ISSUE 01: CINEMA

CUT / TO

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“Cinema is like a battleground: love, hate, action, violence, in one word: emotion”

Samuel Fuller

"The cinephile is ... a neurotic! (That's not a pejorative term.) The famous French advertising slogan that says, "When you love life, you go to the movies," it's false! It's exactly the opposite: when you don't love life, or when life doesn't give you satisfaction, you go to the movies."

François Truffaut


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“Anyone who’s made film and knows about cinema has a lifelong love affair with the experience. You never stop learning about film.”

Francis Ford Coppola

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7 films to look out for in 2021: what can we expect after a year of closed cinemas?

by: **INÉS CASES**

To say that 2020 was a difficult year for cinema would be more than an understatement. Since the COVID-19 pandemic brought much of the UK to a standstill in late March, cinemas had very little opening times and failed to attract a Summer audience for anything that wasn't Christopher Nolan's highly anticipated blockbuster 'Tenet'. In an industry already struggling with the growing popularity of streaming platforms and the rebirth of primetime television, the virus seemed like the final nail in the coffin.

Nevertheless, like many of us, Hollywood is determined to make 2021 a turning point. With many blockbusters and Oscar hopefuls having their release dates delayed and rescheduled, here's a list of ten upcoming films destined to make a splash this year.

1. Malcom & Marie (dir. Sam Levinson)

2020 has been a year of many things, but one of the highlights was the rise of Hollywood's new darling Zendaya, who's historic Emmy-winning performance in HBO's 'Euphoria' has solidified her as one of the brightest young stars of her generation. Now, she's reunited with 'Euphoria' creator Sam Levinson and partnered up with 'Tenet's' leading man John David Washington for 'Malcolm & Marie'. Filmed over quarantine in April in closely monitored conditions, Levinson wrote the screenplay in six days at Zendaya's request and Netflix recently acquired the rights. Set to be released in early February, the film will be eligible for nominations at the postponed 2021 Academy Awards in April and has been named a dark horse in the race for Best Picture and the leading actor categories.

Director: Sam Levinson
Starring: Zendaya and John David Washington
Release date: 5th February
Distributor: Netflix

2. No Time To Die (dir. Cary Joji Fukunaga)

Bond is back! Or at least we think he might be. Daniel Craig's swan song as the iconic British spy has been delayed twice and is now looking to be released a whole year

Malcom & Marie (2021) dir. Sam Levinson

No Time To Die (2021) dir. Cary Joji Fukunaga

after originally planned. The production has faced some difficulties as Danny Boyle dropped out as a director due to creative differences and was quickly replaced with Cary Joji Fukunaga. Look out for performances by Ana de Armas, Lashana Lynch and new villain Rami Malek, as well as returning actors Léa Seydoux, Ben Whishaw and Naomie Harris.

Director: Cary Joji Fukunaga
Starring: Daniel Craig, Rami Malek and Léa Seydoux
Release date: 2nd April
Distributor: Universal Pictures

3. Last Night in Soho (dir. Edgar Wright)

Edgar Wright gained widespread attention for his action-packed sleeper-hit 'Baby Driver' in 2017, proving that he was bigger than the very British Three Flavours Cornetto Trilogy. This time, Wright has written and directed 'Last Night in Soho', a psychological horror set amongst the jazz and glamour of London in the 1960s. As usual, Wright has brought together an impressive cast that includes 'The Queen Gambit's' Anya Taylor-Joy and Jojo Rabbit's Thomasin McKenzie.

Director: Edgar Wright
Starring: Anya Taylor-Joy, Thomasin McKenzie and Matt Smith
Release date: 23rd April
Distributor: Universal Pictures

4. In The Heights (dir. Jon M. Chu)

2020 was huge for streaming platforms and one of the standout events was in July when Disney+ finally released the live stage recording of Lin Manuel Miranda's 'Hamilton'. But there's another Miranda musical set to make waves and this time it's Jon M. Chu's film adaptation of 'In the Heights'. Starring 'Hamilton' actor Anthony Ramos in the lead role of Usnavi, hype for the movie has only increased after it was postponed a year due to the pandemic as it's banked to be Warner Bros' summer smash at the box office.

Director: Jon M. Chu
Starring: Anthony Ramos
Release date: 18th June
Distributor: Warner Bros. Pictures

5. Candyman (dir. Nia DaCosta)

Produced and co-written by Jordan Peele, visionary director of 'Get Out' and 'Us', Nia DaCosta's 'Candyman' is a sequel to the 1992 cult horror film that has spawned a plethora of nightmares and urban legends. Originally slotted for release in 2020, the film has been rescheduled to late summer instead. Yahya Abdul-Mateen II's lead role as Anthony McCoy is also something to watch out for, especially as he's fresh off winning an Emmy for the HBO series 'Watchmen'.

Director: Nia DaCosta
Starring: Yahya Abdul-Mateen II
Release date: 27th August

Distributor: Universal Pictures

6. **Dune** (dir. Denis Villeneuve)

We all gawked at the trailer of Denis Villeneuve's highly-anticipated adaptation of 'Dune' in September, and then cried when it was announced the film would actually be released in October of 2021, nearly a whole year after when was originally planned. But as we continue to buzz over the trailer we do have, it's worth remembering that Villeneuve has stated that this film will only cover the first half of the novel and a sequel is already planned. The film will boast a lead performance by Timothée Chalamet as Paul Atreides alongside a stacked cast that includes Oscar Isaac, Rebecca Ferguson, Josh Brolin, Javier Bardem and Zendaya.

Director: Denis Villeneuve
Starring: Timothée Chalamet, Oscar Isaac and Zendaya
Release date: 1st October

Distributor: Warner Bros. Pictures

7. **West Side Story** (dir. Steven Spielberg)

Movie-musical fans rejoice! 2021 has another huge movie-musical that has been postponed and it's none other than Steven Spielberg's take on the classic 'West Side Story'. With a cast that includes Broadway performers like 'Hamilton's' Ariana Debose and 'Dear Evan Hansen's' Mike Faist, as well as a much talked about debut by newcomer Rachel Zegler whose been cast in the lead role of Maria,' West Side Story' has everyone wondering whether it will be able to stand alongside the Oscar-winning original or not.

Director: Steven Spielberg
Starring: Ansel Elgort, Rachel Zegler and Ariana DeBose
Release date: 10th December
Distributor: 20th Century Studios

Westside Story (2021) dir. Steven Spielberg

The Vampire and Hedonism: Reading Fan Study

by: **ELIZABETH TRAIN-BROWN**

"A TEXT IS MADE OF MULTIPLE WRITINGS, DRAWN FROM MANY CULTURES AND ENTERING INTO MUTUAL RELATIONS OF DIALOGUE, PARODY, AND CONTESTATION."

- Barthes (1977, p.148)

The vampire is the anthropomorphic creation of fear; every anxiety of the dark brought into one terrifying figure that has resonated through human history. But does it not also expose our voyeuristic tendencies? The innate human thirst for taboo, or hedonism? Is the cinematic vampire not glorified, mystified, even sexy? Do we create these creatures out of fear or out of a desire to live vicariously through them?

Barthes (1977) discussed a new concept: the power of the reader, the ability to create meaning of the text, overwhelming the significance of the author. Henry Jenkins' (2012) later research into fan study and textual poaching suggests that fans subversively appropriate mass-media texts for their pleasure - in this way, all texts are 'made of multiple writings' (Barthes, 1977, p.148) recreated in a new image, one wrought by the reader. Since Jenkins' introduction of the theory in 1992, critics note how the term no longer encapsulates the rapid growth of contemporary fan practices and engagement (Bennett, 2014). 'Fans collaborate with the commercial culture they allegedly poach from' (Chin, 2010, p.2) and, indeed, 'there is a growing acceptance that [brand strategists] are no longer the ones in control' (McCulloch, et al., 2013, p.325). Fans are taking over the portrayal of their texts and influencing cinematic adaptations.

Nowhere is this truer than the vampire.
'The monstrous lurks somewhere in that ambiguous, primal space between fear and attraction' (Cohen, 1996, p.17), the space Kristeva (1982, p.3) calls 'abjection', where the power of the audience may cast off the conventional identity of the vampire. 'Through the body of the monster fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space', explains Cohen (1996, p.17) about the 'escapist delight'

"FANS ARE TAKING OVER THE PORTRAYAL OF THEIR TEXTS AND INFLUENCING CINEMATIC ADAPTATIONS. NOWHERE IS THIS TRUER THAN THE VAMPIRE."

audiences derive from the vampire and the desire to live vicariously through them. It can 'function as an alter ego, as an alluring projection of (an Other) self' (ibid. p.17).
Fan study and textual poaching support Barthe's (1977) power of the reader, and this can be evidenced in contemporary Western vampire narratives - namely, 'Interview with the Vampire' (1994) and 'Only Lovers Left Alive' (2013). The power of the audience is demonstrated in how a semi-bestial monster character has been transformed into a humanoid figure of hedonism, through which audiences live vicariously through. This interaction with, and textual poaching of, earlier models have produced the citational vampire we see today (Gelder, 2012).

Addiction is synonymous with weakness. However, it is semi-fetishised in vampire narratives through the metaphor of blood-drinking. Audiences live the desire for drug use through vampires, glorifying the high. Addiction is a hedonistic element paramount to this argument due to its overwhelming taboo. Therefore, to live vicariously through another's addiction, to romanticise the drug's effects, suffering none of the consequences, is to transform the vampire into a vicarious figure of hedonism, to greet 'the lascivious cannibals [beckoning] from the edges of the world' (Cohen, 1996, p.18).
The theme appears in earlier texts, fore-fronting in Ferrara's 'The Addiction' (1995) 'Only Lovers Left Alive', the drinking of blood produces heroin-like highs. Ava gasps, 'My God, that is good. I want more' and grabs for the hipflask [1:13:52-1:13:56]. The foreground placement of the flask represents its centrality to the film and, more poignantly, its centrality

Only Lovers Left Alive. (2013) dir. Jim Jarmush

Only Lovers Left Alive. (2013) dir. Jim Jarmush

to the lives of the three vampires, paralleling human addiction. The childish exclamation, 'I want more', trivialises the blood/drug analogy, bringing a naivety to the film, downplaying the gravity of addiction and making it easier to live vicariously through the vampires.

The three characters fall back in a meta-reference to the infamous 'Trainspotting' (1996) scene, one of the most well-known cinematic representations of heroin use. This parallel of 'multiple writings' (Barthes, 1977, p.148) reinforces the drug metaphor, as the audience becomes voyeur, watching three vampires fall back in ecstasy, baring blood-stained fangs, signifying the analogy.

In Figure 2, not only is blood synonymous with a drug high but it is also sexualised: Eve's head is thrown back over a bed in an insinuation of orgasm; the lighting is intimate, darkening her shadow on the bed and highlighting the paleness of her skin, almost a caress. Stableford (1997, p.80) points out that 'there is no ambiguity at all about the representation of blood-drinking as an intrinsically sexual experience' and so the metaphor for drug use extends to a primal, more bodily pleasure.

Blood is sexualised even more so in 'Interview with the Vampire'. The quotation heading the poster, 'drink from me and live forever' (Warner Bros., 1994) euphemises the act of drinking blood. It is direct address, a command to the audience to live vicariously through this symbol of hedonism, to 'drink from me and live forever' (ibid.) through the symbol of the vampire.

Textual poaching sexualises blood-drinking and its effects with a clear fixation on the hedonistic personality of Lestat. In many pieces of fanfiction written about 'Interview with the Vampire', blood is fetishised. 'He feels euphoria washing through him, coursing through him, and he wonders why no one would want to be bitten if given the chance' (OkeyDokeyLoki, 2018, para. 47), is a line from a piece of erotic fanfiction that takes the metaphor of blood-drinking further. Weinstock (2012, pp.7-8) talks of blood-drinking as a 'sexualised exchange of bodily fluids' and how right he is, when certain textual poaching crosses the line of metaphor and straight into the explicit mingling of 'cum and blood' (RubyWriter, 2019, para. 43).

Blood is a metaphor for the experience of pleasure, both in drug and sexual forms. The monster, as Cohen (1996, p.17) describes it, 'awakens one to the pleasures of the body' and perhaps, one can interpret this in a more literal sense - the vampire awakens one to the pleasure of bodies, of blood.

In a fan-made music video, 'The Vampire Lestat: "If I Had You"' (NyxRising, 2016), one

Trainspotting (1996) dir. Danny Boyle

The Vampire Lestat: "If I Had You"

drinking. The video fixates on the cannibalistic taboo and the almost-orgasmic pleasure Lestat experiences. In Figure 5, there is a parallel to the head-toss of Eve in 'Only Lovers Left Alive' that, yet again, enters into 'dialogue' (Barthes, 1977, p.148), with the infamous heroin scene of 'Trainspotting'. In this cosplay clip, 'Lestat' smears blood down his neck in an overtly sexualised action, lips parted in pleasure, exaggerating the metaphor. Here, the lighting is garish and loses an element of Eve's intimacying of the blood scales down some of the reflexive horror at the sight of that universal scarlet. Batchelor (2000, p.22) warns film critics of 'chromophobia', the tendency to marginalise the significance of cinematic colour and, here, it would be counter-intuitive to diminish the interesting choice of almost club lighting. This blue-ing reaches a neutrality between the scarlet of blood and the green of Lestat's New Orleans in 'Interview with the Vampire'; a neutrality between the taboo and the human. This scene is voyeuristic, it is an unnatural camera flash exposing the sexuality of blood, inviting the audience to watch, to see every contour, to live vicariously. The fan recreates the blood-drinking scene of the original text, living vicariously through the 'alter ego' (Cohen, 1996, p.17) of the vampire.

Blood was once a symbol of the Grotesque, a bodily fluid that went hand in hand with fear and the gothic horror. But here, through drug-like connotations, it has been transformed by the power of the active spectator, romanticised as an aspect of the vampiric hedonism. It is drunk from glasses, offers ecstasy, and a euphemistic parallel to other bodily fluids. This is evidence of Barthe's (1977) power of the audience, as modern film has changed the association of blood with vampires: it is no longer a hint of the monstrous. Jenkins' (2012) fan study demonstrates a rewrite of the original text to glorify blood and addiction, to glorify hedonism.

From a fan study reading of new media, there is a clear fixation in textual poaching that glorifies and sexualises the hedonistic aspects of the vampire - in blood, intimacy, and sex. This has evolved the contemporary cinematic narrative to portray the new citational

"THIS SCENE IS VOYEURISTIC, IT IS AN UNNATURAL CAMERA FLASH EXPOSING THE SEXUALITY OF BLOOD, INVITING THE AUDIENCE TO WATCH, TO SEE EVERY CONTOUR, TO LIVE VICARIOUSLY."

model of the archetypal hedonistic vampire, transformed into new media adaptations. Barthes' (1977, p.148) description of text as the product of 'multiple writings' holds as the vampire enters into 'mutual relations' of the citational model. However, where it was once 'drawn from many [geographical] cultures', it now becomes 'drawn from' the fan culture: a conversation of textual poaching. The audience has transformed the vampire into their fantasy 'alter-ego' and, exceeding Cohen's (1996, p.17) estimations, attempted to break through the 'permanently liminal space' and fulfil the role of the hedonistic vampire through a surge of vampire cosplay videos (NyxRising, 2016; Muirin007, 2018). The vampire is the ideal case study for Barthe's (1977) power of the audience because it demonstrates how they have transformed the original monster of the gothic horror into a desired symbol of hedonism. The power of the audience has exceeded that of the monster.

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The Effect of Cinematography in 'Psycho'

by: **TJ WILSON**

From the very beginning of film, cinematography had the immense impact of conveying multiple messages through creative directorial choices. Alfred Hitchcock was notoriously known for his directorial skill; making films into instant classics, and bringing in around $250,000, per film, during the 1950s (Rebello, 1990, p.15). A prime example of Hitchcock's use of cinematography is through the examination 'Psycho' (1960), a small budget film in comparison his bigger projects. Yet, despite the smaller budget, 'Psycho' is arguably the defining film of Hitchcock's long career, combining a thrilling soundtrack and expertly planned shots that capture the terror of the moment perfectly. From the murder of Marion Crane, to the penultimate fruit cellar scene, Hitchcock forms together a masterpiece of suspense and horror through his cinematography. Although technology available at the time limited the stylistic choices possible, the production itself was still a cinematic success. Therefore, the functions and effects of cinematography must be examined in light of the immense impact 'Psycho' has had on the film industry as a whole. Specifically, the 'shower scene', 'Arbogast's murder', and 'revealing Mother scene', along with the final scene. Each of these scenes are haunting and fascinating in their own right, done through the quick cutting of multiple camera angles, juxtaposing with other scenes that are longer continuous shots, etc. Convincing the audience throughout that Norman Bates is deserving of sympathy for caring for his mother.

It is impossible to discuss 'Psycho' without examining the effects of the shower scene. Arguably one of the most recognisable scenes in film history, with Hitchcock murdering the leading lady within the first third of the film. Designed by Saul Bass, the detailed 3-minute

shower scene and murder is "one of the most aesthetically exciting" (Berliner, 2019, p.118) scenes. Primarily as the unexpected death of the assumed main character creates a change in the "understanding of the direction of the narrative" (ibid.). From this, the audience is manipulated to believe that Norman is now the protagonist as the narrative continues with his cover-up of the murder. Furthermore, the decision to shoot the majority of the film with a 50mm lens effectively presents the murder of Marion more clearly, without distorting the image, to an extent that chills the viewer continuously. With over 70 different camera set-ups, and over 90 cuts throughout the scene (Psycho Shower Scene- Art of the Scene, 2015), Hitchcock toys with the audience to create both the illusion of nudity, and a bloody murder. For instance, the close-up shots of Marion's face are intercut with high-angle shots of Marion being stabbed, and another close-up of Marion screaming. However, many of these shots are off-centre, with Marion's close-up scream being more left of the frame. Thereby making the scene disturbing, as the composition of the scene feels cramped and uncomfortable. Altogether, the shower scene presents an "impressionistic" view on Marion's murder, rather than a linear perspective (Robello, 1990, p.105). By using a range of different camera shots, or as S. Robello describes them "a barrage of oblique angels, medium shots, and close-ups" (ibid. p.101). Hitchcock influences the viewer's sense of morality, leading them to believe that it was Mrs Bates

" 'Psycho' is arguably the defining film of Hitchcock's long career. Combining a thrilling soundtrack and expertly planned shots that capture the terror of the moment perfectly."

who committed the murder, making the murder even more horrifying as the original impression of the unseen Mrs Bates, an incapable old woman, is subverted and she is capable of much more evil things. The stolen money plot, at the conclusion of the scene, seems secondary to the murder. Despite this, Hitchcock pans from Marion's body towards the cash, as he once again manipulates the audience through his story-telling. When the shots are cut together, along with Bernard Hermann's screeching score, they "create an impression of savage, almost visceral violence" (ibid. p.102). Which had such an effective impact, that it solidified Hitchcock's status as "one of Hollywood's most imitated, envied, and powerful directors" (ibid. p.174), due to his masterful manipulation, working around the strong censorship of the Hays Code, to create a visually disturbing masterpiece.

Despite the money plot seeming secondary to the murder, the appearance of private detective Arbogast brings this back into the forefront. First appearing by walking into the shot, a close-up which highlights his intimidating features, Hitchcock is playing with the audience's expectations. Yet in the novel of the same name, by Robert Bloch, it is clear the plot of the story as the point of view switches between Norman Bates and other characters. This change to the source material is another way in which Hitchcock is able to build up suspense surrounding the various murders. However, Hitchcock foreshadows the death of Arbogast with the motif of bird imagery, suggesting that everyone is being watched by the Mother. This is analysed within Anna Powell's 'From Psychoanalysis to Schizoanalysis: An Intensive Voyage' (2005), linking the scene in which "Norman leans forward in profile, the birds loom large and dominate the composition", to when "Arbogast's killer attacks from above, shot from a birds' eye viewpoint" (Powell, 2005, p.24-p.25). Having the overall effect of making the audience blind to the Mother's face, presenting her as more of a surprising threat. She is a faceless, murderous being that seems to watch over all of her victims, especially her son. Throughout the sequence Hitchcock's use of a mixture fixed shots and technical camera movements, such as following Arbogast down the long flight of stairs, is "unusually appealing" (Yablun, 2012). Using a monorail shot (Robello, 1990, p.124), specifically designed for tracking at an angle, Hitchcock was able to capture the feeling of an unexpected attack as Arbogast investigates Mother. To further this, Hitchcock used a familiar technique known as the "'floating' fall" which was used within his bigger budget films such as 'North by Northwest' (1959) and 'Saboteur' (1942). Marshal Schlom, the script supervisor, recalls how they had "Marty [Martin Balsam]... flailing in front of a standard rear-projection screen" with footage of the "moving background... using the monopod without Marty" (Robello, 1990, p.125). Thus, making it one of the most difficult to film murder scenes of Hitchcock's career. Continuing to hide the real murderer with the use of the extreme high angle shots, leaving the reveal to the penultimate fruit cellar scene.

Similar to the bird's eye shot used for the murder of Arbogast, another is used when Norman returns to the house to hide Mother in the fruit cellar. Once again Hitchcock is able to conceal the true form of Mrs Bates through strategically using this effective shot, making the reveal evermore effective. As Lila Crane walks through the fruit cellar a tracking shot is used, with the hard lighting of the basement, encouraging the suspense. With Mother's back facing the camera, and the slow approach of Lila, the suspense becomes almost too much as a mid-shot reveals the mummified corpse swinging toward the camera. The jump to a close-up of the corpse's face, along with the jolt of the body, gives it a false sense of being alive. Shocking the audience into the realisation

Psycho (1960) dir. Alfred Hitchcock

Psycho (1960) dir. Alfred Hitchcock

that, Mrs Bates is not the murderer we have seen over the course of the film. Combining this with the swinging lightbulb, as well as Lila's scream, the head is given a "sort of macabre animation" as if it were "laughing, screaming" (ibid. p.126). It can be argued that this further reflects the bird theory, that Mrs Bates is still able to watch her victims through the eyes of her son. However, it must also be said that the final scene, with 'Mother', is truly spine chilling as the audience is invited into a room with just Mother as we hear the final monologue. The voice continues as a long shot slowly zooms into a close-up, all while Norman stares at the camera. It is the close-up of the menacing smile that ends the film, before the credits roll over the foreground of the car being brought from the marsh. Not only does Hitchcock use this slow zoom to thrill the audience, but it also suggests that the story is not over yet. This leaves room for further thought. Should we trust our neighbours? Even if they appear innocent, just like Norman. Subverting the American image of what a psychopath looked and acted like (Genter, 2010, p.135), fearing more than just the stereotypes of a murderer. Hitchcock is able to transform and manipulate the perception of the traditional 'boy next door'. Reflecting growing fears surrounding mental disorders in the late 1950s and 60s.

Altogether, 'Psycho' is a piece of aesthetically pleasing, and disturbing work of cinematography. Hitchcock's directing and Bass' planning come together to create one of the most recognisable, and haunting films to date. Primarily due to how the "disruptive information requires deep structural changes in our [viewer's] knowledge" evoking "greater arousal" (Berliner, quoting 'Gaver and Mandler', 2019, p.110) in audiences as they are manipulated constantly with unexpected murders, and shocking revelations. Despite the limited budget and technology, the final product shows how much creative thought went into the production of this 'thirty-day picture'. Not only does the ending leave the audience disturbed, but also horrified and delighted at the explanation of Norman's behaviour. Making it one of the biggest plot-twists in pop culture, with iconic scenes being parody in numerous shows such as That 70s Show and Family Guy (Yablun, 2012).

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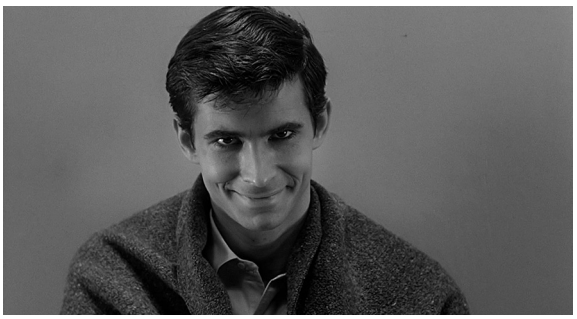

Psycho (1960) dir. Alfred Hitchcock

Mikhaël Hers' 'Amanda' is sad, sweet and strikingly simple

by: **INÉS CASES**

Like many French indie dramas of the last decade, Mikhaël Hers' 'Amanda' (2018) flew under the radar and only made it into a select few theatres in the UK. Creating some hype in its native country after snagging two César nominations, including a well-deserved Best Actor nod for leading man Vincent Lacoste's performance as David, the feature had little buzz outside of the European festival circuit, and that's exactly what makes it so good.

This is a well-crafted window into the tragic world of David, a man whose only just got his two feet on the ground, and his niece Amanda, a shy and wide-eyed girl he's been left to raise as his own. The cinematography by Sébastien Buchmann is gorgeous, guiding us through a grainy and green panorama of Parisian streets and parks. Anton Sanko's score also adds a beautiful melancholic touch to every frame. Every aspect of Hers' vision is delicately stitched together with a loving but careful hand.

Although the story may leave something to be a desired, it's designed to be simple as most French indies tend to be. We're lead through quiet shots of 'Amanda', played by newcomer Isaure Multrier, and David as they adjust to their new life together.

This little film has so much heart. There is an undeniable aura that surrounds it, one that almost hugs you in the same way David

"EVERY ASPECT OF HERS' VISION IS DELICATELY STITCHED TOGETHER WITH A LOVING BUT CAREFUL HAND"

Amanda (2018) dir. Mikhaël Hers

hugs Amanda as he breaks devasting news to her. In fact, Lacoste's portrayal of David is the highlight. He is a young man dabbling between careers now forced to grow up. He has to take care of his eight-year-old niece and he has to mourn in private, all whilst losing his one source of love. He battles with his fragility and wears strength like a coat only to be taken off when Amanda is fast asleep.

Could the film be perceived as a little tone-deaf? In parts, yes. There is one particular scene where Amanda notices a Muslim woman being berated in the park for her hijab. When she asks David about it, there is a long monologue about religion and how it doesn't define a person and 'blah blah blah'. The problem is this isn't about religion; it's strictly about Islamophobia, a topic that is ever so prevalent in France today. It would have been nice to address it, but David's speech comes off as a bit dismissive and naive. I suppose that Hers could be trying to reflect of a lot of French people who are indifferent to the subject, but it does seem like a missed opportunity by him to address the ignorance and discrimination that has been plaguing the Muslim community in modern France.

This film is warm and tender, a little naïve in places, but if anyone has ever experienced grief, especially young grief, it will stick with you long after you've left the theatre.

The Art of Communication: 3 Films To Watch If You Love Dialogue

by: **YARA STEPUROVA**

You might watch films to admire their complex plots. Take Christopher Nolan's latest film 'Tenet' (2020), which will make your brain feel like it's exercising. Or you might find happiness in their aesthetics and cinematography, like in Luca Guadagnino's 'Call Me by Your Name' (2017). Picture a world of daffodil yellow, sweet summer air and a bowl of breakfast on a white-and-grey checkered tablecloth, the swirl of languages humming over a candle-lit dinner table. But sometimes it's what the characters say and how they interact that makes your heart beat with excitement.
If so, here's a list of three films you might consider watching if you find beauty in dialogue:

1. 'Before Sunrise' (1995) dir. Richard Linklater
"50,000 years ago, there's not even a million people on the planet. Now, there's between five and six billion people, right? If we all have our own individual, unique soul, where did they all come from?"

This work has become one of the classics of its genre. Two strangers meet on a train and decide to get off and spend a day together in Vienna. We follow them as they wander around, discovering not only the city, but also each other. Despite beautiful views, you could replace it with any European city; the scene serves as a background for the dialogue.
As it starts with a conversation about old couples losing the ability to hear each other due to the pitch insusceptibility, Jesse and Celine continue to talk as they get on a tram, walk through the cemetery, sit in a café. They talk about ideas they ordinarily wouldn't have, the ambiguity of things, first sexual feelings, reincarnation, death, romantic projections. The dialogue flows, it is lively, unrestrained and remarkably

Before Sunrise (1995) dir. Richard Linklater

Her (2013) dir. Spike Jonze

honest. We recognize the things they talk about, we relate, and yet it is never a small talk.
If you doubt the film has enough non-verbal chemistry, you should watch the vinyl shop scene; in the listening booth, with no dialogue, it's a game of glances.

2. 'Her' (2013) dir. Spike Jonze
"Sometimes I look at people, and I make myself try and feel them as more than just a random person walking by. I imagine how deeply they've fallen in love or how much heartbreak they've all been through."

Placed within a nearly utopian society, 'Her' is a love story of a person with an AI operating system. The central conflict seems to be a battle between technology and nature. However, we also see characters of completely different backgrounds successfully establishing an uncommonly meaningful connection through talking. In fact, words and speech play an important role from the very beginning: Theodore, the protagonist, is employed by a service that writes letters for people from other people.

The novelty of the story lies within the essence of the relationship. Samantha, the AI, is only present as a voice. First, we hear the characters interacting about organizational methods and proofreading, but as Theodore turns to the system more and more often, their dialogues undergo a gradual shift from predominantly practical to more intimate. One of the charms of the film is Theodore's child-like curiosity and open-mindedness that allows him to fall experience to an exceptionally different kind of love. Strikingly, 'Her' might have one of the most sensual sex scenes in cinema this decade, and yet it remains completely hidden from us.
Bonus to the film include wonderfully clean shots, beautiful colour grading, and performances by Joaquin Phoenix and Scarlett Johansson as Theodore and Samantha's voice.

3. 'Paterson' (2016) dir. Jim Jarmusch
"When you are a child / you learn / there are three dimensions: / height, width, and depth. / Like a shoebox. / Then later you hear / there's a fourth dimension: / time."

Jim Jarmusch is one of the first names that comes to mind when you think of the beauty of words. His films are calm, slow-paced, careful of details while his main characters are often charming, contemplative, placid, and effortlessly magnetic. From the charismatic 'Coffee and Cigarettes' to enchanting 'Only Lovers Left Alive', his films are a case study of conversations. You cannot help noticing how respectful and loving Jarmusch is of language. His characters never try to tame it by chattering. They play with words, but also choose them with precision. He allocates space for silence, which eventually makes the words mean so much more.
'Paterson' is the epitome of finding beauty in the ordinary, of the silver-tongued quiet

and poetic way of thinking. In the film, we follow the day-to-day routine of Paterson, a man who works as a bus driver, writes poetry, comes home to his sweet wife and dog. It is a different kind of dialogue that we as viewers are used to: it's between Paterson and us. We hear him trying out words, rearranging the lines, pondering upon everyday experiences, and we inevitably respond. Quiet, observing, he writes about the ordinary, overlooked objects, like a box of matches, and reinforces the idea that everything around us can serve as a creative incentive.

Glimmering with the gentle beauty of harmonious and mindful living, 'Paterson' is exactly the kind of film you need to watch to fall back in love with life, words, and poetry.

Paterson (2016) dir. Jim Jarmusch

‘The Brother in Law’ (N’sibi)

Transcending corporeality in Algerian queer cinema

by: **CHABHA BEN ALI AMER**

Hassene Belaïd’s ‘The Brother-in-Law’ (2014) portrays the controversial life of Ali (Malik Benchita) and his sister-in-law Habiba (Bouchta Saidoun) as the Franco-Algerian director’s short film depicts the struggles of transsexuals in modern Algeria. Set in the suburbs of Setif, in Algeria, Ali, a young working-class man who is trapped in a siloed and mundane life, as his transgender sister-in-law Habiba lives rejected by Algerian social norms. Ali finds himself forced to give Habiba a ride one evening, and in doing so, he discovers the atrocities that she has to endure as a result of being a trans woman. Transsexuality in Algeria is tolerated as an anomaly supposed to entertain people, something that only exists in the realm of humour, but not as a reality.

This article reviews Belaïd’s short film and provides a close analysis to the representation of queerness in Algerian cinema. Drawing upon Kaya Davies Hayon’s study investigating the question of the body in Maghrebi films (2017), this article pays particular attention to the complexity of corporeal portrayal in Algerian cinema, the perception of sexual and gender identities in its society, and the understanding of transgender identity in a predominantly masculine environment.

The opening scene is shot in desaturated colour and shows Habiba in a pink satin backless dress asking her sister about her overall look and she satirically remarks on her facial hair: “Don’t you see my hair too much?”. The use of tight spatial framing close-up on her face combined with this increasingly invasive chattering helps to communicate her feeling of entrapment and the fear she has due to society’s critiques. After a couple of minutes, the camera cuts to eye level angle and a medium close-up of Habiba telling her sister, Leila, that she needs a makeover to look as feminine as she does. The camera cuts again to a low angle close-up of Habiba’s cleavage as she reaches for her purse to grab a burgundy

“This article explores the importance of representing a transsexual body in Algerian cinema as a means to express subjectivity and identity, instead of focusing on the socio-political dimensions of filmmaking.”

lipstick, the camera follows the movement of Habiba’s hand to close-up on Leila’s lips and Habiba begins to question her femininity.

This sequence places an emphasis on the body, the emotions, and the sensations, all of which are similar to a collection of contemporary Maghrebi films, including ‘A Mon age je me cache encore pour fumer’ (Rayhana, 2016) and ‘Exils’ (Tony Gatlif, 2014). Both of these films feature corporeality as a site through which subjectivity and human interrelations are experienced and perceived. Kaya Davies Hayon, in Sensuous Cinema: The Body in Contemporary Maghrebi Film (2017), argues that “[t]hese films are set in and between the countries of the Maghreb, France and, in some cases, Switzerland, and often adopt a sensual aesthetic that prioritizes embodied knowledge, the interrelation of the senses and the material realities of emotional experience”. She adds that no study to date has chosen corporeality as its principal concern, despite the importance of the body that Maghrebi films attempt to highlight. Drawing upon Kaya’s research, this article explores the importance of representing a transsexual body in Algerian cinema as a means to express subjectivity and identity, instead of focusing on the socio-political dimensions of filmmaking. That is to say, in the field of Maghrebi cinema, there is a lack of study into corporeality representation: films aren’t centred around how society perceives gender and sexual identities or the dynamics of representing the body.

Towards the middle of the film, the camera cuts to an eye level angle medium close-up of Ali entering his apartment angrily and shouting at his wife for dressing up as if she were going to “a wedding party”, and at Habiba while addressing her as Tahar, her birth name. The camera then captures Habiba’s angry temper using the swish pan technique to indicate her fast reaction to correct Ali’s mistake: “don’t call me Tahar. I told you. I am Habiba; Ha-bi-ba”. This sequence not only puts Habiba’s and Leila’s life and material experiences at the centre of the story, but also exposes their unrecognisable bodies. Thus the body becomes a tool through which untold emotions are expressed. A couple of minutes later, Ali angrily kicks Habiba out of the apartment by violently grabbing her hand. As the scene continues, the camera cuts to a high angle to show Habiba being chased by children with stones

N'sibi (2014) dir. Hassene Belaïd

in the street. This camera technique might suggest both the powerlessness of Habiba and Ali's indifferent attitude to her harassment.

Towards the end of the film, Ali accompanies Habiba to the pub where she works. Once there, the camera cuts to medium close-up of Ali, who after some hesitation, rests his head on Habiba's shoulder as if they were slow dancing to Raï music. The scene captures Ali's vulnerability as his body relaxes but his facial expression remains frantic and exhausted while Habiba expresses only affection and love.

The story that Belaïd captures on camera transcends the image of transgender people who are often represented as bad and evil characters whom we are supposed to fear and to reject. He also changes slightly the narrative of trans women who we are so used to seeing murdered in many Hollywood movies. Yet, the focus in 'The Brother-in-Law' is the relationship between Habiba, Ali and Leila, the three characters and the Algerian setting. Instead of approaching the representation of the body through a discursive or social constructivist framework (Hayon, 2017), the film instead brilliantly depicts their emotions through their bodies. The choice of limiting the cast to only few characters is yet another way to convey the idea of approaching the experience of Algerian transgender community by highlighting subjectivity and corporeality as a way to express everyday experiences.

Although some Maghrebi films impose a cluster of ideas that have evolved within the western conceptual spectrum onto a non-western/North African context, 'The Brother-in-Law' differentiates from this and employs a discourse that analyses images of Maghrebi cultural and its social landscape. In other words, Belaïd's short film is not intended to be seen as a film that criticises how Algerian society treats the transgender community. Rather, it depicts how Habiba lives her life regardless of rejection, and how she lives as a woman and stands for her womanhood regardless of what society thinks she is.

It also defies western expectations to see the Algerian LGBTQIA+ community who are strongly thought to be rejected by everybody in a Muslim society. This is depicted in the last sequence where the camera cuts to Ali's point-of-view displaying Habiba dancing in the middle of nowhere when she is suddenly surrounded by two armed men. A few minutes later Ali grabs a rock and runs towards Habiba to save her from being raped. The camera cuts again to a panoramic shot where we see Ali's hand around Habiba walking together at dawn in the middle of a highway. This is a particularly interesting sequence in contrast to the first scenes; Ali gets a glance inside of Habiba's life, and accepts her. 'The Brother-in-Law' is a short film that does not only intend to capture the challenging life of Habiba as a transwoman and Ali suffering from social marginalisation, but it also proposes a solution to stop discrimination against the transgender community in Algeria.

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Post-Apocalypse and Dystopia on the Big Screen: Why Audiences Enjoy Seeing a World Gone to Pot

by: **ETHAN BLAN**

The end of the world needn't be the end for cinematic storytelling: the toil, turmoil and torture of a scorched world provides endless opportunity for broken characters in a post apocalypse or dystopia.

George Miller's 'Mad Max: Fury Road' (2015) portrays a lawless and barren land, after wars for dwindling resources have left the Earth a shadow of what it once was. Post-Apocalyptic films are very similar visually to the Western, despite one substantial difference: Westerns are set on the American frontier as civilisation expands across an unknown land, filled with possibilities. In the Post Apocalypse, it's dealing with the recession of civilisation and an empty, broken world, with no hope in sight. Miller captures this sense of emptiness in 'Mad Max'; dry deserts devoid of life, in which the promise of water enslaves the remaining population under a tyrannical dictator.

Where the post-apocalypse tells of a world marred by catastrophe, dystopian films depict a world in which a dark, authoritarian civilization is on the brink of collapse. These stories tell of a world that is not empty; rather filled with problems that will cause the status quo to cease; an example that comes to mind is Fritz Lang's 'Metropolis' (1927), in which the dictatorial status quo of Metropolis rests on the compliance of the population 'below' to play their part - each worker of this world has a specific task to complete. If the enslaved population do not do their part, the entirety of the civilisation collapses.

Often it is difficult to pinpoint whether a film is post-apocalyptic or dystopian, but, as Emily Babb puts it, "If the story is about the powers that be, it's probably dystopian. If it's about the damaged state of the world, it's probably post-apocalyptic" (Babb, 2016). These worlds breed both external and internal conflict, which audiences crave to see when watching a film - they want to see what might become of Earth when they are gone - they want to see a world (and the characters who inhabit it) that is suffering - suffering breeds conflict - and conflict reels audiences in.

Throughout both post-apocalyptic and dystopian cinema, there is a continuing theme

WALL-E (2008) dir. Andrew Stanton

of failure; be that a technological failure, as in 'I, Robot' (2004) or overpopulation and its consequences on our planet in 'WALL-E' (2008). Generally speaking, in post-apocalyptic films, narratives focus on the consequences of a single failure - such as the events following the collapse of society; whilst dystopian films deal with the failure as the disaster is occurring - such as the collapse of society.

If we take the aforementioned 'WALL-E', we are shown a version of Earth in which the surface is covered with litter and inhabited by robots who attempt to pack the litter away. Meanwhile, the human population has left Earth; instead dwelling on a spaceship and becoming obscenely unhealthy. Kylie and Brett Caraway argue that, "In truth, the technology of Wall-E exhibits more humanity than the actual humans, creating an emotional tie between audiences and technology" (Kylie Caraway & Brett R. Caraway, 2020).

However, at the end of this film, the humans return to Earth after evidence of life is found - a symbol of hope for these humans - which may explain why we as audiences are so interested in dystopian stories. They offer us a terrible scenario, but show us how a situation, no matter how dire, can be overcome, if we only persevere.

The fall of society causes a slight dilemma: something needs to fill the power vacuum (or does it?...) and dystopian and post-apocalyptic films have two very similar options to fill that void. Authoritarianism is the likely route for these films to go down - it provides unlimited conflict that furthers the narrative naturally. However, there are two forms of authoritarianism one can use in a dystopian world: dictatorship (one single leader, leading a government by decree) or anarcho-capitalism (a form of anarchism in which no government exists, leaving mega-corporations to fill the power vacuum).

Both scenarios are less than desirable for those living under them. George Miller, director of 'Mad Max: Fury Road' (2015), explained his process of building the fractured, feudalist world of Mad Max, "You're going back to a medieval time...there's always a tyrannical figure...who controls all the resources" (Miller, 2016).

"THEY OFFER US A TERRIBLE SCENARIO, BUT SHOW US HOW A SITUATION, NO MATTER HOW DIRE, CAN BE OVERCOME, IF WE ONLY PERSEVERE"

In the subgenre of dystopia known as 'cyberpunk', societal order is often dominated by corporations that enslave their workers - these societies are anarcho-capitalist. In Ridley Scott's 'Blade Runner' (1982), we see the ominous Tyrell Corporation, occupying huge pyramidal structures in the futuristic Los Angeles. In this world, oligarchs are pharaohs; what they say, goes. This is a typical way that cyberpunk stories organise themselves; corporate dictatorships oppress the protagonist. In 'Blade Runner', the oppressed are 'replicants' - synthetic humans which are sold to carry out any task, with mining and prostitution among their uses. Maurico Duran describes this status quo as the, "overwhelming influence and dominance of the massive, omnipotent companies, which control each facet of every citizen's life" (Duran, 2019) in his article on whether cyberpunk dystopian films offer a critique of anarcho-capitalism. One could observe this critique as a warning; films following protagonists who are oppressed by this system of governance show audiences unfamiliar with anarcho-capitalism that it is an inherently bad idea, which will lead to mass enslavement.

Alternatively, individualism is another system that post-apocalyptic films may seek to portray - dystopian films are less likely to portray an individualist society as the action in their narratives are often driven by conflict between a higher figure and a protagonist. Perhaps the most apparent example of this system appears in 'I Am Legend' (2007), in which Will Smith is the only apparent survivor of a virus that wiped out humanity. We are shown the effects that an absence of human interaction can have on a person - at first it would seem that it has no effect whatsoever; Smith drives around New York in a red sports car. However, it becomes apparent that this solitude has had a psychological effect on Smith's character, especially after he is forced to kill his dog, who has become infected with the virus.

Therefore, the message of this film enforces the idea that community is a human requirement - however, retaining one's individual characteristics is important too, something that authoritarianism in its different forms seeks to diminish. Dystopian and post-apocalyptic films are therefore arguably a way for audiences to experience and make judgements on political systems

that they are not familiar with. It is likely that films reinforce a rejection of authoritarianism and make them recognise the importance of community.

In Peter Weir's 'The Truman Show' (1998), we are shown a suburban dream; and Truman's soon-to-be living hell. Born into a world where his every move is tracked and scrutinized by obsessed audiences, Truman Burbank thinks that he has everything he could want; a beautiful home, a beautiful wife and a stable job. Unbeknownst to him, hidden cameras are placed in every cranny of his home - his existence filmed and broadcast around the world in an authoritarian fishbowl of world. As is the case in every regime, Christof serves as the dictator - a television producer who guides Truman's life; he is to Truman as a video-gamer is to a make-believe character.

Rob S. Gall refers to Christof's character as "like the God of our Abrahamic religious traditions, Christof cares for Truman" (Gall, 2019), despite going on to claim that the film infers that he is, "there is something dark and sinister about him" (Gall, 2019). Aesthetically, Christof's character is seen as a God-like figure due to his position in 'the moon' atop the soundstage the show is set on; his position constantly higher than that of Truman, reflecting the control that Christof holds.

We are presented with several motifs throughout the film, such as Truman's routine for getting to work, and in addition to identical cinematography, the film reiterates his iconic line, "if I don't see you, good afternoon, good evening and good night". Through these motifs, Weir makes it all the more satisfying when Truman begins to recognise his situation - as these attributes that we have grown to know so well begin to unravel - Truman begins to be "spontaneous". Therefore, we can see the issues with a seemingly 'perfect' utopia, and we must ask why it is perfect - it may actually be an authoritarian state.

Meanwhile, South Korean director Bong Joon-ho's 'Snowpiercer' (2012) presents a world divided by class, in which a train is used as a symbol for the larger divide of society. Travelling through the Arctic, upper-class passengers inhabit the upper floors of the train, while the poor passengers dwell below. We can easily identify these poorer passengers - claustrophobic shots of crowds of shabbily dressed people, packed into carriages like animals. Therefore, we can infer from Bong's dystopian vision that class divide will be our undoing - unless we heal the divide and become one.

When one thinks of a dystopian or post-apocalyptic film, it is likely that certain recurring images will come to mind: a dark, dusty, hellish world, led by either an unjust dictator, supernatural power or supreme corporation, topped off with a unstable protagonist who must survive against all odds.

Arguably, Alfonso Cuaron's 'Children of Men' (2006) is the ideal dystopian/post-apocalyptic film - set in a future where all humans have become infertile, and the human race is slowly becoming extinct. This world is truly depressing; it is a warning to us all, not to take for granted what we have and the consequences of not having the abilities we have - such as the ability to reproduce. In

his article on the film, Zahid Chaudhary relates the "sound of children's laughter" to "Utopia" (Chaudhary, 2009) - the "laughter" of these children haunts each and every person in the world of 'Children of Men'.

It is, however, difficult to ascertain why audiences enjoy watching dystopian films - we know that they enjoy watching them, because they often do well at the box office, and so studios keep making them. Perhaps the key to 'Children of Men's' critical success is its key theme: hope. The world presented to us is one of sorrow; the key to unlocking a better future is the child so fervently protected throughout the film. It is this hope in an otherwise hopeless world that shows how powerful a single person can be.

Alas, we can merely speculate as to why these films are successful. The most likely answer is this: people enjoy seeing a world that they are glad they do not occupy, but the thrill of seeing that world, imagining what it would be like to be endangered in such a way, fulfils the ultimate goal of cinema: to escape from our lives...and be transported elsewhere.

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Sexism, racism and capitalism: An essay on Jane Campion's, 'The Piano'

by: **TJ WILSON**

Jane Campion's 'The Piano' (1993) touches on the issues of sexism, racism, and capitalism through the use of historical setting and representation. For the majority of the film, it is told through the point of view of Ada McGrath, a mute woman who is married off to Alisdair Stewart, a man whom she has never met before. As the film is set in the mid-19th century, Ada's marriage marks a crucial time in her growth as a women, both in terms of social and political independence, but sexism is probably the most recognisable issue in 'The Piano'. Male characters, such as George Baines and Stewart, are portrayed as using physical and mental force to show their attraction towards Ada. It could be argued that they are simply products of their time, with Stewart embodying Victorian views on colonial power and the objectification of women. However, to a more modern audience, Baines is exploiting Ada for his own pleasure without returning any affection, but interpretations vary due to the different beliefs surrounding types of sexual assault. Despite this, Campion manages to interweave elements of racism and capitalism within her film to highlight colonial views in the Victorian era as well as the present day. This is shown within the representation of the native New Zealanders, the Maori, and Alisdair's views in relation to them and money. However, this feels less important than the elements of sexism portrayed as the representation of the Maori are as secondary characters.

Sexism is a crucial issue as the majority of the film is told through the female gaze (Mulvey, 1975). The first shot, a close-up point-of-view shot of Ada's fingers and her looking through them, symbolises how the audiences are experiencing this film from her perspective. Furthered by the voice over of Ada's 'inner voice', the audience are given an intimate window into her as a character, especially since she has been mute since the age of 6. Campion leads the audience to believe that Stewart has accepted Ada's her inability to speak, as they have never met and yet are married, but it must be noted that in the 19th century marriage was primarily seen amongst the middle and upper classes as a way of gaining status. For example, even novels written by female authors in this time normally portrayed the social context surrounding marriage, like Jane Austen's Persuasion (1818) and George Eliot's Middlemarch (1871-72). When Stewart is travelling to the beach to meet his

“Campion is able to explore sexism by using the piano as a metaphor for female sexuality. It is through playing the piano that Ada is able to have a voice, symbolising how she craves freedom”

bride, he checks her portrait which immediately draws attention to how he is attracted to her physically, making her an object of his affection. This objectification shows “Ada, as an image and a person, is blanked out by the land” of the bush and is “subsumed in Stewart’s perception of her” (Hardy, 2000, p.65). Campion’s ability to represent the sexism is also relevant to modern audiences, as we are reminded of the objectification of women in pornography. At first, the head shot and eye-line match of Stewart checking the photo of Ada might seem like he is nervously anticipating meeting his wife. But when he tilts the portrait to get a reflection in order for him to comb his hair, it can be seen as a metaphor as he bends her to his will.

Furthermore, Campion is able to explore sexism by using the piano as a metaphor for female sexuality. It is through playing the piano that Ada is able to have a voice, symbolising how she craves freedom. Only when the piano is lugged off the boat into the ocean towards the end of the film, Ada both physically and metaphorically releases herself from the restraints of the piano that weighs her down. She has been able to explore her sexuality, thus is able to be rid of the weight that the specific piano represented (Pflueger, 2015, p.487). Stewarts attempts to destroy the piano with an axe representing the patriarchal oppression on women. As P. Pflueger explains, “the piano, thus, becomes a contested site between domestic and romantic ideology”, furthered with a difference in the roles of other female characters (Pflueger, 2015, p.473). Aunt Morag states “she does not play the piano as we do”, suggesting that Ada refuses to be trapped in a domestic sphere that traps other women. As Ada triumphs against sexualisation, Campion turns the tables so that rather than the men controlling her, she has the ability to give them consent.

Campion also explores the limits of male power and how this has an effect on the way the male characters treat women. For example, A. Hardy argues that “male power must be taken into account, but it is not the guarantor of meaning” as ‘The Piano’ focuses more of Ada’s exploration of eroticism rather than Baines or Stewart (Hardy, 2000, p.60). Yet, the importance of male power is shown through showing the limits of said power, with the Victorian patriarchal views being shattered when Stewart cannot obtain Ada’s love and when Baines conforms to his moral code, feeling as though his lust has turned Ada into a “whore”. Despite gaining Ada’s love, Baines originally does it through

some questionable ways as he allows her to buy back her piano one key at a time, asking "if you let me [touch you], you can earn it back". It can be interpreted that Baines is psychologically manipulating her to explore his sexual need, through using the piano as leverage. But it is Ada who finally engages in sexual intercourse with Baines as she comes to the realisation that she is attracted to this man. A man who, in some ways, is her equal. Both are disregarded by society as Ada had a child out of wedlock and Baines was left by his wife, portraying him as an embarrassment to white British society. Campion is able to play with this by slowly creating this romance between the two characters, creating their "own source of meaning" as Baines is not able to reach the limits of male power that Stewart does (Hardy, 2000, p.61), arguably because "in discovering the feminine side of himself" Baines provides the space so that she can "make her own choice freely, without fear of his masculine power" (Fox, 2011, p.111), providing a more fulfilling environment for her. Campion also makes this relevant to modern audiences due to prevalent objectification of the female body as a spectacle for men.

Additionally, Campion touches on issues of racism in terms of the colonial views of Britain in the 19th century. Stewart is in the New Zealand bush buying up land, and thus embodies the ideals of colonial Britain. His authority is shown through the use of binary opposites within the film; light skinned people and people of colour; the long shot the shows him approaching the beach leading the Maori, with the Maori following him like sheep; with a binary in intelligence, as shown with the Maori rushing on stage during the Bluebeard performance, believing it real. These examples, argues film critic H. Greenberb, show that Campion's representation of race is "coolly balanced" as the Maoris are not presented as "glorified (or degraded) as noble primitives" (Greenberg, 1994, p.49). However, as the Maori become blended into the background as secondary characters, it can be argued that the film offered "little more than a 1990s expression of colonial ideologies" due to the limited amount of representation (Pihama, 2000, p.114). Pihama, who is writing from the perspective of a Maori academic, rightly believes that the lack of positive representation has had a detrimental effect on how the Maori are viewed. Furthermore, the representation of Maori women within 'The Piano' shows the domestic colonial ideologies forced upon them (Pihama, 2000, p.129). It was not perhaps created with the intention to appropriate Maori culture, yet as Campion is from a white New Zealand background this does cause of concern as Pihama might feel as though Campion has appropriated Maori culture for entertainment.

"CAMPION TOUCHES ON ISSUES OF SEXISM, RACISM, AND CAPITALISM"

However, the issue of racism is still touched upon in a controversial way as Baines can be viewed as a white man shunning his own background in favor of Maori culture. His relationship with the Maori, whom he speaks with freely, means that he is viewed as lesser by Stewart. Campion plays with the subjectivity of race as a social construction, as some sociologist on racialisation argue, as his costuming of ragged clothes, slightly tanned skinned and partial moko markings on his face. Presenting him as neither a white colonial man like Stewart, nor a member of the Maori, but as someone in between. To some extent Campion is able to present differences of race in a positive light; she's not degrading the Maori by presenting them as unreasonable savages or oversexualised beings. Their role as secondary characters does present some issues of racism as, during the 1990s, people of colour were still viewed as lesser than white people.

Although sexism and racism are more prominent within the film, capitalism is still an issue that is presented as it is interlinked with racism and provides almost an excuse for the colonialising powers. Some of the Maori act under the authority of Stewart who has purchased some of their land, thus forcing them to become objectified by his capitalistic ideas. Campion does not necessarily present this as an issue in relation to how she presents sexism in unconventional ways. However, with the capitalistic link to racism, Campion is able to criticise the historically oppression put on natives during British colonial times. Stewart can therefore be seen as product of his time as colonisation has often been "explained in terms of capitalism's need to explore 'new' lands in

The Piano (1993) dir. Jane Campion

order to access resources... and cheap labour" (Pihama, 2000, p.117). This is not to say that his colonial attitude should be pardoned, but it's more so to explain that his views differ in regard to race and capitalism compared to modern views. Stewart's lack of respect in relation to the Maori burial ground, for example, as he states "they want more money, that's what it is" which gives the impression that Stewart only sees the economic aspect of cheap labour. As well as this, the long shot of two Maori women sat down, playing through Ada's belongs, suggests their ignorance towards Western culture and material. With the close-up pan showing their excitement at the different materials, whilst Ada's face is one of annoyance and discomfort portraying her own middle-class British views in regard to the natives. It can be argued that Campion presents the income made from the Maori land as unfair and unjust, as Stewart is unwilling to accept that he cannot purchase a part of their history. Yet, this is ironic in the sense that contemporary Maori playing themselves in the film "continue to be paid poorly for their labor in a capitalist economy imposed on their stolen land by white colonial invaders" (DuPuis, 1996, p.61). This addresses the issue by succumbing to capitalistic social

constrains and benefiting from them as both a white audience member and a white director. To conclude, it is evident that throughout 'The Piano' Campion touches on issues of sexism, racism, and capitalism. Although, sexism is primarily more touched upon as Campion unconventionally tells the story from a woman's perspective. As A. Hardy agreeably points out, from the first shot "we are actually inside someone else's experience" which makes the Ada's sexist more personable, especially to a contemporary audience (Hardy, 2000, p.63). However, racism and capitalism are interwoven into the narrative; Stewart uses the Maori for economic gain due to his colonial views, but varying interpretations of the film show that not all issues are addressed equally.

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Cathy Yan's 'Birds of Prey' is a pink riot of a good time

by: **INÉS CASES**

Cathy Yan and Margot Robbie promised us 'Harley Quinn and Birds of Prey' like we'd never seen them before. They promised us originality, a compelling story, great performances and all the quirks and pink and fluff that would come with a standalone Harley flick! And for the most part, they delivered.

The cinematography and overall aesthetic of the film are gorgeous. Gone is the grainy green sheen of 'Suicide Squad' that polluted the screen like an over-spilling sewer; here, Matthew Libatique has infused the screen with a pink fluffy gloss that works like magic as Harley prances around in her sparkly rainbow sleeves and trademark pigtails.

The soundtrack is particularly well put together. In one particular scene where Harley blows up the chemical factory where she first dedicated her life to the Joker, Charlotte Lawrence's velvety vocals on the standout track 'Joke's On You' accompanies her crazy impulses. It's a real feminine badassery that doesn't feel forced or manufactured, but it's aware of how important it is for the women in the audience.

Margot Robbie's performance as Quinn is just as compelling. She was the standout in David Ayer's Suicide Squad and she carries

"A FEMALE-FRONTED FILM IN THE MALE-DOMINATED CITY"

Birds of Prey (2020) dir. Cathy Yan

the main role here with ease. But the Birds of Prey trio is just as good, with a particularly strong supporting performance by Jurnee Smollett-Bell as Black Canary. Her rendition of 'A Man's World' in the club is hauntingly fitting to not only her character, but to the movie in general; this a female-fronted film in the male-dominated city of Gotham, but it is a city that would be nothing without a feminine touch.

Cassandra Cain, played by newcomer Ella Jay Basco, is the real scene-stealer of the whole affair. She's given the right lines to bring to life her cheeky and witty character, becoming a loveable partner for our crazy leading lady.

Yan's big splash in the DC universe could not be better timed. With Todd Phillips' 'Joker' taking pop culture and media conversation by storm, she has managed to make a film with almost the opposite tone; it's light, fun and spontaneous! It perfectly reflects Harley, just as Philip captured the dark and moody tone of the 'Joker'.

If you want to go in for a good time, you won't be disappointed. You'll be in for exactly that with a bonus of great performances, colours bursting from the screen and a CGI hyena with a sweet tooth for human flesh and red liquorice.

New Masters of Horror: Ari Aster

by: **CATERINA FENUCCI**

merican film-maker Ari Aster has proven himself to be the new master of the horror genre with his first two feature films - 'Hereditary' (2018) and 'Midsommar' (2019) - both being met with critical acclaim over recent years.

His background certainly speaks of someone who's been fond of the genre for most of his life and the young director might just be paving the way for horror's new era of storytelling.

Born in 1986 in New York City to artist parents - his father was a musician and his mother a poet - Aster grew up obsessed with horror films and began to write horror screenplays from an early age.

He completed his undergraduate studies in film at the College of Santa Fe, New Mexico. After graduating in 2008, Aster was accepted onto the prestigious MFA program at the AFI Conservatory with a focus in directing after being awarded a fellowship. His MFA thesis film 'The Strange Thing About the Johnsons' (2011), which follows the story of a suburban family where the son is involved in an abusive and incestuous relationship with his father, premiered at the Slamdance Film Festival in Utah, before going viral after being leaked online. Between 2011 and 2016 he produced, wrote and directed six other short-films.

In 2018 Aster made his feature film directorial debut with the horror-drama 'Hereditary', produced by A24. The film premiered at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival, before being theatrically released later that year. Starring Toni Collette, Alex Wolff, Milly Shapiro and Gabriel Bryne, 'Hereditary' follows a family haunted by a mysterious presence after the death of their secretive grandmother. The film was critically acclaimed and a commercial success, leading Aster to release another feature-film with A24 the following year.

His second feature-film 'Midsommar', a Sweedish folk horror film, starring Florence Pugh, follows a group of friends who travel to Sweden for a festival that occurs once every ninety years and find themselves in the clutches of a pagan cult. Again, the film was praised by critics with particular attention to Aster's direction and Pugh's performance and gained a nomination for Best Screenplay at the 29th Gotham Independent Film Awards.

But Aster isn't just interested in the horror genre. In his movies Aster digs deep, orchestrating in his films a layer of existentialism that coincides with a personal journey the audience can identify with.

Miscommunication, internal conflicts, disturbed minds, and dysfunctional families are at the centre of the stories in Aster's films, turning the relationships we feel most safe and comfortable with into a source of evil.

Ari Aster stands out from the crowd because his cinema redefines what a horror movie can be, creating a new genre of horror that focuses on dysfunctional relationships. Miscommunication, internal conflicts, disturbed minds, and dysfunctional families are at the centre of the stories in Aster's films, turning the relationships we feel most safe and comfortable with into a source of evil.

Here, familiar relationships become scarier than 80's headless zombies and slasher movies. With 'Hereditary' and 'Midsommar', Aster puts the spotlight on domestic-urban horror. Both films explore how co-dependency can exist in families and in romantic relationships. Some critics have gone so far to define them as break-up movies, because in one way or another, a relationship between characters must break-down in order for the protagonist to get away before they can be suffocated by the co-dependant other. Aster expertly manages to make us feel the same sense of crisis and confusion that the characters experience, hence leaving us totally disarmed and paralysed, both figuratively and literally unable to leave our seats.

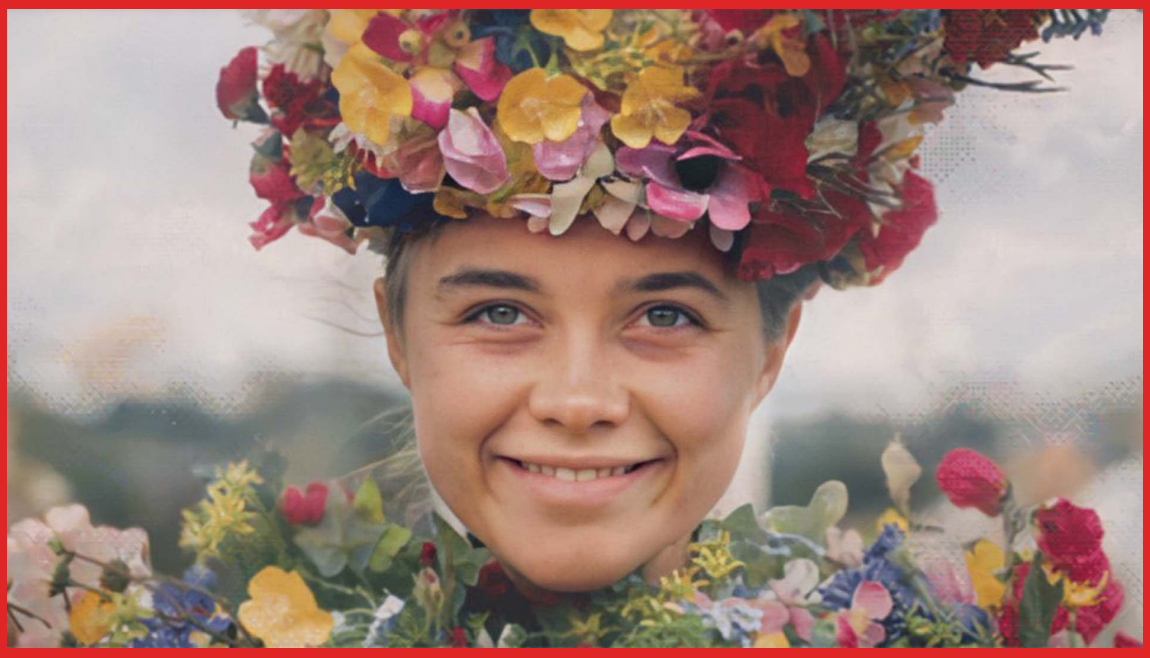
Aster has the capacity to almost scientifically analyse relationships that don't work, relationships that are sick and relationships that make people sick. First, in 'Hereditary', with a family, then with a couple and a group of friends in 'Midsommar', Aster sinks his hooks into relationships that should be providing safety, but instead are responsible for the impossibility of living. This is where Aster's horror shines. For Aster, relationships seem to present the ideal breeding ground for this new form of horror, because our families and the people we are closer with (i.e. a sort of surrogate family) represent our home and to quote paraphrase Freud, the uncanny manifests itself when the familiar - our home - ceases to be so, causing a sense of strangeness.

Finally - just in case you need one more reason to check out Ari Aster - it is worth

pointing out how he writes and the importance he gives to female characters in his movies, with leading actors Toni Collette's and Florence Pugh's performances receiving positive and well-deserved attention for their roles. This is, of course, a refreshing and needed perspective for a genre that has primarily reduced female characters to "scream queens" and "final girls" throughout its history.

In June 2020, Ari Aster announced he is working on his third feature film, a "nightmare comedy", titled 'Beau is Afraid'. And if it's anything like his other work, it's not hard to see why it might give you nightmare worthy scares to look forward to.

Hereditary (2018) dir. Ari Aster



Midsommar (2019) dir. Ari Aster

Ladj Ly's debut 'Les Misérables' makes a thunderous political statement.

by: **INÉS CASES**

About a year ago, I took a solo trip to Brussels and finally got to catch the Oscar-Nominated French drama film 'Les Misérables' in Ladj Ly's feature directorial debut. Somewhat controversial, there has been a fiery debate on whether France made the right choice in choosing this film over Céline Sciamma's 'Portrait of a Lady on Fire'. Many called it a political coup to build hype around the film due to its critical stance on French attitudes towards racism, the Parisian suburbs and police brutality, topics that are all very prevalent in the politics of modern-day France.

But I went in with an open-mind and I was honestly excited. I don't often get the chance to catch foreign-language films in my English hometown, especially not freshly released in theatres before the awards season.

I came out of the theatre almost breathless; it's a thunderous statement of a film. We open on the Parisian banlieues, the notorious outskirts of the French capital often tucked away from tourists and shunned by politicians. It's captured in a series of drone shots that are all integral to the film's look, because this is a film drenched in golden daylight, but it's the kind of gilded light that captures dusty roads, crumbling buildings and scuffed shoes. The cinematography is so eye-catching, and yet there is something so detached about it. It's almost as if Ly has taken the Brechtian approach of making the audience constantly aware of themselves. It's a bold strategy, and he pulls it off.

"YOU WILL FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE. YOU WILL FEEL DISTURBED. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, YOU WILL FEEL ANGER."

Les Misérables (2019) dir. Ladj Ly

You will feel uncomfortable. You will feel disturbed. But more importantly, you will feel anger. That's the resounding emotion I felt watching this film; I was angry. As violence erupts in the third act, I found myself almost embroiled in the action. It's an intense journey that leaves characters on the run and its audience panting for breath.

There are many standout performances, some of whom were recognised at the César Awards, but the ones that stuck with me the most were the supporting roles of Djebril Zonga and young newcomer Issa Percia. Zonga plays Gwada, a police officer who group in the neighbourhoods he now patrols, evidently lands himself in a grey area of morality. He adds so much life to the screen as he balances between being sympathetic to the residents and his job as a member of the anti-crime brigade.

But it's Percia who emerges as the real scene-stealer. In the role of self-named troublemaker, Issa, he causes havoc on the streets, darting between police and the mayor's council with his friends. Unlike the adults, the children have no loyalties to anyone but themselves. Whilst the police and the mayor engage in a power struggle, the children think only of protecting their neighbourhood and we can't help but root for them.

This is a film that will be looked on for years, and even though I cannot say whether or not it deserved the Oscar nomination over Portrait, I can say that it has one of the most explosive third acts I have ever seen, which is undoubtedly down to Ly's masterclass in political filmmaking.

My Love-Hate Relationship With 'Blue Is The Warmest Colour'

by: **Ines Cases**

I have had a love-hate relationship with 'Blue is the Warmest Colour' since I first saw it two years ago. It's no secret that mainstream representation for the LGBTQ+ community is practically non-existent outside of stereotypes, and usually the best place to find good queer storytelling is in smaller-budget indie films. So, I found Blue on Netflix and when watching it, I found myself falling in love. Everything from the cinematography to the performances to the storytelling was so raw and real, it was like looking through someone's window into their life, so close it was almost uncomfortable.

And then, that scene happened. If you've seen it, you'll know exactly what I mean by that scene.

I'm not going to pretend I didn't know about Blue's reputation before watching it. I'm the kind of person who likes to read up on the things I'm excited to watch days before I actually get down to watching it. I'm also not someone who minds sex scenes. It's no secret that French filmmakers love their nudity and graphic sex scenes and I had been exposed to that for a long time. But I just didn't expect it to be that graphic. It kind of took me out of the magic for a moment.

I still loved the rest of the film, and to be honest, when it ended I didn't really think about that scene at first. It took me about a day to register that maybe there was something problematic about it. The more I thought about it, the more I started to hate the film whilst simultaneously being completely in love with it. Turns out, I'm not the only one who feels this way; Blue has divided its audience for years.

Premiering at the Cannes Film Festival in 2013 in front of a stacked jury which included Steven Spielberg, Ang Lee and Lynne Ramsay, Blue ended up taking home the Palme d'Or. In an unprecedented move the two lead actresses, Adele Exarchopoulos and Léa Seydoux, were awarded the Palme d'Or as well as director, Abdellatif Kechiche. Exarchopoulos became the youngest person to receive the award in Cannes history after having been chosen by Kechiche himself in 2011. The praise for the young actress was never-ending. Jessica Kiang from Playlist stated: "... there is not a single one of the moments in which we felt her 'acting'".[1]

Blue Is the Warmest Colour (2013) dir. Abdellatif Kechiche

She was a revelation in the role, playing a 15-year-old with the kind of naivety we can all recognize, but portraying a twenty-something primary school teacher just as easily. IndieWire's Eric Kohn believed that she gave the best female performance of 2013[2], and it's hard not to agree. When you look back at what performances were awarded this kind of high praise in the same year, there were performances by Cate Blanchett in 'Blue Jasmine', Amy Adams in 'American Hustle', Sandra Bullock in 'Gravity', Meryl Streep in 'August: Osage County' and Judi Dench 'Philomena'. If you've never seen Blue or have never heard of it, you may ask how she could compare to this impressive line-up of seasoned actresses, and the amazing thing is, at least in my opinion, she does.

But she was never nominated alongside them. She was never even named as a contender despite the historic Palme d'Or win. In fact, Blue barely got a sniff at anything that awards season. Outside of small Critic awards and the French César Awards, there was no buzz around the film whatsoever.

The blame went entirely on the sex scenes.

It's safe to say the film was considered quite shocking at Cannes. Justin Chang from Variety wrote that the film contains some of "... the most explosively graphic lesbian sex scenes in recent memory".[3] And remember this is Cannes. I cannot stress enough how explicit sexuality and graphic nudity usually doesn't faze French critics. It's almost expected. So, when they're shocked by sex scenes, you know it's got to be extensively explicit.

Critics were divided on the scenes with some not minding them at all. David Stratton of The Australian stated: "If the film were just a series of sex scenes it would, of course, be problematic, but it's much, much more than that."[4] In

a way, I agree with Stratton. The film is three hours long and the graphic sex scenes total to about ten minutes. The film doesn't rely on the couple's sex as its climax, no pun intended, but rather on their relationship, particularly their breakup.

Richard Brody of The New Yorker enforces this further, finding almost a beauty in the sex scenes paired with the rest of the film. He states: "Those

> "I HATE THE IDEA THAT A FILM I'M TRYING TO RELATE TO IS BEING USED AS A SEXUAL STIMULANT FOR STRAIGHT MEN"

who express this concern seem to be reacting to the mere fact of a man filming naked young women rather than the particulars of the film." He goes on to say: "... Kechiche philosophizes the lovers' bodies in the same way that he physicalizes their conversation. The dialect of sex, with its tensions and parries, its comedy and its fury, is as much part of their being as is their discussion of art, food, or family."[5]

There's absolutely a part of me that agrees with Brody's perspective on the scene. Physicality is a huge part of a relationship, and it's only fitting that in a film about a relationship it plays a big part. However, I have to disagree that "Kechiche philosophizes the lovers' bodies in the same way that he physicalizes their conversation." I think Brody is missing the point.

The point is queer women have been over-sexualized for centuries and fetishized simply for existing. Watching that scene now, it doesn't just take me out of the film as a whole, it makes me feel horribly vulnerable, and not a kind that is enlightening. It's the kind of vulnerability of when a man says a disgusting joke when he finds out you like the same-sex, the kind of joke you're supposed to laugh at lightly in order not to be seen as difficult or hysterical. Watching it, it makes me think about all the straight men who watched it and enjoyed it because it's two women having sex, and not because it's two women discovering themselves. It becomes a vehicle for straight men to enjoy instead of queer women to find solace in. In a film that does such an amazing job at portraying a same-sex female relationship in the 21st century, it feels suddenly cheapened by the almost pornographic nature of its sex scenes.

Queer women aren't just complaining about "the mere fact of a man filming naked young women", as Brody put it. There's no objection to showing two naked women. The nudity shown in Todd Haynes' Carol is a good example of sexuality being explored for queer women, and not for a straight-gaze. We're complaining about the crude history of queer women being viewed as purely a sex-entity simply for existing. We're complaining about how Kechiche's otherwise realistic approach to the film has a completely unrealistic view on sex between two women.

The feminist and lesbian response to Blue was almost entirely negative. The film itself was loosely adapted from a graphic novel by Julie Maroh, who had some problems with the film, saying: "It appears to me this was what was missing on set: lesbians." And that's true. There

were no lesbians working on this film, at least that we know of. Maroh goes on to say that in the movie theatre "gay and queer people laughed because it's not convincing and found it ridiculous. And among the only people we didn't hear giggling were the potential guys too busy feasting their eyes on an incarnation of their fantasies on screen."[6]

That's where my main problem lies. I hate the idea that a film I'm trying to relate to is being used as a sexual stimulant for straight men. I see myself in Adèle. How can I not? I hate that some straight men must have been to see this film and thought only about how 'hot' that scene is and not what it means in the wider context of the film. It makes me feel dirty and uncomfortable. Is that a little selfish? I don't know. Maybe. Maybe not.

My genuine question to Kechiche is why? Why did he make that scene so graphic and so complex to the point of shocking a Cannes audience and creating such a backlash? I'm not trying to find fault in Blue. For a long time, I tried to completely ignore how uncomfortable those ten minutes made me feel. But it's scary that men might see me just as a sex object first and woman second. I'm not saying that straight woman don't get oversexualized, because they absolutely do, but when you're a woman and gay on top of that, it adds a whole new layer to being oversexualized. Just take a look at the porn industry. It's everywhere. So, when you're trying to find queer female representation in contemporary films it's so frustrating to see an otherwise perfect film on a young woman discovering herself turn into a debate on sex and the straight-gaze. I wish we could live in a world where these sex scenes are just viewed as sex scenes like those in heterosexual narratives, but we don't, and we can't pretend we do, because to do so is to erase the decades of painful fetishizing of queer women.

But I wanted to end this essay with all the reasons why I loved Blue, because despite all the problems, there's still an inch of love I have for it that remains.

I love the cinematography and the colours, how the colour blue seems to stain every shot even after their relationship ends. It reminds me of how even after leaving a relationship, a part of that person remains. We carry every person we've met like Adèle carries her blue clothes. They're a symbol of our past, a reflection not of the person we were, but the person we have become after such a relationship.

I love how close-up we get to Adèle's face at times, to the point where it's almost too close and claustrophobic. We affront the world with her wide-eyes and how relatable she is in her mistakes. I love how we see her evolve. From a teenager who takes part in protests with her friends with hard drums and chants to joining in a pride parade with her lover, allowing herself to kiss her in public without fear of being ostracised as she was by her school friends.

I love the story. Some find it overlong, but I think it's perfect in length. Adèle and Emma hold on to their love for too long, and as a consequence, it ends bitterly. Emma cheats on Adèle emotionally and Adèle cheats on Emma physically that ends in a tumultuous fight that finds her kicked out of her house. It's so devastating and yet completely predictable. That's part of the genius; everything is something we've seen before. I mean, if you were to strip it down, it's literally just a relationship between two women that

ends in them separating. But it's that simplicity that's so engaging.

Finally, I love how Blue ends. How Adèle slips away in a blue dress, looking sad, but in the music there's something more like relief. She's free, whether she realises it or not yet, to move. That doesn't mean she'll forget Emma, but she'll stop crying about it. Eventually she'll discover that she wasn't the love of her life. She was just a love, and there are so many more of those loves that will come her way.

I will always be in love with 'Blue is the Warmest Colour', but I will also always have some form of resentment to how Kechiche marred his perfect film with his own stubborn determination to keep the sex scenes as long as they are. Does that make me a hypocrite? Probably. But I can live with that.

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Robert Eggers' Nightmare: Mythology Meets Misogyny

by: **LILY COLLINSON**

Robert Eggers' 'The Lighthouse' (2019) and 'The Witch' (2015) are not horror films in a traditional sense, with vibrant gore, blood-curdling screams and jump scares that send you under your seat. Robert Eggers crafts a new kind of a terror, a psychological nightmare forged upon the pillars of fantasy and reality to produce a poison so potent to the mind that you will catch yourself dwelling on what you've seen long after you leave the cinema. The experience of watching these films is akin to that of lucid dreaming: you are self-aware and present, yet cannot escape the environment around you, whether it be pleasant or horrifying. The environment Eggers creates is the latter, the combination of mythological and historical references, documenting both the traditions of folklore and misogyny, resulting in a kind of purgatory that at once transfixes and torments the audience.

The plot of 'The Lighthouse' is centred around two lighthouse keepers, Ephraim Winslow and his employer Thomas Wake, who find themselves trapped on a dismal island, enclosed by the treacherous storms engulfing it. As they struggle to remain sane in the bleak conditions, battling disturbing visions which reveal their sins, alcohol becomes their salvation and they drink themselves to madness, only to result in Ephraim committing unforgiveable acts.

Meanwhile, 'The Witch', which may be considered to be a "companion piece" to 'The Lighthouse', is set in New England and follows the story of Thomasin and her family who are cast out from their settlement due to her father's religious beliefs and left at the mercy of the unknown land. Living alone together, they establish a farm and yet find themselves to be plagued by a supernatural being they suspect to be a witch; their new-born son is kidnapped; their crops fail; their goat's milk turns to blood. When their calls to God are not answered, the blame falls upon Thomasin, their teenage daughter, whose cries of innocence are dismissed amidst blatant traditions of misogyny.

Such a tradition of misogyny can be seen through the portrayal, both in the film and in wider history, of the figure of the mermaid in 'The Lighthouse'.

“THE DIRECTOR SHOWING US A WOMAN RELISHING IN HER FREEDOM, BATHED IN GOLDEN LIGHT IN ALL HER GLORY”

As Ephraim descends into madness, he indulges in lust, the mermaid appearing in the film both as a vision and as a small figurehead off a ship which he keeps under his bed. In the grim patriarchal environment, this inanimate figurine becomes the object of the protagonist’s lust and is subjected to the male gaze. This literal image of the woman as an object may reflect upon the misogynistic objectification of women in society: she is powerless and passive in the hands of a man. Historically, according to critic Annie Lord, men turn mermaids into “mute and child-like” beings and this concept can be applied to this scene with the model, a silent and beautiful woman who he manipulates for his own pleasure. Alternatively, in Ephraim’s vision of the washed-up mermaid, the power balance is reversed and the mermaid is no longer a lifeless carving, but a siren-like creature, luring him to danger. This is when Robert Egger’s nightmare comes alive.

Egger’s employs the technique of vertically panning the camera to slowly scan the mermaid’s naked body from the perspective of Ephraim, his hands lustily caressing her body until the camera shot reaches her gills and we see him trembling with realisation. She sits bolt upright to reveal her true form and laughs maniacally at his misfortune. Eggers forges this nightmare in combining mythology and misogyny with Ephraim’s fear not only coming from being confronted with a mythological creature, but from his shameful behaviour in being discovered sexually harassing a woman he likely presumed dead. The director seems to latch onto the innate human fear of an absent society, a lack of law and order, and reveals the true, animalistic nature of man which comes to the surface in such a situation. We too are trapped in this nightmarish environment where neither the laws of nature nor the laws of man apply, sin and vice ruling over the two men. This fever dream is further enhanced by the cinematic techniques Eggers employs, the director’s choice to film in black and white creating a hopeless landscape which foretells ruination from the start. Equally, the film’s underscoring, a constant drone of the lighthouse horn which runs throughout the film, gradually crescendos as the horror escalates and provides a constant tone of pessimism that sits in the pit of your stomach as you watch.

Eggers crafts a similar, dreary landscape in ‘The Witch’, once again choosing a muted colour palette for the film, the only exception being the bright red of freshly spilt blood. He creates a raw, burning fear as he intertwines the supernatural events of the film with the claustrophobic entrapment of misogyny. Whilst there is in reality a witch in the film, the family never find concrete evidence of this and instead speculate on the cause,

The Lighthouse (2019) dir. Rober Eggers

their accusation lying on the basis of misogyny rather than logic. The witch herself is terrifying, she is pictured, for example, smearing the blood of the new-born over her body after slaughtering him. But what is more terrifying is the sense of injustice and condemnation that Thomasin is subjected to in her accusation. Eggers highlights the terror women are often subjected to, both in the past and in the world today, as they find themselves entirely at the mercy of patriarchal powers much stronger than themselves. Eggers evokes this feeling of helplessness within the audience so strongly that you could argue this is the horror story in itself, the frightening situation Thomasin finds herself in further emphasised by the real-world context of gender-based oppression throughout the world today. Critic, Walter Metz, suggests that in this film Eggers advocates an "exorcism of Puritanism from American social life", referring to today's America, which implies that Eggers intended this film to reflect upon our own world on a deeper level.

The film ends with Thomasin abandoning her life of innocence at the farm and joining the witches as they are pictured levitating, naked, into the sky. The protagonist seems to have become a self-fulfilling prophecy as she becomes what she was so harshly accused of being, this regression in her character perhaps reflecting the cruel impact of misogyny upon women in the real world. Whilst it may be argued that Thomasin, in her now naked state, is indulging in her sin, it seems that Robert Eggers supports this transition away from piety in society and as she floats towards the moon, she is liberated and free

from the religion that treated her as property to scapegoat and abuse. Unlike 'The Lighthouse', which ends bleakly with a Promethean scene of Ephraim, naked and bloody on the rocks, having his guts feasted on by seagulls, 'The Witch' ends on a high in comparison to its prior misery, the director showing us a woman relishing in her freedom, bathed in golden light in all her glory.

In contrast to the long enduring history of misogyny that runs throughout our history and into the present day, Eggers at once documents the waking nightmare women must face and celebrates and empowers them as they are liberated from the patriarchy in the film. Misogyny is manifested in mythology as women become monstruous scapegoats for the misfortunes of men and the sense of injustice which is created as a result creates a gruesome atmosphere which is deeply disturbing to watch. Robert Eggers truly masters the horror film as his coalescence of the most frightening elements of fantasy and reality lock the audience in a nightmarish state for the duration of the feature-length. With filming just having finished on his latest film, 'The Northman', which is set in the dark ages of the Vikings, we might expect another chilling masterpiece in our cinemas soon.

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Review: 'Being Frank: The Chris Sievey Story'

A tribute to a relentless creative in an oversized head

by: **MAX GORSE**

In 2013, Steve Sullivan launched a Kickstarter campaign to produce a documentary about the life of the musician, artist and performer Chris Sievey. Three years earlier, a similar approach was used to raise the necessary funds to save Sievey from a public health funeral. Both campaigns knew where their best chances of success lay.

Sievey was most widely known for his spheroidal headed alter-ego Frank Sidebottom, a bizarre figure who was mesmerizingly out of place in every public appearance he made across a 25-year period. The tone of the act rarely changed; while he was a regular on the alternative comedy circuit, Frank's excitable manner also took him through Saturday morning children's television, saw him feature as a regular on Granada Reports, and gave him free reign on the brilliantly chaotic 'Frank Sidebottom's Fantastic Shed Show'. In each setting, the character would add a few more members to his mesmerized cult following.

Naturally, Sullivan - whose film examines Sievey's personal life as well as his wildly varied work - opted to name the project 'Being Frank: The Chris Sievey Story'. The bereaved family and friends chose 'Frank's Fantastic Funeral' for their Facebook page and the twitter hashtag '#franksfund'. After all, Frank was the heart of Sievey's popularity and therefore became a useful selling point for the appeals.

Sullivan is clearly a fan of the Sidebottom universe, but the drive of the documentary reaches far beyond this single figure. Running through the film - via interviews, diaries and archive footage - is an avid appreciation of Sievey's relentless creative impulse.

There are numerous accounts of the projects to which Sievey committed himself to, encompassing a hugely diverse collection of skills. Music was his first and most enduring passion, with Sievey

> "SIEVEY WAS MOST WIDELY KNOWN FOR HIS SPHEROIDAL HEADED ALTER-EGO FRANK SIDEBOTTOM"

forming and leading a number of bands, the most notable being The Freshies. They were perhaps best known for their 1980 song 'I'm In Love With The Girl On The Manchester Virgin Megastore Checkout Desk', which reached number 54 on the charts. It had all the makings of a hit. However, members of the group protested against Radio 1's refusal to play the track due to the use of a trade name, as well as a BBC technicians' strike halting their chances of a Top of the Pops appearance.

Even while trying to break into showbusiness, innovation was brewing. In a rare serious segment of Sievey-based footage, he talks to TV host Nick Owen about his 1983 single, 'Camouflage', on which the B-side contained digital code for accompanying visuals. Owen is perplexed as it is explained to him that the data from the record can be loaded onto the ZX81 computer to display an animated lyric video. Sievey claimed to have spent three months learning the programming technique.

The contributions of fellow performers provide a compelling insight into how he was perceived by his peers. Comedian Johnny Vegas speaks with an almost painful level of admiration about Sievey's creative convictions in reference to a series of short stop-motion films based around Frank. 'He didn't talk about doing it, he didn't wait, or go around pitching it, he went home, and he made it,' says Vegas, with a tone of reverential envy.

Footage is shown of the development of this project, and Sievey's fingerprints were everywhere. He crafted the hugely detailed models and sets, came up with the plots, performed an original theme song, voiced the characters and controlled the contents of every frame.

Despite this, Sievey doesn't come across as a control freak who shunned collaboration. It feels as though he loved every part of the process and didn't want to miss a moment of it. With respect to each member of the ever-changing line-up in The Freshies – for whom Sievey was the singer, songwriter, producer, manager, promoter and cover artist – if it were physically possible for him to play every instrument at the same time, it would have been a one-man band.

While this warm veneration of his artistic commitment is present throughout, the film does not overlook the problems that he and his family faced during these years. The esteem in which his fellow performers hold him is tempered by the stories of his struggles and the impact they had on those close to him.

Many of the issues themselves seem rooted in his obsessive creative hunger. Paula, Sievey's former wife, recalls how he had bought one of the earliest available home video cameras at a time when the bailiffs were at the door over unpaid bills. Later, when his profile as Sidebottom was at its peak, much of his earnings would be spent in the bar after performances. His home life collapsed amid debt, evictions, alcohol problems and depression, as is explored through moving accounts from his family and close friends. He died of cancer at the age of 54.

This is decidedly not a story about a dummy taking control of the ventriloquist or the mask hijacking the man, though some of the interviewees occasionally like to play into the mystique of these tropes. The prominence of the alter-ego is almost incidental; Frank becomes a vehicle for Sievey's innovations of art, film, technology and music. While it appears that the character is at the heart of these ventures, it seems probable that Sievey used him to give shape, structure and popular interest to projects which would likely have happened in another form anyway.

There is plenty to see for the Sidebottom purists. Sullivan has compiled a wonderful collage of Frank's unique strangeness. Yet it is Sievey's flair, innovation and enthusiasm that seizes your attention. Perhaps for the first time in the Sievey-Sidebottom landscape, it is the creator who upstages the creation.

FEATURED SCRIPTS SEGMENT

by

CUT TO

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

FILM JOURNAL

TITLE: **FEATURED SCRIPTS**

INT. OFFICE - DAY

ALFRED HITCHCOCK (64) sits near the window in his office, and reads the *Featured Scripts* segment of the *CUT TO JOURNAL.* After finishing, he looks into the camera and says

ALFRED HITCHCOCK
To make a great film, you need three things: a great script, a great script and a great script.*

* The quote is attributed to the British director Alfred Hitchcock, even though there is no record of where or when it was said.

1 *SINNER*

Written by: ELENI VARELA

TITLE: **JUNE 1964**

EXT. FIELD – DAY

JOSHUA (37), a mine worker and God-fearing man, and his two sons, **PETER** (10) and **ZACHARIAS** (9), have gone to harvest vetch from a field six kilometers away from their village. A small mountainous village in Northern Greece. Joshua is wearing his mining uniform, and the boys shorts with plain T-shirts. They also have a horse and mare with them.

As soon as they have finished harvesting, and the vetch is bound into sheaves, a storm breaks. The day becomes night as dark clouds fill the sky; they thunder. There is nowhere to protect them from the rain. They rush towards some rocks which create protection, but they do not fit. They are all soaking wet.

JOSHUA
(desperately)
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Father God, you alone can stop the heavy rain. Protect and keep us safe.

Peter and Zacharias look at each other, trembling and shaking.

JOSHUA
(angrily)
What the hell are you doing? You want the rain to stop? Pray to the Lord! Say the "Πάτερ Ημών¨!(Lord's prayer-Our Father).

Peter and Zacharias hesitate, before they start murmuring words.

JOSHUA
(screaming)
Louder! The Lord can’t hear you!

Zacharias holds Peter’s hand very tightly and closes his eyes. Both boys are wet and cold from the rain; they can’t even open their mouths.

PETER
(With trembling voice)
…our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name…

ZACHARIAS
(Opens his eyes and looks at Peter)
…thy kingdom come…

ZACHARIAS\PETER
(Nearly crying)
…Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Joshua has his eyes closed and moves his lips along. He acts as though he is not there physically. When he opens his eyes the rain is heavier, and Peter and Zacharias are just standing there, wet. They will definitely get sick.

JOSHUA
(With stern voice)

Let’s go. We’ll walk back home. Peter take the horse, and you Zacharias, the mare. The rain will not stop because you have no faith, and God will not help us. This is what happens when you don’t have faith. The price you pay is this. It is all a test by the almighty and yet you don’t care at all. I don’t care if you get sick because

you brought this upon yourselves. Move quickly.

Peter and Zacharias start walking, still holding hands. their clothes are dripping, and they have nothing to protect themselves or the horses.

They all go back to the village after two hours, Peter and Zacharias are coughing and are wet to the bone.

EXT. JOSHUA AND CHRISTIANNA'S HOUSE - DAY

CHRISTIANNA (38) the wife of Joshua; a short, plump woman with gentle features, fair hair and green eyes comes running out of the front door in despair.

CHRISTIANNA
(Shouting worryingly)
For Christ's sake! What happened? Come inside quickly and take these clothes off!

JOSHUA
(Muttering)
Not saying the prayers right, worthless τσεφαλάδες (an old fashioned demeaning greek word, meaning someone who has a big head and is stupid)

Christianna looks at Joshua bitterly and leads the boys inside the house to change clothes.

TITLE: **JULY 20, 1978.**

INT. TRADITIONAL CAFETERIA – DAWN

The Eastern Orthodox Church commemorates the Prophet Elijah on a very big feast day. It's very early in the morning, and Zacharias is playing "Thanasis", a greek card game, with JOHN (52); A tall, slim man with a thick moustache who is the owner of the cafeteria, and SPIROS (23); a short, skinny boy with fair hair and blue eyes. They have been playing all night and are placing bets.

ZACHARIAS
(Excitedly)
Aces folks! Show me the money!!

JOHN
(Disturbed)
Fuck you, you little bastard! I have the jinx all over me, for fucks sake. You're paying for your fucking drinks now, and the drinks from the previous time you soaked me.

ZACHARIAS
(Humorously)
Come on John don't be such a dick. Just because you're a looooser!
(He drinks his wine in a gulp and burps loudly)

Spiros starts laughing and tries to compete with Zacharias in burping.

JOHN
(Ironically)
From what I see coming down the road, I predict you giving the money sooner than I expected.

Joshua has been ordained priest of the Orthodox church for 3 years now; 5 years after he retired from being a miner. He is wearing his black ryasa, has a long beard and long hair. He is running down the road angrily, heading towards John's cafeteria.

FATHER JOSHUA
(Angrily, his eyes red)
Shame on all of you sitting here all night. And you τσεφαλά(for his son Zacharias), wasting my money and drinking like you are a scoundrel! Which you are! Instead of coming to my church to repent for your sins, you lie down with the Devil!

JOHN
(Sarcastically)
You know how the saying goes Father. You lie down with the devil, you wake up in hell!

Everyone laughs except for Father Joshua.

FATHER JOSHUA
(Addressing John)
You are the Devil since you keep them here all night. Serving alcohol and taking their money. God have mercy on your soul!

JOHN
(In a serious manner)
Take it easy Father. Mind your own business. I don't mess with your God, you don't mess with my shop.

FATHER JOSHUA
(Burning with anger)
You deserve to rot in hell! "… their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur…"

Father Joshua leaves the cafeteria, murmuring curses and waving his hands above his head in a crazy manner.

ZACHARIAS
Spiros, I have to stay at your place tonight. I can't go home. I'm afraid.

SPIROS
It's ok. You can come with me, but don't tell your father where you slept. I don't want any trouble.

Zacharias gives a condescending nod.

JOHN
The show is over folks. Pack it up, give me the money, and go to hell.

Everyone leaves. Church bells ring from afar.

END.

2

RESURRECTION MEN

Written by: IOLO J. WILLIAMS

INT. ART CLUB NIGHT
An almost empty very pretentious club, industrial chique in all of it's bourgeoisie tainted glory. It's patrons are spaced apart, ornamented in tattered clothes.

CUT TO:

The wrist of a grey jacket. Underneath a suit that is more on the ragged side.

GULLIVER
I met with my compatriot somewhere between Nick Cave and Heroin Chique.

Another man, dressed in double denim and a button-down shirt with the air of Robert plant stands between a very slim woman in a white t-shirt and jeans, cheekbones ghauntly prominent. And a taller man in a black suit with no tie, hair slicked back and thick widows peak overlooking the valley of his brow.

GULLIVER (CONT'D)
And our employer closer to the tune of a tambourine, so o'er we rambled.

A third man with dark, square sunglasses and shaggy hair. Slight stubble and a rolled cigarette hanging out of his mouth.
He is wearing an army fatigue jacket and worn jeans. He's sat on a reddish arm chair. On either side of him stand realistic yet

slightly off models of people.
The man smiles and opens his arms.

GULLIVER (CONT'D)
The man had queried about acquiring some newly cold muses. Naturally being somewhat prolific I found my name in this particular hat.
Gulliver stands in his ragged suit under a long grey jacket, next to him stands BENNY in his denim uniform.

TITLE CARD: **RESURRECTION MEN**

GULLIVER
So we go about it the normal way.

A SERIES OF LONG SHOTS

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY
A mourning woman in all black wanders through a graveyard before settling at a very fresh grave, the soil on top is loose and untouched but for debris.
She takes a moment to pray before she collapses crying.
A young couple with flowers uncomfortably walk past her.
The woman rights herself and pulls out a small handkerchief in which is wrapped a small notepad with 2 names already written down, 2 years corrisponding to them. She writes a third and re-folds the handkerchief.
She stands up and walks again through the graves.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT
A hard thwack as a spade hits dirt, Benny is digging into the fresh soil whilst Gulliver aims a light over him.
Some time passes... a clunk as the spade hits wood.
More time... the men stand over a well-dressed body.

GULLIVER
Open casket.

BENNY
Is that a problem?

GULLIVER
More work. At least the night is young. Shall we?

Gulliver and Benny remove the mans shoes, one each. Gulliver hands his shoe to Benny and begins to undo the corpses belt.

BENNY
Whoa, I wasn’t aware of your... caveat to the plan.

GULLIVER
We are leaving all of his clothes in the ground.
We’re body snatchers not grave robbers.
A small distinction, but one I hold in high acclaim.

Gulliver removes the trousers throwing them into the open grave. Followed by a shirt, a suit jacket and the shoes.
Gulliver picks up a gold pocket watch and a fancy pen from the ground next to the corpse. He opens the watch, it reads somewhere between 1 and 2.
He throws them both into the pit and Benny begins to rebury the contents as Gulliver throws the body over his shoulder and walks away.
Some time passes... Gulliver returns as Benny finishes covering the hole.

BENNY
(Without looking up)
You’re next.

MOMENTS LATER

Gulliver stands on a fresh grave, he removes his long jacket and unbuttons a red waistcoat. He hangs his jacket over the arm of a nearby statue. He holds his hand out and Benny throws the spade into it.
He begins to dig.
Benny is leant up against the statue with the jacket.

BENNY
So why don’t we fleece ‘em?

GULLIVER
It’s their property.

BENNY
They aren’t in a position to complain.

GULLIVER
Theft is a crime.
And the upheaval of treasured items, as redundant as they have now become, is somewhat more questionable than taking it from those still kicking.

BENNY
How so?

GULLIVER
Well, the living can at least put up a fight. It seems like a more balanced playing field.

BENNY
(Taking a moment to think)
So bodies are fine but not a nice dinner jacket, saves a lot on costs down the line.

Benny picks at the hanging jacket.

GULLIVER
When they are dead their souls are no longer inhabiting their body. Instead, they have reentered the universe, anew with returned vigor.

BENNY
Nonsense.

GULLIVER
(Hitting the casket in the grave finally uncovering it)
My friend. Whilst we are kinsman in our profession, I fear we are closer to Cousins than Brothers.

Benny hops down into the hole and reaches to the opening. His hand returns clutching a prybar. He reaches down and uses his fingers to clear loose dirty from the edge of the sealed coffin. He finds a notch in it's wooden armour and slams the wedge of the bar in.

Benny pulls the bar loose and slams it in further, a small click before the creaking continues.

GULLIVER (CONT'D)
(Gesturing to BENNY's Legs)
You might want to widen you stride there.

BENNY
(Heaving down hard)
What?

The box lid releases itself to a huge BANG and Benny's leg is thrown back, his face clattering into the top of the coffin. Benny cries out in pain.

GULLIVER
(Dropping to the ground)
Is it double-barreled?

BENNY
(Through seething pain)
What!?

Gulliver peaks into the coffin revealing a shotgun wired up to the lid of the coffin, light glints off a second barrel.

GULLIVER
(Hopping to his feet)
Well cousin, it seems you've been had.
Gulliver begins to throw the tools out of the hole.

BENNY
(Crawling and grasping at GULLIVER's boots)
Wait, wait. Brother, we're in this together.
Is there no honour in grave robbing?

GULLIVER
(Looking down hands on the edge of the hole)
Bod snatching.

Gulliver pulls himself up and out of the hole.

END.

“I FEEL THAT I FOUND MY ROLE, MY PLACE”

Interviewing Carol Morley: A Retrospective

Manchester born and BAFTA nominated filmmaker Carol Morley, reflects on her influential career. Contextualising her seminal works: ‘The Alcohol Years’ (2000) to ‘Dreams of a Life’ (2011) and ‘The Falling’ (2014), Morley explains the thinking behind her films; the impact of Covid-19, roles of women on screen and offers invaluable advice on how to make it in the film industry.

“PEOPLE REALLY NEED FILM AND PEOPLE NEED SPACES TO GO OUT. SO, I THINK CINEMA WILL ALWAYS SURVIVE; I THINK FILMMAKING WILL ALWAYS SURVIVE.”

So this question is actually about all your films as a collective. We noticed you seem to have a running theme of characters who struggle to cope with their life situations, primarily shown in different perspectives on a kind of childhood trauma, such as through young death, sexual abuse, incest, lies, and isolation. What was it that inspired you to take this route and do you see your films as linked by this or individual in their own right?

"Themes in a way emerge out of what I'm drawn to. Generally, I'm very interested in the dark side of life but not in a tawdry way. I feel like I want to shine a light on it and make it so that people don't feel too disturbed by it and can leave my films feeling you can think about things and explore ideas without yourself going too far to the dark side. I like to balance those kinds of themes with humour as well so not everything is in this vacuum of grimness. I hate grimness. I don't know whether that's coming from Manchester and growing up where there was a kind of humour amongst the people no matter what was happening. That's a cultural thing because there was definitely a way of dealing with everything that I think is in my films. Now, the connexion between those themes in the films... I'm not sure if it's a very deliberate act to make films about those things, it's more that this is what I'm drawn to, these sort of areas. It's only when other people start to look at your films that they start to show you the patterns and things emerging. The compulsion to tell that story is the main thing and it's only really later that the ideas emerge as a connexion. It's the sense that when you're going towards making something, you're not conscious of your authorship. Because maybe it could really stifle you, if you became really aware that 'oh this is the things that I look at' or even when it comes to directing like 'oh I'm the kind of director that does tracking shots' and then you could be really like 'oh I haven't got any or I should' so I think it maybe would entangle you too much. It's that kind of awareness but not hyper aware and certainly not doing it because that's what you do."

You've directed many films and screenplays and you've even written a book, made a music video and been in a band. Is there anything else you have wanted to try, perhaps acting?

"I don't think I could ever be an actor. Many years ago before I knew about film, I was in Manchester and somebody asked me to be in their short film. I never saw the film but afterwards remember hearing somebody say, 'We saw it and you were terrible!' and I thought, ' How could I have been terrible? I was just being myself'. I grew up hanging around the Manchester music scene, so I was in bands and that seemed achievable, but then nothing really went well with them. Then, I did lots of different jobs to maintain being alive. I moved

"THE COMPULSION TO TELL THAT STORY IS THE MAIN THING"

to London, for no particular reason other than it was 'London' and had this weird kind of calling, and did various jobs. When I was 23 I studied A-Level film and A-Level photography and those subjects really came alive for me. After that I studied Fine Art, Film and Video. But even now, calling myself a director, I still just think of myself really as a filmmaker. In general, that's how I consider myself. It was a very securitas route to becoming a director and really finding out that's what I loved. I have made one Pop video and in actual fact, I sort of avoided doing that. For me, I've got this really weird thing that if I did that, it would somehow swallow up my ideas that I don't want to put there. It's a bit like not wanting to be photographed: it might take your soul. So, I feel that I found my role, my place. I really do like writing, so I can imagine writing more books. But it's writing/directing. I'd be a terrible actor. But a lot of brilliant directors have been actors, so I think there are ways to directing."

The Alcohol Years (2000) dir. Carol Morley

'The Alcohol Years' (2000) depicts Morley's return to her home of Manchester, in search of discovering the truth about her blurry youth.

What was it like hearing all these different perspectives about you in The Alcohol Years?

"So, I left Manchester when I was about 20, and obviously I had been up to no good. So I'd gone out a lot and drunk, partied and all of that. You know, it was a time of promiscuity and no plans. Just seeing what happened on a night out and seeing where you'd end up. It was after I had been at Saint Martins so I was probably 30. I did think it would be a short length film, but then it grew. It always had the title, 'The Alcohol Years'. I always like to begin with titles. It sort of helps to form it in your mind somehow. So I thought, 'I'll go back'. I'd not been in touch with anyone for all those years, 10 or 12 years so it felt like a long time. So when I went back, having the camera gave me this kind of courage, but also a sense of constructing something from what people were saying. So because of that, whatever anybody said - it wasn't like they were saying it to me. I didn't feel personally aggrieved. It was like they were saying it to the camera and the person that would see the film eventually. So because of that you are protected. When people said bad things, I'd be like 'Brilliant! That's going to be great for the film!'. In fact, one of my favourite stories was when the film

"HAVING THE CAMERA GAVE ME THIS KIND OF COURAGE"

was finished, somebody said: 'If I'd known you were going to finish the film, I wouldn't have been in it. I was only in it because it never occurred to me that you'd finish it.'"

Why did you choose not to directly use your own voice or put yourself in front of the camera in 'The Alcohol Years'?

"Yeah, it's a really good question and I think that came very early on. You see tiny glimpses of me because I remember somebody saying, 'Is it too self aggrandizing not to be in it at all?'. With a documentary commentary, there's the sense the filmmaker is telling you what to think and guiding you through that unfolding. With the essay type of documentary, there's also a sense that they are positioning themselves central to that narrative and it's their point of view. But I was interested in this idea of contradiction, so that the people within the film 'The Alcohol Years', contradicted each other. They had different views of me and I had different views of them. So I never wanted to create a seamless, coherent narrative because it really wouldn't be where I was going. What was most interesting to me in 'The Alcohol Years', was not to put forward my case. One horrible thing I did do was when I did the DVD release for 'The Alcohol Years': they asked me to do a director's commentary and that became the hideous thing that was like the voiceover of me telling everyone what to think. I thought I'll never do that again. So being absent allowed the audience to bring to life this character and insert themselves into that - rather than just me taking that away."

"THAT WAS JOYCE'S DREAM OF HER LIFE; THAT WAS MY DREAM OF MY LIFE; THOSE WERE OTHER PEOPLE'S DREAMS OF THEIR LIVES."

Morley investigates the complex and curious life history of Joyce Vincent and the intriguing mysteries surrounding her death in the true story and documentary, 'Dreams of a Life' (2011)

A lot of documentaries introduce speakers with their name and their significance to the person the film focuses around. In 'Dreams of a Life' however, you choose not to do this. Instead you let their identity be revealed through flashbacks. Why did you choose this method of introducing characters?

"If you watch a fiction film, you never have that kind of introduction to a character; it says their name and 'engineer'. In some narrative films, you don't have the name of a character. Even in the titles or credits, it comes up as 'the girl', or something. So, I was very interested in this idea of documentary having to do a similar thing, wherein you understand the person by getting to know them like you would do in a fiction film. At the end of 'The Alcohol Years', you might not necessarily know everyone's name; you might not necessarily know what everybody does, but you probably know what the key people do and who they are. I am not sure that I see 'The Alcohol Years' or 'Dreams of a Life' as documentaries. I think they probably are portraits, as you mentioned - a portrait of a city would be the way I would look at 'The Alcohol Years', and in 'Dreams of a Life', definitely a portrait of a woman. I find it very exciting that the audience has to work out who these people are and act actively rather than just be told."

Joyce Vincent had suffered from domestic violence but in 'Dreams of a Life', you mainly focus on her childhood and interpersonal relationships. What led you to make this change?

"Dreams of a Life": the title says it all. That was Joyce's dream of her life; that was my dream of a life; those were other people's dreams of their lives. It wasn't necessarily what happened. Some of it was the idea of what might have happened; what could have happened or possibly happened. I would say that there were legal restrictions to what I could and couldn't say as it's very difficult without Joyce being around to begin to make any accusations. But, I feel like I didn't really want to do that anyway. I didn't want this film to be about accusations and guilt, or "you are responsible for this" etc. I felt like making a film that was a bit more dreamlike - more about possibilities but not nailing it down. Of course there was the restriction of who I could find. Before Joyce ended up in the flat, she was in a domestic violence unit, but they won't talk. There are obvious high confidentialities even after someone dies. They wouldn't disclose information quite rightly. But after 'Dreams of a Life' was on television, people were phoning me up that had known Joyce. I remember it was on Channel 4; they were trailing it a lot. Somebody phoned me saying her daughter and her had been in the domestic violence unit with Joyce. She phoned up saying, "my daughter just saw this advert on the telly. She said it was auntie Joyce" (Her daughter calls Joyce "auntie Joyce"). After that , I learnt more details about the refuge where Joyce was. But again, it felt like an extension of Joyce in that she never quite gave up a lot of information. So the person that had been in that domestic violence unit with her, said that she used to buy bagels, cream, cheese and salmons for everybody and would dress well and not really talk about anything that happened. So, I think she was quite mysterious. I certainly didn't

want to expose that too much. I would say 'Dreams of a Life' is a combination of moving away from talking too much about something because it feels too exposing for a person to be kind of legally bound as well. So it is sort of that combination."

'The Falling' (2014) is quite a different film to 'Dreams of a Life' (2011), where Morley investigated the effects of isolation and secrecy. 'The Falling' instead depicts Morley's filmic exploration of mass hysteria, psychogenic illness and sexual experimentation amongst a group of adolescent school girls.

What I became interested in is what effect you may have wanted this to have on the audience. I heard in an interview you had that you wanted viewers not just to witness the physical effects of "the falling" but to feel it too. Can I ask then what it was you meant by this and whether you tried to create a particular feeling from the symbolic motifs in the film such as the water, the old oak tree and the near-subliminal flashbacks?

"I think maybe with all my films I would hate to think that people are just watching. With my editor Chris Wyatt, we would always talk about the audience completing the film so you would never fully finish a film, you would leave areas within it throughout that people could insert themselves into and feel part of. If you tie all the ends up, people can go away going 'I don't need to think about it anymore because that was the result, that's the conclusion, that's who was to blame, that's who it was about.' And the same in 'The Falling', it's this sense of taking a very unusual and strange condition 'mass psychogenic illness' or 'mass hysteria' as it's been called that goes back to mediaeval times and that people have all sorts of rationale as to what it is. Is it an illness? Is it a cultural kind of hysteria in the sense of people getting over emotional about what they see? There is so much like mystery in mass psychogenic illness that I definitely didn't want to complete any of that by saying this is what it is. Within the falling there's the different strands of what it could be and what's interesting is that some people see the film and are convinced there was asbestos in the school and that's what caused it. But then there's also the idea that it could be more spiritual or the devil or that kind of thing. One of the things that I found very interesting reading into the history of mass psychogenic illness is that they mirror back the anxieties of the time. In 1969, when the falling is set, there was definitely a kind of sense that women were becoming liberated and sexually free with the advent of the pill and reproductive rights. Even though really, they took a lot longer to seep in but the idea of it was there.

I really wanted to explore that in the film, and I felt like it would be unseemly if you watch a film about young women and you're just witnessing it. I wanted people to feel they were in that film; they weren't just voyeurs and sort

of watching people undergoing their sexual awakenings. They were part of that, and they could feel that it was telling their story as well somehow."

"I WANTED PEOPLE TO FEEL THEY WERE IN THAT FILM; THEY WEREN'T JUST VOYEURS"

The character relationships in this film are quite interesting and sometimes even uncomfortable. One such relationship I was interested in was that between Abbie and Lydia. They seem to have a kind of sexual closeness with Lydia and the other girls obsessing over Abbie, even before her death where there are scenes of her and Lydia cuddling closely in bed together with what can come across as sexual tension.
You've mentioned in another interview with the Glasgow Film Festival how this kind of admiration can be part of a pattern needed to produce this kind of mass hysteria but I wondered if there was also a kind of teenage sexual experimentation or homosexual undertone going on between the girls?

"I definitely wanted to include a female sensibility and I think that at that age there's an exploration. Their sexuality isn't fully formed. I do see the film as a love affair really between Abbie and Lydia but it's not like some traditional love story either. To give you some insight I did write where people were now. So, when I wrote the characters from 69 I thought: where would Lydia be as an older woman? And I had her living in Brighton with her girlfriend. So, for me she was sort of emerging as a lesbian. It was this sense of emerging attractions definitely.
Within a mass psychogenic illness there is a very particular way that psychologists and psychiatrists have seen it formed that especially within a closed institution like a school or a nunnery, it would be the person

The Falling (2014) dir. Carol Morley

that's most admired feels ill and then people will start to develop that illness. When I was writing 'The Falling', I was very aware that Abbie was the charismatic one at school, the one that for whatever reason they just have control over the others. In all the films I make I don't want to nail the thing because then it becomes 'oh it's a lesbian film.' People have definitely read it as a as a lesbian film. When we showed it at Flare festival, a lot of audience were reacting to it in a way that I feel embraced so many elements of it that maybe another audience wouldn't. I'm not conscious of an audience when I make a film as such

but maybe in the editing you become more conscious of that obviously, but I feel like people will bring themselves to a film. I feel like I like an openness to them. You know Maisie's character was definitely in love with Abbie, that's without a doubt written as that but it's definitely an emerging sexuality. I would definitely call that a love story, but I've maybe not said it because I haven't wanted someone just to focus on that. But the relationship or the sexual incest that happens within the film between Lydia and her brother Kenneth, that is all about Abbie because she sleeps with her brother to get Abbie back because they've been intimate so that's her route. It's all about Abbie, it's a completely obsession."

"I FEEL LIKE PEOPLE WILL BRING THEMSELVES TO A FILM."

Can you tell us anything about your up-and-coming film, 'Artist Typist Pirate King'? Was it postponed due to COVID-19?

"I was still writing it, so I finished the screenplay. I think Covid-19 will delay it because of raising finance for it. But, I was writing my final draft during that first lockdown. The title 'Artist Typist Pirate King', comes from the person themselves. 'Welcome' is a big charitable organization that looks at health, based in London. They have a library and an archive; they do lots of research; they have a café; they have an exhibition space. They offered a screenwriting fellowship which I did. I spent a year there looking through the archives and the library. I met a lot of health professionals, psychiatrists, and psychologists. I really wanted to find a first-person account of a life lived with...I was quite fascinated with looking at the idea of mental illness. They'd taken on an archive a few years before that was quite extensive: eighty massive boxes of Audrey amiss. She was born in 1930s in Sunderland and went to the Royal Academy in the 1950s to paint, had a breakdown (what she called her original breakdown) and then ended up being diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. She then trained as a typist and became a typist for the civil servant for the rest of her life, while keeping her art on during that time she lived in London. She kept diaries, notebooks and wrote copious letters which she kept logbooks of. Her whole life she kept books, like the reverse of 'Dreams of a Life' where I had nothing to start with; I had an enormous amount of insight into her life. So, I made the decision fairly early on that I'd do with this archive. One is writing a book, which I've nearly finished, and the other is writing a screenplay. So, the book is like a documentary. I interviewed her family and friends, people who knew her. The film is completely fictionalised. She is the character, taking on her view of the world. So, it's a road trip through her life. She goes on a journey with her psychiatrist nurse. It was such a big undertaking; I had to break it up".

The marginalised female is such an integral aspect of your films. You really get inside and explore the female in an incredibly complex manner.

"Audrey Amiss (subject of 'Artist Typist Pirate King') is someone that people would cross the road to avoid. People have told me they have crossed the road to avoid her. She's someone who walks along muttering with lots of bags. When I started to read her diaries, she'd be talking about Polanski films and all manners of things that you might not have seen. It was important to me to create a film around her where she becomes a hero of the film. She's almost like an antihero. As she got older, she began to speak out a lot, she used to be very quiet when she was young. I love this because women are so silenced and she grew up, got louder and would go to Speakers' Corner in London and make speeches. The idea of taking someone so marginalised and giving them space to be seen is really a political act. In the history of cinema there's so few women who have been given really great roles. Watching films now, you question why the woman is in the film; just make a film about men I don't mind! Stop giving women really ridiculous roles or use them to prop up men! Why not make films about underrepresented people? There's a wealth of story to tell that's never been told or the nuances have never been given".

"THE IDEA OF TAKING SOMEONE SO MARGINALISED AND GIVING THEM SPACE TO BE SEEN IS REALLY A POLITICAL ACT."

How has COVID-19 affected your creative process?

"In the first lockdown, I was writing the third draft of my screenplay. I became very conscious of the outside world and not having access to it. I think the way Covid-19 will affect the industry is... Well it's a very difficult debate around cinema and cinemas closing...but the distribution models for films have been changing anyway because of digital forms. So, COVID-19 has brought that into reality: cinemas actually being closed and Warner Brothers putting all their films online next year. I think the effects of how you make a film and how it will be distributed will shift around. My great belief is that people really need film and people need spaces to go out to. So, I think cinema will always survive; I think filmmaking will always survive. In my case it will just take a longer time to get the money for the film."

For anyone who is looking for some advice...

Could you give any advice to anyone who is struggling to find their creative style?

"Don't worry about style! For people struggling with their style, really good things to do is to look at other films, paintings, pictures, and stories. Make scrapbooks, cut things up that mean something to you. From that, you might find that you have a colour palette for your film. I let the story and the characters tell me... but creativity is difficult. Sometimes accept you don't have ideas, but other times seek out ideas you like! I like going to cafés and overhearing people. Just allow yourself some freedom, not worry about what your style is."

What advice would you give for a student trying to break into the creative/film industry?

"My way of doing it is to have something you really want to tell and do. There are a lot of ways into the film industry and lots of different roles. You could start as a runner in a film and learn about the creative side that way, or you could start to make short films. People have during lockdown and made films on these kinds of platforms like 'zoom'. I feel it's a balance of just really trying to think about telling stories or showing things. It could be experimental ways. The main thing is to make things somehow, and do writing. The other bit about getting into the industry is different because it might not be a creative role you begin with. My role was to apply for Arts Council grants, so I could make my film. I've never worked on a film set. Try things out and be messy. Everyone can get into the film industry in the end, but you just have to never give up."

I read that you nearly called it quits on filmmaking to become a teacher. What advice would you give to those who want to take that leap of faith, despite feeling scared?

"I always taught alongside getting my films off the ground. So, I think it's a really brilliant thing to do. But there was a point where I went for a job interview in America. I was with a friend who's a filmmaker, and he said, 'What do you want at the end of your life? Do you want to be known as this teacher or do you want to be known as this filmmaker?'. So I think it's around where your focus lies. I think it's that balance. Everybody has to earn money - not everybody is from a filmmaker family or a rich family. Look for ways of being able to earn money and balancing that out. But either try and have them in the field that you're interested in or something very different. Don't work in film in a way that deadens you. I think the life experiences I had before film really led me into making films and the way I make them. I did all sorts of jobs. For some other people it's like 'bam!', but some other people kind of have to

really learn from experience and not wait for that moment when something might happen - that it will change your life or something."

How did you manage to stay so motivated at school and find time amongst your studies to pursue filmmaking and create 'The Alcohol Years'?

"You see 'The Alcohol Years' was kind of after I left college. But because it was art college you didn't learn about constructing a film story, you didn't learn any of that stuff that might have been quite helpful ultimately, but you learnt how to use cameras and sound equipment and you learned a lot about representation, about the sort of weight upon you to represent a person. It was a lot of theory about that as well. I feel that while I was there, I definitely only did the things I like to do. It was really using that time to explore who I was, not that I knew when I left totally, but I think the alcohol years emerged out of that because I was very interested in this idea of representation, how you represent someone, what a film is and how powerful a film is. I did work in a shop when I was there in the summer and the weekends and stuff like that but nowadays people often have full time jobs and they're at college full time. I think the only way you can do that is to really try and honour your work within that. But is it tough, I think it's got tougher. If you don't have to work full time, don't! Try and to commit to your work I think."

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