent) appearances, and through the use of non-human labelling that killing becomes more bearable. It serves to extend the emotional distance between those who kill and those who are killed.

The de-humanisation of the enemy is present in *Generation Kill,* varying from exclamations about "*filthy Hajij fingers*" to derogatory remarks about clothing - "*Don't you think you ought to change out of your pajamas?*".[5] This degrading process is at points in also countered by a re-humanisation of the Other, for example as when Gunny Wynn says: "*You have got to see that these are people just like you. You've got to see past the huts, the camels, the different clothes they wear. They're just people. … We're not here to destroy their way of life*"[6].

Brotherhood and the Disintegration of Command

All Marines internalise the terms honor, courage and commitment; they form the core values of the Marine Corps and the foundation of the brotherhood they enter. Through a

rigorous boot camp that is marked by a sense of psychological and physical rebirth, a connection is formed which creates a loyalty that is unquestionable. In *Generation Kill* it becomes clear that the homo-social brotherhood and camaraderie of the Marines is established by casual, irreverent and quick-witted vulgarity, the constant need to physically test one another, as well as by shared confusion and anger over the situation they find themselves in.

But the strength of the brotherhood and the duty they feel towards their fellow Marines is aptly illustrated when Wright talks to Espera after he decides that eight years in the Corps are enough, and that he wants to connect with his wife and the nine-year old daughter he barely knew. "*But news images of Marines dying in the fighting in Fallujah were giving him second thoughts. What pained him were the deaths of several young troops in one day. 'Those are my babies dying over there,' he said, using an old squad leader's term of endearment for young Marines*".[7]

Aside from the glorification of camaraderie and virtues like loyalty and self-sacrifice, the moral complexity of the situation is accentuated by the disintegration of, and growing discontent with, structures and processes of command. With this *Generation Kill* builds on themes already familiar from Vietnam War and First Gulf War films such as *Platoon* and *Jarhead*. The incompetence of 'Encino Man', the officer in command of Lieutenant Fick's Marines, is highlighted by incidents ranging from duct-taping his windows shut and missing checkpoints to ordering a dangerous fire-bombing mission using the wrong protocol. 'Captain America', for his part, is the incompetent platoon commander who is scared of the idea of enemy contact and, worse still, attempts to bayonet captured soldiers.

The growing disbelief in command is not limited to officers. First Recon's Commander Lt. Colonel Ferrando - or 'Godfather' - does not come off unscathed. 'Godfather' is portrayed as a man on a mission - primarily to impress Major General Mattis. 'Godfather' also dedicates a great deal of time to enforce the Grooming Standard, which also displeases the Marines. "*Out here we have a pile of captains, gunnery sergeants and staff sergeants with us that can't do jack shit. They don't even know how to refuel vehicles, get us batteries. All they do is make us get haircuts and shaves … We're getting ready to invade a country, and this is what our commander talks to us about? Moustaches?".*[8] Eventually, even though they sometimes despise their commander for his reckless actions and obsession with grooming, he does embody what the Marines are all about: professionalism - mission accomplishment first, troop welfare second.

An Inescapable Moral Compass

The principle 'Do not harm' is arguably built into our evolutionary moral compass, and even those who are trained to suppress this instinct cannot escape its grasp. Aside from the evolutionary component that curbs the martial appetite, even in the case of those trained to kill, it is also the underlying conviction that civilians are deserving of protection from the ravages of combat that shapes the moral compass. This moral tension between military necessity and society's moral framework is also dramatised in *Generation Kill*.

For example, in the first episode of the mini-series, when Iraqi civilians hand themselves over the code of conduct based on humanitarian principles dictates that the Marines need to take care of those who surrender to them. But the

situation unfolds differently. Their commander orders them to 'un-surrender' the Iraqis and to send them back where they came from. When orders are given from high up the command chain the Iraqis are sent back to Basra to face a grisly fate at the hands of the death squads from whom they had been trying to flee.

As the Marines move further and further towards Baghdad, the civilian body-count grows. From the *gung-ho* attitude that permeated all the first contacts with violence, the Marines grow wearier and wearier over the lives they've destroyed. The civilian casualties are an affront to their sense of professionalism; it is poorly done work and a disappointment in their conceptualisation of themselves as warriors. The shooting of civilian men, women, children lies outside their vision of professional conduct, and even with continuously changing Rules of Engagement, the Marines continuously try to navigate the line between a 'good' and a 'bad' kill.

The shooting of a girl as well as a farm-boy poses such an affront to the Marines' integrity and sense of self as ethical warriors that, when they are unable to help the boy because of the unwillingness of command, they rebel against their superiors and force their hand to medically evacuate the injured boy. Lt. Fick realises that if he doesn't side with his platoon it would fall apart, and even though he might become subject to professional inquiries later he understands the need to cleanse the hands of the marines.

As one Marine explains: "'*I'm going to have to bring this home with me and live with it. A pilot doesn't go down and look at the civilians his bombs have hit. Artillerymen don't see the effects of what they do. But the guys on the ground do.*

This is killing me inside".[9] *Generation Kill* shows that apparently cold-blooded warriors are not that cold-blooded at all. War eventually generates long-term guilt in most of its professional warriors, and ultimately wreaks havoc on their sense of personal identity.

Conclusion

The TV series and the book confront their viewers and readers with complex moral dilemma which have ambivalent outcomes. The series and book can be read from both a pro-war and an anti-war standpoint, which makes it increasingly interesting to study as a source of moral complexity even though it only focuses on such a short period of time. The various and conflicting moral standpoints Marines need to engage in during battle become illuminated in *Generation Kill*. It explores the idea that within a certain role (i.e. the professional) there might be conflicting moral standpoints. As viewers we gain a greater understanding of the reality of war from a 'boots on the ground' perspective, and come to realise that in navigating these dilemmas the Marines must choose which of the moral values they respect and choose to uphold.

The mediated experience of the Iraq War and the conceptualisation of Marine and Army conduct in Iraq will, for most, forever be associated with the horrors such as Abu Ghraib and the Haditha killings. The Iraq War has become a topic of national shame for America, but when we think back to the beginning of the War, most of the American public was very much in favor of it. The media were on top of the invasion through the use of embedded journalists such as Wright himself, because of a 2003 Pentagon decision that allowed journalist to live with and work alongside soldiers in

various military units, although journalists were pulled back as the conflict became more ambiguous.

With the diminished coverage, the lack of a clear and compelling narrative, and with no promise of a satisfying, morally unambiguous resolution, the audience quickly lost interest – something which Wright condemns: "*It's the American public for whom the Iraq War is often no more real than a videogame. Five years into this war, I am not always confident most Americans fully appreciate the caliber of the people fighting for them, the sacrifices they have made, and the sacrifices they continue to make. After the Vietnam War ended, the onus of shame largely fell on the veterans. This time around, if shame is to be had when the Iraq conflict ends – and all indications are that there will be plenty of it- the veterans are the last people in America to deserve it. When it comes to apportioning shame my vote goes to the American people who sent them to war in a surge of emotions but quickly lost the will to win it or end it*".[10]

Through the representation of the moral complexities that emerged in the first stage of the invasion of Iraq for the Marines, we as viewers (and readers) of *Generation Kill* – aside from our opinions about the validity of the Iraq War - might come to empathise with the Marines and gain a clearer perspective on what it actually means to be at war. We get to see masculine bravado and idealism as well as the (personal) costs of the war, but also the pervasive sense of professionalism and the moral complexities Marines face on a regular basis. All in all, the series and the book only give us a small part of the overall picture of the war in Iraq, but nonetheless our moral horizon as viewers is expanded because of it.

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60 / The Hidden Reality of War in Afghanistan and Iraq: Challenges for the Fiction Film

Richard Gehrmann

The Spectacle of Combat

War films might emphasise pathos, heroism or hyper-realist levels of violence, but they do not represent the real war experience of most soldiers. For most soldiers war involves tedium, routine work and occasional violence, yet such imagery is not part of the spectacle of war that we construct and that we consume. The vast majority of war films depict combat that represents only small, isolated peaks of military experience, suggesting that the pleasures of the spectacle demand this high degree of unrealistic representation.

In a contemporary environment where media images of war are readily available online, and yet where many Western communities are increasingly divorced from daily contact with real soldiers, this essay examines the distorted mis-match between the way war is represented and the way war is, using case studies of Afghanistan and Iraq war films.[1]

Audiences gain pleasure from war films that can convey a variety of messages that might include a critique of war, commemoration of the dead, or advocacy of one cause over another. To improve the spectacle, film-makers seek more authentic representations of the reality of war, often using second-hand mediated versions of wartime experience, with fictional accounts developed by screenwriters based on soldiers' memoirs or the experience of embedded journalists.

Enhanced technology enables a far more graphic portrayal of combat than ever before, with a film like *Black Hawk Down* (Scott, USA, 2001) recognised for its ability to convey what Klien describes as the hyper-real spectacle of battle, in which the totality of the film as war spectacle transcends any critical messages it might have made about the 1993 Somalia intervention.[2] But to what extent do war films actually convey a true representation of the complex experience of war itself as experienced by participants?

Representations of the U.S. War on Terror differ from those of earlier conflicts. As noted by Bjerre, the Second World War provided a mythic-heroic version of war, Vietnam reflected themes of disillusion, and the Iraq War was one of *"war junkies … raised in a historical vacuum"*.[3] Despite such differences, the dominant trope of the war film remains military action and combat. *Generation Kill* (White/Cellan Jones, USA, 2008) and *The Hurt Locker* (Bigelow, USA, 2008),

as well as the documentary *Restrepo* (Hetherington/Junger, 2010) all reflect this primacy, and with varied effectiveness all three privilege the combat experience of war.

The Experience of Combat

The seven-episode fictional TV mini-series *Generation Kill* covers the victorious United States advance to Baghdad in the 2003 phase of the Iraq War. The genesis of this series lies in the work of award-winning author Evan Wright, the *Rolling Stone* journalist who spent two months embedded with the Marine Combat Team members who constitute the subject of both the book and television film. Wright acknowledged the difficulty of coming close to a team of soldiers, but the duration of his embedded experience helped him achieve some success.

A key facet of the film is the way in which the soldiers' frank behaviour (and profanity) reveals the extensive social and cultural differences between the soldiers of the Iraq War and those depicted in earlier conflicts - and their social distance from Wright himself. *Generation Kill* provides an intimate and revealing picture of the experience of these soldiers, while raising questions about what might follow their apparent victory. The length of a highly effective mini-series such as *Generation Kill* allows the film-maker more scope to portray the non-fighting aspects of war but while the pauses between combat are frequent features of this work, combat action or imminent combat action remain key elements driving the film.

More packaged and commercial, *The Hurt Locker* is in turn based on a screenplay by a former embedded journalist. Winner of six Oscars (including Best Director, Best Picture,

and Best Original Screenplay), this portrayal of the experiences of a U.S. bomb disposal team during the occupation phase of the Iraq War was filmed in neighbouring Jordan under conditions of intense heat and discomfort, adding to the sense of authenticity. The film was further strengthened by Bigelow's decision to cast lesser-known actors, rendering the actors somewhat anonymous and making the film more documentary-like. The opening scenes, shot hand-held, depict an improvised explosive device incident and are extremely powerful, with the imagery evocative of propaganda films jihadist groups make of their own catastrophic bombing attacks.

While thankfully I have never been blown up, my experiences in the Middle East have given me a perspective on this aspect of war.[4] The powerful nature of Bigelow's work indeed creates tension and hyper-arousal for the first part of this very convincing opening scene. *The Hurt Locker* has been praised by non-military reviewers as an action film that represents war effectively, but there are also significant inaccuracies, stretching the film's credibility, that reviewer and former soldier Kate Hoit has identified.[5]

As with *Generation Kill, The Hurt Locker* script has links to the reality of war through the experience of an embedded journalist. The Academy Award-winning screenwriter Mark Boal spent two weeks with a U.S. Explosives Ordnance Disposal team, a short stay which would have nonetheless given him an excellent insight into the intense work of an EOD team facing several call-outs each day, but would have provided a far more limited understanding of the long-term military experience of soldiers at war.

Different Forms of Spectacle

In contrast, the Afghanistan-based documentary film *Restrepo* is more complex and less climactic. Set in the Korengal Valley where so much fighting occurred that the film-makers found it became boring, the film won awards but was never going to have the wide appeal of a major money-making fictive representation shown in mainstream cinemas. With its emphasis on daily routine, *Restrepo* includes scenes of relative inactivity, of soldiers sitting around apparently doing nothing - which actually makes it far more effective in terms of depicting the real experience of soldiers, but a lot less interesting to many audiences.

This representation also arose from the experience of embedded journalists, but in this case was far closer to the experiences of soldiers themselves. In 2009 Sebastian Junger and the late Tim Hetherington made five separate month-long trips to Korengal where they were embedded with the soldiers. As the film-maker who conducted one of the last Western interviews with former Afghan resistance leader Ahmad Shah Masood prior to his assassination by the Taliban, Junger understood the nuances of conflict in Afghanistan, and Hetherington was also a highly experienced and award-winning conflict reporter.

The 93-minute documentary is based on 150 hours of film, and more than 40 hours of further interviews with soldiers. Any documentary film that collapses time is in one sense inherently unrealistic and climactic, but may still provide an effective and realistic depiction of experiences. Despite the authenticity of *Restrepo*, however, the extensive action and dramatic climaxes of fiction films such as *The Hurt Locker* had greater appeal and attracted far more viewers.

A very different Iraq War film is the drama *Taking Chance* (Katz, USA, 2009). In this instance the representations of combat are essentially confined to the first few minutes of the film, which indirectly record the death of U.S. Marine Chance Phelps. The remainder of the film is an unusual depiction of the experience of war, with its coverage of the repatriation and burial of Chance's body. As an academic I was in the rare position of being able to watch American soldiers view this film in a tent cinema located on a U.S. military transit base in a Middle Eastern desert.

The soldiers were *en route* to Iraq or Afghanistan, returning to the States from the war zone, or on short respite leave during their year-long deployment. My ethnographic gaze was much taken by the way the soldiers viewed this film - they were absolutely absorbed and watched it in utter silence. Their consumption of this material was truly compelling. Viewed at that place in that time, the film spoke to this audience directly and with great power, in a way action films could not.

The posthumous aspect of war is not often shown, and this is what becomes the focus of *Taking Chance,* making it a homecoming account with a difference. The main character is U.S. Marine Lieutenant Colonel Michael Strobl (played by Kevin Bacon), who volunteers to escort Chance's body back to his home-town for burial. *Taking Chance* gains strength from the source of the screenplay, an article Strobl published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in May 2004 (later expanded in the *Marine Corps Gazette*), describing the events in question and his emotional response to his task.

He had served in the 1990-1 Gulf War and had a sense of ambiguity about his non-participation in the longer-lasting

and more dangerous Iraq War of 2003. The theme of soldiers seeking validation through war is one I will return to shortly. While not overtly debating issues of the War on Terror, *Taking Chance* is highly successful in its depiction of the reality of war, and is a success as a fictional war film.

Expectations of the War Film

Such varied portrayals return us to the question of what war means within a society, and how it can be represented in film. Those in the military have been socialised by the army life, and the wider society in which they live to want to experience a 'real' war. In reflecting on the soldier experience, *Generation Kill* screenwriter Mark Boal clearly understood, even if he did not share, the feelings typically experienced by soldiers: *"War is dehumanising, but it can be exhilarating and existentially very profound. To save lives and to take them. To fight for your country. All that can be alluring and addictive for some people"*.[6] It is telling that *The Hurt Locker* opens with the statement *"war is a drug"*.

Gender also has an important and complex impact. The Iraq War telemovie *Saving Jessica Lynch* (Markle, USA, 2003) has been criticised for its inaccuracies and its propaganda role in promoting a distorted representation of women in combat, but it remains true that for some female soldiers the experience of a 'real' war can be an assertion of their own equality with males. For many male soldiers war can be a manly act or a rite of passage. War can also be a professional experience that soldiers seek in order to validate years of rehearsal and training. In his review of the Gulf War film *Jarhead* (Mendes, Germany/USA, 2005), Nathaniel Fick reflects on the similarity between this fictional film version of

war and his own real experience of a later war as one of the soldiers depicted in the *Generation Kill* miniseries:

"Swofford and the others care only about … their chances of 'getting some'. When that day finally comes, and Iraqi artillery blossoms into dust clouds around the Marines' position, Swofford stands transfixed while others dive for the bottom of their holes. 'My combat action', he muses, 'has commenced'. It seems staged, melodramatic, too perfect to be true. And yet, I saw similar reactions in Iraq. After my platoon's first firefight, we basked in the validation of all our training and waiting and sacrifice. We finally felt like real Marines". [7]

Soldiers can of course even feel loss if they miss out on war. The 1990-1 Gulf War lasted months in the preparation and bombing phase, followed by only 72 hours of direct fighting. For many soldiers this war therefore ended with no opportunity to experience actual combat, a theme introduced in *Three Kings* (Russell, USA, 1999), a heist film located in the Gulf War. Such anticipation of conflict that is ultimately unfulfilled is also the theme of *Jarhead*, linked to reality through its source, Anthony Swofford's Gulf War memoir. This emphasises the life-journey of a soldier through the experiences of enlistment, basic training, and then the long wait before the fighting starts in 1991. Despite some factual errors Fick regards the film as much more authentic than the book.

The non-military community sees more images of war than ever before, but paradoxically knows much less about it. During the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq soldiers could use helmet cameras and blog their experience, television news disseminated images of destruction and horror, militant

groups arranged roadside bomb explosions with the best angles for propaganda films, and images from unmanned aerial vehicles showed the war from above. Yet despite having access to such 'real' images of war, the Western public is increasingly divorced from either personal or second-hand exposure to the military.

In contrast to earlier conflicts where conscription made military service a mass community experience which all knew would touch their own families, the United States' adoption of an all-volunteer army after Vietnam has meant that the vast majority of the American public have, in Blackmore's words, *"avoided military service"*, a position that can *"force the heavy lifting on a relatively few individuals caught in a permanent war economy underwritten by stop-loss orders"*.[8] A small volunteer military is the norm throughout the affluent Western world, and few of those who watch war films have been in the armed forces, or have access to families, friends and neighbours with military experience.

This lack of personal connection reduces their ability to question and critique the images that they believe represent the reality of military service in war, unless film-makers provide corrective alternate viewpoints. War journalist and co-director of *Restrepo* Tim Hetherington sums this up as follows: *"People who haven't experienced war inevitably base their understanding of it on the mediated versions of news or Hollywood. These representations are often limited and can't quite reveal the humour, boredom, and confusion inherent in combat. It's something we feel was important to represent"*. [9]

The Unfilmed Reality of War

Film and media play a key role in perpetuating a false depiction of the war experience and in elevating the significance of combat. Combat might be the peak of military experience for those in the armed forces, yet is not an everyday occurrence for the vast majority of those military personnel from the Western world who go to war. For most soldiers, war consists of administrative work, routine, preparation and waiting, with only occasional combat events. Many in the military deploy on operations and never experience combat, while small numbers of troops in battle are supported by a much larger number of combat service support troops. The disconnect between soldiers in each category remains an enduring source of tension.

For those who do undertake fighting, the experience is as intense and traumatic as it has ever been, but dangerous and challenging combat during operations can be punctuated by periods of inactivity back at a patrol base, with the occasional threat of death or disability from poorly aimed rocket attacks. Yet those who do experience combat are less likely to be killed or wounded, and if they are wounded are highly likely to live. For Western soldiers and their allies, survivability has increased exponentially with the application of a wide range of high-level medical technologies.

For the West, participation in recent conflicts has been marked by comparatively low casualties. Of the 2.5 million Americans who were deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, fewer than 7,000 were killed, and US casualties constitute a far smaller proportion of killed and wounded than in previous wars - a figure only partly explained by improved medical

assistance.[10](More than 34,000 Australians served in Afghanistan yet only 41 were killed and 263 wounded.)

Such figures help illustrate that despite our cultural construct of what war entails, most Western soldiers don't fight constantly, many experience enemy threats on infrequent occasions and at minimal risk, and the small minority who fight regularly usually do so facing risks that have been mitigated as never before. Yet depictions in mainstream film and media usually fail to emphasise these fundamental truths, and persist in misrepresenting the war experience as primarily one of constant fighting.

While continuing to entertain, the fiction spectacle of the experience of war is increasingly divorced from reality and much of recent film and media only continues to perpetuate this. But there would only be small audiences for war films that show storekeepers allocating fuel supplies for *Generation Kill* troops advancing to Baghdad, the operations room taking the reports from *The Hurt Locker* bomb disposal heroes on a day without catastrophe, or transport supply convoys that are not attacked and where Jessica Lynch does not require saving.

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THE LONDON FILM AND MEDIA READER 4 (in preparation)
Essays from the Third Annual London Film and Media Conference 2014

THE LONDON READER 1
Essays from the First Annual London Studies Conference 2011

THE LONDON READER 2
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