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Celebrity Big Brother 2007

Douglas Allen

Introduction

When I wrote in *MEJ 40* about psychology, reality television and its brand leader *Big Brother*, little did I realise that within months so many of the issues raised in the article would explode on to the world stage in a diplomatic crisis of unprecedented proportions. The 'Jade racist bullying' controversy made such an impact that discussion about *Celebrity Big Brother 5 (CBB5)* and reality TV migrated from the proverbial water cooler to the floor of the House of Commons and the streets and corridors of power of India.

What follows is a brief attempt to disentangle some of those issues which teachers may find themselves discussing in class if they teach reality TV. It makes no claim to great originality or theoretical provenance or rigour – it is more an attempt to organise and reflect on some of the discourses and debates in circulation at the time (January 2007).

These can be covered under four main headings :

1) audience pleasures – how aspects of the show – such as the narrative trajectories that make the routine *BB* series such compulsive viewing – were especially at work on this occasion, through mechanisms such as our parasocial relationships with the 'performers', and our audience position of superiority as the possessors of privileged knowledge.

2) popular psychology – how the skills and theories of psychology were needed even more to decode and explain the extremes of behaviour; and how the role of psychology experimentation in reality TV really came to the fore, raising sharply the issue of ethics for the programme makers.

3) reality TV as social barometer – how a simple, much derided programme became for a moment a topic of national debate,

opening up issues which were clearly bubbling under the surface and waiting to erupt – areas of social panic, uncertainty and unease, such as youth aggression, bullying, racism, class anger and conflict and the role of good citizenship through intervention by third parties.

4) institutional factors – how the means of production of a TV show were revealed as seldom before, with issues coming up for public scrutiny and debate such as TV editing techniques, media finance, advertising and sponsorship, the economics of telephone voting, the powers of Ofcom, the role of showbiz agents, and the cultural and political position of Channel 4.

Chronology

Firstly a brief narrative reminder of what happened. *CBB5* was launched on Wednesday 3 January 2007; housemates were Leo Sayer, Dirk Benedict, Jermaine Jackson, Danielle Lloyd, Jo O'Meara, Ken Russell, Donny Tourette, Carole Malone, Shilpa Shetty, Cleo Roccas, Ian 'H' Watkins. Initial viewing figures of 7.1m fell to 3.2m and 2.8m by the weekend, and most of the media gossip was about how dull the programme was, not even saved by *CBB's* big gimmick – to introduce celebrity mag favourite and former housemate Jade Goody, her boyfriend Jack and her mother Jackie as privileged guests who would be served by the others. This led to tensions and walkouts. Jackie in particular raised the temperature with her forthright manner and casual approach to remembering Shilpa's name and pronouncing it correctly.

After the servant experiment ended and Jackie was first to be evicted, Jade's extravert personality began to dominate the house, attracting a clique of the young female housemates around her, comprising Jo and Danielle. Their behind-the-back remarks centred on Shilpa, with casual

and offensive remarks about her name, accent, social status, cooking skills and eating habits escalating into a full-scale confrontation between Jade and Shilpa on Wednesday 17 January, with the rest of the housemates at a loss about whether to intervene. A massive number of public complaints to media watchdog Ofcom indicated that the confrontation was raising concern and anger beyond the house, and the controversy escalated into a 'racism' row, reaching even Cabinet level when Chancellor Gordon Brown had to give his views during an official visit to India.

It became a Jade v Shilpa eviction contest on Friday 19 January, and when Jade was evicted by a massive public vote, she was virtually smuggled out of the house to avoid what was feared could become a public lynching. Eventually Shilpa won the contest on Sunday 28 January, to popular acclaim. The tabloid uproar – seen by many as a witch-hunt – against the 'racist' members of the house took quite a few days to subside, as both TV channel and participants counted the cost of their lost sponsorship deals.

For a more detailed account of events see a well documented chronicle in Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celebrity_Big_Brother_2007_\(UK\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celebrity_Big_Brother_2007_(UK))

Audience Pleasures

The power of narrative to hook an audience proved to be crucial in *CBB5*. Indeed as events unfolded they seemed to take on the trappings of classical drama, with a figure of overweening pride or hubris facing her nemesis and being destroyed through a fatal flaw – a tragedy bringing catharsis to us the audience. Like a scenario from a Propp fairy tale analysis, good battled evil, and the beautiful princess vanquished the wicked witch. The 'just desserts' ending could not have been bettered, as the final six went out in exact

order of 'villainy to virtue rewarded', from Danielle in sixth place ('boos') to Shilpa first ('cheers'). The previous 'guilty parties' had already been dispatched in the first watershed battle between Jade and Shilpa, which had become almost a national ethics referendum. Morality tales were played out in the house and the endings appeared to satisfy our need for natural justice – that all is right with the world, that what goes around comes around – and to offer us guidance on correct ways to behave.

Other narrative devices increased our pleasure. The superior knowledge of the omniscient viewer allowed us to watch 'real' characters act out their daily soap existence unaware of the storm around them outside the house. There were particularly piquant dramatic ironies, such as Danielle's musings about boyfriend Teddy while the tabloids were charting his progressive disenchantment with her on-screen 'performance'. Our parasocial interaction with the characters made them our temporary friends or enemies, as we gossiped about who said what to who, as we took sides, expressed outrage at one or the other, debated the merits or not of the 'hands off' tactics of the other housemates, and disagreed on whose behaviour was to be emulated and whose to be disparaged.

In this *BB/CBB* series more than any other, the narrative pull of voyeuristic people-watching was all powerful. It combined with other primitive urges – feelings of the need to take revenge, to put the guilty parties in the stocks, and if necessary to organize a public hanging to see off the 'villains'. We found ourselves turning to German words we've always wanted to use like '*schadenfreude*' as we gloried in their humiliation, and cheered on Davina and Dermot as they give the villains a – by their standards – relatively hard time in the post-show grillings.

Popular Psychology

This series confirmed even more the central role of psychology in the reality TV genre, generating popular psychological knowledge and debate. Two aspects of psychology emerged strongly from *CBB5* – clear-cut demonstrations of some of the extremes of psychological interaction and conflict, and the need for a full-scale debate about the ethics of reality TV in general and the *Big Brother* concept in particular.

The usual pop psychology issues emerged and were discussed in spin-off programmes like *Big Brother's Big Brain* – group dynamics, body language etc. But these took on a much greater urgency when the crisis blew up, bringing in a whole new raft of heavier psychological issues, such as prejudice, in-groups, scapegoating, aggression, bullying, and bystander behaviour. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/6273975.stm>)



Jade Goody and Shilpa Shetty

As the aggression escalated, the programme began to look more and more like a variation on Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment, with characters locked up in pressure cooker conditions to see what would happen if, as in this case, a volatile personality like Jade was added to the mix. And like Stanford, things seemed to spin out of the control of those nominally in charge, as the participants performed their roles with more gusto than could have been predicted.

Here ethical elements entered the debate more strongly than before, with much long-felt unease about the practices of reality TV surfacing. If the *Big Brother* idea were to be pitched as a psychological experiment in academic circles, it is unlikely that it would be allowed, out of ethical considerations. But renegade psychology experiments that are close to the edge are alive and well in the world of reality TV where the idea of ethics appears to be more of a flexible concept.

Leaving aside the main obvious commercial considerations of ratings, such edgy ventures are justified by familiar arguments – that the insights generated (e.g. on bullying) are valid and important enough to justify any exploitation. Anyway the exploitation is justified because it is people volunteering and giving consent of their own free will, knowing what they are getting in to. Even celebrities must

know in advance what is in store for them, and have made the calculation that it is worth it for their career prospects. So in effect anyone who gets involved is asking for it, as the argument goes. In case of any problems or adverse criticisms, psychologists are involved behind the scenes looking after the state of mind of participants throughout the process from selection to eviction. This time, questioning of such a *laissez-faire* approach reached a new peak as programme and post-programme reports

of depression, addiction and suicide risk created one of the heaviest fallouts to date for a British *BB*. ('Ethics of Reality TV', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/6702315.stm>)

(See separate boxed panel for information on the role of the British Psychological Society in TV, with its TV Ethics Code)

Reality TV as Social Barometer

The crucial nature of the reality TV as a barometer of our times seemed to be reinforced in this series, which

acted out a raft of social concerns and battles about how to behave and what is acceptable and what is not. Each issue that came up had no simple answers. Even basic questions such as whether Jade was guilty of racism and/or bullying prompted the answer – it depends . . . It depends what you mean by racism. At one end of the spectrum if your definition involves hood-wearing cross burners, she probably is not one; if your definition involves the unthinking propagation of social stereotypes translated into offence-causing remarks, then she may well be. If your definition of bullying involves vicious gang-leaders beating up others or extorting money with menaces, she probably is not one. If it involves the basically insecure leader of an 'in-group' being psychologically abusive and demeaning of an 'out-person' then she may well be.

Another contemporary issue of uncertainty and debate is how you should behave if you are a bystander observing these events. Do you intervene to stop something that is wrong (provided it *is* wrong – after all, everything is relative)? Or is that an intrusion on someone else's issue that is not your concern and which may well backfire on you? How far are you your (big) brother's/sister's keeper?

Darley and Latane's research on bystander behaviour in New York in the 1960s – after

the notorious murder of Kitty Genovese in sight of 35 witnesses, none of whom did anything – brought forth theories such as 'diffusion of responsibility' and the five stages of thinking we go through, before deciding to intervene. We ask: Have I seen that there is a problem? Is any help actually needed? Is it my responsibility, or someone else's? Am I best equipped to deal with it, or is someone else? Will there be negative consequences if I intervene, not least for me? There was a great deal of responsibility being diffused and bystander thinking in the *CBB* house, echoing the decisions made every day by individual viewers facing various levels of street crime, vandalism and other anti-social activity.

It is not just the participants and viewers who find themselves in unfamiliar territory, but the programme providers are caught on the horns of an uncertain dilemma. Do you broadcast such potentially racist and bullying behaviour in order to show how bad it is, or is that broadcast in itself offensive? It revealed most clearly the confused state of society's understanding of the meaning of terms like racism, bullying, and how to deal with them. In our postmodern era of relativity, we have lost our certainties as to what is acceptable and what is not, confused further by the changing standards commonly known as 'political correctness'.

Now the battles are played out in arenas such as reality TV, where there is a hegemonic struggle over values. What is acceptable behaviour? Has there been too much of a celebration of the ladette culture of vulgarity? Has there been too much attention paid to the world of the talentless celebrity, where ignorance is lionized? Should even the slightest hint of what might be seen as racism be leaped on and squashed straight away, or is that an attack on free speech? Should everything be out and aired as a vigorous debate? Does it depend who is making the remark? Is black-on-white racism equally reprehensible? Or black-on-black for that matter? Is there a potential for issues like class prejudice becoming tangled up in what may appear to be the main debate on race?

To paraphrase the argument put forward most strongly by cultural critic Paul Morley on the various *CBB* spin-offs – we appear to be living in such a confused world that we're crying out for some kind of guidance for how we should behave.

From the amount of heat generated, it appears that the internet and reality TV are the main areas where the debate is being played out.

Institutional factors

One of the most interesting aspects of the fallout from *CBB5* was how much of TV's often hidden 'means of production' were revealed. In terms of editing and constructing TV programmes, the technical language of the reality show once again became a key issue. The editing process was laid bare, as certain images and sequences rather than others were selected and constructed into a particular narrative account of reality – or 'distortion' of reality as victims (including this year's) have traditionally claimed. The cries from especially Jo and Danielle that they were misrepresented and that 'yes, it looks bad... when you show it that way!' helped to highlight what has always been one of the key concerns of media studies.

The role of the audience became more prominent than ever before. The public became more important makers of events, extending beyond the famous pseudo-democratic inducements to vote for evictions ('you decide!'). Viewer power was exercised, with complaints to Ofcom reaching notoriously record breaking levels – an initial 200 turned into 2000, and a reputed 40,000 by the end of its run, as word spread when discussed in chatrooms or through the networks of campaigning special interest groups. The virus-like mechanism by which this happened would make an interesting and revealing case study of popular opinion-forming in our electronic age.

TV organisations felt the glare of publicity, with institutional conditions of production and distribution foregrounded as never before. Channel 4 was forced to act and defend itself, with executives having to appear on TV to justify their action or lack of action.

Light was shone on financial aspects of the show previously the preserve of boardrooms. Thanks to the crisis, the kinds of decisions faced by TV executives were made public, as they had to calculate the risks of the loss of Carphone Warehouse sponsorship. Their dilemma was publicly revealed and debated – trading their reputation and financial income from sponsorship against the rise in audiences and advertising income which would come from the programme's notoriety. Carphone Warehouse withdrew their sponsorship and have since excised any mention of

CBB5 from their website, which once proudly boasted of their sponsorship links. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/6274881.stm>

A hitherto unseen invisible institutional hand appeared to enforce a party line of sorts. Russell Brand's potential to offend became tamed and dink-free for a couple of days; Davina and Dermot had to take an unusually severe line with the 'guilty parties', turning the previously jolly post-eviction interviews into inquisitorial battles of relative toughness. The debate over how hard or soft they were soon led to greater awareness of the incestuous world of reality TV and the media, revealing that Russell, Davina, Dermot and Jade (and Cleo, Jack, Jackie and Matthew Wright...) all had the same agent John Noel Management (though Jade and the agency have since parted company). (<www.johnnoelmanagement.com/>) ('Who's Pulling their Strings?' *Guardian* 29 January 2007 <<http://media.guardian.co.uk/site/story/0,,2000739,00.html>>)

Revelations went right to the top of society, with politicians revealed – not unsurprisingly perhaps – as bandwagon jumpers who don't watch TV but aren't afraid to pontificate on it. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/6269953.stm> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6270825.stm>

Even tabloid newspapers of a certain reputation stoked the hypocrisy boiler by running anti-racist and anti-bullying campaigns. <http://www.thesun.co.uk/article/0,,11049-2007030153,00.html>

The showbiz circle was squared recently when celebrity host Piers Morgan (whose *Mirror* newspaper led the original 2002 assault on Jade) interviewed celebrity guest Jade Goody about her fall from grace ('You Can't Fire Me, I'm Famous', BBC1, 31/7/07).

Conclusions

So overall, as media teachers, what can we make of these events – storm in a shallow teacup or moment of major cultural significance, depending on your perspective?

It usefully highlighted a key issue of media studies – the power of media processes such as narrative, which shape our relationship with the media; it forced us to look more at the constructed nature of reality, and how every product from fictional soap to factual news works

BPS and TV

The British Psychological Society (BPS) produced a new Code of Ethics and Conduct in March 2006 which all psychologists 'should' follow (the Code uses this word instead of the coercive 'must' to emphasise its advisory nature). To meet the growing problems being generated by popular psychology on TV, the BPS media centre has produced a series of guidance sheets for TV production companies, giving advice about how psychologists can be used in TV programmes. The most comprehensive is 'Psychologists working within television : the ethical implications' which highlights the areas of the Code of Conduct most relevant to working on fictional programmes (e.g. *Sea of Souls*) or more importantly factual programmes.

Key issues highlighted are :

Consent – there should be informed consent from participants, and that should mean being made thoroughly aware of the implications of the loss of privacy, the loss of control under stress, the likelihood of embarrassment and regret.

Confidentiality – there must be a clearly agreed line between what will be aired in public and what is kept confidential between psychologist and participant.

Responsibility – there must be a clear definition of the exact responsibilities for the mental health of participants and when psychologists can step in if someone is at risk.

Follow-up involvement – due regard should be given to the long-term implications for participants.

Professional boundaries – psychologists should not attempt to make judgements about situations outwith their area of specialization.

Manipulation – special care should be taken with programmes which change the environment to manipulate participants' behaviour.

The key principles are : warning about and protecting participants from harm, not withholding any vital information from them, and assuring participants they have the right to withdraw at any time. But what becomes of such good intentions in the harsh, commercial world of TV? The document sums up the key contradiction: "Media companies frequently don't understand that ethical considerations prevent psychologists from causing distress, being judgmental or setting up scenarios that could anger/endanger participants – all the things they see as making good television!"

(<http://www.bps.org.uk/media-centre/tv-section/implications/factual/manipulation.cfm>)

Every one of these issues appeared (and was tested to the limits?) in *CBB5*, and it looks like an issue which will become more important in the future.

An edition of the Radio 4 psychology programme *All in the Mind* raised the issue of potential damage to children from reality TV, and Dr. Cynthia McVey of Glasgow Caledonian University admitted that it was a area of little if any research about the effects or damage. (*All in the Mind*, 19 December 2006) http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/allinthemind_20061219.shtml)

The effect on adults is even more of an unknown territory. McVey's experience as resident psychologist on one of the early reality TV docusoap programmes, *Castaway* (BBC/Lion TV, 2000), has made her a leader in liaising between psychology and the media, in an attempt to try to keep things ethically sound. *Castaway* gives us, by chance, one possible pointer to a future trend, through its status as the only programme to be successfully sued for misrepresentation in the editing process, when former participant Ron Copey won £8000 from each of the two production companies in 2001.

(http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,6903,508174,00.html)

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/tv_and_radio/1998795.stm)

by the same principles to engage its audience.

It re-emphasised the importance of psychology in popular television,

particularly reality TV, explaining the processes by which we are drawn into such a world through a search for 'authenticity', and how we interact with and learn from that world. It confirmed,

most sinisterly, that reality TV is the new wild west frontier of psychological experiment, in urgent need of more investigation and interrogation about its methods and ethics.

It re-affirmed the importance of reality TV as the key genre of current TV. But further, it suggested it is a key mediator of our times, highlighting contested areas, uncertain issues and debates, disputed morality, and acting as a playground – or battleground – for society's concerns and anxieties to be struggled over. In reality TV's world, social and moral panics are raised, played out, defused, and brought under control, through imaginary magical resolutions.

Like that outstanding documentary *Capturing the Friedmans* (2003), it reminded us both of the power of the media to make or break players through the narratives they construct, and of the impossibility of the media getting to 'the truth' of a set of events, even under the full and continuous glare of a TV or film camera.

And finally, again most usefully for the media teacher, it highlighted the largely unseen role of institutional bodies, as the people and groups who shape our media experience were flushed out of the backroom and boardroom, and forced to make their decision-making public.

In short, it put up a classic case for the need for media studies, a discipline which highlights and interrogates the processes of the media. And perhaps it tells us that the often despised reality TV genre, because of what it says about the media, society and 'reality' should be at the forefront of our explorations and our teaching.

(In August, Channel 4 announced that the 2008 edition of *Celebrity Big Brother* was to be shelved, to provide "a bit of breathing space" and to take account of "a general issue of supply and demand" in celebrities.) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/6962065.stm>

Additional Sources/Resources

(For a fuller list of material on reality TV, see my article on the topic in *MEJ* 40.)

CBBC/Newsround resources for news-based class lessons on reality TV and CBB5:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_3020000/newsid_3025200

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Radio and TV

Alan Brazil's Sports Breakfast, (UTV owned national station) Talk Sport, 18th January 2007

Scott Wilson in the Morning, Talk 107, (UTV owned Edinburgh based local talk station) 18th January 2007 (partial transcript below)

Today Programme, BBC Radio 4 18th January 2007, business correspondent Greg Wood interviews Channel 4 Chairman Luke Johnson

Today Programme, BBC Radio 4 19th January 2007, business correspondent Greg Wood interviews Bob Wooton
Today Programme, BBC Radio 4 22nd January 2007, media correspondent Toryn Douglas

Week in Westminster, BBC Radio 4, 20th January 2007

Radio Programme Transcription

Talk 107
Scott Wilson with Susan Morrison

(SW) so last word on the show for Thursday Susan.

(SM) Yeah, we've been talking about *Big Brother* and attempts to take it off the air. Now that we've seen Jade's bullying and all the carry on that's going on, it seems to be the most important thing going on in Britain today and Colin has texted us in. Good morning Colin. He says morning both, *Big Bro*, what a stouche over a game show. Not real life or *Cell Block H* for that matter. Anyone of them can walk out, got to give credit to Channel 4, they've created the monster Jade, made a thicko millionaire and now they're ruining her. Fantastic, no more Jade. And I think Colin, you're absolutely right, she became a media star, but now that we've all seen what she's really like, she's not like your ditzy, slightly dim little cousin. She's a nasty, vicious, vindictive lady. And I've

never seen anybody that stupid with just one brain.

Glasgow Caledonian University

Anthea Irwin

The papers that follow have been written by lecturers and research students from the Media and Communication subject group at Glasgow Caledonian University. They all teach on one of the longest established media degrees in the UK, which has recently been reviewed and updated to reflect developments in the media industries and bring it firmly into the twenty-first century. The Media & Communication degree strikes a good balance between the practical and the analytical: in every semester from when they first join us, students are engaged in hands-on training in media skills such as radio and video production, public relations, advertising and web media; alongside this they study modules that analyse the messages in various genres of media, thus enabling them to develop into reflective practitioners who display creativity and responsibility in the media they produce.

The media subject group forms part of the Division of Cultural Business. The division brings together lecturers and researchers in the areas of media, journalism, leisure and tourism whose work can be framed by the concepts 'culture as business' and 'business as culture': on the one hand, cultural events and artefacts are increasingly commodified (hence the regularity with which we hear the 'cultural economy' and 'cultural industries' referred to) and as such are now more than ever a key area of analysis when considering identity and power within (and between) societies; on the other hand, this cultural turn demands that business and the economy be seen as not simply transactional, but as a text to be 'read' like any other. The four papers included here between them explore both strands of 'cultural business', and running throughout them is a theme of 'discourse', or to be more precise 'discourses' plural,

competing for prominence and reinforcing or challenging the norms of the societies from which they arise (cf. Foucault).

Hugh O'Donnell's paper, 'Girl Meets World', examines the *Ugly Betty* phenomenon, the Colombian telenovela *Yo soy Betty la fea (I am Ugly Betty)* that has appeared in various different guises in various countries around the world. The meanings with which the text is invested in each case, and the extent to which the socio-political 'life' of the country in which it appears overlaps with the 'art' of the television programme, invites us to re-examine globalised media from angles other than that of cultural imperialism: what we have here is more complex than top-down cultural transmission from the more to the less powerful, albeit with the caveat that cultural indigenisation cannot override economic imbalances.

In contrast to the creativity of societies representing *themselves* that we see in Hugh O'Donnell's paper, is the replaying of traditional images, and the power imbalances that go along with these, in British news media portrayals of another (or indeed, an 'other') society, in Derek Bryce's paper. It tracks coverage of the capture of Royal navy personnel for allegedly sailing illegally in Iranian waters, and their subsequent release, and does so through the lens of 'Orientalism' (cf. Said). By highlighting the presence of specific tropes and tableaux, Bryce illustrates that literature and art are drawn upon as much as eye-witness or other accounts in this coverage, and thus reminds us of the need to question the reality effect of news media.

The next two papers deal with music media. The first of these, by Catriona Miller, reads the work of Marilyn Manson against the context of the Middle America

that demonises him. Miller tells us that 'Manson is an artist who is notoriously difficult to pin down' and as such is perhaps succeeding as an 'authentic voice of counter-hegemony', who at once challenges society's dominant discourses and elides the positions in which these discourses aim to place him. The paper provides an interesting parallel to both O'Donnell's and Bryce's: art and life overlap in the news media 'blaming' Manson for the Columbine shootings, evidence for which seems to come, ironically, as much from other cultural texts as from material reality.

Carrie MacLennan's paper explores more localised music media, specifically three female performers based in Glasgow, a city that is continually repositioned as a 'hotbed' of musical creativity. Discourse is central once again, and the paper complements its consideration of the discourses arising from the women's musical performance and other related activities with those arising from their own reflection on what it is they do and what it means. The fact that these two elements link, but also contrast, in interesting ways, particularly as regards feminist and post-feminist positions, reminds us again of the necessity to view meaning and identity not as static elements but as complex intersections of discourse.

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Girl Meets World: *Ugly Betty* and the internationalisation of the *telenovela*

Hugh O'Donnell

The Latin American *telenovela*

When *Yo soy Betty la fea* (*I am Ugly Betty*) was produced and aired by the Columbian network RCN in 1999 it joined a list of Latin American *telenovelas* going back to the nineteen-fifties and so vast in scale that it would be impossible to provide even an approximation of the total number. While the dominant form of seriality on British television has always been the soap opera (O'Donnell, 1999), throughout Latin American it has been the *telenovela*, a phenomenon of such magnitude that it totally eclipses cinema as the primary source of the Latin American star system. *Telenovela* stars are household names throughout the continent, the main centres of production being based in Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico and to a lesser extent Argentina. With the growth of the Spanish-speaking population in the United States, the Univisión station, whose production facilities are based in Miami, has also become an important producer.

Just as the television soap is the successor to the radio soap (in both the United Kingdom and the United States), so the *telenovela* is the successor to the *radionovela*, a form which first emerged in Cuba in the 1940s. Though both are forms of seriality, the difference between a soap opera and a *telenovela* is quite clear. While a soap opera is a narrative format which allows an (at least potentially) unlimited number of overlapping stories to be told without any structural expectation of an ending – the oldest soap in the world, *The Guiding Light*, was launched on radio in the United States in 1937 and continues on television there to this day, seventy years later – a *telenovela*, as the name suggest (it means "television novel"), is a *story*, with a beginning, middle and end. The average *telenovela*

lasts around six months, and not only does everyone involved know that it will come to an end, as the climax approaches the level of hysteria in the popular press can be quite astonishing for someone used to the more sedate narrative pace of a soap-based culture. Recently UK soaps have also tried to produce such climactic moments – a good example would be *Coronation Street's* 2003 'Killer Corrie' storyline in which serial killer Richard Hillman murdered several members of the cast before crashing his car, with his family inside, into a canal (this scene was watched by nineteen million viewers) – but once they are over things calm down again as the characters we have known for years get back to their more mundane lives. Once a *telenovela* ends the same actors will reappear in subsequent productions, playing quite different characters in quite different narratives.

Latin American *telenovelas* are often thought of as falling into two broad groups: a more realist product emanating from Brazil (where they are, in fact, usually referred to simply as *novelas*), and a more melodramatic product coming primarily from Mexico and Venezuela. This is in a very general sense correct, but in fact the situation is somewhat more complex than that. In Brazil, for example, with the exception of the news the entirety of prime time television on the Globo channel (Globo is the biggest producer of *telenovelas* in the world) consists of *novelas* aimed at different market segments: products aimed at a younger audience in the earlier slots, *novelas* designed for general family viewing in the middle, and more adult *novelas* later on. In addition, the sheer number of *telenovelas* produced means that they are characterised by a much greater variety of topics and styles than

soap operas. There are *telenovelas* on historical topics set in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, others might be set in remote regions of the Amazon, there are whodunit and cops-and-robbers style *telenovelas*, there are comic *telenovelas* and others based on literary adaptations, there are even *telenovelas* dealing with vampires (such as *O Beijo do Vampiro* – *The Vampire's Kiss*)! They can also be extremely political, much more so than any British soap opera has ever been. Globo's 1996 production *O Rei do Gado* (*The Cattle King*) dealt with the difficult subject of land reform in Brazil. When the leader of the workers' movement was murdered by the landowners in the narrative, real-life senators from the Brazilian parliament attended his funeral in the *telenovela*. Events such as these speak volumes of the different relationship between serial and audience (or indeed art and life) in Latin America, since it is virtually impossible to imagine any European politician actually appearing in a soap opera in similar fashion.

The *telenovela* in Europe

Though still relatively unknown in the UK, *telenovelas* have been exported to Western Europe since the mid-nineteen-seventies. The first country to show them was Portugal. The tremendous shake-up of Portuguese television following the 1974 revolution opened up spaces for experimentation which would have been unimaginable before, and this resulted in the broadcasting in 1975 of the Globo production *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (*Gabriela, Carnation and Cinnamon*), adapted from the novel by Jorge Amado. Such was its popularity that no-one dared phone anyone else while it was on air and – or at least so legend has it – a cabinet meeting had to be cancelled on the day of the last episode since none of

the ministers wanted to miss the end of the story. Spain's first encounter with the Latin American *telenovela* took place in 1986 with the Mexican production *Los ricos también lloran* (*The Rich Also Cry*), featuring one of the greatest *telenovela* stars of all time, Verónica Castro. As we move into the nineties *telenovelas* would also conquer Italy – where for many years they were the staple output of Mediaset's Retequattro – Greece and Russia. Such was their success in this last-named country that they had to be moved from their afternoon slot to an evening one, due to the high levels of absenteeism they were causing from work.

The history of the European-produced *telenovela* is a more complex one, and for the first twenty years – apart from rather desultory experiments in Italy and Greece which did not lead to any kind of stable output – was, no doubt for reasons of shared languages and greater cultural proximity, limited to Spain and Portugal. Portuguese television was in fact the first to experiment with this format with a few rather hesitant productions in the 1980s, beginning in 1982. However, production on anything approaching an "industrial" scale did not begin until 1993 when the company Nicolau Breyner Produções (NBP) began turning out one *novela* per year for the public-service broadcaster RTP. This situation continued until the end of the nineties, when one of Portugal's two private terrestrial channels, TVI, which at that point was languishing at the bottom of the ratings league table, decided to gamble on the production of *telenovelas* in a major way. This operation – which involved "stealing" NBP from RTP – has proved to be a huge success. Since then it has commissioned and screened around twenty *telenovelas*, some of which (like their Catalan counterparts which I mention below) have stretched the limits of the format by running for several years. We are in fact witnessing the emergence of a new hybrid form, part *telenovela*, part soap. When *Anjo Selvagem* (*Wild Angel*) came to an end in 2003 it had clocked up over 600 episodes and its last episode had a 44.5 share: almost half the viewing population had tuned in. Its successor, *Morangos com Açúcar* (*Strawberries with Cream*) is still running to this day, and is about to enter its fourth season.

The second country to produce its own *telenovelas* was Spain, but with the additional clarification that these were originally a Catalan phenomenon rather than one which affected the country as a whole. In 1994 the Catalan public-service channel TV3 launched *Poble Nou* (the title means "New People", though it is also based on a district of Barcelona called Poblenou, where the production was set). TV3 took a deliberate decision to avoid the melodramatic aesthetic associated with many of the Latin American productions which had been shown in Spain prior to this point, preferring instead to adopt a more "British" social-realist approach – *Poble Nou* took over the slot on TV3's schedule which was occupied before it by *EastEnders*, shown dubbed into Catalan as *Gent del barri* (*People from the District*). Though originally scheduled to run for only 120 episodes, *Poble Nou* was such a success that the original ending



America Ferrara is 'Ugly Betty'

was scrapped and a further seventy new episodes were written, meaning that it came to an end on Christmas Eve 1994. Its final episode was watched by over one and a half million people, the greatest audience ever achieved by Catalan television fiction at that time. Since then TV3 has gone on to produce a further six *telenovelas*, but – initiating a process which would be repeated in Portugal a few years later – these quickly broke the bounds of the traditional Latin American format with *Nissaga de poder* (*Dynasty of Power*) running for 476 episodes and

Laberint d'ombres (*Labyrinth of Shadows*) running for 469. Its current production, *El cor de la ciutat* (*The Heart of the City*), has now run interruptedly since 2000, and has in fact become a soap opera with well over one thousand episodes.

Elsewhere in Spain the situation is more patchy. The pattern in Andalusia to some extent mirrors that of Catalonia, with shortish 45-episode *Vidas cruzadas* (*Crossed Lives*) being followed by the 435-episode *Plaza Alta* (*Top Square*), it in turn being followed by *Arrayán* (the title is the name of a hotel) which began in 2000 and is still on air, slowly approaching one thousand episodes. Given that the Basque Country opted for the soap opera format from the beginning – its Basque-language production *Goenkale* (*Hill Street*) first went on air in 1994 and is still running now, thirteen years later, with over 2000 episodes under its belt – the pull of the "endless" soap-opera format over the short-run *telenovela* appears to be irresistible, as it has also proved to be in Portugal. The only exception is Spanish central television where the public-service broadcaster TVE has, since 2001 screened one *telenovela* per year. But even there things appear to be changing: its most recent offering, *Amor en tiempos revueltos* (*Love in Troubled Times*) – itself loosely based on the earlier Catalan production *Temps de silenci* (*Time of Silence*) – began in 2006 and is now entering its second season.

Since the arrival of *Gabriela* in Portugal in 1975 it had seemed that – with the exception of one-off experiments such as Channel 4's broadcasting of *A Escrava Isaura* (*Isaura the Slave Girl*) in 1985 – the *telenovela* would remain a uniquely southern European phenomenon. However things were to change dramatically in Germany when, in 2004, the second public-service channel ZDF (in a very general sense the German equivalent of BBC2) screened *Bianca – Wege zum Glück* (*Bianca – Roads to Happiness*). Explicitly billed as a *telenovela* – its website offered Germans unfamiliar with this format a potted history of the Latin American product – it ran for 224 episodes: a shade long by Latin American standards, but still recognisably a *telenovela*. Since then ZDF, the first public-service channel Das Erste and the commercial channels Sat1 and Pro Sieben have now screened over ten *telenovelas*, though again they have strained the

boundaries of the original Latin American format to and beyond breaking point. While some of them such as *Lotta in Love* (sic) with 130 episodes or *Tessa – Leben für die Liebe* (*Tessa – Living for Love*) with 125 are very much in the Latin American mould, others such as *Julia: Wege zum Glück* (*Julia – Roads to Love*) with over 500 or *Sturm der Liebe* (*Storm of Love*) with over 700 have already moved into soap-opera territory. The longest-running of all so far is *Verliebt in Berlin* (*In Love in Berlin*) which began in early 2005 and is now approaching its eight-hundredth episode. This brings us back to our starting point, since *Verliebt in Berlin* is the name of the German version of *Yo soy Betty la fea*, or *Ugly Betty*.

The Ugly Betty Phenomenon

Although Latin American *telenovelas* have known enormous export success in the past – the Cuban writer Delia Fiallo once claimed, probably not without some justification, that her productions were the most viewed television programmes in the world, with a worldwide audience of over 1600 million people – *Yo soy Betty la fea* broke new ground in that its success was not due primarily to straightforward export, but to the way in which the narrative lent itself to adaptation by television channels in a wide range of countries who wanted to tell the story in a slightly different way in order to appeal more directly to their domestic audience. It's not that export success was missing. In fact the product's first foray outside Latin America was when it was shown in its original Columbian version – and to great success – in 2001–2 by the Spanish commercial channel Antena 3. However, this was quickly followed by domestically produced adaptations of the original story developed in a number of countries, a process which is still underway. These can be summarised as follows:

- India: *Jassi Jaissi Koi Nahin* (*There is no-one like Jassi*) (2003–6)
- Israel: *Esti Ha'mechoeret* (*Ugly Esti*) (2003–6)
- Germany: *Verliebt in Berlin* (*In Love in Berlin*) (2005–)
- Turkey: *Sensiz Olmuyor* (*Won't Work*

Without You) (2005–)

- The Netherlands: *Lotte* (2006–)
- Russia: *Не родись красивой*¹ (2006–)
- Spain: *Yo soy Bea* (*I am Bea*) (2006–)
- Mexico: *La fea más bella* (*The Most Beautiful Ugly Woman*) (2006–)
- United States: *Ugly Betty* (2006–)
- Greece: *Maria, i Asximi* (*Ugly Maria*) (2007–)

As can be seen from this list, not only is the heroine given different names in different countries (Jassi, Esti, Lotte,



Yo soy Bea (*I am Bea*)

Bea, Maria – in the German version she is known as Lisa and in the Russian one as Ekaterina) – but in each case the story has lasted longer than the original 169-episode Columbian production: in fact versions such as *Verliebt in Berlin* in Germany and *Не родись красивой* in Russia have now strayed so far from the original format that they have actually become soaps. As anyone who has seen the American version *Ugly Betty* will know, it is neither a *telenovela* nor a soap, but a dramedy – that curious combination of drama and comedy which has now become a staple on American TV.

My own direct acquaintance with these adaptations of the Columbian original is limited to the German, Dutch, Russian, Spanish and American versions. While they clearly have certain things in common – the techniques used to make the heroine seem “ugly” are the same in each case (basically braces, large glasses and frumpy clothes²) – and in each case she works as a secretary for a fashion house, but the differences are also striking. The Dutch Lotte is noticeably less “ugly” than any of her counterparts, the environment of the fashion house is more overstatedly

glamorous in the Russian version than elsewhere, and in general terms the Columbian version is rather more cruel in its treatment of the heroine than the European versions, at least in the early episodes. But more importantly as the European versions have rolled on they have inevitably left the closed story of the Columbian original behind and are now creating their own *Ugly Betty* storylines bringing in topics and angles more immediately relevant to their national audiences.

Cultural Imperialism or Indigenisation?

The vexed question of cultural imperialism has been much debated in media and cultural theory over the last fifty or so years (Tomlinson, 1991), and indeed continues to be a topic which can be mobilised by governments or pressure groups when they feel that their society is being “inundated” by “foreign” – which almost always means American” – cultural products.

Though by no means all academics accept that the indigenous culture of

other societies is simply being replaced by that brought in by foreign products – in fact most research suggests that viewers in all countries “read” imported products in quite different ways from how they are read in their country of origin, sometimes investing them with entirely different meanings – cases like the *Ugly Betty* phenomenon give us additional resources for thinking through this issue. Since not only is *Ugly Betty* a case of what is known as “reverse flow” – in other words not from the United States or other advanced societies to other less well-developed societies, but precisely in the other direction – it also lends weight to the arguments of theorists such as Arjun Appadurai (1996) or Milly Buonanno (2007) who argue that rather than processes of imperialism what we are dealing with are processes of *indigenisation* whereby the product is adapted, either directly by the local broadcasters or indirectly by the domestic audience (in terms of their interpretations), within frameworks built around domestic expectations. While such a process can be difficult to ascertain when it is carried out by viewers in relation to imported products

– in fact large-scale ethnographic work is required to establish the existence of such a process in such cases – once the local broadcasters enter the field in the form of reversioning operations the process of indigenisation becomes clear for all to see. Indigenisation means not only *relocating* the action and replacing the language, fashions, architecture and so on of the original by their domestic versions, it means above all using the original format as a vehicle for the reproduction of *discourses* circulating in the host society, discourses with which the audience will be more immediately familiar. I use the term “discourse” here in the sense given to it by French theorist Michel Foucault (2002) for whom a discourse – or more accurately discursive formation – has no single identifiable source or author, but consists of an uncountable number of what he calls “statements”, which can be linguistic, visual, plastic, kinetic or indeed take any kind of expressive form, and which work to (re)define a wide range of concepts we come to take for granted: gender, age, race, family, or, as in the case of *Ugly Betty*, beauty.

Indigenisation on its own does not, of course, mean that the imbalances

which were at the centre of cultural imperialism theory no longer exist. Columbia continues to be a significantly poorer country than the United States or the European societies which are “indigenising” its product, and their ability to do is predicated absolutely on the fact that they have the economic resources required. But it does suggest that the picture is more complex than was perhaps at one time thought. In her various guises *Ugly Betty* is now, perhaps not quite a worldwide phenomenon, but certainly an



international one. But each manifestation is different from the others in ways which the producers believe will make better sense to their domestic audience.

Some Useful Reading

- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Buonanno, M. (2007). *The Age of Television*, Bristol, Intellect.
- Foucault, M. (2002). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London, Routledge. First French edition 1969.
- O'Donnell, H. (1999). *Good Times, Bad Times: Soap Operas and Society in Western Europe*, London, Leicester University Press.
- Tomlinson, J. (1991). *Cultural Imperialism*, Baltimore, the John Hopkins University Press.

(Footnotes)

- ¹ The Russian title is the first half of a proverb which translates literally as “don't be born beautiful, be born happy”.
- ² Images of all the international variants on the original *Betty* can be found at the following website: <http://tonylagarto.tripod.com/betty/internacional.html>

The 2007 Iranian 'Hostage Crisis': an Orientalist Captivity Narrative

Derek Bryce

Introduction

On 23rd March, 2007, whilst on patrol in the Persian Gulf, fifteen Royal Navy personnel based on HMS Cornwall were seized by Iranian Revolutionary Guards on the grounds that they had allegedly entered Iran's territorial waters. This was denied by the British government which maintained that the vessel had been patrolling in Iraqi waters under the terms of a UN mandate. The British personnel were flown to Tehran and, after several days' diplomatic stand off during which they appeared on Iranian television to offer apparently coerced confessions and apologies for trespassing into Iran's waters, they were released on 4th April and returned to the UK (BBC News, 2007). The episode initiated something of a British media sensation with a thematic and narrative content that transcended the essential outline of the events themselves. Prominent amongst these were the question of women (mothers in particular), performing frontline roles in the armed forces, with Paul Routledge writing in *The Mirror* on 30th March:

Iran captive Faye Turney's fate remains in the balance, putting even more strain on husband Adam and her little girl Molly.

I have to wonder what was she doing there, risking not just her own life but the motherhood of an infant child.

Amid the relief that we will feel when she eventually returns, it still has to be asked why we are sending young mothers to a war zone of our own creation. Britain cannot be so short of military personnel that such women should be permitted – nay, encouraged – to go gadding around the world's most dangerous and volatile waterway.

Call me old-fashioned but I think it is wholly wrong to separate a young mother from her child, put a gun in her hands and send her off to the Gulf.

Also apparent was anxiety about Britain's perceived military and diplomatic impotence during the crisis, articulated by comparing then Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett with her nineteenth century predecessors of the imperial heyday. On 29th March, Stephen Glover wrote in the *Daily Mail*:

Even if the British Government was wrong in asserting that our sailors were 1.7 nautical miles inside Iraqi waters, and the Iranians were right, this would offer them no defence. This is uncivilised behaviour that amply confirms the description of Iran as part of an 'axis of evil'. By its actions, Iran condemns itself.

The response of the Foreign Office to the television footage and Ms Turney's 'confession' was pathetically inadequate. The words it used were 'completely unacceptable'.

Can't those clever and supposedly well-educated mandarins do better than to adopt the feeble cliché of a football manager criticising his team for a below par performance?

From the moment the sailors and Marines were illegally captured, the response of the Government has been remarkably relaxed. Margaret Beckett – the successor of Palmerston and Curzon – has looked about as formidable as the foreign minister of Liechtenstein. The Revolutionary Guards who seized our sailors are unlikely to have asked themselves whether they had perhaps behaved a little too hastily.

Now, as it has become clear that the softly-softly approach has brought no rewards, Tony Blair declares that it is time to 'ratchet up' diplomatic pressure.

Though it is uncertain what this entails, the Iranians will hardly be quaking in their boots.

Doubts concerning the quality of the personnel's conduct whilst in captivity were also raised by, for example, Mathew Hickey in the *Daily Mail* on 6th April:

There was growing concern last night over the conduct of the prisoners and the extent to which they cooperated with and even praised their captors.

Unlike past generations, today's servicemen and women are trained to cooperate and present a human face if they are taken prisoner.

But former senior commanders are asking if the shift has gone too far, and saying the hostages should have been more dignified. One called their behaviour 'a bloody shambles'.

Tehran TV showed the sailors and Marines laughing and joking after 'confessing' to invading Iranian waters, and later shaking President Ahmadinejad by the hand and thanking him enthusiastically for his 'forgiveness'.

Their behaviour let the Iranians milk every ounce of political capital out of humiliating Britain and still end up appearing magnanimous.

Finally the ethical appropriateness of the post-release sale of some individual accounts to the media was debated. The manner in which this particular debate was conducted by *The Sun* and the *Daily*

Mail was perhaps influenced by the fact that their opposing positions on the issue corresponded to their respective status as successful and failed bidders for Faye Turney's account. *The Guardian* offered a third party account of this dispute on 13th April:

The strongest critics of the navy's decision to allow the 15 sailors detained by Iran to sell their stories include newspapers which themselves put in hefty bids.

The *Daily Mail* is understood to have emailed an offer of "a very substantial sum", but rounded on the hostages, and Des Browne, the defence secretary, after its bid was rejected. Its front page headline yesterday – They won't be selling their story, minister – ran over pictures of coffins of four soldiers killed in Iraq last week ...

... The extent of the involvement of the Ministry of Defence, which passed on the bids to the sailors, remains unclear. Guidance in 2004 stated that authorisation to speak to the media "on national issues" should be obtained from the MoD.

The preceding can be characterised as being reactive to events as they unfolded and principally concerned with the robustness of a British self-image embodied by the effectiveness of its armed forces. What I wish to suggest is that the geographical and cultural context in which the events unfolded allowed elements of the news media to deploy representative grid, or discursive formation, (following Foucault: 1969: 121) that is deeply embedded, diffusely articulated and therefore *recognisable in a largely unproblematic sense*, within Western metropolitan cultures, notably those of Britain and the United States. Edward Said (1978: 3) has most famously defined this discourse as Orientalism: the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.

I want to make some suggestions about the extent to which the events in the Gulf and Iran in Spring 2007 were made available to readers' understanding after being filtered through this discourse.

The Unquestioned Rightness of Being (There)

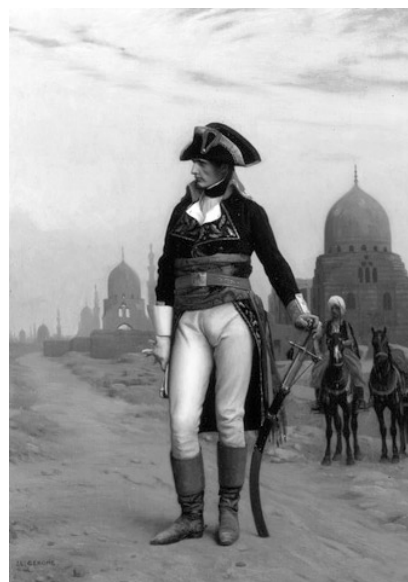
Said's analysis is epic in scope (at times problematically so), stretching back to classical antiquity and so its full exposition need not detain us here. A subsequent study by Said applied many of his arguments within the specific context of contemporary news coverage of the Middle East and Islam. Whilst it focused principally on the US context (such as American reporting of the Iranian Revolution of 1978–79), Said's (1997: 28) following assessment also seems apposite when considering some UK coverage of the 2007 events:

It is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed, and apprehended either as oil suppliers or as potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Islamic world. What we have instead is a limited series of crude, essentialised caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as, among other things, to make that world vulnerable to military aggression.

Much of the British coverage of the 2007 'Hostage Crisis' offers a rich seam for potential analysis at both 'macro' and 'micro' levels. One area that presents itself immediately is the regularly, and largely unquestioned, deployment of the word 'hostage', despite that its appropriateness in a situation involving a dispute between two sovereign states on a point of international law seems doubtful. The association of the terms 'Hostage' and 'Iran' enhanced the meaning of both because of their *existing* (and therefore recognisable) discursive relationship. By way of reinforcement, frequent reference to the 1979 American embassy Hostage Crisis in Tehran appeared across UK coverage of the 2007 events. Such an analysis might ask questions about the extent to which British popular consciousness has internalised elements of that of the United States, in this case where the perception and representation of particular third countries are concerned.

Another avenue might examine this particular episode within the existing research agenda that asks questions about the *unproblematic* ways in which the states and interests of the metropolitan West have been, and continue to be,

represented acting *there*, in what can be loosely termed the postcolonial world (e.g. Said, 1993). The necessary second strand to that agenda is, of course, the urgently *problematic* way that acts of resistance to Western hegemony and the assertion of non-Western states' interests are represented. Often, these are placed in opposition to what are assumed to be universal norms of rational behaviour, or of 'Reason' itself (the latter notions stripped, conveniently, of their own culturally specific origins). Within Western metropolitan cultures, such as Britain's, the geographer Derek Gregory has identified what appears initially to be the paradoxical convergence of *colonial amnesia* and *colonial nostalgia*. By cross-cutting these with culture and power, Gregory identifies a mechanism for the production of what he calls the *colonial present* (Gregory, 2004: 9–10). On the side of amnesia, he argues, metropolitan cultures' historical degradation and predatory appropriation of other cultures in order to render them *as other* is matched with a commensurate forgetting of the 'terrible violence of colonialism ... the exactions, suppressions, and complicities that colonialism forced upon the peoples it subjugated, and the way in which it withdrew from them the right to make their own history'. On the other side, Gregory continues, there is a nostalgia first for the encounter with other cultures *frozen at the point of their subordination* to colonial interests, 'as a series of fetishes ... brought back to life through metropolitan circuits of consumption', and second 'for the aggrandising swagger of colonialism itself, *for its privileges and powers*' (emphasis added). Disruptions to this equation, even in a supposedly postcolonial world, and by a state, Iran, that was never subject to *formal* colonial rule (although a virtual dependency of a



nexus of Western financial and industrial interests during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) require the deployment, or reassertion, of certain discourses of hegemonic 'common sense'. The news media play a significant role in this reinforcement of this hegemony (Allan, 2004: 80-81).

A double forgetting of history was apparent in much coverage of this specific incident and the way that Iran is 'handled' more generally. What I mean by this is that both the implications for Iranian sensibilities of Britain's engagement with it over the past century or so and Iran's own sense of place within its region and cultural milieu are disavowed in discourses that assert, unreflexively, the 'normality' of the metropolitan culture's global projection of power. Max Hastings, writing in the *Daily Mail* on 31st March provides an interesting case in point when he contrasts the incidence of a British sailor's arrest by Greek authorities in 1848 with the 2007 Iranian 'hostage' crisis:

One day in 1848, the Royal Navy warship HMS Fantome dropped anchor off the Greek port of Patras, and dispatched a boat to the shore to take on water. Greek relations with Britain were then poor, following several incidents in which British subjects had allegedly been mistreated.

Local police in Patras detained the midshipman in command of the boat. He was held overnight before being grudgingly released.

Palmerston, Britain's Foreign Secretary of the day, professed outrage. It was he who invented what became known as 'gunboat diplomacy'. At first, the Greek government refused either redress to the British subjects – a pretty disreputable lot, as it happened – or an apology for the insult to Fantome's midshipman.

A powerful British fleet was cruising off the Dardanelles. Palmerston dispatched the Royal Navy to blockade first Piraeus, then every Greek port, and to seize any ship which attempted passage. After a few weeks under siege, the Greeks caved in. The injured British subjects received handsome compensation. The little midshipman got his apology.

Compare and contrast that episode with the experience of 15 British

service personnel, illegally seized by the Iranians, held prisoner and threatened with a show trial.

The U.S. and Britain deploy hundreds of thousands of men, hundreds of combat aircraft and the most powerful fleet in the world in Iraq and its surrounding waters. Yet all this might can contribute nothing to retrieving the hostages – for hostages are, of course, what the British prisoners have become.

It is a truism that historical events should not be judged exclusively in terms of current moral and ethical standards since, so the aphorism goes, the past is a foreign country and they do things differently there. It would be unproductive to evaluate nineteenth century British foreign policy from the perspective of twenty-first century distaste for imperialism, and then simply leave it there. However, it may be observed that Hastings inverts that presumption by projecting the standards of 1848 gunboat diplomacy onto events in 2007. The assumptions of that period (in which the robust assertion of the interests of countries like Britain, France, the Netherlands and the United States wherever their navies could take them was an unquestioned right), survive quite intact in Hastings's account. Just as in 1848, metropolitan interests simply exist in a relatively value-free state of innocence. Just as in 1848, the recalcitrance of Orientals, Greeks then and Iranians now, and the assertion of *their* interests, articulated let us remind ourselves, *locally* and not *globally*, are dismissed as simple presumption. What is problematic, outlandish even, is that in 2007 *they* are being permitted by *us* to get away with it.

The fact that Britain was directly complicit first, along with Tsarist Russia, in thwarting the Iranian constitutional revolution of 1905 and then, along with the US, supporting the 1953 coup overthrowing the democratically elected government of Mohammed Mosaddeq are rarely permitted to intrude into righteous proclamations of the purity of British motives in the face of fanatical Persian intransigence. That Iran, a culturally self-referential society that has been an identifiable political power in its region for some two and a half millennia (no Iraq-style postcolonial amalgamation, this) might consider the presence of the navies of the United Kingdom and the United States off of its coast as the provocative intrusion of two *parvenus*

goes similarly unacknowledged. Nor do the facts that, for the past two and a half centuries, Iran has not engaged in *aggressive or expansionist* warfare whilst the imperial powers of Europe and the United States extended their hegemony by conquest or proxy over much of the globe, seriously disrupt the essential message that *we*, our presence and intentions, are ultimately benign, whilst *they* are an urgent and menacing threat. Even where acknowledgment *is* made of Iran's regional status and interests, such as in the excerpt below by Bronwen Maddox in *The Times* on 5th April, the accent is on explaining Iranian *perceptions* of what these might be. Corresponding caveats concerning subjective perceptions are not attached to British and American interests; they are simply assumed to exist.

That is the key to the question of what Iran wanted: respect and a recognition of its power. It is hard to overstate its profound belief in its right to be involved in the running of Iraq and the region, by virtue of its size and its long history as a nation state, in a region of countries partitioned in the last century by lines in the sand. To many Iranians, the episode will look like an affirmation of that status, even if in Britain it may look like a climbdown.

For all that the episode has ended smoothly, it marks a long step backwards in Iran's relations with the world. The regime's reflexes tend towards confrontation much more quickly than those who try to wrestle with it, over Iraq and over its nuclear ambitions, have hoped. We can't expect Iran to hand over its nuclear centrifuges so easily as a second "gift" to the cause of harmony.

The 'cause of harmony' is invoked as if it is a metaphysical essence, divorced from the cultural, historical and political *location* in which it was formulated, which we may safely assume was situated, in material and discursive terms, nowhere near Tehran.

The preceding are 'macro' levels of analysis invited by the events in Iran, concerning as they do the construction and occupation of culturally contingent subject positions in history. What I want to do now is to proceed towards the 'micro' insofar as it examines the way in which aspects of the *personal* were handled by the news media. Not that these can be separated from the 'larger' issues above; indeed they



Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, 'Odalisque and Slave' (1839)

proceed directly from them, as we shall see. In observing the mediated unfolding of events, it seemed to me that in the midst of what was being presented as ostensibly *novel*, a series of quite familiar figures and scenarios seemed to assert themselves, or rather, *be asserted*. Whilst not wishing to minimise or doubt the real distress experienced by the British personnel, or indeed to present the motives and actions of the Iranian regime as sadly misunderstood altruism, I do want to highlight the news media recourse to two discursive tropes made available by Orientalism to construct a narrative liberally laced with melodrama and high camp.

Inside the Despot's Seraglio

Familiar and venerable narratives and characters from the Western cultural archive of Orientalism were drawn upon, principally by elements of the tabloid press, which as Allan (2004: 105) argues, 'can often be shown to anchor, in hegemonic terms, an array of prejudices (sexist, racist, homophobic, xenophobic and so forth) as being synonymous with "public opinion" or "what our readers think"'. Perhaps the most prominent of these was the curious, but potent, mixture of racial, sexual and religious anxiety that accompanies the idea of a young European woman being held captive in an Islamic land; personified in this instance by LSM Faye Turney. There is a longstanding fascination evident within Western culture, going back to at least the eighteenth century, with unveiling the sexually mysterious Muslim woman as well as speculation about, and longed for access to, the reputedly wanton goings-

on of the Harem or *Seraglio* (Grosrichard, 1994: 141-146; Yeğenoğlu: 1998: 73). A frisson of self-regarding horror was added to the salacious with the notion of the abduction and imprisonment within the *Seraglio* of white, Christian women, 'forced into submission by their lustful captors' and inducted into the 'infidel' faith of Islam (Rodinson, 1988: 59). Nor was this terror of captivity, in which violence, sex and forced religious conversion were intertwined, confined exclusively to women. The practises of sodomy and male rape were also exteriorised from European culture by associating both with the 'lustful Turk' and sundry menacing Islamic 'others' (Wheatcroft, 1993: 220). Within the genre of the 'captivity narrative' these images became familiar to Western audiences in cultural products ranging from Mozart's opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*), to the erotic images produced by Orientalist painters like Delacroix and Ingres and tales of European and American sailors (real and imagined) enslaved by the pirates of North Africa's Barbary Coast (Majid, 2004: 82-104). Indeed as Lewis (2004: 12) has stated:

There is no denying it – as a topic, the harem sold books. From the eighteenth century on, whether you wrote about living in one, visiting one, or escaping from one, any book that had anything to do with the harem sold. Publishers knew it, booksellers knew it, readers knew it and authors knew it.

Amanda Platell, writing in the *Daily Mail* on 31st March, drew deeply, and it

should be added *self-consciously*, from this wellspring of images. She invokes the cartoonish sadism of Faye Turney's captors; her blonde hair, the signifier of Western female purity (and the object of Asiatic male lust) *imprisoned* within the very symbol (we are relentlessly told) of oppressed Muslim womanhood, the headscarf or *hijab*.

Some images of battle are so horrific that they are etched into our national psyche. And now we have a new one, the image of Leading Seaman Faye Turney, paraded like a trophy by her gloating Iranian captors.

Looking at those pictures, we don't see the face of a brave sailor. All we see is a terrified young mother, her blonde hair covered with a Muslim scarf, dragging heavily on a cigarette, hands shaking with fear. It is a profoundly unsettling image.

And why? Principally, because she is a woman. Beneath our veneer of political correctness and our pride that nearly one in ten of our Forces personnel are female, we still feel deeply uneasy about women in battle.

The Iranians perfectly understand our queasiness and that's why they paraded Faye, bent her to their will, forced her to write grovelling letters of apology, and used her ruthlessly against the West as the splendid propaganda weapon she is.

Watching Faye effectively pleading for mercy, we inwardly ask ourselves how the hell we ever let her get there in the first place. We feel a kind of collective guilt at her fate, a knowledge we were all complicit in her capture. And we are.

The Sun on 9th April covered similar territory, albeit less reflexively, in these excerpts from the account Turney sold to that newspaper:

FREED British hostage Faye Turney told last night how she feared she was being measured for her COFFIN by her evil Iranian captors.

STRIPPED to her knickers – with the rest of her clothes and belongings taken away – and caged in a tiny freezing cell.

A few hours later, Faye was ordered to wrap a black Islamic cape around

her before being shown to an office to meet the officer in charge.

On the same date, *The Mirror* related the account of Arthur Batchelor, the youngest of the group, in which potent fears of violence and sexual coercion were again invoked:

Hostage Arthur Batchelor told yesterday of his nightmare at the hands of cruel Iranian bully-boys – as he was stripped, blindfolded, tormented and dumped in solitary confinement for days on end. The 20-year-old sailor – youngest of the 15 Brits snatched by the Iranians – bravely battled to retain his composure but eventually broke down and sobbed like a baby in his tiny cell because he was sure execution was imminent.

He also revealed that colleague and close friend Faye Turney was convinced she was going to be raped after the fanatical Revolutionary Guard thugs suddenly became agitated on discovering they had captured a woman.

Arthur told of a bizarre incident in which the guards gently caressed Felix's (Lieutenant Felix Carman) hair as the 15 captives sat blindfolded in a row – then doused him with sweet-smelling aftershave.

Felix then asked if one of us was stroking his hair and we all said no. He was then sprayed with aftershave. He let out a really nervous laugh. We all thought he was about to be sexually abused."

From the torments (real, imagined and *anticipated*) endured by the figure of the European innocent imprisoned within the Oriental *Seraglio*, I now turn to the personification of their despair. For another character, the *Oriental Despot* was summoned forth from the West's archive of images of the *otherness* of Islam and the East. As Grosrichard (1998: 3) explains, 'from the end of the seventeenth century and all through the eighteenth, a spectre was haunting Europe: the spectre of *despotism*', conceived of as the 'absolute levelling' of a society to a state of slavery under the absolute and capricious will of the ruler in which no countervailing sites of power were permitted to exist. Whilst principally associated with representations of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, the notion of Oriental Despotism was applied

generally to other 'Asiatic' rulers such as the Persian Shah and Chinese Emperor. The figure of the despot is one of an all-powerful solitude in the midst of a multitude of fanatically obedient courtiers and soldier-slaves who exist only to enact their master's every savage decree. That it was, as Turner (1994: 34–35) and Lockman (2004: 45–48) explain, an abstraction developed by European thinkers to conceptualise, and symbolically externalise (from Europe), an extreme notion of arbitrary power and that it had limited utility in accounting for actual conditions in Oriental societies, did not (and still does not) limit its traction as a powerful discursive trope. Certainly it survived into the nineteenth century, given extravagant display in the Orientalist paintings of the period, as the figure of the despot was depicted, enthroned and impassive, surveying scenes of wanton cruelty and eroticism – or both (Sardar, 1999: 46). From the late twentieth century it has been present in the figure of the cunning Arab oil Sheik or terrorist mastermind in popular film (Semmerling, 2006). In news reporting, we can see the very essence of despotic menace distilled and personified in figures like Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden (e.g. Said, 1978; 1997; Poole and Richardson, eds, 2006), and as we shall see from the following analysis, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Within the narrative of Oriental despotism, all political power must be seen to be vested in one individual. Any evidence to the contrary, such as the reality of limiting and competing sites of power within the Oriental society, is elided. Accordingly, during what might be called despotism's discursive high-point in eighteenth century Europe, the all-powerful *figure* of the Sultan survived the reality that central authority was very limited during this period in Ottoman history. That this would have been directly observable by the many European diplomats and merchants who traveled within the Ottoman lands at this time was, in effect, besides the point (Quataert, 2007). So, even before the British personnel's encounter with President Ahmadinejad on the day of their release, and despite power and decision making in Iran's political and judicial system being distributed amongst often competing religious and state authorities (Keddy, 2003: 263–284), *he* was personified as the source and arbiter of their plight, as *The Sun* illustrated on 9th April:

But the most cruel trick played by Iranian president Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad's henchmen was to separate Faye from her 14 male comrades and tell her they had all been sent home.

Here, the Iranian president is conjured up as the despot and adorned with the trappings of 'Oriental' cruelty and duplicity that the discourse has to offer. Added to the scene is a coterie of 'henchmen' implementing their master's malign will upon a vulnerable European woman.

However, the televised meeting between the naval personnel and the president on the date of their release allowed the *tableau vivant* of the despotic court to be laid out in its full panoply: the all-powerful Oriental despot enthroned, surrounded by his fawning courtiers, receiving the submission of his helpless captives and, after the application of exquisite torment, dispensing the arbitrary mercy that is his alone to bestow. The *Daily Express*, on 5th April, stated:

They were paraded one by one, wearing shiny Iranian suits, in front of their beaming captor yesterday – and forced to "thank" him for their freedom.

As the 15 Royal Marines and sailors trooped before the world's cameras, towering above Iran's hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, their 13-day ordeal edged towards a peaceful end. But Britain's humiliation was complete.

Whilst the more immediately recognisable manifestations of this narrative were largely confined to the tabloid press, it was not entirely absent from even liberal broadsheet titles, as *The Independent* demonstrated on 5th April, painting a picture that might be the envy of Delacroix:

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sat on the podium, a satisfied smile hovering around the corners of his mouth, clearly savouring the enormous surprise he was about to spring on the world. One minute sermonising, the next pinning a medal on a grizzled revolutionary guardsman, this was, from the very beginning, Mr. Ahmadinejad's day.

Even the weather was on the President's side: as he stepped forward for the last act, to meet the 15 captives at the centre of this saga, the sky was lit up by a flash of

lightning and a rumble of thunder. After taking so little part in the events of the past 13 days, his return to the world stage was timed to near perfection.

If the figure of the Oriental Despot might be imagined as a figure straight out of Central Casting, then on 5th April *The Sun* surely retained his services in magnificent, scenery chewing style (the denial of neck ties a new refinement of Oriental cruelty):

The 15 Navy hostages held by Iran were made to grovel before being given their freedom last night.

Conniving President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad bragged to the world that he ordered their release as an Easter gift to the British people.

Then he insisted on taunting the group one by one in a sickening line-up at his palace in Tehran, for which they were kitted out in brand new suits –with no ties.

With a creepy smile, the president asked captive Leading Seaman Chris Coe, 31: "Have you enjoyed your mandatory vacation?"

These reductive situations and caricatures might be written off as unremarkable if one subscribes to the view that the popular press's primary motivation is to titillate rather than inform its readership. A related point of view might add that a more serious purpose is served when such efforts act as vehicles for the maintenance or presentation of certain ideological positions. I don't want to enter into that discussion here but will observe that, in any case, by presenting the preceding chain of events, contexts and characters as a series of Orientalist clichés, they are rendered recognisable, and therefore consumable, in ways that are quite specific to Western metropolitan cultures.

Conclusion

Analysis of the kind I have attempted here is concerned with the deployment of discourses within the *representing* culture and not principally with that which it seeks to portray. What I want to suggest is that these accounts, in terms of their mediation by the newspapers concerned as well as their anticipated reception by a British readership, would be denuded of much of the *urgency* of their meaning without the availability of deeply embedded discourses that we can group under the umbrella of

Orientalism. In this case, the universality of *our* interests and the normality of their global assertion coupled with long held anxieties about virtuous Europeans being held captive within an Islamic society, subjected to real or imagined violent and sexual torments, and at the mercy of the all-powerful Oriental despot. That in the latter instances the discourse was articulated in what was surely a pantomimic style veering towards the comic does not, I suggest, detract from the observation that it was deployed because it was *available* and *recognisable*. To reinforce my suggestion that specific discursive *devices* available within Western culture were deployed to represent the cultural, geographical and religious context in which the personnel found themselves, consider briefly the West's previous existential crisis: the Cold War. If I might be forgiven for indulging in some retrospective conjecture, it seems difficult to conceive of an appeal to a similarly potent, almost atavistic, mixture of racial, sexual and cultural anxieties had the British personnel been held captive in analogous circumstances by the Soviet Union.

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Frock Off: Reinterpreting the position of women in the Glasgow music scene . . . and other reflections

Carrie Maclennan

Glasgow music: Creative clout & credibility by association

The city of Glasgow crops up regularly as a site of interest and activity in discussion of popular music. The indie 'cool' of The Jesus and Mary Chain, Teenage Fan Club and Primal Scream justified the whirr of interest surrounding Glasgow and its vibrant music scene in decades past and the art poetry of Arab Strap, The Delgados and Belle & Sebastian became synonymous with the Glasgow locale during the 1990s. Angular, art school pop-punk has recently been reinvented by Glasgow acts, influencing fashion trends across the country equally as much as musical ones. Arguably, contemporary mainstream pop acts like Snow Patrol somehow regain edginess and spark when they are positioned under the 'Glasgow music' umbrella and reconsidered in terms of their Glasgow-based biographies. Regardless of whether or not members of a band are indigenous to Glasgow – or indigenous even to Scotland, the 'Glasgow music' label and the connotations that come with it are powerful, and are regularly applied to or appropriated by musicians and performers as a means to carve out a specific musical identity.

In recent years, media commotion surrounding first Franz Ferdinand and then The Fratellis has repositioned Glasgow (on paper at least) as the veritable hotbed of musical talent for the umpteenth time. As a result of this revitalised enthusiasm, Glasgow music, and indeed Scottish music more broadly, has received increased academic, government and media attention of late. The data drawn upon here originates from research conducted in Glasgow during Summer 2006. The climate at that time seemed to encourage debate over the very definition of the Glasgow music 'scene' and the commercial

success of Glasgow-based acts seemed to pose questions and challenges to the young musician about their ambitions and goals. On one level, the commercial success of local acts was to be celebrated and maintained but on the other, a need to protect Glasgow's indie territories and underground musical activity became a priority for those working and socialising in the scene. I was ready to consider the ways in which the mediated reputation of Glasgow-based acts, Glasgow venues and the mediated notion of a musical community spirit might differ from the real lived experiences of the scene's members. Placing an emphasis on the role of women within the city's music community, the project looked to provide an initial insight into Glasgow music and the opportunities (or indeed the barriers) it presents for the female musician or musically inclined female entrepreneur.

Girl spotting in the Glasgow music community

From the observer's vantage point, the music scene in Glasgow seems a welcoming habitat for women musicians and for women in the music business generally. As a participant in local music management and consumer of Glasgow music – and the social scene bound up with it – it is easy to identify numerous female musicians and performers who have gained relative success on the local, alternative live circuits. Also operating successfully are numerous acclaimed girl-run clubs, promotion companies and artist management teams. On the surface, women are present, visible and appear to hold significant roles in the Glasgow music scene; roles which much of the literature I engaged with testify have historically been filled almost exclusively by men (McRobbie, 1978, Whiteley, 2000, Bayton, 1998).

The three female musicians recruited for the study were Rosalind Davies (Roz), lead vocalist and bassist with pop-punk band Miss The Occupier; Amanda MacKinnon (Manda Rin), keyboardist, occasional bassist and vocalist with electro-pop bands Bis and Data Panik; and Natasha Noramly (Nashii), lead vocalist and bassist with lo-fi indie rock band FO Machete. Roz, Amanda and Natasha are in their early thirties and have each been performing in bands around Glasgow for a similar length of time. All three women, whether originally from the Glasgow area or not, have been active participants in Glasgow music for a decade or more and now view themselves as fully fledged members of the Glasgow music community. The bands in which they perform (and those in which they have performed in the past) have reached varying degrees of success. The style of music each band delivers differs significantly.

From initial interactions with the women, I quickly established that music was integral to who they are and who they want to be. They showed themselves to be devoted, hard-working, strong and savvy members of the Glasgow music community. The centrality of music in their lives was clear and their creative obsessions immediately discernible: "I love music. I DO love music. I am obsessive about music. Before I started to play . . . it definitely – the idea of being able to make something that you love is a big draw. You know?" (Natasha). Although working in the same environment and looking to achieve similar goals, Amanda, Roz and Natasha each presented different pictures of Glasgow music and their experiences within the scene. Stories of self-doubt, self-consciousness and fear emerged from the interview data to present an

unexpected, alternative discourse of their identities as performers and further analysis helped identify a number of other, often competing discourses at work. According to Fairclough, we must view language as social practice and must accept that as such, it is determined by social structures (2001:14). Drawing from ideas developed by Foucault, Fairclough places an emphasis on the 'dimensions of the relations of power and language' (2001:36). He recognises discourse as 'a place where relations of power are...exercised and enacted' (2001:36) and notes that this

power play can take place in both micro and macro scenarios. Power relations can be exercised in person to person spoken discourse and in the establishment or protection of conventions of particular 'discourse

types' (2001:36). In the context of the paper, these might include feminist and post-feminist discourse, male-centric ideologies of rock and riot grrl inspired rock politics.

Realities from the Glasgow scene I: Girls producing alternative culture?

Although the participants documented a positive change in music generally, whereby women musicians were seen more, heard more and given an opportunity to play more, they also noted that, in the last ten years, there had been little change in how they were treated by their male peers: "When guys say, 'Aw, do you know where to plug your bass in?' you have to think, 'would you have said that to a guy?' He wouldn't've you know?" (Roz). Quoting the main barriers they faced as unfair or inappropriate press representation, exclusion from technical environments (sound booth, recording studio) and hostile reactions from audiences and colleagues, the image of a truly 'inclusive' music scene was rejected early on in the project. In turn, my own preconceived notion of dramatic change and improvement in the acceptance of and respect for women in the music industry was challenged. The negative experiences

and challenges described by the participants were not isolated and were in keeping with reports of previous studies by the likes of Bayton (1998) Davies (2001) and Cooper (1996). However, of particular interest was the emerging impression that female musicians were much more positively received and supported in the more underground or 'subcultural' pockets of the Glasgow music community: "People just involved in music – and who go to like, Sleazy's and Mono . . . and Tut's to a degree, are much more accepting and you get loads of female bands playing, but

events in alternative venues; and thirdly, that they are granted the freedom and respect to contribute fully to the creative music making process when dealing with trusted local professionals (e.g. studio networks and engineers). They also note a marked deficit in the number of female musicians in more commercial scenes and in the *standard* of the female acts or the decorative nature of the roles women inhabit in mainstream, "big bucks", popular music (Girls Aloud are mentioned frequently as a disgraceful example of 'women in music').



Roz, Amanda and Natasha



Established literature has, in the past, recognised subculture and the subcultural as a male domain (McRobbie & Garber 1975, McRobbie & Frith 1978 and Cohen, 1991). Histories of rock and popular music have marked guitar

then you'll go to the rock gigs, and em . . . nothing" (Amanda). Examination of media clippings relating to FO Machete, Bis/Data Panik and Miss the Occupier revealed that the higher the profile of the publication (whether it be online or in print), the higher the tendency for their reviews to focus on non-music related aspects of the bands' identity. For instance Bis, Data Panik and Amanda's onstage persona, 'Manda Rin', receive an abundance of praise in underground e-zines and in blogs etc. In an interview on music and pop culture website, www.audiojunkies.net, Amanda answers a number of questions associated with her time in bis, about Data Panik's upcoming album and about her views on the music industry (accessed 11.09.07). The coverage they receive in more mainstream sources i.e. NME and the tabloid press, is in direct contrast. Amanda tells me: "One day, a whole page of the NME letters page was all criticisms about us. It was just fat/ugly, fat/ugly...It was horrible."

In further support of this idea, the participants themselves imply that: firstly, they are received with more respect by audiences in local alternative music venues; secondly, that they are more confident in organising their own

music as male territory too (Whitely 2000, McRobbie & Frith 1978, Clawson 1999). We might tentatively suggest then that even a ripple of change is afoot. We might propose that these women are not only playing a more active role in subculture and in the production of alternative culture, but that a change is occurring, or beginning to occur on the part of the male contingent who might previously have been read to exclude women and girls from the subcultural sphere.

Realities from the Glasgow scene II: Making music and alternative discourses of musicianship

Of the small group, Roz is the only person to have studied music in a formal capacity. An accomplished oboe player and flautist, Roz began her musical life at school. She tells me: "I always, always, always made noises out of things. At eight I started recorder. At nine I sat a music test and I got 100% in the test so I got to play flute. Em, at thirteen I swapped to oboe, at fourteen I started guitar...I wanted to be a classical musician." Although Roz describes a period early on in her band career where she was a little uncertain of her capability to 'jam', to improvise with a group of fellow instrumentalists, she presents herself now as a self-

assured musical performer, secure in her own talents. Amanda and Nashii have both been largely self-taught. Amanda continually made disparaging comments about her own aptitude and adopted a rather girlish, child-like discourse when talking about music making.

Positioning herself amongst her fellow band members as the "least talented out of them all" she seems to create a binary opposition between the classically trained musician and the self-taught musician whereby the person who can read music, understand chord structures and improvise in a manner informed by the rudiments of music is placed as the greater talent. She is noticeably uncomfortable or perhaps ill-equipped to engage with musical terminology. This is not to suggest that in practice she does not offer valuable creative contribution. Conversely,

Natasha appears to embrace the fact she is a self-taught bassist / songwriter and is not embarrassed in admitting, albeit humorously, that she is 'musically illiterate'.

Interestingly though, she is articulate in her explanations and musical descriptions, referring to classical conventions and demonstrating time signatures and so forth. In describing her song writing process, she says plainly, 'I will play around until I find something that I like. I will play all the wrong notes until I find the right ones.'

Natasha explained that she is really rather liberated by this unawareness of the rules of music making. She puts chords together because she likes the sound of them and she creates musical patterns because she's moved by them – not because they work to a traditional chord structure or progression. Indeed if she arrives at a point in her creative process where things are not coming together as she would like, Nashii will change the tuning of her guitar altogether to suit. Her technical style swerves convention too. By using a capo and by playing chords, she stands out from other bassists. Natasha doesn't understand *why* it should be presumed that she would play in a standard finger picking style. In addition, since she has some difficulty in following standard time signatures, FO Machete

tracks have a tendency to be a bit off beat – quite literally – they always incorporate a little syncopation! Nashii has taken a supposed 'problem' and successfully integrated it into her musical identity and the identity of FO Machete.

Traditional 'male-centric' perceptions of women in music might firstly, and perhaps unfairly, characterise Amanda as the archetypal 'token female keyboard player', unfamiliar with the jargon of music making and limited in her musicianship (Whiteley, 2000). Roz might be positioned as 'typical' too, in the sense that, as a girl, her route into writing and performance has stemmed from more traditionally 'feminine' classical roots and dainty woodwind instruments (Bayton, 1998). Natasha may well be seen as

women each engaged in discussions about punk and the punk ethos, but yet did not place their own experiences under the same banner. Although classically trained, Roz has rather rebelliously embarked upon a musical career as a front woman in a punk-pop band. Despite accusations of amateurishness, Amanda manages to write, perform and play in a successful band, and aims to encourage other girls like her to do the same. In a slightly similar vein, Natasha has rejected the notion that without training she cannot be a musician. She has instead reworked standard musical rules, thus creating a whole new sound and approach to playing bass.

Realities from the Glasgow scene III: Reclaiming competence

Amanda, Roz and Natasha described sets of additional tasks they perform as band members: diary management, press and promotion work, event co-ordination, online information maintenance, artwork design and so on. They each involve themselves in tasks that might automatically be associated with a traditional positioning of women in the musical environment that is continually critiqued by, for instance, Cohen (1991), Bayton (1998), McRobbie (1978) and Cooper (1996). Arguably these extra duties require considerable knowledge, skill and creativity and are of the utmost importance in the prospective success or failure of the band. This should raise questions over whether these roles ought to be bracketed as 'negative', restricting and second rate at all.

While all three participants express little annoyance or dissatisfaction with the

additional managerial or promotional work they undertake as a band member/ leader, Amanda hints that she can feel under pressure to act as the responsible, organised person. She does not always appreciate being expected to take care of practicalities under the premise that she is the 'capable woman' or mother figure of the Data Panik team.

In the same way that charges of musical incompetence might be reinterpreted as

Glasgow Music Venues

'Sleazy's' – Sleazy's is the name given locally to music bar Nice 'n Sleazy situated on Sauchiehall Street in Glasgow. A staple in the Glasgow music diet for around 15 years, Sleazy's is well known as a hub for musicians and artists alike. Glasgow indie bands such The Delgados and Arab Strap played shows here early in their careers and the bar is still seen as a space where indie musicians congregate.

'Tut's' – Tut's is the abbreviated name of popular music venue, King Tut's Wah Wah Hut on St. Vincent Street in Glasgow. A slightly more mainstream venue in comparison to the likes of Nice 'n sleazy and Mono etc., King Tut's plays host to a vast array of local bands and international touring bands. The venue is probably most famous for being awarded the title of the 'UK's best live venue' by Radio 1 in 2000 and for allegedly being the venue in which Alan McGee discovered Oasis.

Mono is a vegan cafe/music bar situated near the Merchant City area of Glasgow. Independently run, Mono has established itself in the last few years as a creative hub for Glasgow's indie community. Housing the city's popular Monorail record store, Mono is popular social spot for Glasgow musicians and music lovers. Specialising in offering an eclectic mix of musical styles and particularly embracing more experimental music, Mono is a key alt. space on the Glasgow music landscape.

someone who experiments with sound and instrumentation in an entirely unique way. However, the possibility remains that that interpretation might be reduced quite simply, to a lack of technical competence (Whiteley, 2000).

There are a number of alternative positions from which to analyse the behaviour of the participants. However, for now, we might place a banner of punk sensibility above these approaches to musicianship and creativity. It is interesting that the

brave, artistic statements on the part of the performer, so too can the impertinence regarding women working in managerial or 'administrative' roles in the music industry. The ownership of these roles by female figures could be read as a political statement informed by a punk-orientated DIY ethic. By filling these positions women are in greater control of the press they approach, the areas of industry they want to be affiliated with and the image of their band that they want to be advertised. Taking the Riot Grrl aesthetic as a recent example, we often hear of 'reclaiming the dress'. Driscoll explains: "Riot Grrls... inspired... 'little girl' looks or 'hypersexy' looks as part of a resistance to what was often perceived as the desexualisation of girls among feminists" (1999:181). When we talk about reclaiming the dress, we talk about reclaiming a symbol of femininity. Whether this reclaiming is symbolic or material, the reference embodies the idea that a girl can engage with feminist politics *and* construct and retain her own story of femininity. In this instance however, we might refer to 'reclaiming competence'.

Carving out musical identities: Gender, image and the 'f' word

There are striking differences between the individual images the women have constructed for themselves aesthetically. It is also clear from the interview data that each performer perceives the importance of image differently. Each musician manages her sexuality in a different way and each has a unique approach to her 'political' status as a woman. Amanda and Roz both spoke freely and explicitly about feminism and feminist ideals, often instigating discussions; Natasha did not. Exuding a professionalism and musical passion that is immediately identifiable and potentially challenging to traditional gender stereotypes of women in music, Natasha presents herself as a knowledgeable, business orientated, creatively talented woman. Seemingly unconcerned with how she is perceived in terms of gender and femininity, Nashii's priorities lie in how she is received as an *artist* – not with how she is viewed as a woman. Natasha has a knack of poking fun at her own sex appeal, (and flicking it back at her audience with an aggressive lunge!) without tainting her professional reputation or undermining her musical capability. Almost conversely, Amanda is vocal in her defense of the wider feminist cause and is comfortable talking about her overtly feminist opinions in terms of punk, Riot Grrl and feminist zine culture.

She campaigns for women musicians to be recognised as such and hopes one day for groupings like 'women in music', 'female fronted bands' etc. to be irrelevant and declared defunct. Roz inhabits a curious middle ground. She appears very conscious of her position as a woman working in a male dominated environment and treads carefully while marking out her own territory. Despite possessing the creativity and the musical ability to protect her niche in the musical environment, Roz works painstakingly to cultivate the perfect image or persona. It seems that this particular notion of perfection is one that satisfies traditional stereotypes enough to placate her male audience and her male colleagues but simultaneously inspire and/or shock. An interesting contradiction and an interesting tactic.

Reflecting on the research outcomes

Although the research project raised a number of questions which are worthy of further investigation, it was undeniably disappointing and more than a little disheartening to discover that the environment with which I had been engaging for some time was not necessarily as hospitable to women as it had seemed. Self examination and reflexivity was inherent to the project overall, but it was both startling and fascinating to find my own role – as researcher, as member of the music community and as a woman – under equal scrutiny to that of the participants. Having spent a considerable amount of time working to reinterpret existing theory, other people's view points and common misconceptions, I came to realise that to reinterpret my own musical identity, my own role and preconceived ideas was equally as important and constructive to the research task. The findings of the study and my reactions to them confirm, however reluctantly, existing feminist work in cultural theory and sociology that strongly suggests issues relating to gender inequality have not been resolved, regardless of what the alleged arrival of 'post-feminism' might imply (McRobbie, 2004).

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Eat Me, Drink Me: A Marilyn Manson Discourse?

Catriona Miller

Introduction

For the last ten years, Marilyn Manson has been one of rock and popular music's most controversial characters. We know that Brian Warner was born in 1969 in Canton, Ohio and Marilyn Manson was created sometime in the early 1990s in Florida. We can be fairly sure that the two are related to each other in some way.

Manson is one of Vivendi Universal's best sellers (Milner 2003), while MTV has argued that he's "the only major performer today who can justifiably call himself an artist." (Weiderhorn 2003). For others, however, he's a more difficult figure. According to one newspaper columnist Marilyn Manson set new standards for rock outrage. (McCormick 2007). Others (mainly right wing Christian groups) have made it plain that they think Marilyn Manson is evil (<www.justchristians.com/abundantLife/111998/5.html>). The *Observer* (2003) summed him up: "He sings about sex and death and teenage alienation. He drags naked girls around on dog leads and acts out the Nuremberg rally. (And) he set fire to his drummer." In June 2007 he released his seventh album *Eat Me, Drink Me* which reached No 8 in the American Billboard charts and in Britain debuted at No 8.

As can be seen from even such a brief overview, Marilyn Manson is a difficult figure to pin down. Media rumours about him abound and the concerns of parents of Middle America have made the headlines more than once. He is considered to be a media manipulator, a shock rocker, a racist, a Satanist, the Antichrist, an artist, and sometimes even a *credible* artist, but his real rise to international prominence came in 1999 when two teenagers, Dylan Kleebold and Eric Harris, walked into their High School in Littleton, Denver USA and gunned down some fifteen of their schoolmates and injured twenty eight

others. They booby trapped themselves and the school, and eventually committed suicide. The suburban community of Littleton was shocked and simply could not understand why the boys had committed such pre-meditated and well-planned, cold blooded murder. When it was suggested that the boys were Manson fans, the media went into overdrive. Even the British newspapers linked Manson with the crime and within hours "Manson's notoriety went nuclear (as) Manson unfairly reaped the blame for 'inspiring' them." (*Observer* 2003).

Fairly typical of the kind of statement made by the media was the *Independent* on April 22nd 1999, which said: "The two boys were members of an on-campus group called the Trenchcoat Mafia, a withdrawn clique fascinated by the dark, satanic image of musicians such as Marilyn Manson." The *Daily Record* on the same day said: "Eric Harris and Dylan Kleebold's killing spree mirrored the depraved lyrics of their rock star idol Marilyn Manson . . . The Trenchcoat Mafia gang were obsessed by the man who has made 10 million from albums glorifying slaughter and Satanism." Ironically, later research revealed that Dylan and Kleebold were not Manson fans and in fact the two teenagers hated the "decadent faggot Marilyn, while idolising Adolf Hitler as their anti-social icon." (Baddeley 2000:128).

It is obvious to suggest that Manson became a scapegoat for larger problems, but for the authorities and the media at the time, it seems to have been far simpler to attempt to drive Manson into the wilderness and place the blame on him along with rock and roll more generally, than to look at the gun culture of America as an influence on its children; a theme Michael Moore took up robustly in the film *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) in which

Manson spoke articulately and with some compassion about the tragedy.

So, perhaps it was all a case of mistaken identity and Marilyn Manson should be considered solely as a misunderstood artist, unfairly blamed for something he had nothing to do with. It is impossible, however, to avoid the suggestion that there was *something* about Manson and his work that meant that he was an easy, even obvious, target for such accusations. He said at the time of *Columbine*: "I definitely can see why they would pick me. Because I think it's easy to throw my face on the TV, because in the end, I'm a poster boy for fear. Because I represent what everyone is afraid of, because I say and do whatever I want." (Manson in Moore 2002). Manson's work is controversial, and in order to explore this it is worth making use of the terms discourse, ideology and hegemony.

A Marilyn Manson Discourse?

Discourse is originally a term from linguistic analysis developed by Michel Foucault to mean ways of thinking, talking, representing, doing and acting which actively shape our understanding of reality. This is an important idea because discourses can work to uphold ideology (an idea developed in Marxism to mean the collection of ideas circulating in the society's legal, political and religious systems). Discourses can also work in the creation of hegemony, or preponderant influence. Hegemony is a term developed by Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, who was trying to understand why workers in Western Europe had not risen together in revolt as they had done in Russia. For him the answer was that Western governments (or ruling groups) in more recent centuries have ended to use the ideological meaning of culture to *persuade* subordinate groups of the legitimacy of their power, rather than employing

coercion, i.e. the use of military force or police. However, this persuasion is a non stop process and constant, albeit often unspoken, negotiations take place. Through tactical alliances with other groups, and a willingness to make concessions, dominant groups must *work* to win broad consent for their own political, economic, intellectual and cultural leadership, in other words, hegemony.¹

Putting Marilyn Manson into this context of discourse, ideology and hegemony is an interesting exercise because the extremity of the reaction to Manson in the wake of Columbine leads to the question: what dominant ideology does Manson risk destabilising, or more properly what dominant ideologies do people *fear* that he is destabilising? This subtly shifts the focus from the figure of Manson to the established discourses of society that he intersects with.

To take a brief example, even Manson's chosen stage name is provocative, coined as it is from two of America's most famous icons: Marilyn Monroe, sex kitten, screen goddess, tragic heroine, and Charles Manson, celebrity killer, psychotic responsible for an orgy of torture and slaughter in the Hollywood hills in 1969, and drug addict. So Manson just by his name is drawing attention to two major elements of American culture which sit somewhat uncomfortably beside one another but which are undoubtedly related. The culture of celebrity has certainly grown exponentially in the last twenty years as actors, actresses, musicians, indeed anyone on television becomes famous, a celebrity. However the American media in particular has also been responsible for raising serial killers to the status of celebrities. Serial killers have been reinvented as mythical monsters and attention is lavished on them: the meticulous recounting of their crimes, the building of 'fan clubs', the constant recasting of them as evil geniuses in TV series and films that are based on their lives and crimes. Up until 2001 serial killer related memorabilia could be auctioned on E-Bay, although the company eventually banned this trade after mounting criticism. Charles Manson is perhaps the most notorious serial killer of them all.

Commenting on the name, Manson said "I was writing a lot of lyrics . . . and the name Marilyn Manson, I thought, really describes everything I had to say. You know, male and female, beauty and ugliness, and it was just very American. It was a statement on the American culture, the power that we give to icons like Marilyn Monroe and Charles



Manson and since, that's where it's always gone from there. It's about the paradox. Diametrically opposed archetypes." (Manson in Baddeley 2000:21). Manson thus throws the full spotlight of his fame on the 'diametrically opposed archetypes' at the heart of American culture.

To be sure, Manson does not offer a clearly thought out and rationally argued counter-hegemony discourse where all the elements fit together and makes logical sense. He is, arguably, an artist and artists do not, as a rule, make rational arguments about the things that concern them. Manson's statements through song lyrics, performance, visual imagery and interviews, may be fragmentary, contradictory and even incoherent, but it is possible to draw some themes from what Manson does, for Manson sets himself up to interrogate some of America's dearly held ideals about itself. The remainder of the article will trace some of these themes through Manson's seven albums to date.

Portrait of an American Family (1994) & Smells Like Children (1995)

In his first two albums, it can be argued, Manson was a 'shock jock', an angry young man, a rebellious teenager amongst other rebellious teenagers, but he seems to have had a clearer than average understanding of what he was out to achieve. He said: "I wanted to become what adults feared most. Marilyn Manson is the harvest of

thrown-away kids, and America is afraid to reap what is sown" (*Daily Record* 1999). He also said "As a performer, I wanted to be the loudest, most persistent alarm clock I could be, because there didn't seem like any other way to snap society out of the Christianity and media induced coma" (Weiner 2000:16).

Portrait of an American Family and *Smells Like Children* suggested a world filled with nightmarish figures culled from children's literature and entertainment such as the cartoon *Scooby Doo*, the children's book *The Cat in the Hat*, and the film *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* (dir: Mel Stuart, 1971), all of whom get name checks of some description or are visually referenced. For example, the album title, *Smells Like Children*, is a direct quote from the evil child-catcher of *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (dir: Ken Hughes, 1968). These two albums

seemed to have an aesthetic of twisted nursery rhymes and toxic candy; a long way from suburban dreams of white picket fences and Mom's apple pie.

Manson has often spoken of himself and his work as an evolution, and the next stage of that evolution came in 1996 with the provocatively entitled album *Antichrist Superstar*.

Antichrist Superstar (1996)

This was/is Manson's most apparently anti-Christian period to date. In this album, Manson seems to have deliberately planned to disrupt the religious discourse of America, which can be a perilous undertaking. America and Europe may no longer burn witches but the religious discourse is emotional rather than logical and can give rise to intense responses. Some would argue that, in a post-modern era, the religious metanarrative has come to an end. It does not dominate public life in Britain in the way it used to, but there are areas of America where it most certainly does. The choice therefore to title an album *Antichrist Superstar* was a provocative challenge to that world perspective.

Manson's avowed distrust and dislike of mainstream Christianity probably has its roots in his education at a private Christian school in Ohio, where, if his biography *Long Hard Road Out of Hell* is to be believed,

the children were regularly subjected to explicit seminars on the impending arrival of the Antichrist, and the effects they could subsequently expect. Manson says he still has nightmares about it. Additionally, in 1994, Manson met and was impressed by Anton LaVey, dubbed the 'Black Pope' who was head of the Church of Satan. (LaVey died in 1997.) However, Manson has consistently avoided definitively stating one way or another whether he is a practising Satanist or not. Even his biography says "I'm not and never have been a spokesperson for Satanism. It's simply a part of what I believe in, along with Dr Seuss, Dr Hook, Nietzsche and the Bible" (Manson and Strauss 1998:164). A typically baroque collection of influences.

As this quote suggests, Manson's use of Antichrist imagery in his lyrics, which is extensive on the album *Antichrist Superstar* owes far more to the philosopher Nietzsche and his idea of the *übermensch* or superman, than to LaVey, though perhaps the two are not unrelated. There is undoubtedly a Nietzschean perspective in much of Manson's work, one which seeks to valorise 'authenticity' and individual thought, rather than learned conventionality. In this scheme, the *übermensch* is a person "not bound by convention, (but rather) responsible for the creation of his own character, beliefs and values" (Robinson 1999).

Manson speaks against the kind of evangelical fervour favoured by certain sectors of Christianity, partly because he sees it as pure hypocrisy, but, at the same time, he has suggested on more than one occasion that he is not opposed to Christianity. One website suggests that although this album may sound anti-Christian, Manson does not hate Christianity, rather he "frequently questions common Christian beliefs and practices to help us make our own decisions in regard to our beliefs" (www.mansonusa.com). The lyrics of the title song 'Antichrist Superstar' are interesting in this respect: "I can't believe in the things that don't believe in me. Now it's your turn to see misanthropy. Anti people now you've gone too far. Here's your Antichrist Superstar." Thus suggesting that 'the crowd' of believers, or fans, gets what it demands and should thus bear any responsibility.

***Mechanical Animals* (1998)**

By the end of the *Antichrist Superstar* tour, Manson admitted that he was at the limits of his strength. His drug use appears to have been getting out of hand, and he was emotionally and physically exhausted.

However, in typical Manson style, he decided to use this to his advantage: *Mechanical Animals* was an album about a decadent rock star so anaesthetised by drugs and obsessive fan adulation that he's almost entirely lost contact with reality. Perhaps in reference to Nic Roeg's 1976 film *Man Who Fell to Earth*, (starring David Bowie) he is also an alien, and an androgynous alien at that.

This album certainly discusses gender identity, both visually and lyrically, but drugs are clearly the pre-eminent concern of the album, with songs titles including 'The Dope Show', 'I Don't Like the Drugs But the Drugs Like Me', and 'Coma White', and the sleeve work heavily featuring pills and hypodermics. In 'Long Hard Road Out of Hell', Manson, playfully, includes a list of rules to help the reader decide whether they are an addict, adding that although he uses drugs, he is not an addict. Then again, with typical irony, Manson goes on to point out how many of his own rules he's broken! The impression from more recent interviews is that his 'drug' of choice is absinthe and has just launched his own brand called 'Mansinthe'.

Manson talks about drugs with a frankness that is frankly alarming to conservative America, (and Britain) where drugs are more usually depicted as the enemy, leading otherwise 'normal' people into a spiralling hell of addiction and inevitable death. This view of drugs is backed up with a firm 'just say no' message in the media. Manson upsets this discourse of prohibition and self control by discussing drug use and openly admitting the highs as well as the lows.

So in his albums up till 1998, Manson managed to upset 'white picket fence' America and outrage evangelical Christian America by openly talking about the Antichrist, glorified gender bending and drug use, but this was far from the end of his controversial musical statement. The next album *Hollywood* (2000) seemed to have many references, however oblique, to the Columbine shootings in songs like *Disposable Teens*, *The Nobodies*, *Count to Six and Die*, but there was another strong theme running through both *Hollywood* and *The Golden Age of the Grotesque* (2003), his sixth album, which makes it worth discussing the two together.

***Hollywood* (2000) & *The Golden Age of the Grotesque* (2003)**

In these two albums, Manson brings to the fore an element that had already appeared in *Antichrist Superstar* – the aesthetic

of Fascism, a problematic aesthetic to raise under any circumstances. Manson deliberately employs what could be called an 'iconography of outrage' to make his points because there can be little doubt that it is outrageous to reference so blatantly in a popular music context the imagery of the Third Reich which killed 5 million Jews in its 'final solution', but Manson is prepared to argue the point.

He says over and over in different ways "It's essential to be extreme in order for the reaction to be extreme. I provoke people because art's meant to be a question mark." (*Observer* 2003). Speaking in 1997, Manson said, "We perform the song Antichrist Superstar on a podium, with banners and it's a kind of sarcastic Nuremberg/TV evangelist thing. We're trying to say, it's all stupidity. In the way people react, there's not much difference between the Marilyn Manson audience, a Nazi rally and a Christian revivalist meeting" (Weiner 2000:35). In the same interview he said, "The Fascist theme's a very complicated part of the performance," says Manson. "I'm satirising the fascism of politics, of religion, and most importantly the fascism of rock and roll. Whether people realise that, or simply buzzing (sic) off the spectacle isn't my concern . . . we're the polar opposite of Nazism, we would be the first to be destroyed by it, and we're using the imagery against itself. Words and symbolism are only as powerful as you make them." (Weiner 2000:35-36).

Manson is treading in delicate territory here for if audiences do *not* detect the post-modern 'quoting' and irony which is apparently his intention, then such imagery can look very much like glorification. Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model is useful in this context for communication is rarely a linear, straight-forward transaction and however much Manson might insist that irony is his preferred meaning here, it is no guarantee that it will be read as such. However, Manson, from his Nietzschean perspective, where the individual is responsible for themselves and not to convention or 'herd morality', is not prepared to take the blame for how fans (or critics) might read his work. An interesting and possibly dubious moral distinction in this particularly context.

The Golden Age of the Grotesque seemed to take a little step back from the imagery of Nazism itself and explore the art of pre-war Berlin, the Weimar period in Germany as it's usually called, which was both a period of extreme economic hardship (as Germany struggled with the reparations

imposed by Allies at the end of the First World War), and, ironically, a period of intense artistic and cultural output. When speaking about his inspiration for this album, Manson commented: "The art that was created during the political upheaval transformed the spirit of what I was attempting with my record. It's not about going back in time, it's about bringing back the attitude." (*Observer* 2003). The videos for this album certainly seem to visually reference 1930s Berlin, perhaps by way of Bob Fosse's 1972 musical *Cabaret*.

As always, however, it is a little difficult to quantify exactly what Manson is trying to achieve with his music here because he seems equally happy to outrage left wing liberals as he is right wing conservatives. The song 'Use Your Fist and Not Your Mouth', from *The Golden Age of the Grotesque* would seem to be the very opposite of the philosophy espoused by the Liberal Left. To quote from the lyrics – "My hate-pop won't ever stop. I'm fucking glad we're different. This is my hate-American style Hit. This is a black collar song. Put it in your middle finger and sing along. Use your fist and not your mouth" It is probably safest to assume that in 2003, Manson is unable to stand any poorly thought out, 'namby pamby', 'wishy washy' stance that doesn't have the courage of its convictions.

In the four years after *The Golden Age of the Grotesque*, Manson seemed to be concentrating on the visual arts through painting and film projects (Phantasmagoria: The Visions of Lewis Carroll is currently in principle photography), rather than being interested in music, but in June 2007 came his seventh album, *Eat Me, Drink Me*.

Eat Me, Drink Me (2007)

True to form, *Eat Me, Drink Me*, seems to have created outrage amongst some critics and fans, but for thoroughly different reasons to his previous work. An article from MTV.com stated: "For the first time in Manson's career, he has written songs not about ideas, issues or his own beliefs, but about himself – a personal diary, if you will, spread out across eleven tracks" (Harris 2007). However, according to one disappointed fan posting on Rolling Stone's website, "No political criticisms, no Satanism, no sadism, no . . . Manson." (www.rollingstone.com). Ironically, this time around, people were outraged by the fact that they had not been outraged by Manson's album! Even in 1997, however, Manson had been aware of this possibility, saying in one interview, "sometimes I think the most shocking thing I could do would be to behave politely."

(www.mansonusa.com). However, in defending the subject choice for *Eat Me, Drink Me*, Manson said "My life became more of an inspiration to me than the rest of the world. I don't have any concern about politics or religion. I don't even need to comment on it anymore. I don't need to feel that I have a better explanation for who I am or what I did on this record" (www.mansonusa.com/redcarpetgrave).

However, it should be noted that even this more intimate incarnation of Manson has not been entirely uncontroversial. A publicly painful divorce from burlesque superstar Dita von Teese and a subsequent affair with nineteen year old actress Evan Rachel Wood has ensured that those who expect to be outraged by Manson can still find something to worry about. The video for the first single from the album 'Heart Shaped Glasses' (an explicit reference to Kubrick's controversial 1962 film *Lolita*) features Manson in explicitly erotic scenes with Evan Rachel Wood, as blood rains down upon them. There were rumours that the crew working on the video were uncomfortable during filming and television companies were certainly not happy with the video, insisting that these scenes be in black and white for TV broadcast. Manson commented: "You're okay with me driving a car off the cliff and fornicating, but the raining blood is bad? It's always a new experience learning what people hate and love." (www.mansonusa.com/redcarpetgrave).

Conclusion

Manson is an interesting artist who may be an authentic voice of counter-hegemony. He can hardly be considered the devil incarnate however much he might upset the discourses of American society: the family, religion, drugs, gender identity, political extremism, racism, decadence – Manson's own discourse has intersected with them all. Ultimately, however, it is difficult to sum up what Manson might be about, but perhaps that is the point. In 2003 he said "... if America represents freedom and democracy, then, as an artist, I can stand up and be dangerous and outspoken. I can create art that tests that democracy is working properly." (*Observer* 2003). In 2007 he said: "I had always used music, in a strange way, to define myself as a person, but I had done it as an armour or barrier. This record really defines me as a person because I had just let things out that normally I didn't know were supposed to go into song-writing." (www.mansonusa.com/redcarpetgrave).

Manson has been a musician, performer, socio-political commentator, painter, film director, and also a human being with a personal life. For now, his audience can only wait, with interest, or dread, to see what comes next. Perhaps it is safest to leave the last word to Manson himself. On the track 'Mutilation is the Most Sincere Form of Flattery' from *Eat Me, Drink Me* he sings "The young get less bolder, the legends get older, but I stay the same." Time will tell.

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Gillo Pontecorvo and Film Studies Concepts

Keith Withall

Gillo Pontecorvo, the Italian film director, died on October 12th 2006. He was famous for a number of political films, most notably the classic 1966 *The Battle of Algiers*. This dramatisation of events from the War of Liberation waged in Algeria against the French occupation has remained a key film for both admirers and critics. In the late 1960s French filmmakers like Louis Malle campaigned to overturn a French government ban on the film. In the 1970s the radical Black Panthers in their struggle against reactionary US administrations saw the film as an inspiration and a lesson. In 2003 it was screened by the Pentagon in order to learn lesson in how to combat the perceived enemies of US 'freedoms'.

Pontecorvo is a key filmmaker of the second half of the 20th century, one whose influence has been acknowledged by directors in the Art Film world like Malle; by mainstream directors like Oliver Stone; and by filmmakers in anti-colonial struggles. Rather than add to the numerous obituaries and appreciation I thought it would be interesting to apply some key and commonly used concepts from Film Studies to Pontecorvo and his films. Interesting, that is, to see what light they shed on the filmmaker and the films: and interesting to see what light is shed on the concepts themselves.

Biographical context

Pontecorvo was born into a bourgeois Jewish family on November 19th 1919. After University he became a tennis player on European circuits and then took up photojournalism. However, in the 1930s he became involved in anti-fascist activities. During World War II he fought in the partisan movement and became

a member of the Italian Communist Party. After the war he returned to photojournalism. He also was struck by the rise of the cinematic movement known as Neorealism. The key film influence was Rossellini's *Paisà*. He started filmmaking with a 16-mm camera, shooting short documentaries. He then worked as an assistant director on several films. In the mid-1950s he left the Communist Party, part of a fairly large exodus occasioned by the public debates over Stalin and the actions of the then current leadership in Eastern Europe. Pontecorvo directed his first feature in 1957, *La Grande Strada Azzura (The Wide Blue Road)*. He then made a series of films scripted by the Italian writer Franco Solinas: *Kapó* (1959), *The Battle of Algiers*, (1966), and *Queimada (Burn)*, (1968). Subsequently he made one last feature *Ogro (Operation Ogro 1979)* and then two short documentary films. From 1992 he was director of the Venice Film Festival.

The Wide Blue Road, stars Yves Montand who plays a poor fisherman who illicitly uses dynamite to catch fish. His activities dramatise a conflict between his individualist actions and the organised fisherman who attempt to use collective action to improve their lot. Franco Solinas developed the story from his own novel.

Kapó is set in a Nazi concentration camp, one of the earliest features on this topic. It stars the Hollywood actress Susan Strasberg, but the film was shot in black and white and had a documentary feel in many sequences.

The Battle of Algiers reconstructs from the memories of a participant, Saadi Yacef, the actions by the Algerian Independence

Movement in the city of Algiers in the late 1950s, as they struggled to drive the French colonialist from their land.

Queimada is set on an imaginary Portuguese Island in the mid-C19th. However, the story is developed from actual historical characters. There is Toussaint L'Ouverture, the leader of the great successful slave rebellion on San Domingo (now Haiti) at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. And William Walker, a US adventurer, closely tied to the US capitalist Vanderbilt, who invaded and ruled Nicaragua in the 1850s.

Ogro deals with the campaign by ETA against the Franco regime in the 1970s and the assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco, the Prime Minister, in 1973. However, in Italy it became caught up in the arguments and conflicts about terrorist activities in that country, including the activities of the Red Brigade and the death of Aldo Moro. A new ending was inserted.

Political film

This is one of the most common adjectives used to describe Pontecorvo's films. In *Politics and Film* (Furhammar and Isaksson, 1971) the authors note that "cinema does not exist in a sublime state, untouched by the world: it also has a political content, whether conscious or unconscious, hidden or overt." (Preface). They then focus on 'movies that have a clear political purpose'. Pontecorvo's films are clearly political in this latter sense. All his main features deal with issues relating to the state and/or social conflicts. They all offer a definite stance on the characters and their actions, and this stance falls in the political area usually described as 'leftist'. These

characteristics are most clearly discernible in *The Battle of Algiers* where the conflict is between the forces of the occupying state France, and the embryonic state of the movement for Algerian Independence. There are many ways in which the film signals its support for the forces of liberation, but notably in the end sequence, where the seemingly spontaneous demonstrations by Algerians signal the arrival of a new order.

There are a number of films that deal with the events in North Africa during this period. *The Lost Command* (Columbia 1966) follows French paratroopers in action in Algeria. Whilst it has a vague anti-war sentiment, there is no sense of the politics of either French colonialism or Algerian resistance. *The Battle of Algiers* focuses closely on both, offering key scenes where the participants analyse their values and their actions.

Jean-Luc Godard offered a rather different definition for this type of film, 'making films politically'. Pontecorvo's production work has varied, using both Hollywood stars and finance for some films, like *Kapó* and *Queimada*. But both those films also developed out of research into historical events. And *The Battle of Algiers* stands out in this way, with the film coming out of extensive research involving both Algerian and French participants. One aspect that makes it Pontecorvo's most powerful film is the sense of an Algerian voice that is dramatised in the film.

Propaganda.

Politics and Film comments on 'the cinema as a weapon of propaganda'. The definition suggests a common use of the phrase, to describe artwork that present a particular point of view. Such a description tends to cast critics and audiences in the role of either supporter or opponent. In Soviet Art propaganda had a different sense, being contrasted with agitation: the former offering analysis, the latter emotional engagement

This distinction is useful for Pontecorvo's films; they tend to have both an agitation and propaganda function. *The Battle of Algiers* is predominantly agitation. Whilst the values of the participants are clearly presented, the underlying social and political strands are not developed in to the same degree. Thus critics have pointed out how the film does not explore aspects of the struggle – including the position of

women, the role of Islam or the different tendencies within the FLN.



Pontecorvo (sitting right) on the set of *Queimada*

Pontecorvo's next film *Queimada* is closer to analytical propaganda. The film is structured so that William Walker (played by Marlon Brando) has key scenes where the politics of the different forces are explored. In a memorable scene set in a brothel Walker uses the idea of prostitution versus marriage as a metaphor for the change from colonialism to neo-colonialism.

The common feature of these two films is the tendency to a dispassionate stance. Whilst both films clearly endorse the liberation struggle, they are not dramatised in the heroic mode common in war films. Pontecorvo allows both sides in the conflict a clear voice; and both sides are involved in positive and negative actions.

Auteur

A number of critics have explicitly labelled Pontecorvo an auteur. The term was bought into film studies by critics' associated with the *Nouvelle Vague*. It has had various meanings, but centrally refers to filmmakers in whose work thematic and stylistic patterns can be identified. Picked up by the Industry, it has acquired another sense as a 'star filmmaker'. Thus the term is often applied to the first-time director, where clearly no patterns can be observed.

The star sense applies to Pontecorvo in the discourse of Art Cinema. He is clearly something of a star director, with frequent references in writings, and with his major film frequently revived. A number have won prestigious awards. Auteur would also appear to apply in a pattern of themes; the political themes are clearly present in all of Pontecorvo's films. And stylistically there are also recurring features, including

the use of documentary techniques, non-professional actors and the importance of music. In both *The Battle of Algiers* and *Queimada* the key protagonist is a non-professional. And the musical themes that accompany them are an important component in the impact of the films.

However, using 'auteur' overlooks the contributions of other filmmakers. Pontecorvo's main features have all been scripted by Franco Solinas. He shares a left-wing political stance with Pontecorvo. And in the case of *The Battle of Algiers* both were influenced and bought to the production ideas from Franz Fanon.

And the films made with Pontecorvo have themes which appear in the scripts of Solinas for other filmmakers. This is particularly apparent in the central opposition in both *The Battle of Algiers* and *Queimada* between two main protagonists – Ali La Pointe and Colonel Mathieu, Jose Dolores and William Walker. A number of Pontecorvo's films have had music composed by Ennio Morricone. *The Battle of Algiers* and *Queimada* have what are probably Morricone's best film scores, which powerfully support the overall stance of the films.

The Battle of Algiers, in particular, raises another question. The film's story is actually taken from a memoir by Saadi Yacef, who was also co-producer. The script was developed out of interviews with participants, on both sides. Pontecorvo had originally intended to make a film with a central European character, a photojournalist. It would seem the process of development was important in the form and meaning of the final film.

Stardom

Pontecorvo frequently uses non-professional actors in his films, but he also uses stars, including major Hollywood figures. Pontecorvo's wants to be different from the mainstream film, but at the same time to capture its audience. "It (also) seems to me that to renounce films that are made for the normal market in the normal way – narrative, dramatic, etc – to consider them not useful is a luxury of the rich, of people probably not really interested in political results . . ." (Pontecorvo, 1984). The only one of his films not to feature a major star is *The Battle of Algiers*. *The Wide Blue Road* stars Yves Montand; *Kapó* Susan Strasberg from Hollywood; *Queimada* Marlon Brando; and *Ogro* Gian Maria Volonte, a major Italian

star. It should be added though that the stars tend to be people with an interest in politics, true of both Montand and Brando, who have also featured in other political films and made public political statements. And Volonte is distinguished by the many political roles he has played, especially in the films of Francesco Rosi.

The star presence has been important in gaining the interest and financial input from major players in the film industry. They provide some sort of guarantor for the investment. The one film where stars are absent, *The Battle of Algiers*, was supported by an indigenous North African film company, and involved Pontecorvo in strenuous fund raising efforts. The stars have affected the production style of Pontecorvo. The most notable problems were during the filming of *Queimada*, where the initially sympathetic Brando fell out fairly publicly with Pontecorvo. The stars also seem to effect the film's content. *Kapó* features a somewhat anachronistic love plot. It also, like *The Wide Blue Road* and *Queimada*, closes with the death of the star protagonist. *Ogro* has a changed ending with the death of a hard-line ETA member and the suggestion of an ending for violent tactics. Such closure is missing from *The Battle of Algiers*, where the film ends on the people as hero, and with a fairly open resolution.

Neorealism

Pontecorvo has stated the impact that Rossellini's *Paisa* had on him. And he started filmmaking in the period when the Neorealist movement was at its most successful and influential. Mary Wood (1996) quotes "Ten Points of Neorealism" – (1) a message; (2) topical script inspired by concrete events – great historical and social issues are tackled from the point of view of the 'common people'; (3) a sense of detail as a means of authentication; (4) a sense of the masses and the ability to manipulate them in front of the camera; (5) realism; (6) the truth of actors, often non-professional; (7) the truth of lighting; (8) the truth of décor and the refusal of the studio; (9) photography, reminiscent of the reportage style stressing the impression of truth: (10) an extremely free camera, its unrestricted movements resulting from the use of postsynchronization." (Wood, 1996).

These are all characteristics that can be seen in Pontecorvo's films, most especially *The Battle of Algiers*. Wood makes the point that few Neorealist films showed

all of the characteristics. This also applies to Pontecorvo's films. His work, like that of other Neorealist filmmakers, retains certain key elements of style and structure from the typical mainstream film, but creates a very different sense of character and place, which fits with the focus on classes and individuals usually found on only at the periphery of the entertainment film.

Wood later adds that Neorealist films also use the conventions of melodrama. In its original sense of music and drama this is certainly applicable to Pontecorvo. Music is central to his films and in fact he was always involved in the composition of the scores. In both *The Battle of Algiers* and *Queimada* recurring musical motifs are associated both with key characters and the masses. The emotional and agitational effect in these films relies on the contribution of this music.



The three women who enter the French quarter to plant bombs in *Battle of Algiers*

Montage

The Italian Neorealists were influenced by Soviet Montage, and this can also be seen in the work of Pontecorvo. This not primarily the fast and discontinuous editing associated with films like *Battleship Potemkin*. In fact, in certain sequences Pontecorvo does use fast cutting, often with unconventional cuts, even jump cuts. This is probably less noticeable today when the commercial film shot has become considerably shorter than in classic Hollywood. Pontecorvo also uses cuts that work rather like Kuleshov's famous experiment, though strictly speaking they do not introduce material from outside the established narrative. A notable example would be in *The Battle of Algiers*, after the explosions in the European City set off by the FLN. As the bodies are removed from the wreckage to the strains of 'sacred' music a sudden edit shows us the arrival of the Paratroopers and their rapturous welcome by the European settlers. Pontecorvo is clearly establishing a social relationship in the manner developed by Eisenstein. Like Eisenstein he also uses

graphic construction within the mise-en-scene and framing to draw attention to character traits. In both *The Battle of Algiers* and *Queimada* the watching colonialists' viewpoint is emphasised with the characters seen through a monocular or binocular frame.

Joan Mellon in her *Filmguide to the Battle of Algiers* draws attention to another aspect of this style, 'graphic conflict', as we see the French soldiers converge on the Casbah to finally capture Ali La Pointe. *The Battle of Algiers* has a number of sequences which emphasize the visual organization of forces, both French and Algerian. This develops a set of rhythms that reinforce the functions and situation of characters for the audience.

Another aspect of visual style favored by both Soviet filmmakers and Pontecorvo is 'typage', the use of visual types for representation. In *The Battle of Algiers* one character who fitted Pontecorvo's image, the Algerian informant, victim of torture, in the opening sequence, had to be allowed out of jail so as to appear in front of the camera. In *Queimada* Evaristo Marques, who had never acted before, was selected by Pontecorvo to embody the conceived character of Jose Dolores.

There are strong parallels in content between Pontecorvo's films and the Soviet filmmakers. And it is clear that he found a number of techniques in their work that enabled him to point and present the content in his own films.

Third Cinema

The term appeared in a Manifesto written by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino entitled 'Towards a Third Cinema'. Summarising their argument: we have First Cinema... "aimed at selling *movie-life*, reality as it is conceived by the ruling class". Second cinema is "so-called 'author's cinema' " . . . where "the film-maker be free to express himself." And Third Cinema is "*making films that directly and explicitly set out to fight the System.*" One of the strongest influences on this Manifesto is Frantz Fanon, who was involved in the Algerian War of Independence and the wider liberation struggles of the period. Fanon described a series of phases which characterised artistic and intellectual work, and the 'third phase' was the 'fighting phase', which offered 'a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature.' (For literature read art and/or culture).

At least two of Pontecorvo's films would appear to aim at the 'fighting' function, *The Battle of Algiers* and *Queimada*. However, both are problematic. Whilst, as suggested above, Pontecorvo's work does not simply fit into the auteur category, his films do possess a number of 'authorial' characteristics. In particular Pontecorvo's control over the film is consistent with what Solanas and Getino terms 'author's cinema' i.e. Second Cinema.

There are other criticisms. Mike Wayne (2001) has an extensive critique of *The Battle of Algiers*. He appears to accept the judgements of some liberal critics that the film treats the Algerian and the French forces even-handedly. This is something that I find to be a serious misreading of the film. More substantially he argues that the film offers only a limited reflection of the ideas of Fanon on the Liberation Struggle. He also argues that the film fails to offer serious analysis on the historical, political and class aspects of the Algerian struggle. These are valid criticisms. He does not refer to propaganda or agitation, but would seem (correctly) to be criticising the film for being merely agitational. Whether that devalues it as Third Cinema is debatable. Agitation has its place: notably in Soviet Cinema, where Montage followed on from the early 'agitki', predominantly agitational films. And indeed, where such agitational material continued during the period of Montage masterpieces.

There is another aspect to this issue. Wayne includes in Third Cinema films from both the colonising states and the colonised, as long as they 'fight the system'. This is certainly one reading found in the Manifesto. However, Solanas and Getino state clearly at the opening their interest in 'films of de-colonisation'. And both Fanon, and Mao Tse Tung another important influence on the Manifesto, make a clear distinction between the anti-colonial struggle among oppressed peoples and the class struggle within colonising states. This is not a geographic distinction (as Wayne suggests) but a distinction between the fundamental situation in which people find themselves. The western capitalist states exploit their own working classes: the states colonised by the west are both exploited and oppressed. Hence Fanon's insistence on 'national culture' in the anti-colonial struggle, whereas at home in the states involved in colonial and neo-colonial exploitation and oppression internationalist rather than nationalist political culture is required. Fanon (and

other writers) have also stressed the importance of such national culture giving 'voice' to those oppressed people. This is something that *The Battle of Algiers* does only partially, and which *Queimada* only addresses indirectly.

I would suggest that Pontecorvo's most radical film, *The Battle of Algiers*, is in fact a transitional film, falling in the spaces between the second and third cinema. In 1966 *Third Cinema* was still a category being forged among radical filmmakers in oppressed countries, the films mainly came later. In fact, the Algerians saw the production not just as a way of recording their struggle but as an opportunity to develop indigenous cinematic skills. Algerian personnel were trained in the craft of film on Pontecorvo's production. Thus a step towards an indigenous film culture 'that could fight the system'.

Conclusion

Another critical point made by Mike Wayne refers to a quote by a Virginia Horwell, "I know an Army officer who screened a video of *The Battle of Algiers* to his lads in Northern Ireland almost as a training film." Wayne comments on 'an unhelpful ambiguity or loss of analytical power.' But this comment ignores the context of the screening. Sergei Eisenstein wrote tellingly, in his comments on *Battleship Potemkin*, regarding the importance of the class context for viewing his film. Colin McArthur made a parallel point in an article defending Ken Loach's *Days of Hope* from the attacks in the pages of *Screen*. It seems to be that the context of Pontecorvo's films is extremely important. The categories that I have used and discussed are all related to reception, to people as viewers, audiences and critics. Thus the responses of the squaddies in northern Ireland, of the Black Panthers or the Pentagon suits in the USA, probably tell us more about their situation than they tell us about Pontecorvo's most famous film. I encountered two reviews where the critic had not registered that it is the French who first use bombs to target civilians, the actual course of the historical events.

If we consider Pontecorvo's feature films in relation to their contemporary cultures: *The Wide Blue Road* has an unusually overt political message for a Neorealist film: *Kapó* deals with the Nazi holocaust at a time when cinema, and the other popular media, treated this as a no go area: *The Battle of Algiers* is a paean to the Liberation struggle only a few years after

the bloody contest, and when mainstream film industry was still turning out travesties like *The Lost Command* or *The Green Berets*: *Queimada* deals with slavery long before *Roots*, and explicitly addresses the economics of that industry: and *Ogro* deals with a topic, the use of political violence within western Europe, which even now is rarely addressed.

So Gillo Pontecorvo, with his collaborators, made a small but immensely rich and challenging portfolio of films. They offer not just recreated history, but political comment. Moreover, they offer this within the highest quality of film form and style. I have watched *The Battle of Algiers* and *Queimada* on a number of occasions. I still find them intellectually and emotionally stimulating. Pontecorvo also won a number of awards for his films, but his meaningful legacy is these few great movies.

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The Wide Blue Road, The Battle of Algiers and *Queimada* are all available on DVD via the Internet.

There are Study Notes on *The Battle of Algiers* by the author from *in the picture* (www.itpmag.demon.co.uk/Publications/filmnotes.html)

Teaching *Empire of the Sun*

Liz Roberts

Some twenty years ago I chose *Empire of the Sun* (1984), a newly published novel by J G Ballard, as a study text for my Higher English students. It was a "set text" (a feature of the examination at the time) selected by the then Scottish Examinations Board, and my group of relatively mature further education students seemed to enjoy and benefit from close study of a contemporary novel. Then, just as we were completing the course, the Spielberg film was released. Excuse for a class visit to the cinema! On the whole, the class enjoyed the film but, immersed as they were in the novel and the world it had created in their imagination, it was often more a case of identifying changes, omissions and disappointments than appreciating the film for itself.

But the film stayed in my mind, not because I was a student or teacher of film, both of which came later, but because of its emotional impact and resonance.

In the intervening years film supplanted literature as my main area of teaching and academic interest, but neither Spielberg nor *Empire of the Sun* featured in my modest repertoire. This was rectified by my return to *Empire of the Sun*, both novel and film, in preparation for recent sessions for teachers preparing candidates for the Film and TV Drama section of the Critical Essay paper in Higher English. Close analysis of scenes from the film confirmed Spielberg in my mind as a suitable case for study – a director whose artistically valid films are the result of meticulous preparation and whose personal immersion in cinema ("Spielberg's films are 'about' cinema before . . . anything else," John Baxter, 1996) deepens and extends the representation of the cinema-obsessed hero of the novel and film.

While the handout appended to this paper covers all the bases for the hard-pressed teacher to adapt as appropriate for particular groups of students, what follows is an opening up of some of the suggested

extracts for study and additional material on suggested approaches to audience and institution for those offering the SQA National Qualifications in Media Studies.

The four minute opening sequence begins with a black screen. Scrolling up over it are the words: "In 1941 China and Japan had been in a state of undeclared war for 4 years . . ." A sombre but neutral RP male voice (note English not American) reads aloud the words on the screen. As the words, in white script over the black screen, move upwards some dark red letters emerge behind them from the black, gradually revealing the much larger lettering of *Empire of the Sun*, which goes from dark red to gold. Beneath the title is an underlining of barbed wire. Light travels along the title from left to right, gradually illuminating the word 'Sun' while the unseen speaker intones ". . . Pearl Harbor." As the title fades, it resembles the opening of the *World at War* television documentary series, the atmosphere that of a documentary. On the soundtrack we hear a bell, possibly a tramcar, and lapping water. The screen returns to black and then we have an extreme close-up shot on grey water with white garlands floating from right to left. On the soundtrack is a chorister's pure voice singing in a foreign language. A broken box floats after the flowers, revealing in an open coffin a barely visible corpse. We connect the flowers with the coffin – these are funeral wreathes, and the river is carrying the dead to the sea. An overhead long shot reveals many more such coffins and then the prow of a boat, grey like the water, nudges the coffins aside as a uniformed sailor is coiling ropes on deck. Suddenly, the screen is filled with a flag – a huge, blood-red sun dominates the screen and then reveals the Shanghai waterfront, the Bund, its tall Western-style commercial buildings and sampans on the river. This rising sun represents Japan and the contrast between this ascendant power and the impoverished doubly conquered Chinese is established.

Defeated and subjugated by the Japanese, they are also treated as a close-to-slave populace by the Europeans in the protected territory.

Behind the imposing waterfront is a pock-marked, rain soaked street of low, drab houses with, at its end, the twin spires of the Anglican Cathedral. The camera follows the path of an equally incongruous gleaming limousine along the street taking us to the cathedral, while on the soundtrack the solo voice continues the mysterious, haunting song, joined occasionally by the choir. Now the camera is at the top of the spires tilting downwards to a medium close-up shot of the limousine, the winged emblem of a Packard on its bonnet, as a uniformed Chinese chauffeur polishes its already immaculate bodywork. Others, similarly employed, form the backdrop. Then the camera does a similar tilt from within – the gloom of the cathedral illuminated by light from the vast stained glass window, down which our gaze travels to rest on the large religious painting at its base, the body of the dead Christ. The choir stalls are filled with young boys, essentially English schoolboys in blazers, clean, well-groomed and all but identical. On their maroon blazers is their school badge with its Union Jack motif. One boy, the soloist, now commands the screen. He loses eye contact with the choirmaster, his mind evidently elsewhere as the choir takes over and he stops signing. In the opposite stalls the drably uniform Chinese amahs watch their charges. The soloist's amah looks approving, then reproving, sensing her charge's inattention. At the last moment, the boy (by now identified by the cineliterate audience as a key character) leaves his daydream and comes in on cue.

His voice continues on the soundtrack but it is now non-diegetic as the Packard travels homeward through streets lined with vast European mansions and only a rickshaw to remind us that this is Shanghai. The expressionless amah

and chauffeur sit in front with the boy alone in the back, engrossed in a lurid American comic book with a uniformed aviator wearing dark glasses on the cover – prefiguring Jamie's first meeting with Basie and his fleeting resemblance to this hero. As they turn into the driveway of his opulent home, Jamie sees from the security of the car the Chinese beggar at his gate. On the soundtrack, as the car approaches the house, the song fades out to be replaced by piano music. The servants are lined up at the door, while inside Jamie's elegant mother is revealed as the pianist, the grand piano covered with silver framed photographs, the room itself an epitome of the chintzy comfort of a wealthy ex-patriate's home, the photographs on the piano now revealed as younger images of the boy we have just met.

In this entire sequence there is no dialogue at all. The only words we hear are those of the beggar and are essentially meaningless to our ears. The words of the song are, in fact, in Welsh (although this is never explained) but this Cradle Song – "Suo Gan" – becomes increasingly poignant as the film progresses and hear it in different circumstances. This is a mother's reassurance to her child that there is nothing to fear, that no harm can come while mother and "holy angels guard your rest." Indeed, this early Jamie is protected, by his race, his status, his parents and their wealth from the harsh realities of life. But this is, as the prologue has warned us, the eve of Pearl Harbor, and all will soon change.

Already established are visual motifs which will return: the coffins on the river will be followed by Jamie's wooden suitcase; the rising sun of the Japanese will become increasingly visible and dominant; life, already established as fragile, will be increasingly threatened; while mirrors, wings (angels/planes) and other religious iconography will be recurrent motifs.

We already focalise frequently through Jamie's gaze, which extends our engagement with him. His point of view is often ours and we, like him, are as yet ignorant of what is to be his fate.

In the second extract, *Dr Lockwood's Christmas Party*, Jamie dressed as the Thief of Baghdad follows the flight of his model plane and encounters a crashed fighter. Lowering himself into the cockpit, he playacts a dogfight between himself

and the model aircraft which escapes out of sight. Following it, Jamie's double fantasy figure (part Thief of Baghdad, part fighter ace) is confronted by terrifying reality – a trench full of silent waiting Japanese soldiers. A whistling wind, his crunching footsteps, the murmurs and laughter of the soldiers and a threatening non-diegetic drumbeat presage danger, as he walks along the rim of the trench. Ludicrous in his double disguise (aviator glasses and pantaloons), Jamie comes face to face with real danger in the form a fully armed Japanese soldier. They confront each other at either extreme of a wide angle shot, which accentuates the clash of the two cultures they represent – the decadent post-imperialist Europeans and the ascendant power of Imperial Japan. From this predicament Jamie is rescued by his father in pirate costume and a family friend, Mr Maxstead, whose urbanity is accentuated by his cool English style (immaculate grey suit, eschewing fancy dress), which he maintains in ragged dignity until the very end.

The third extract, Jamie/Jim alone and the Chinese boy, comes after the Japanese seizure of the International Settlement and Jamie's separation from his parents. Having survived for some time in his deserted house, he has decided to try to surrender to the Japanese. Still in his school uniform and pushing his bicycle, he finds his offer met by derision and hostility. As he moves from the onscreen reality of war-torn Shanghai, we see him dwarfed by a giant film poster for *Gone with the Wind* with Chinese text – Atlanta not Shanghai is burning here and the fleeing figures are from the Old South, another civilisation built on slavery and oppression about to end. Dominating the refugees is a huge depiction of Clark Gable as Rhett Butler rescuing Scarlett in his strong arms. The smoke of burning Shanghai merges with the pictorial smoke and flames as Jamie (about to be renamed Jim by Basie) is confronted by a Chinese boy in his own version of uniform, shabby jeans and aviator jacket. Sensing danger, but still instinctively polite, Jamie asserts his Englishness – "I'm waiting for my chauffeur", declining the invitation to go with the Chinese boy. His survival instinct finally kicking in, he tries to escape. His *mise en scène* established of Jamie dwarfed by the vast billboard poster can be analysed to explore a number of connections:

- an allusion to Jamie's obsession with war as a form of fiction (comics and

films) – its full reality has still to confront him

- the irony of a Chinese populace viewing a long gone American war as escapism from the real thing
- the coincidence of one war victim, Scarlett, being rescued by one All-American hero, while Jamie's would-be saviour Basie is another opportunist (like him, Rhett Butler was a war profiteer) on a less heroic scale
- the homage paid to a late-20th century director, Spielberg, to the work of a director half a century before.

The other extracts for close analysis suggested in the notes highlight particular aspects of Spielberg's filmic technique and teachers may wish to select other sequences. But the approach suggested by the above close analyses should be followed as an effective way of establishing students' awareness of the accessible complexity of film language.

The final scene of the film, *The Reunion*, also merits close analysis (as canny teachers preparing students for examinations know, opening and closing scenes are favoured by examiners). This serves as a kind of coda. We already know that Jim, a boy far removed from the Jamie of the film's beginning, has survived against the odds. But what of the parents, whose faces he can no longer remember?

The scene opens with a crane shot that zooms in on a vast, bomb-damaged glasshouse, many of its panes shattered or missing. The camera moves in slowly, enabling us to see through the missing panes to a scene of children milling about. It is reminiscent of the shot in *Citizen Kane* when the camera closes in on the skylight of the cheap cabaret where Kane's second wife is performing and we see her through the skylight. Then the camera is outside the wrought-iron gates leading to the ramshackle building and we follow a procession of formally dressed Europeans led by an army officer. Inside the children are marshalled by nurses and the adults face the children, scanning their ranks for a familiar face. All the faces are solemn; we hear murmurs of "mum". Gradually we recognise Jamie's parents, plainly dressed now in pale neutral clothes, and a reverse shot reveals a still near catatonic Jamie gazing fixedly ahead. Unaware, his father pushes forward and Jamie half turns, unsure, and then turns away. On the soundtrack we hear the voice of the innocent chorister of the opening scene, singing the Welsh cradle song, coinciding

with his mother's look in his direction. She says his name, moves closer, but he stares out of the frame, at nothing. Can this possibly be him, can this scarecrow figure be her beautiful boy? His father moves in, solemn, questioning. The camera reveals Jamie's face, its sores and shadows, his filthy camp clothes. He is hesitant, then reaches out a grimy hand for his mother's. There are no smiles, no words, as he then touches her lips and, removing her hat, her hair. Her mouth forms "Jamie" soundlessly as he reaches out to her, pulling her towards him. They embrace and she rocks to and fro, a mother with her baby. The last shot is an extreme close-up of his eyes, still wide open, his pupils reflecting the glass. Then slowly, slowly his eyes close while the Welsh cradle song plays on, now over an extreme long shot of an exuberant liberated Shanghai, veiled in smoke from firecrackers not bombs. Now we are back where began on the Yangtze and a boat chugs past a wooden box, not a coffin this time but the suitcase containing all the memories of Jamie's lost childhood, his blazer, his comics, his Latin primer, on its way to the sea. The screen fades to black as the last notes of the song die away.

This is not the 'happy ever after' reunion of the sentimental movie but an overt recognition of the terrible price of such survival, made more poignant by the voice of the child long gone. Spielberg's lack of dialogue in this scene, as in the first, affirms his mastery of the visual techniques of cinema.

Critics have berated Spielberg for his "uplifting hopeful conclusions" that are "a betrayal of the truth". While there is the anticipated reunion at the end of *Empire of the Sun*, it is a muted and sombre resolution to the hero's quest and perhaps too close to the truth for comfort.

Audience and Institution

After *The Color Purple* (1985), his first excursion into the dramatisation of a literary novel, Spielberg turned his attention to *Empire of the Sun*. Significantly perhaps, the success until then of both director and author had been in the realm of science fiction, but Ballard had waited forty years to write his autobiographical novel and this converged with Spielberg's desire to make a war movie. He had initially hoped that David Lean, director of *Bridge on the River Kwai*, another epic about clashing cultural values (British and Japanese), would direct but Lean eventually decided that the

novel lacked "a dramatic shape" and "had no satisfactory ending" and withdrew, leaving Spielberg to direct the project. His choice for to write the screenplay was Tom Stoppard, whose own father had been killed when the ship on which he was travelling was torpedoed by the Japanese.

It was filmed in Shanghai in three weeks of location shooting in Red China, at Elstree and on location in the UK and in southern Spain for the camp sequences.

Casting involved testing four thousand possibles for the part of Jamie/Jim before deciding on Christian Bale for the challenging role of a boy who has to age four years and change in looks, character and personality. Well known faces from British film – Leslie Phillips, Nigel Havers, Miranda Richardson – played the Brits, while John Malkovich and Joe Pantoliano were the American freebooters, Basie and Frank, their characters altered from Ballard's originals to give them more audience appeal.

For commercial reasons, this main audience for the film had to be the mass American home audience, attracted by Spielberg and by Malkovich's starring role, and addressed more subtly though the film's ideology. While Spielberg had frequently been accused by critics of sentimentality, oversimplification, superficiality and those "uplifting, hopeful conclusions that are a betrayal of the truth," perhaps it was the very lack of these that contributed to the film's commercial failure. The story of Jamie/Jim's survival is not edifying. It is, in fact, his shedding of the niceties of his cast – sharing, fair play, unselfishness, unquestioning patriotism and faith that enable him to survive. Indeed, it is his espousal of the dubious American values of Basie and Frank, amoral in their exploitation of anyone and anything to remain on top, that allows him to become an honorary American and survive in the camp. Not perhaps the message America wanted to receive!

There is also a deep ambiguity in Jamie's and, indeed, the film's attitude to the Japanese. Since the spectator's gaze is aligned with Jamie's in his fascination with their rituals, aircraft and heroism in the face of defeat, there is none of the simple good versus evil dichotomy of many war films. If America won the war is the message, then it is a not unmixed one. American aircraft destroy the surrogate home established in the camp, the atomic

bomb is a far off light in the sky and their shining cylinders of food dropped from planes contain bounty so rich that the starving Jim throws it up.

Perhaps the deepest and most sentimental belief that the movie audience maintains is that, despite everything, when the lost child finds its way home, it is unmarked by what has intervened. Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* has been over the rainbow only to find "there's no place like home." But the haunted gaze of Jim at the end of the film is that of a child who has lost his innocence for ever and for whom there may be no safe home.

Thus the American audience was denied its affirmation of the supremacy of American values and of its deepest sentimental beliefs. Their protagonists in the film are grubby opportunists, while the Japanese are not uniformly villainous, and the viewpoint from which the audience see the war is the flawed, unreliable gaze of a boy.

In *Adventures in the Screen Trade*, William Goldman asserts that the only reliable truth about the film industry is that "nobody knows anything" in terms of which films are going to appeal to the paying public. That said, it is the mighty American home market that is the main target for Hollywood film makers, and the film's failure to appeal to that market could well be the main reason for its cool reception, despite the fact that it grossed \$67 million on its initial release.

What follows is a handout issued at sessions for teachers in Aberdeen and at the AMES conference in 2007.

Empire of the Sun

1. Historical Background

By 1937 the Japanese, in their quest to establish an empire, had begun to conquer the Pacific, invading and occupying China, including Shanghai, a great international trading city. Shanghai, "the Paris of the East" or "Ancient Rome with Neon", had been largely created by people from the West and, even after its occupation by the Japanese, the wealthy foreigners, American and European, had diplomatic security and 35,000 of them lived in the International Settlement, isolated from the dangers of war behind barbed-wire barricades.

In December 1941 the Japanese attacked the US Pacific base of Pearl Harbor and

also seized the International Settlement in Shanghai, imprisoning its inhabitants in some thirteen internment camps in which many died.

In August 1945 the US Airforce dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan surrendered and withdrew from China and the international concessions in Shanghai were restored.

2. Setting

Shanghai, a city dedicated to capitalism, was a city of contrasts, a city of 400 night clubs and a city of beggars, a Chinese city overlaid with the culture of the wealthy foreigners who lived there, particularly the British and Americans. So Shanghai's skyline was – and still is – a Western skyline, American movies filled the film screens, American cars – Buicks and Packards – pushed their way through the rickshaws, and the British and American ex-pats lived in large houses with swimming pools, optimistic that their way of life would survive.

3. The Novel (1984)

J G Ballard, the Jim/Jamie of the novel, waited almost forty years before writing a fictionalised account of his experiences – "Twenty years to forget, twenty years to remember." His biggest decision in writing the novel was to isolate the fictional Jim from his parents: in reality, Ballard and his parents were interned in the same camp. Written in the third person but from Jim's point of view, this is not a grim "survival against the odds" novel but is full of unexpected humour and ironies.

4. The Film (1987)

Steven Spielberg's obsession with World War II began in his boyhood, when his father, newly returned from the war, fed his imagination with stories based on his experiences.

Empire of the Sun, like *Schindler's List*, is from the point of view of civilians and, unlike some of his more sentimental films (like *ET*), is not a celebration of childhood but a childhood journey marked by the death of innocence.

The film is true to the young Jim's love of all things American, from the gleaming limousine he rides in and the comics he reads in his life before the Japanese invasion to his liaison with Basie, the American merchant seaman, his fascination with both the Americans in the camp and the American planes dropping supplies – the B29s, the Superfortresses.

To accommodate the film's major audience, the American domestic market, certain changes are made: Basie's role is emphasised and some of the more dubious and sinister aspects of his character in the novel are airbrushed out of the picture. This allows John Malkovich star billing, an important factor in the film's marketing.

5. The Narrative Structure (Todorov)

(a) The film's opening sequence establishes the *equilibrium*, the state of balance, in which the way of life of the wealthy foreigners in Shanghai seems insulated both from the war in Europe and the patient Japanese. This is a fragile state – it's the eve of Pearl Harbor – as is further illustrated by Jim's brush with danger at Dr Lockwood's party.

(b) *Disruption* occurs, and the *disequilibrium* is established, not with the attack on Pearl Harbor hundreds of miles away but with the Japanese assault on British and American gunboats, the invasion by Japanese troops and Jim's separation from his parents in the resulting chaos.



Christian Bale as Jim.

(c) The *recognition* that a *disruption* has occurred: Jim walks home and lives in the deserted house. When food runs out he returns to the city, accepting the fact that his parents will not now return, and tries to surrender to the Japanese.

(d) The *disequilibrium* (or attempt to repair the *disruption*) occupies all but the final minutes of the film – Jim's efforts to survive alone, his realisation that the "name of the game" is survival and his association with anyone he hopes will help

him stay alive and be reunited with his parents.

(e) The *new equilibrium*: Jim's reunion with his parents is in a Shanghai that seems almost unaltered – but he, and they, are altered. The status quo cannot be restored and, while the final *equilibrium* invites the audience to share the characters' happiness vicariously, the price is high – Jim's haunted gaze is that of a boy who has seen and experienced too much and his suitcase floating in the Yangtze symbolises the loss of his childhood.

The narrative shares characteristics with 19th and 20th century novels which feature the child alone in a hostile or potentially hostile environment, such as *Kidnapped*, *Treasure Island* (whose young hero is also called Jim), *Oliver Twist*, *Jane Eyre*, *Peter Pan* (the Lost Boys), *Lord of the Flies* and even Harry Potter. In each the child/children must navigate without parental guidance.

6. Characters

(a) The British

(i) Jim (Jamie) – the indulged only child, embodiment of the values of a country he has never visited, whose combination of intelligence and naivety, enthusiasm and curiosity, adaptability and instinct for survival allow him to endure and even enjoy his life in the camp.

His physical representation is the outward sign of his changing character and situation:

1. the immaculate English schoolboy, clean and shining in his uniform of cap, blazer, school tie and badge with the Union Jack.
2. the dishevelled but still uniformed Jim at large in Shanghai, who loses a shoe to the Chinese boy and replaces his school cap with a woollen hat.
3. Jim in the camp three years on, very dirty, dressed in plundered adult garments – too big shorts, golf shoes, US flying jacket – his white teeth brown, his skin pitted with sores and his hair filthy and matted.

(ii) Jim's parents – archetypal English ex-pats, glamorous mother/handsome father; we never see their prison camp selves.

(iii) Mr Maxted – raffish Englishman abroad; even in the camp he wears an approximation of his civilian clothes.

(iv) Dr Rawlins – the camp's medical officer, embodiment of the best *Boys'*

Own Paper characteristics, defender and educator of Jim, testing his Latin verbs to keep Jim sane.

(v) Mr and Mrs Victor – faded, defeated English couple, Jim's reluctant room-mates in the camp, who make no effort to step into the parental role but are indifferent to him.

The representation of the British in the camp is of a group clinging to the vestiges of their old lives but generally dispirited and passive.

(b) The Americans

(i) Basie – US merchant seaman, a consummate survivor who exploits Jim for his own ends. His energy, absence of moral scruples and entrepreneurial zeal fascinate Jim, who aids him in running his business empire – a trading network in the camp.

Basie is quite prepared to send Jim into a potential minefield to set traps for never-seen pheasants, but his final act is to throw Jim a Hershey bar – a symbolic gesture of generosity, a sort of kindness.

(ii) Frank – Basie's sinister sidekick, surviving on his wits like Basie, for whom Jim is a kind of currency.

The representation of the Americans in the camp is of a group who have style, energy and an easy camaraderie. They fascinate Jim, as do –

(c) The Japanese

Small boys find heroes where they can, and Jim identifies with the bravery of the Japanese; while accepting of their brutality, he also negotiates with them, imitating their rituals.

(i) Private Kimura – a boy like Jim, forced to leave his childhood behind by the war.

(ii) Camp Commandant (Nagata) – who becomes increasingly agitated and unpredictable as the war nears its end.

(iii) The Kamikaze pilots – portrayed through Jim's fascinated gaze as heroic and mystical.

(d) The Chinese

The surging masses of a Shanghai where life is cheap, but from whom emerges the beggar boy – with his cry of "no Mama! No Papa! No whisky soda!", whose precarious existence, also living on his wits, foreshadows Jim's but who becomes

Jim's adversary when the latter is alone in Shanghai.

7. Key Scenes for Analysis (timings based on DVD)

(a) Opening sequence (0.00.00 – 0.04.00) This four minute sequence begins, after the prologue, with a visual representation of the first paragraph of the novel: "Wars came early to Shanghai, overtaking each other like the tides that raced up the Yangtse and returned to this gaudy city all the coffins cast adrift from the funeral piers of the Chinese Bund." Without dialogue, but with effective use of *diegetic music*, setting and character and situation are established (through the interaction of the *codes*) and the *equilibrium* of the narrative is created.



(b) Dr Lockwood's Christmas party (0.17.11 – 0.18.41)

The absurd excesses of the British ex-pats are accentuated by the fancy dress, and the collision of the two cultures is demonstrated in the *wide-angle shot* of Jim (as the thief of Baghdad) and the Japanese soldier. The *sound codes* build up the tension. The motif of the ball before the battle/party before the war is not unusual (*War and Peace* and *Brussels on the eve of Waterloo*).

(c) Jamie/Jim alone and the Chinese boy (0.36.16 – 0.37.55)

The vast poster for *Gone with the Wind* (featuring a previous war) with the school uniformed Jim in front of it creates an effective *mise-en-scene*. The response of a nervous Jim to the Chinese boy's challenge – "I'm waiting for my chauffeur" – accentuates the gulf between them.

(d) Transition – from building the runway to Jim in the camp (1.04.08 – 1.06.08) Jim is starving and near death, and his situation is conveyed by the *magic realism* in this sequence with the Japanese planes. *Editing* to compress time (in this case two and a half years) is used effectively, with the planes as link *motif*. Again music is used to accentuate the dreamlike unreality.

(e) The Kamikaze pilots (1.44.32 – 1.47.49) The visual metaphor of the red sun rising is ironic – this is the end of the war and Japan's defeat is imminent (the dawn sky = the Japanese flag). The *montage* sequence, cutting between Jim and the other camp residents, emphasises the gulf between their adult realisation of the situation and his limited perception and identification with the young pilots. Music from the opening sequence is used as an effective *leitmotif*.

(f) The long march (1.59.20 – 1.59.55) In his first adult act Jim abandons his suitcase containing the relics of his school days (his blazer, Latin primer, war comics). It's the symbolic end both of his childhood and the security of the camp. Rendered in silhouette, his tattered profile stark against the glittering water, this is a Jim to whom life doesn't mean much any more. Music echoes ripples on water.

(g) The Olympic Stadium (2.01.42 – 2.01.55)

This is the end of the long march and the *extreme long shot* shows the stadium like a medieval fortress. Inside are the looted possessions of the prisoners – cars, chandeliers, statuary, ornate furniture, pianos. The camera *tracks* Jim as he moves through, until his gaze finds the once gleaming bird emblem on the bonnet of his family's Packard. The scene is reminiscent of the end of *Citizen Kane* in the cellar full of Kane's possessions, where the camera moves in, drawing our gaze to an old sledge ("Rosebud") – the significant, the poignant amongst the detritus of human acquisitiveness. *Diegetic music* (piano), also poignant, becomes *non-diegetic*.

(h) Liberation (2.14.42 – 2.16.18)

This sequence is notable for the change in *lighting*, which presents the now deserted camp quite differently from before; and for the *music*, "Laudamus te", a choral piece linking us (and Jim) to his past incarnation as a choirboy and to his Latin lessons with Dr Rawlins, and transmitting his joyful relief musically as well as visually. The moving camera creates a sense of freedom and vitality. Jim's surrender to the reassuring American soldier is reminiscent of Ralph's collapse at the feet of the British naval officer at the end of *Lord of the Flies*.

(i) Reunion (2.18.12 – 2.20.12)

Again no dialogue but the close ups reveal an altered Jim, able at last to shut his eyes but unable to retrieve his lost childhood.

Shanghai may seem to have survived but the final sequence – the wooden suitcase, instead of the coffins of the opening sequence, floating on the Yangtze – confirms that the old Jim has gone for ever.

8. Themes

(a) The loss of innocence, an unsentimental education, the journey from childhood to adulthood, gain and loss, change.

(b) War and death, but war without clearly defined heroes and villains, largely as background.

(c) The combination of (a) and (b) in Spielberg's phrase – "innocence versus extreme jeopardy."

(d) The sense of a journey – a literal search but also a search for one's self.

(e) The end of Empire – first the colonial, imperialist world of the British and Americans in Shanghai, then of the Japanese "Empire of the Sun".

(f) Disintegration (the falling apart of a way of life) and transformation through a series of changes.

(g) Survival and its cost.

(h) The attitude towards "conquerors" – the Chinese at the start of the film to the British and the British in the camp to the Japanese.

9. Plot

The *plot* organises the *story* into two parts, with the central part of the story omitted (from Jim's arrival in the camp in early 1942 to where it is taken up again in 1945) and with a closing coda – the reunion.

The plot can be divided into sections for convenience:

Part 1 (a) The eve of war: the opening sequence and the fancy dress party.

(b) Jim surviving alone in Shanghai (*Gone with the Wind*) and meeting Basie.

(c) The journey to the camp, building the runway and the planes.

Transition to Part 2

Part 2 (d) Jim in the camp – the war nearing its end.

(e) The long march to the stadium.

(f) Liberation and jubilation.

Coda (g) The sombre reunion between Jim and his parents.

10. Representation

It was obviously impossible to have the child actor playing Jim age over three years in the course of the film, and so the change both in him and his circumstances is displayed physically in terms of clothes, appearance and performance:

(a) the perfect English schoolboy in Shanghai

(b) the fancy-dressed Thief of Baghdad

(c) the dishevelled schoolboy in the occupied city

(d) the dirty scarecrow Jim in the camp, in cut-off shorts, leather flying jacket, dog-tags (and golf shoes).

His metamorphosis from spoiled brat, indulged only child, to battered survivor is conveyed physically.

11. Genre

Large scale epic production began in America with D W Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which combined epic historical spectacle and family melodrama. The formula of combining great epic themes from history and civilisation with human stories has formed the basis for subsequent Hollywood epics, exploiting cinema's capacity for large scale spectacle to advantage, along with the narrative essential of individual characters caught up in these events.

Within this genre there are Biblical epics, classical epics, war epics, space epics . . .

Clearly *Empire of the Sun* belongs within the war epic tradition and there are the great set pieces, with the hundreds of extras and multiple camera units associated with this particular genre:

(a) the Japanese invasion of Shanghai

(b) the American planes attacking the camp

(c) the long march to the Olympic stadium

along with the personal story of Jim.

This is not just another war epic as the point of view is evidently Jim's and that of the other civilians caught up in the conflict, and there is no crude division between the 'us' of the film and the 'them' in terms of good and evil.

A Tale of Two Oliver's

Margaret Hubbard

When Charles Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* in 1837, he did so for the Press. In 1948 David Lean made a film version of it, with strong gothic elements, and, twenty years later, *Oliver* was re-worked as a musical.

While all three versions work from the same baseline story, the end products are very different. Each is constructed within its own medium and genre. Dickens wrote his novel for *Bentley's Miscellany* in 24 monthly instalments, and it is this which has given it its very specific episodic structure. Lean used gothic iconography to deliver the suffering and violence in Dickens's story, while the musical adheres to the conventions of its genre and reaches resolution through song and dance.

As a consequence of this, the Representation and Narrative in the two films are very different, and, in turn, different from the source material. Comparing one story across two films (and in this case also a novel), is a valuable way of working with the key aspects of media studies. Examining Representation and Narrative leads to a close look at how they are tied to the other key aspects.

What follows is a comparison of a number of sections of the two films:

- the opening to the point when Oliver asks for more
- Oliver reaching London and the introduction of Fagin
- the construction of Bill Sykes and Nancy
- the ending.

A suggested way of teaching the two texts would be to show the Lean version in full, and then the parallel scenes in the musical. At the end the whole musical would be viewed. It would also be useful to link in with some of the appropriate scenes in the novel.

The Opening Scenes of the Two Films

David Lean's version opens with wild weather, a tree, a shadow and a small figure on the landscape. The storm mirrors the woman's pain. She is pregnant, and on her way to the workhouse. The representation of both the weather, and then the workhouse is grim. The gothic horror motifs are clear in the gates, and the bell she rings. Lighting is used to illuminate the words 'Parish Workhouse'. The storm passes, and a baby is born. However there is no happy ending here. The grimness of the workhouse is reinforced by the candles, the shadows, the old crones drinking and the noises off, which have all the echoes of prison. The iconography of the representation is explicit. The narrative enigmas are clear: who is she?; why is she here?; why does a woman in her situation own such a locket? A narrative is then introduced through the theft of the locket.

The representation of class is also very evident in the opening section through the juxtaposition of the starving children and the adults in the dining room. The children watch the adults eating, and the despair and hunger of the children is emphasised by the wider shots on the children, and the intensity of the point-of-view shots, in close-up, on the adults' faces and food.

Twelve minutes into the film, straws are drawn in silence, and Oliver is tracked along the tables through the point-of-view shots of the other characters. The close-up of the whip emphasises the cruelty of the place, and Oliver asking more is followed by reaction shots.

Thus the representation of class and the narrative are set up in the opening sections. The varied use of the camera, the sounds and the use of black and white reinforce the despair of the whole situation much more effectively than could colour. The idea of genre begins

to emerge and through it categories are introduced.

Who is the audience? Certainly adults through the pleasure of understanding the iconography. There are also the literary buffs who are familiar with the novel, and wish to see how it is played out in film. But for the children being taught, who are not the primary audience, it is important for them to grasp how different sectors of an audience is drawn in, and how the key aspects combine to do this.

The musical version of the opening of the film is entirely different. It begins with a song, 'Food, Glorious Food'. The children are filing into the dining room in a regimented way, but the grimness is diffused by the singing. These children are very different. The casting is responsible for this. The children are clean, well fed, and have teeth in excellent condition. 'Lean's' children looked much less well cared for. This reflects an Institutional issue – it is actually difficult to find undernourished, (white) children today. The narrative of the film begins at the workhouse. Oliver's birth and the locket, so vital to the first film, (and the novel), are simply not there. It is in the nature of musical to begin with a song. There are exceptions, but they are few. 'Oliver' is not one of them.

Almost nine minutes into the film, it borrows from its predecessor a scene, which does not appear in the novel i.e. the children looking in on the masters of the workhouse eating. The representation of class is introduced here, but it is not developed. It is simply there as a narrative device. In the dining room the close-up on Oliver has none of Dickens' words, 'desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery,' to describe Oliver at this moment.

Again the straws are used, (although in the novel it reads 'again the lots were cast'), and again Oliver is tracked to Mr.



Ron Moody as Fagin with Jack Wild (left) and Alec Guinness with John Howard Davies (right)

Bumble. The tension is in the sound, the long build-up as Oliver walks the length of the room and in the point-of-view shot. The cruelty of the situation is diminished as the scene is resolved in a song, in which Oliver is chased, almost as if it were a game. It would certainly be worth, at this point, reading to the class the paragraph in the novel, as Oliver goes forward to ask for more. The similarities and differences lead to lengthy discussion, which in turn could also be used as a lesson on how to turn text into film.

By comparing the opening in this way, it will be clear to pupils how material can be used and altered. In the earlier film, the opening is longer, and there are more enigmas. In the musical the narrative is linear. Its songs are used to shift the mood. Ideas, not originally in Dickens' novel, are introduced because they work as a shorthand route to representation of class, and /or because audiences, familiar with the first film, expect to see them. Certainly the children watching the workhouse masters eating are very strong images. Presumably Dickens did not have the children doing this, as his audience would know that this level of proximity of children and masters just did not happen. The credibility of his story would have been undermined in a way that it is not to us.

Lean's version, being multi-stranded in its narrative, is much more of a drama. The pathetic fallacy of the weather links the gothic to literary devices.

It is of course vital to explore with pupils the effect of black and white compared with the colour. While the children may initially be put off by the black and white, they quickly see it to be more suitable to the nature of the story. Lean's use of sound, in contrast with the singing in the musical, likewise affects the text. The montage of Lean's first sequence constructs the representation and the narrative in a much more sophisticated way than is the case in the musical. This is the result of the different genres and languages, and attracts different audiences as a consequence.

Going to London

Our sympathy for Oliver is because of his situation. This is constructed differently in both films. In Lean's version Oliver is forced to sleep amidst the coffins at the undertakers where he has been sent to work. Oliver is bullied by everyone, most explicitly by Noah Claypole, and then flogged for standing up for himself. Just before the half hour point of the film, he decides he is leaving. Unlike in the musical, where he finds his way out by luck, Lean's Oliver is pro-active and forces his way out using a crowbar. The montage of the detailed shots of his tiny amount of

possessions is a clever visual device to add sympathy.

When he reaches London, he is overwhelmed. This is emphasised by the use of the close-up. When the Dodger appears, he is clearly not a friendly character. The sound level on London is increased to such a pitch that the audience is uncomfortable, thereby echoing Oliver's terror.

The approach to Fagin's den is classic gothic. Close-ups of seemingly unending stairs, with no knowledge of what will be at the top, build the terror of the child. En route Oliver and the Dodger step over a comatose drunk- the misery of London's poor is referenced, albeit minimally. At the top of the stairs they cross a bridge, with the dome of St. Paul's in the background, and they reach Fagin's den.

In contrast, in the musical, our sympathy for Oliver at the undertakers is predicated largely on the song, 'Where is Love?' Here the narrative of Oliver's mother is introduced - where is she?- and along with this, his longing to be loved. One shot of this is behind bars to provide a visual link for a twentieth century audience of the idea of the workhouse as a prison. By luck, Oliver is able to leave, and he makes his way to London. In the musical version, we see details of the difficulties of the journey. The weather is bad. Furthermore,

Oliver is covered in mud, and ignored by the coach. However he does use his ingenuity, and gets on the back of a cart, to arrive in London on a bright sunny morning. Here he emerges from a basket of cabbages, in which he has been hiding.

This London, far from threatening, is exciting. We see this through all the point-of-view shots. Oliver is very small against the buildings, but he has space. In David Lean's version, the crowded, callous nature of the city is constructed through the tight close-ups on Oliver, as he is ignored and jostled.

We even get a child's sense of wonder at a toy train – this time an elevated London monorail!

When the Dodger appears he is very friendly, and segues easily into the song, 'Consider Yourself One of Us'. The song is picked up to become a huge chorus number by using vignettes of London: a wedding, chimney sweeps, the meat market etc. The result is the construction of a community far removed from the harsh world of Lean's film.

The route to Fagin's den is exciting. Again the stairs, and again the bridge and St. Paul's, but the mood provided by the music is entirely different. This 'Oliver' is an adventure. The representation of London contributes to this. The musical is pleasant and fun: the Lean version, and the novel, much darker.

Fagin's Den

Can anyone who has seen the appearance of Alec Guinness as Fagin ever forget it? He turns into the shot in tight close-up, and is simply terrifying both to us, and to Oliver. Into the silence the Dodger throws the line, 'Do you want him?' The camera picks up the individual reactions of the other children. No music softens this sinister place. However, after Fagin has threatened the children, music is used to show the hollowness of his pretence at kindness. There is nothing in Fagin's den but cruelty and distrust, and all the languages of film are used to construct this.

Fagin's den in the musical is very different. It is not far off a boys' camp gone a little awry, but there is no sense of pervading pain and exploitation. Fagin (Ron Moody) is making the tea for the children, and emerges through the smoke of the cooking. While he has control over the children, we get a sense that it

is more ingratiating than threatening. Once again the musical genre is used to introduce another major character. The song makes the scene funny. Moreover it is comfortable, despite Oliver apparently not realising that 'Pick a Pocket' is not just for his entertainment, but is what he will be expected to do. Oliver is genuinely enjoying Fagin, who is presented as a kind of eccentric Dr. Barnardo at this point in the text.

The introduction of Fagin's den makes explicit the difference in the representation and the categories of the two genres. Close study of the content and the film languages exemplifies this.

Bill Sykes and Nancy

In Lean's version, having constructed Fagin as a terrifying figure, Bill Sykes appears, and we see a shift in the power relations. Fagin is afraid of Sykes, and by building the narrative up in layers, Lean is able to work with the complexity of Dickens' narrative. Nancy, in turn, is a hard character, as indeed she would be just to survive, but underneath the harshness we glimpse the pain of her life, which is what drives her to save Oliver.

The construction of Nancy and Bill Sykes in the musical is interesting.

In the pub scene, when she sings 'It's a Fine Life', the ideology of community, and her position in society, are explicit. This has no equivalent in the Lean version, which is concentrating on the tragedy of her life, in preparation for the violence of her murder, in a society where all the indices of poverty and despair are commonplace, and in turn lead to brutality.

In musicals major characters all sing, usually fairly soon after they appear for the first time. In the musical version for the stage Sykes sings one of the strongest pieces in the show, 'My Name', but this does not happen in the film. The casting of Oliver Reed was crucial to this. Thus an institutional decision drove the content in the musical adaptation differently for stage and film.

The Resolution

The resolution of the Lean version is as follows: Nancy is murdered, Lean using the camera very creatively to convey the violence within the permitted limits of the time. Bill Sykes realises what he has done, but nevertheless has to be brought to justice for his crime. Fagin is arrested,

and the Bill is shot off the roof, as he tries to escape. This is as it is in the novel. The remainder of the film adapts the story, which is cut to reduce the complexity, and the length, of the narrative in the novel. It turns out that Oliver's mother is Mr. Brownlow's daughter, and Oliver goes off to a very comfortable middle class life with his grandfather. For Dickens the solution was never revolutionary politics!

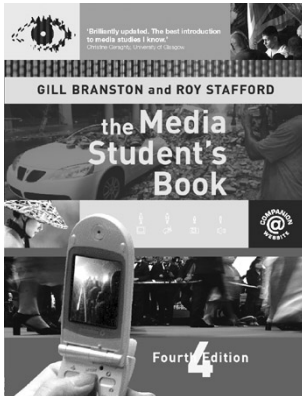
In the musical version, the murder of Nancy takes place at London Bridge, allowing for a visually more dramatic scene, than in a tenement novel. The shots of Oliver on the roof, as Sykes is trying to escape, are directly informed by the earlier version. The Fagin story differs however. In the musical, Fagin and the Dodger go off to pastures new – with, of course, a song and a dance.

There remains the question of the anti-semitism in the text. Teachers would need to assess how far they were going to explore this, and that would depend on the racial awareness and the maturity of the class. Certainly the 1948 film was very heavily criticised for it. Fagin has no redeeming features at all, and visually teeters on the edge of caricature. Ron Moody's Fagin is much less of a stereotype. How much this is to do with the time of production, and how much to do with the genres, is arguable.

To sum up, teaching the film through comparison makes explicit its constructed nature. Once the pupils have understood how the story has been adapted to suit the different genres, it becomes clear how this affects the narratives, representations and languages differently. From here it is short step to move on to the different audiences, and the pleasures they derive, from the different elements of the texts. Film comparison of this nature is an approach teachers may wish to use to teach the key aspects of Media Studies at lower secondary level. It could also suit upper primary, where it could easily fit into a themed approach for example on the Victorians.

Lastly, of course, this teaching approach could be used as a model comparative study for any two films using the same story – see issue No.41 of the *MEJ* for a comparative study of the two versions of *Greyfriars Bobby*.

reviews



The Media Student's Book, Gill Branston and Roy Stafford, 4th edn, Routledge 2006, £19.99, 576 pp ISBN 0415371430

Those of us of a certain age who have been teaching media studies for more years than we care to remember will recall the surge of pleasure when Branston & Stafford came to call in the mid-1990s. *The Media Student's Book* seemed to be the answer to our prayers, gathering together all the media wisdom of the day in one accessible volume, making theory straightforward and exercises practical.

Now in its 4th edition, it arrives like an old friend reappearing after a few years, all scrubbed up and trendified but without any hint of the emperor's new clothes. Branston & Stafford deal well with the curse of media studies – the instant plunge into obsolescence as soon as you have set pen to paper – or rather keyboard to screen. And indeed inevitably the first points in their introduction are a survey of the changing technology which dominates media and media studies, outlining the advantages brought by technological change against the disadvantages.

The authors still see the book as “a toolbox – of concepts, histories, debates, guides to production and so on.” (p.4) One of the sharpest tools is the one used by the authors to make complex terminology simple, where as well as margin definitions, all terms are gathered in a 20-page glossary in the end reference section. This fulfils the authors' aim to be appropriate for all students from A-level to undergraduate, on a ‘dip in’ basis rather than following any specific syllabus.

So what is different about this 4th edition? The authors have gone for a “complete rethink”, as they put it, driven not least by changing technologies which place us now firmly in the digital age. Gone is the separate Technologies chapter, with relevant material now incorporated into separate appropriate chapters. In come new topics and case studies to keep things as fresh as possible – *CSI: Miami*, Japanese horror movies, Jamie Oliver, *Big Brother*, Michael Moore, blogging, mobile phones and celebrities. A number of previously favoured terms, say the authors, are now interrogated rather than taken for granted – stereotype, representation, postmodernism, globalisation, free market.

Organisationally the same three structural elements remain – main chapters, backed up by case studies (both small embedded and longer end of chapter ones) and with boxed-off suggestions for activities. In addition, marginal inserts give instant definitions, asides, questions and illustrations of the main

materials beside them, with further information available in the Glossary or 12-page resource file.

This final Reference section is the fourth of the book's four parts. Part I ‘Key Concepts’ is the bulkiest, with chapters on Interpreting media, Narratives (with case study *CSI: Miami* and crime fiction), Genres and other classifications (with case study Japanese horror and the *Ring* cycle), Institutions, Questions of representation, Ideologies and power (with case study of the news), Industries, Audiences, Advertising and branding (with case study on celebrities). Part II ‘Media Practices’ covers Research, Production organisation, Production techniques, Distribution (with case study on contemporary British cinema). The briefest section, Part III ‘Media Debates’ covers Documentary and reality TV, Whose globalisation? and ‘Free choices’ in a ‘free market’.

So, leaving aside what's old and what's new for a minute, what's the quality like? Dipping into some of the chapters where I am most familiar with the topics, I was impressed by the case study of British cinema in the Distribution chapter. It shows a breadth of the research that has been well compressed into a very informative and coherent package of key information on the economic and institutional determinants shaping the strange beast known as ‘British cinema’. The Documentary and reality TV chapter does a good job in reducing an impossibly wide field into a compact space, with debates about realism, truth,

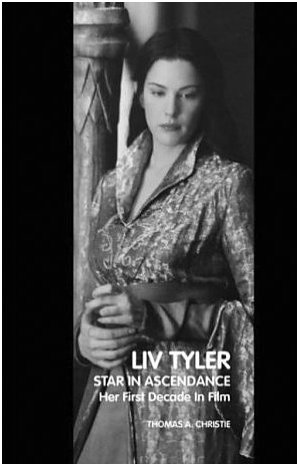
performance and ethics, illustrated by case studies of Direct Cinema, Michael Moore, Jamie Oliver and Big Brother. Little nuggets of information that grabbed my attention from the margin included the fact that the 250,000 applicants for the 2004 US *The Apprentice* were reduced to sixteen by a casting agency, who effectively trained the candidates in a series of mock shows to develop their ‘performance’.

An underlying political theme running throughout the book will satisfy those who fear that media studies can so easily lose its cutting edge. Especially strong is the chapter on Ideology and power where m-words and c-words proliferate – Marxism, class and capitalism – with a case study of how news values emerge. This follows on from a strong previous chapter on representations which focuses on images of world migration, refugees and asylum seekers.

If Channel 4 were to run a programme on ‘Fifty Media Studies Books to Try or Buy before You Die’ (as voted for by you the users), this one by Branston & Stafford would be a very strong contender for the top spot. *Douglas Allen, Motherwell College*

Liv Tyler: Star in Ascendance: Her First Decade in Film, Thomas Christie, 2007, Crescent Moon Publishing, , 269pp, ISBN 1-86171-131-X

How many Liv Tyler films can you name? (Clue: There are at least 17*) In any pub film quiz, that question would have brought me down at the



first hurdle – until this book came along and filled in a previously empty corner of my consciousness. Anyone with a similar blind spot is guaranteed to come away from it knowing a heck of a lot more about one of the most intriguing and modest stars of Hollywood.

Straight away I'll declare an interest. Author Thomas Christie was an Open University student of mine who produced an excellent masters dissertation on changing geo-politics of the John Glen directed James Bond films. I was subsequently surprised when a manuscript dropped through my door – a book that Christie had been writing in his spare time and which I was invited to read and write a Foreword for if I felt it was worthwhile. Within a couple of years, that manuscript has turned into the volume under review, with Christie's efforts to find a publisher coming up trumps with Crescent Moon, a specialist arts and culture publisher from Maidstone, Kent. My opinion of it has not changed – it is a marvellous labour of love that has turned into a professional work that should act as a model combination of enterprise and film writing for ourselves and our students.

Any biographical study of a star treads a dangerous path – on one side is the theoretical world of star

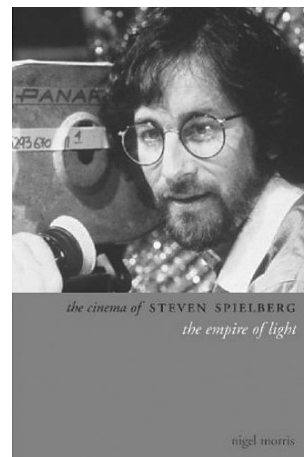
study, full of often dense abstract jargon; on the other the cut and paste of the lazy journalist reheating the old, cold and probably only half-true stories from the cuttings files. Thomas Christie's volume does a skillful job of steering a fresh path between these two, relying on original research of international proportions, as befits a subject new to biographical study such as Liv Tyler. As Christie emphasises in his Introduction, however, strictly speaking it is not a biography, "rather an analytical survey of Tyler's evolving film career." (p.24) In other words it is a study of her films rather than her private life; and Christie clearly directs anyone seeking the behind-the-scenes story of her early days – as a model and young actor daughter of Aerosmith's Steven Tyler – to *Rebel Heart*, the autobiography of her celebrity mother Bebe Buell. What follows is a film by film account of her work, covering the plot of the film, assessing Tyler's role in the widest possible frame of reference, and usually ending with a well documented guide to further reading. A final chapter, 'Liv Tyler in Modern Film and Popular Culture : The Story So Far', offers an overview of her work in the context of contemporary American cinema. Christie emphasises the range of her genre work from indie to blockbuster, and her directors from American veterans like Robert Altman to off-the-wall indies like Steve Buscemi and Kevin Smith, via European auteurs like Bernardo Bertolucci. This chapter is the nearest that Christie gets to theory as he attempts to analyse the appeal of Tyler; so those with an aversion to the mysteries of heavy film theory can be advised that

this is the ideal volume for them, with its firm commitment to solid fact and well-informed opinion. It is a work of immaculate detail, concluded by a 15-page comprehensive filmography of Tyler's work, 17 pages of notes/references, and a 13-page bibliography. The only thing missing is an index – the publisher's rather idiosyncratic choice, I gather – but the work is so clearly and tightly organised that it should be easy enough for the reader to navigate round the work or dip into it.

The book is a model of its kind to commend to students (and anyone thinking of entering a pub film quiz).

Douglas Allen,
Motherwell College

*Liv Tyler's films are :
Silent Fall, Heavy, Empire Records, Stealing Beauty, That Thing You Do!, Inventing the Abbotts, Armageddon, Plunkett and Macleane, Cookie's Fortune, Onegin, Dr. T and the Women, One Night at McCool's, The Lord of the Rings Trilogy, Jersey Girl, Lonesome Jim



The Cinema of Steven Spielberg: Empire of Light, Nigel Morris, Director's Cuts series, Wallflower Press 2007, vii + 434 pp, ISBN 1904764886

Throughout many years of teaching film, even though my students frequently cited Spielberg as their favourite

director, I had never actually taught any of his films in the classroom – although I did find *Jaws* useful as an example of Todorov's equilibrium-disequilibrium-equilibrium pattern of narrative. I have since made amends by analysing *Empire of the Sun* – see elsewhere in this edition.

Was I suffering from the misapprehension that his movies did not merit critical attention, that he was not to be taken seriously as a director? Was I prejudiced against crowd pleasers? After all, *E.T.* was recently voted "Greatest Tear Jerker of All Time in Channel 4's Top Hundred Films series. The answer is a shamefaced "probably, yes!" My change of mind is in no small way due to Nigel Morris's excellent study of Spielberg's cinema.

Wallflower Press has an extensive range of film makers in its Director's Cuts series – from Ken Loach (*Art in the Service of the People*) to Roman Polanski (*Dark Places of the World*). With the focus on Spielberg's "Empire of Light" Morris's introduction identifies his principal critical trajectory as Spielberg's use of lighting as symbolism. In support of this approach he quotes from Christopher Metz's 'The Imaginary Signifier' (1975) where he asserts that "the cinematic institution is not just the cinema industry...it is also the mental machinery – another industry – which spectators 'accustomed to the cinema' have internalised historically and which had adapted them to the consumption of films."

Thus Spielberg's audiences identify "desire associated with light" in the recurrent theme of the reconstitution of the "broken family" and its accompanying pleasures for the spectator.

That this is not a self-limiting focus is amply

demonstrated in the film with which Morris begins his analysis, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* – in fact, Spielberg's fourth theatrical release. Particularly satisfying is his analysis of the opening in which he examines the significance of the initial darkness (30 seconds long) pierced by headlamps mirroring "the spectator's projective gaze" and heightening anticipation of spectator pleasure." Morris extends the significance of such an opening by comparison with Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), where the opening places the spectator in the "dark domestic space of the first shot", allowing the audience to share the screen character's point of view. If cinema is a medium of light and sound, then Spielberg celebrates the cinematic in *Close Encounters* – elsewhere commenting that "light is a magnet" – a film in which "characters repeatedly are attracted to light, awestruck, their faces illuminated by their projected vision", such light having links with religious iconography.

In a non-cinematic flashback, Morris then considers *Duel*, Spielberg's breakthrough movie, albeit made-for-television in an amazingly short time, which eschewed televisual exposition in favour of visual storytelling, although "nervous executives" insisted on some dialogue and voiceovers – so much for the director's vision! The film's favourable commercial and critical reception led to its cinematic release, on the back of the success of *E.T.* ten years later, with some additional material. The man versus machine duel – or, more properly, David Mann (Dennis Weaver) versus the sinister tanker – pitches the law-abiding, peaceful and harmless against mechanical malevolence.

Morris's analysis maintains the light/dark perspective but is deeper and more satisfactory than that of *Close Encounters* and it made me keen to re-view the film, as it brought out the binary oppositions of male and female worlds, the film's homage to Welles' *War of the Worlds* ("the banality within which the upcoming struggle occurs") as well as to Hitchcock and its use of mirrors. And all this with a structure influenced by television's commercial breaks and in a sixteen day shoot!

But, back to the theme of light as Morris identifies a crucial difference between the respective openings of the original television and later cinema versions. Instead of beginning on the highway, he writes:

"The start, one of the four added scenes, is in effect a reverse angle of the beginning and end of *The Searchers*. Darkness, shared by the auditorium, represents domesticity from which a frame opens – spreading over the screen and encompassing the spectator into the panoramic West: a landscape of intense light where desperate men engage in one-to-one struggles."

The *Sugarland Express*, *Duel*'s successor and, in effect, Spielberg's first direct-to-cinema release, was a commercial failure. Paradoxically, according to Morris, its failure lies "in its richness, variation, restlessness and inventiveness that ultimately lead to contradiction, confusion and tonal shifts." Nonetheless, in *The New Yorker* no less a critic than Pauline Kael considered it "one of the phenomenal debut films in the history

of movies" – as Morris is prepared to concede.

Jaws, the definitive modern blockbuster, that triumph of marketing, the multi-million dollar earner and Academy Award winner that was Spielberg's breakthrough movie, is revealed by Morris as more complex, more disturbing than might be supposed. He links its themes to the external political scene of 1970's America – youthful unrest related to Vietnam, the draft and the savage crushing of protest. Amity's red, white and blue Independence Day decorations identify it as a microcosm of the USA; its Mayor Vaughn is a Nixon-like figure, citing "public interest" as a pretext for keeping the beach open for commercial motives. In terms of audience positioning, the spectator is placed "in the rapacious monster's position", presented with "no alternative to allegiance with a destructive force", permitted and encouraged to take visceral pleasure (underscored by the *Jaws* theme music) in gruesome and violent death.

Since this monograph is a comprehensive examination of Spielberg's cinema, each of his films to date has its own chapter, ending with *Munich* (2005). This enables the reader to home in on significant films, although reading chronologically does bring out the developmental arc of Spielberg's career, set against the background of Hollywood and America. Thus 1941 could be read as "satirising Hollywood itself" and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, which appeared during a recession, as a beleaguered Hollywood's attempt to counter opposition from new outlets. The quintessentially American hero, Indiana Jones, embodying as he does the pioneering spirit and rugged individualism,

was a timely antidote to such negative circumstances. Morris also illustrates his theme of light with examples from this film – light shafts in the jungle, warriors blocking the light, Jones's escape in a seaplane into the sun and the Ark itself as a "dazzling light source."

For teachers wishing to use *E.T.* as a focus for film study, Morris's chapter on is required reading, with its attention to promotion and publicity, the ideology of Reaganite America, audience address, narrative and binary oppositions.

The *Color Purple*, Spielberg's film version of Alice Walker's novel, signalled his move into more adult themes, but it is the second of his novel adaptations, *Empire of the Sun*, that engaged me more. As it is a film I know very well, and have recently taught, I was eager to read Morris's view of the film, particularly his theme of light. His comment that "Jamie's aircraft fascination explicitly equates light and aspiration, a convention within religious iconography, as well as a distinct Spielberg characteristic" illuminated aspects of the film for me, as did his contention that "Spielberg unreels a solipsistic vision of war, involving projection into different positions, rather than any attempt at objective realism."

In relation to the theme of light, in this case linked to Jamie's idyllic pre-war home life, Morris cites "the glow from the refrigerator, packed with luxuries soon to be denied", comparing it with the "headboard shaped like a broken sun" adorning the prison camp bed of the Victors, "Jamie's unwilling surrogate parents", whereas Basie, Jamie's unlikely and unscrupulous "guardian" is first shown before a focused beam of light from a porthole. This is Jamie's

projection, his recognition of Basie as a source of salvation, and it allows the cinema audience to share his subjective view.

It is enormously satisfying to find one's own identification of a homage to Welles's *Citizen Kane* echoed by Morris, who links the looted property – statues, furniture, paintings – stacked in the football stadium to Xanadu. To me, however, it resembled more the detritus of Kane's property (including Rosebud, the sledge) about to be incinerated at the very end of the film – but, hey, it's always good to be up there, briefly, with Nigel Morris!

The reader will be able to select his own films from the Spielberg oeuvre – *Jurassic Park* perhaps or *Schindler's List*, with its essential Spielberg theme of families separated and re-united, or from *Saving Private Ryan* to Munich by way of *Minority Report*. Which prompts one to ask, is it possibly Spielberg's amazing productivity that has prompted so much hostile criticism?

Morris postscripts the book with a chapter on "Audiences, subjectivity and pleasure", which raises amongst others the question of Spielberg's wide appeal linked to his "favouring of subjective shots, aligning spectatorial vision with protagonists", thus facilitating identification and creating emotional impact.

All in all, *The Cinema of Steven Spielberg* is an epic production in its own right. Like an epic, it is impressive in its scope – Spielberg's entire cinematic output. But each chapter could stand alone for the occasional reader or researcher. For me, it was a fascinating, engrossing and illuminating read. I was frustrated, however, by the arbitrary omission of dates for any

of the films, referring en route to a basic filmography for these, and puzzled as to why the chapters were "illustrated" with such woefully inadequate black and white (or shades of grey) stills – the best of which, from *Saving Private Ryan*, at least allows one to distinguish the mise-en-scene, while the worst has to be a tie between *Jurassic Park* (a lump of black plasticine wrapped in tissue or a terrifying dinosaur?) and *Jaws* (a black blob against shades of grey or a spectator obstructing the audience's gaze?). Thank goodness for Morris's vivid prose reconstructions of crucial scenes.

No film library – personal, school, college or university – should be without this book.

Liz Roberts

Splice: Studying Contemporary Cinema vol 1 no 2 Spring 2007, Auteur Publishing, 102 pp A5, ISSN: 1751 7516

I think the second issue of this periodical for 'educators' is stronger than the first. In particular, the handling of concepts in the area of film and media studies is clearly presented and care is taken over defining these and providing clear expositions. It generally a little denser than issue one. I mention this because I am inclined to think that, whilst aimed at teachers, it is likely to be used or provided to students. So some sections will be a little challenging, for example, to AS students.

There are two central concerns, the independent strand in the commercial industry and narrative. Both the main articles deal with films starring Jim Carey, so there is also material suitable for star study.

Independent Spirit in Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind concentrates on where the film can

be sited within the industry. There is some good discussion of the characteristics of what is termed 'independent film' in the USA, and this is then applied to the Carey film. The analysis includes the changing character of 'Indies' like Miramax. The writer, Pauline Reay, also constantly checks the reader to consider and evaluate this material. There is a shorter section on the narrative, which discusses ideas about 'classical' and 'independent' film story telling. The shortest section is on film form, including brief comments on the style of the film, but these are not very developed.

The Truman Show and Its Narrative is an extended and sometimes complex discussion of how the story and plot of that film can be analysed. Given some of the theories and analysis available on narrative the complexity is not surprising. But the writer, Michael Massey, is careful to spell out his understandings of these ideas, and to provide detailed commentary on the film. The article makes particular use of the theory of Vladimir Propp, so it is very helpful if you find that model stimulating. But the article also brings out other aspects of narrative; one is style, which again is fairly brief. The other is ideology, where I had some misgivings. The argument uses the term 'America' for the particular state, the USA. And whilst it does deal with the US's 'cultural imperialism', it treats this as a set of ideas, rather than manifestations of a set of social relations. My other problem was with the Narrative Structure Table in which the numbers refer to a 'dialogue-only version of the screenplay. Whilst they are intimately related, scripts and films are not the same thing! But, like the first

article, overall, this provides a lot of ideas and materials for teachers. Also, with a little input the ideas in each article can be applied across to the other film, or to Carey and his star status.

On Board and Online: The Snakes on a Plane Phenomenon is a somewhat bizarre read by comparison. This is because of the content. Apparently the film's title became reduced to the acronym *SoaP*, (logical but odd). Even odder to my mind is the fan behaviour that is related. As a film buff I realise I am sometimes a little obsessive, but this is a world far beyond my experience. However Lance Bradley gives clearly presented detail and relates this to the industry operations. So the article is a very useful discussions of modern aspects of marketing and fandom. Bradley also adds some discussion of what makes a cult film. However, this does not really explain what drives this phenomenon, an explanation that I have yet to find in any writings.

The regular section *If There is One Film you Use, Make it....* deals with the 2005 Belgium winner at Cannes, *The Child*. John Fitzgerald deals in some detail with the characters, story and setting, but the major part of the article is comparisons. The primary comparison is with the UK 2004 film *A Way of Life*. But Fitzgerald also brings in Neorealism, *The Bicycle Thief* (1948) and the Brazilian *Central Station* (1998). This could provide a whole extended study period, but I think there is also sufficient there for a teacher who wants to have a close discussion of this very powerful film.

There is also a book review section, including several volumes on French films and one volume on the UK, Lester Friedman's

volume about *British Cinema and Thatcherism*. So, a lot to commend in this second issue. The three major films discussed all seem to me both excellent movies and fertile ground for discussion: *SoaP* will also make good discussion, and the phenomenon is just very amusing.
Keith Withall



***Inside the Tardis: The Worlds of Doctor Who*, James Chapman, I B Tauris 2006, £12.99, 232 pp, ISBN: 9781845111632**

Part of the problem with the BFI's recent series of TV Classics books has been that they presume no foreknowledge of the text on the part of the reader. Great if you've never seen an episode, rather repetitive if even a passing knowledge of the text is accessible. The inclusion of many glossy stills also makes them something of an expensive purchase. This rather weightier tome from I B Tauris decides not to head down the episode/series guide route at all, but instead chooses to focus mainly on the institutional influences that shaped Britain's longest running science fiction programme.

The discussion of the BBC's various requirements and regulations is one of the most satisfying aspects of this book. Drawing on internal memos stored for years in warehouses, James

Chapman has put together a fascinating picture of the workings of the BBC in the dawn of the television era. Its analysis of audience figures and representational choices is often like peering down a dimly lit corridor of time.

It is the more recent analysis that provides the weaker parts of the book. The discussion of the cancelling and reviving of the series seems rather shallow and surface, which could be excused by the lack of availability of documentation and also the wish not to repeat a frequent and common modern-day argument amongst fans. On the other hand, after such a detailed and fascinating glimpse behind the shutters of Television Centre during the 1960s, it seems disappointing that the discussion of an era where many of the participants would be available for interview is so superficial.

More positively, this book could also be said to appeal to non-fans as only a basic awareness of the series, for example, what a dalek is, is all that is required to fully understand the book. It is clear that the author is something of a fan, but even he acknowledges the difficulties of accessing the programme from the very start due to missing episodes. His analysis of why these archives were destroyed is also interesting, if a little tangential. I would speculate that the BBC is wishing it had a time machine to save these episodes in these days of DVD releases.

Another unusual element of the text is that Chapman makes little attempt to comment of the actual programmes themselves. There is the odd mention of wobbly sets and quotations from reviews of the times but these are used as evidence for budget cuts and changes of producer and

script editors. Even falling audience numbers are linked to these variations, which can make the argument seem rather simplistic.

One of the most interesting areas of discussion is the discussion of the story changes and lack of science elements in *Doctor Who*. It was most enlightening to realise that a programme that is about monsters and heroes originally addressed much wider science fiction tropes. The subsequent decision to set many more stories in the past as opposed to in the future is also explored and the resulting budgetary benefits. In addition to this, the rather odd copyright situation of the daleks, *Doctor Who*'s main (and for me, most recognisable) enemy, is also explored at some length. The representation choices in the early years of the programme also provide a fascinating insight into the programme, with a rather forward looking view that the Doctor's companions be balanced amongst the sexes and without fulfilling stereotypical gender roles. Indeed, the original remit appears to be as education in nature as *Blue Peter*. The subsequent assignment of companion to pretty young girl who screams frequently seems to be one of the less welcome inheritances of later BBC doctrine.

The changes in *Doctor Who* seem mainly to be accredited to a changing climate within the BBC although it is obvious that these changes took place in a wider context. There is some attempt given to exploring this wider context, but rather more attention is given to pointing out the flexibility in the programme, especially after the establishment of regeneration, where the actor playing the Doctor can be replaced without the

basics of the series changing. A sympathetic discussion of the reasons behind the first regeneration is also included.

Overall, this is a book that complements study in early television broadcasting and it is pleasure to see a British programme discussed in such depth. The excellent research and fresh way of examining the old warhorse definitely outweigh the book's failings. For serious fans and those interested in the early days of television programming in this country, it is an interesting and informative read. It must be said, however, that it is not the most accessible of reads and it would be difficult to pick a chapter or excerpt to use in the classroom.

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