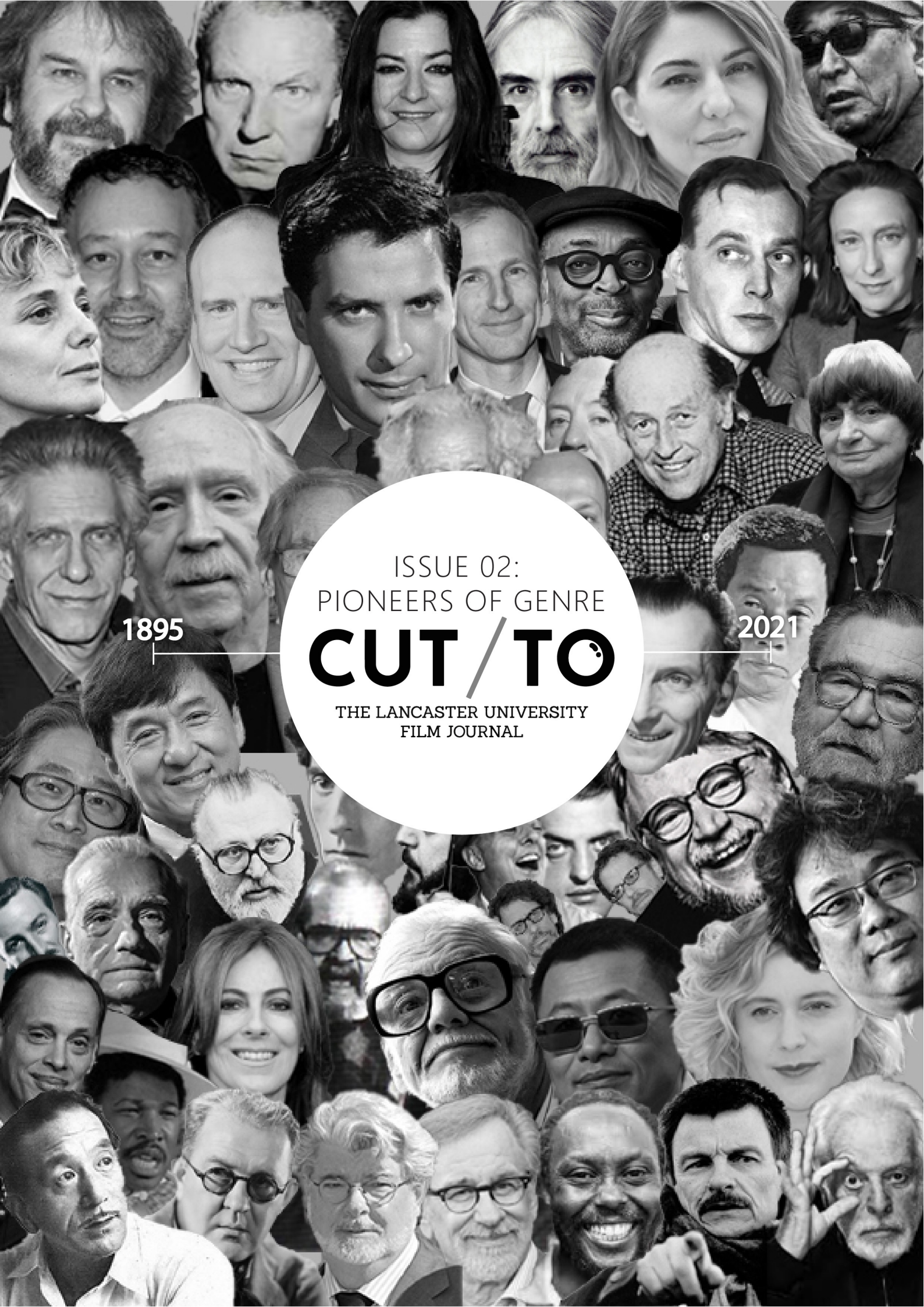

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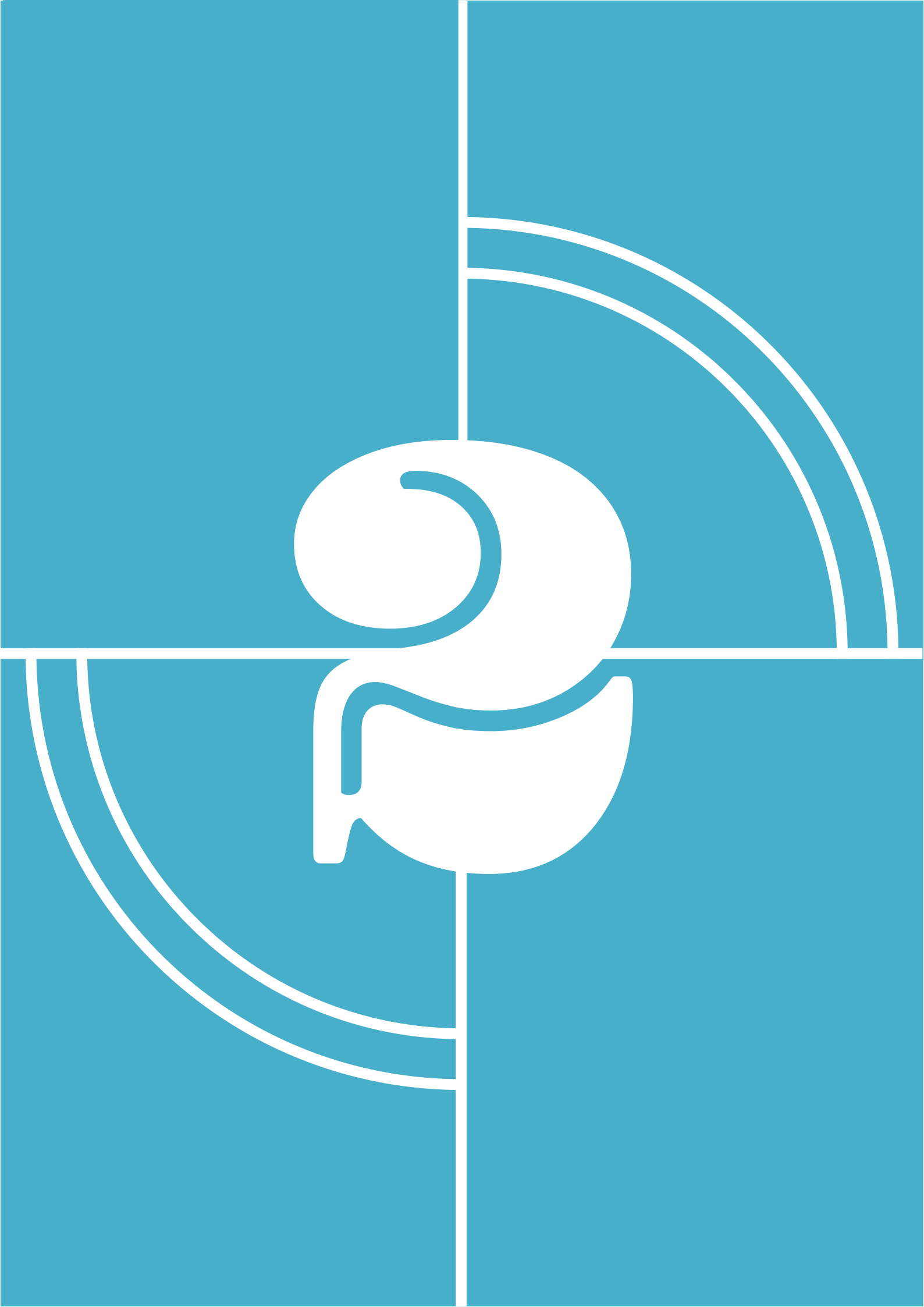
“Cinema is the ultimate pervert art. It doesn’t give you what you desire - it tells you how to desire.”

Slavoj Žižek



“I don’t dream at night, I dream at day, I dream all day; I’m dreaming for a living.”

Steven Spilberg

“When I looked at life through the camera, I felt like I could finally see it.”

Katherine Howe

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How Louis de Funès became the King of French physical comedy

and three performances to watch according to a French girl

by: **INÉS CASES**

If you say the name Louis de Funès anywhere in France, the reaction will be a smile. Known for his wild gestures, facial expressions and charisma, de Funès was christened "the man with forty faces per minute". He became an integral part of childhood, whether your family gathered around the television to watch a DVD or you heard stories from your parents of the days they would line up outside cinemas to see his latest box office hit.

Despite his talents, de Funès began his acting career relatively late. Born in Courbevoie in 1914, his parents were Spanish immigrants who had eloped to France in 1904 after their Sevillian upper-class families opposed the marriage. He attended the prestigious Lycée Condorcet in Paris where he was noted for his musical talents and sense of humour, but later dropped out and drifted from job to job, each of which usually ended in him being fired. He became a pianist at a Parisian bar and discovered a love for acting after he studied for a year at the Simon acting school. Throughout the 1940s, de Funès was often rejected by casting agents, usually because he was considered too old or not attractive enough.

His acting career began on stage, but he eventually made his screen debut at the age of 31 in Jean Stelli's La Tentation de Barbizon (1945). His role comprised of less than forty seconds of screen-time. In fact, for the next decade of his career, he was often reduced to performing minor uncredited roles and voice dubbing.

His breakthrough came in 1956 when he appeared in Claude Autant-Lara's La Traversée de Paris in a supporting role beside established comedian Bourvil and actor Jean Cabin. The film attracted some controversy upon release due to its comedic depiction of Paris during the occupation in the Second World War, but it was successful nonetheless. In 1963, he appeared in Jean Girault's Pouic-Pouic in one of his first leading roles and began gaining traction for his talents as a physical comedian.
His star moment came at the age of 49 when his role as gendarme Ludovic Cruchot

in Jean Girault's comedy Le Gendarme de Saint-Tropez (1964) became an overnight sensation and France's biggest box office film of the year. This would be the first film of six, a franchise that continued to break records in not only its native country, but around Europe and North Africa.

De Funès then began a famous collaboration with director Gérard Oury and comedian Bourvil, and the three became a staple of the French comedy scene. Le Corniaud (1964) saw the pair of comedians as leads together for the first time. Oury developed a formula; Bourvil would play a simple-minded calm character, usually a man from a working-class background, whereas de Funès would play a hyperactive grumpy man of usually upper-class background. This method of typecasting proved insanely popular with European audiences and it led to their biggest success, Oury's La Grande Vadrouille (1966). Set in the midst of the German occupation, de Funès and Bourvil play French civilians who help an RAF crew to cross the border to safe territory as they're pursued by a pompous German Major. The film became the highest grossing film ever made in France and sold more than 17 million tickets internationally. Hoping to replicate this success, Oury was set to direct La Folie des Grandeurs (1971), but plans were cut short after Bourvil's death in 1970, and Yves Montand stepped in to play the lead role beside de Funès.

In the 60s and 70s, de Funès was undeniably the biggest film star and comedian in France. He had revolutionised physical comedy with his eccentric style that involved over-exaggerated gestures, hyperactive performances and over-the-top facial expressions. These were elements of performance that were usually only seen in the theatre. French films were traditionally more demure, philosophical and serious, especially concerning topics such as war and the occupation. De Funès set out to not only change the comedy scene, but his method of pairing these serious topics with his comedic performances allowed people to relieve themselves of the fresh trauma and grief that accompanied the wartime experience.

In the mid-to-late 70s, de Funès' career saw no signs of slowing down. He began a new collaborative relationship with director Claude Zidi and their most notable films include L'aile ou la cuisse (1971) and La Zizanie (1978). In 1980, de Funès completed his long-time dream of bringing Molière's most famous play L'Avare to the screen where he starred as the lead. His final film was the last installement of the Gendarme franchise, Le Gendarme et les gendarmettes (1982).

De Funès was so devoted to his work that he in 1983 he died of a heart condition caused by his hyperactive performances on stage. Left behind is a legacy that is still widely celebrated. His comedic antics, physical style and facial expressions remain iconic and he ranks highly among some of the greatest actors France has ever produced. Last year, AlloCiné named de Funès and his films as the star of 2020; now more than ever, people were turning to him to make them laugh even just for a couple of hours.

Though he reached an extreme level of fame in Europe and beyond, de Funès remains relatively unknown in English-speaking cinema. His only notable recognition he received in America happened in 1974, nine years before his death, when his film Les Aventures de Rabbi Jacob (1973) received a Golden Globe nomination.
So, I have a compiled a list of three of my favourite de Funès films, and here's hoping that I can share a little bit of laughter in these uncertain times.

"WHAT'S MY BIGGEST ASPIRATION AS AN ACTOR? TO PRODUCE FILMS DESTINED TO MAKE CHILDREN AND ADULTS ALIKE LAUGH IN A WORLD SO SAD"

La Grande Vadrouille (dir. Gérard Oury)
Often described as his best work, La Grande Vadrouille is definitely his most famous film. Paired for the second time as Bourvil's co-lead, de Funès portrays Stanislas Lefort, an arrogant and bourgeois conductor who works at the Parisian opera in the early-forties. A selfish man, he is quite happy to perform for the German officers as it keeps him in their good graces. His plans are interrupted, however, the day he meets Augustin Bouvet (Bourvil) and he finds himself embroiled in a plan to cross the border with a crew of Allied pilots.

Louis de Funès and Bourvil as Stanislas Lefort and Augustin Bouvet in La Grande Vadrouille (1966) dir. Gérard Oury

La Folie des Grandeurs (1971) dir. Gérard Oury
This film was supposed to complete the comedy trilogy between director Oury and actors de Funès and Bourvil, but the latter's death meant the role of Blaze had to be recast and Yves Montand was selected instead.
Another box office success, this is an adaptation of Victor Hugo's play Ruy Blas and is set in 17th century Spain. De Funès plays Don Salluste de Bazan, a greedy lord who taxes the poor heavily and takes most of the earnings for himself. But after a scandalous rumour swirls around court,

Salluste is stripped of his title by the Queen herself. Hugely unpopular with both his noble peers and the poor, Salluste vows to take revenge on the Queen and he enlists the help of his naïve but kind valet, Blaze (Montand).

Louis de Funès as Don Salluste in La Folie des Grandeurs (1971) dir. Gérard Oury

L'Aile ou la Cuisse (dir. Claude Zidi)

Although Zidi's L'Aile ou la Cuisse was released later in his career and received mixed reviews from critics, de Funès' popularity showed no signs of slowing down. He was paired for the first time with comedian Coluche, another icon of French cinema.

De Funès plays the lead role of Charles Duchemin, a parody of world-famous French restaurant critic André Michelin, and is infamous for destroying the reputations of even the best French restaurants. Planning on retiring soon, he wants to introduce his son Gérard (Coluche) to the business so he can take over, but Gérard has another passion: he works as a clown in a local circus and he can't find the courage to tell his harsh father.

Louis de Funès as Charles Duchemin in L'aile ou la cuisse (1976) dir. Claude Zidi

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“I’m a writer, but then nobody’s perfect”

5 Billy Wilder Masterpieces You Should Watch Right Now

by: **CATERINA FENUCCI**

With the interminable Lockdown Number Three still going strong in the UK, I spent my nights-in watching Billy Wilder’s extensive filmography. Widely known as the father of American comedy, Wilder is also one of the founders of the noir genre and is considered one of the most prolific and eclectic directors and screenwriters in the history of American cinema.
Here’s five movies that made history:

Double Indemnity (1944)

With its dark urban setting, Double Indemnity is certainly one of the most aesthetic films of cinema noir. Based on a short story by James Cain, Wilder’s first American noir is characterised by a preference for interior settings, a sharp contrast between shadow and light, and the intense characterisation of its protagonists. The insurer Walter Neff (Fred MacMurray) meets Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck), his client’s wife. Right from the start she seems to be attracted to Walter, and soon the two plan to murder her husband to take advantage of the ‘double indemnity’ policy in the event of death in rare circumstances. Set in Los Angeles and structured in flashbacks, most of the film takes place at night and includes lean and dry dialogues to help progress the story’s fast-pace to its tragic conclusion.

Sunset Boulevard (1950)

Sunset Boulevard: The Original Hollywood Expose | Den of Geek
Joe Gillis (William Holden), is a struggling screenwriter who stumbles upon a mansion he believes to be uninhabited, but the villa actually belongs to Norma Desmond (Gloria

Swanson), a famous actress of the silent era. There, she continually projects her old films and plays cards with other fallen movie stars, including the real Buster Keaton. Having met Gillis, Desmond hires him to revise the script she is writing for her big comeback. In great financial difficulties, Gillis accepts, without imagining that Desmond's obsession will make it difficult for him to get away from that house. Norma Desmond's story, as told by Gillis, is a story of loneliness, delusion and madness. "I am big!" Desmond replies to Gillis, who recognises her and remembers her former fame: "It's the pictures that got small." One of the crucial aspects of the film is the particularly realistic representation of Hollywood and its surroundings. The film earned Wilder the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay, and a nomination for Best Director.

"WILDER MANAGES TO REVISIT THE NAIVETE OF CLASSIC CINEMA AND REVIVE IT, ELEGANTLY AND DISCREETLY, IN A MODERN KEY."

Sabrina (1954)

One of the great director's most celebrated films and his first major hit comedy continually rewritten on set, is a workaround of grace, romance and humour. In addition to the romantic element, there is also that of social satire: the Larrabee are a real royal family of capitalism and made their fortune thanks to an indestructible plastic. The wealthy Larrabee don't even consider letting beautiful, good-girl Sabrina (Audrey Hepburn) in the family, because she is the chauffeur's daughter and doesn't belong in their world. David Larrabee (William Holden) - whose depiction is one of the film's chief comedic elements - must marry the heir of a family that will guarantee the merger of two companies and further expand their capital. Fortunately in the end, the roles are reversed and love triumphs thanks to the privileges that come with money. Sabrina is an eternally feel-good movie, one of those comedies that you can watch again and again.

The Apartment (1960)

The plot revolves around themes that, in the very puritan America of the 40s and 50s, were decidedly controversial: our protagonist C.C. Baxter (Jack Lemmon) has a habit of lending his apartment to favour the escapades of colleagues and the affair of Fran Kubelik (Shirley MacLaine) with a married man, the chief of staff Jeff Sheldrake (Fred MacMurray). The protagonists of The Apartment, like many characters in Wilder's cinema, are faced with moral compromises that place them in a difficult position: for Baxter, the compromise consists of the complicity with his superiors for the purpose of career advancement; for Fran it is a question of continuing her secret affair with

Sheldrake in the hopes that he'll eventually leave his wife. Both, albeit from different perspectives, will have to confront their own personal dignity and decide to what extent they may need to compromise. In this sense, Baxter and Fran are two mirrored figures, subjected to the social mechanisms that are reflected in the hierarchical structure of the insurance company they work for, and in the vertical arrangement of that office that frames most of their social relationships.

At the 1960 Academy Award edition, the film earned ten nominations and won five, including Best Picture, Direction, Screenplay, Editor and Production Design. This time, Wilder's medley of humour, drama and romance gives life to a work that is practically perfect in its union between the classic elegance of the narrative and the extreme lucidity of the characters.

Irma La Douce (1963)

Nestor (Jack Lemmon), a naive ex-policeman, and Irma (Shirley MacLaine), a pragmatic and romantic sex worker, fall in love. To prevent her from hanging out with other clients, he periodically disguises himself as a wealthy English lord and pays her with money he earns by secretly working odd jobs. Nestor, however, becomes jealous of the affection that Irma begins to nurture for the mysterious aristocrat. Wilder's theme of disguise, supplemented within the tone of a delightful and bitter comedy, makes use of Lubitsch's lessons fully: from off-screen action to missed hints and anagnorisis. These tools, already used as dramatic effects in previous films, are instruments of humour. With Irma La Douce, Wilder manages to revisit the naiveté of classic cinema and revive it, elegantly and discreetly, in a modern key.

Still from Sunset Boulevard (1960) dir. Billy Wilder.

Still from The Apartment (1960) dir. Billy Wilder.

Agnès Varda's Murs Murs uncovers the soul of Los Angeles

by: **INÉS CASES**

Agnès Varda was a master of storytelling. With New Wave classics like Cléo from 5 to 7 (1962) and Le Bonheur (1965) under her belt, today she is considered a pioneer of filmmaking, "one of the gods of cinema" as Martin Scorsese once said. But the French filmmaker is also known for her documentaries, from the artisanal Parisian shops in Daguerréotypes (1975) to the streets of Cuba four years after the revolution in Salut les Cubains (1963), Varda has always had an eye for capturing not only the stories of people, but the heart of their cities.

During this lockdown, however, I've found the most solace in one of her lesser known documentaries Murs Murs (1981). A play on the French word for 'murmurs', Varda tells the story of Los Angeles through the murals and their artists. As simple as it sounds, the result is a stunning exhibition of humanity in its purest form. These walls are not just art: they're storybooks, diaries and windows into the soul of a city often demonised for its superficiality. These walls are anything but superficial; Varda introduces them to us, saying, "These walls have nothing to sell."

Though the documentary interviews many painters of these murals from a variety of backgrounds, there is a particular emphasis on Chicano artists. We're surrounded by the work of Judy Baca, a Mexican-American artist with some of the most eye-catching murals on display. Known for her colourful landscape pieces stretching from wall to wall, she features women in flower-print headscarves beside frothing blue waves, a striking display of peace and power.

Susan Jackson is another artist highlighted in the documentary. Jackson takes us through the medley twisting stalks and flowers, the star-streaked sky, the birds and butterflies, and reveals that though her art has been questioned for its lack of political content she believes there is power in the peaceful aspects of life. Varda captures her standing defiantly in front of her mural, almost as if she were a part of it.

Still from Murs Murs (1981) dir. Agnès Varda

That is what is most striking about this short documentary: Varda understands that the artist belongs to their art, just a much as the art belongs to the artist. Her documentaries are so remarkable because she spends as much time on the people the art represents than the art itself and thus they become time capsules. The art is eternalised on the walls but the artists and their voices will live forever on film.

I have watched Murs Murs several times throughout these many lonely lockdowns and it never fails to make me feel as if I were there, staring up at the walls, trying to catch every detail. I feel as though I have been reintroduced to the city of Los Angeles, and as Varda herself said, “Whether collective daydreams or personal visions, the walls tell of a city and its people.”

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Still from Murs Murs (1981) dir. Agnès Varda

Seeing and Not Seeing in Psycho (1960) and Jaws (1975)

by: **João Eduardo Belchior**

"Cinema is a matter of what's in the frame and what's out" (Scorsese).

The question of framing is vital in telling a story and accentuates the director's subjectivity since it is in their hands to choose what the spectator will see and what will be hidden from them. Psycho (1960) and Jaws (1975), although two completely different films thematically and formally, both rely on what is out of frame, what is hidden, what is insinuated, to leave the audience on the edge of their seats.

In Psycho our protagonist, Marion (Janet Leigh), flees after deciding to steal forty thousand dollars to get married and start a new life together. On her way to meet her lover Sam (John Gavin), she stops for the night at the Bates Motel, a near-the-road establishment managed by Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins), and his ill **mother** - since it would be in error to assume the existence of the mother as a living being, capable and responsible for her actions, I will higlight in bold everytime I reference her as an active and living being - with whom he has a complicated relationship. Complicated relationships are the core of Psycho and, at a first, are what we focus on. However, as in many relationships, there's much more than what is seen at a first glance.

The film is "interwoven with parent-child references" (Wood, 1966, p. 107) where parents influence and oppress their children's future, even after passing. In the first scene, we can see Marion and Sam in a hotel room, discussing the impossibility of marriage due to their lack of money - Sam must pay his late father's debts - and the past actions of his father weigh heavily on

Sam's present and future. When talking about the next time they'll meet, Marion says they "can even have dinner, but respectably, in my house with my mother's picture on the mantle". Later in the film, after Marion has decides to flee, we can see the family photographs looking down on her as she packs (ibid.). In these two scenes, the absent parents influence Marion's behaviour.

The biggest manifestation of an oppressive parent-child relationship, however, is only disclosed after Marion's arrival at the Bates Motel. After checking-in his new guest, Norman Bates is heard - or so the audience is led to believe - arguing with his **mother,** Norma. Both voices are off-screen (out of frame), however, it is the **mother's** voice that arouses the spectator's curiosity. As Chion (1992, p. 197) affirms, an off-screen voice incites the necessity to "go and see it", to give a physical body to the voice, making more sense of what is happening on screen. The embodiment of this voice is necessary to understand the character better, who she is and what are the motives for her actions, understanding the dangers the characters are facing. It is, however, impossible to see such embodiment since we later understand that Norman's mother has passed long before and is actually played by Norman himself. Alfred Hitchcock hints at this embodiment, making the audience believe in its possibility. The equivalent to this "now you almost see me, now you don't " (Mott & Saunders, op. cit., p. 50) scene in Psycho is when we hear the mother's voice for the second time. After

"HITCHCOCK USES CAMERA MOVEMENTS AND MISE-EN-SCENE, THROUGHOUT THE FILM, TO LEAVE THE AUDIENCE ADRIFT, LOOKING FOR AN UNGRASPABLE SIGNIFICATION TO WHAT THEY ARE SEEING."

the deaths of both Marion and Detective Arbogast (Martin Balsam), Norman, who predicts that someone will "come after them [the victims]", goes into his mother's room and takes her down to the fruit cellar, a safe hiding place.

The camera follows Norman upstairs in a tracking shot, but when Anthony Perkins enters the room and leaves the door ajar in an inviting tone. However, the camera remains outside moving upwards in a complicated movement that leaves the audience looking vertically down to the stairs landing. To "distract the audience and take their minds off what the camera was doing" (Hitchcock, 2017, p. 276/77) the director makes both characters, **mother** and son, engage in an argument where the mother refuses to hide in the fruit cellar. Her voice is strong and offensive, but it does not impede Norman

from carrying her downstairs. Before leaving the room, still insisting on being put down, the voice is closer and "brushes against the edge of the frame" (Chion, op. cit.), making the audience believe in an imminent embodiment. However, when they both leave the room, we can only see an indistinct body being carried by Norman, postponing the reveal.

Hitchcock uses camera movements and mise-en-scène, throughout the film, to leave the audience adrift, looking for an ungraspable signification to what they are seeing. A great example of this is when Lila (Vera Miles) is looking for the mother in the Bates' house. All the décor and objects in the house tell little about the person who lives there, culminating with the mysterious untitled book which content is never revealed. What the audience sees "are mere superficial hints of underlying mysteries" (Wood, op. cit., p. 111).

In Jaws, the motive in not revealing the shark is to allow a projection of fears to take place, ultimately making the monster more menacing as it remains a subject of our imagination. Throughout the film the audience knows more than the characters - we know there is a shark in the water before Chrissie goes for her night swim, and not long after our suspicions are confirmed. Then, we see multiple characters going into the water, from Brody's son Michael (Chris Rebello), who wants to swim with an open wound, to Alex Kintner, who begs to go back into the ocean for only "10 more minutes", given permission by his mother.

We know it is not safe to go into those waters... We know what is out there (even though we have never seen it)... And there is nothing we can do about it... We feel powerless and that is what makes us afraid.

In Psycho, however, what we see and do not see is to avoid knowing much more than the characters do. They are clueless about what is happening, and so are we. Why did mother kill Marion? In the scene previous to her death, whilst talking to Norman in the back parlour, the audience could assume that she was about to come clean and return the money. The idea of possible redemption left us at ease until she is killed with no apparent motive. It is the psychiatrist's exposition at the end of the film that gives the viewer a possible answer to why such atrocities were committed, allowing the audience to finally see.

Regarding the theme of seeing, Psycho and Jaws have many differences - what is being kept away from the public's eye, how cinematography and mise-en-scène are used as tools to manipulate the audience's expectations, and the reasons behind revealing and concealing certain aspects of the film. However, both use what is in and out of frame to contrast the audience and the characters' knowledge regarding what is happening and, by doing so, they create a unique sense of suspense and horror.

Still from Psycho (1960) dir. Alfred Hitchcock.

Still from Psycho (1960) dir. Alfred Hitchcock.

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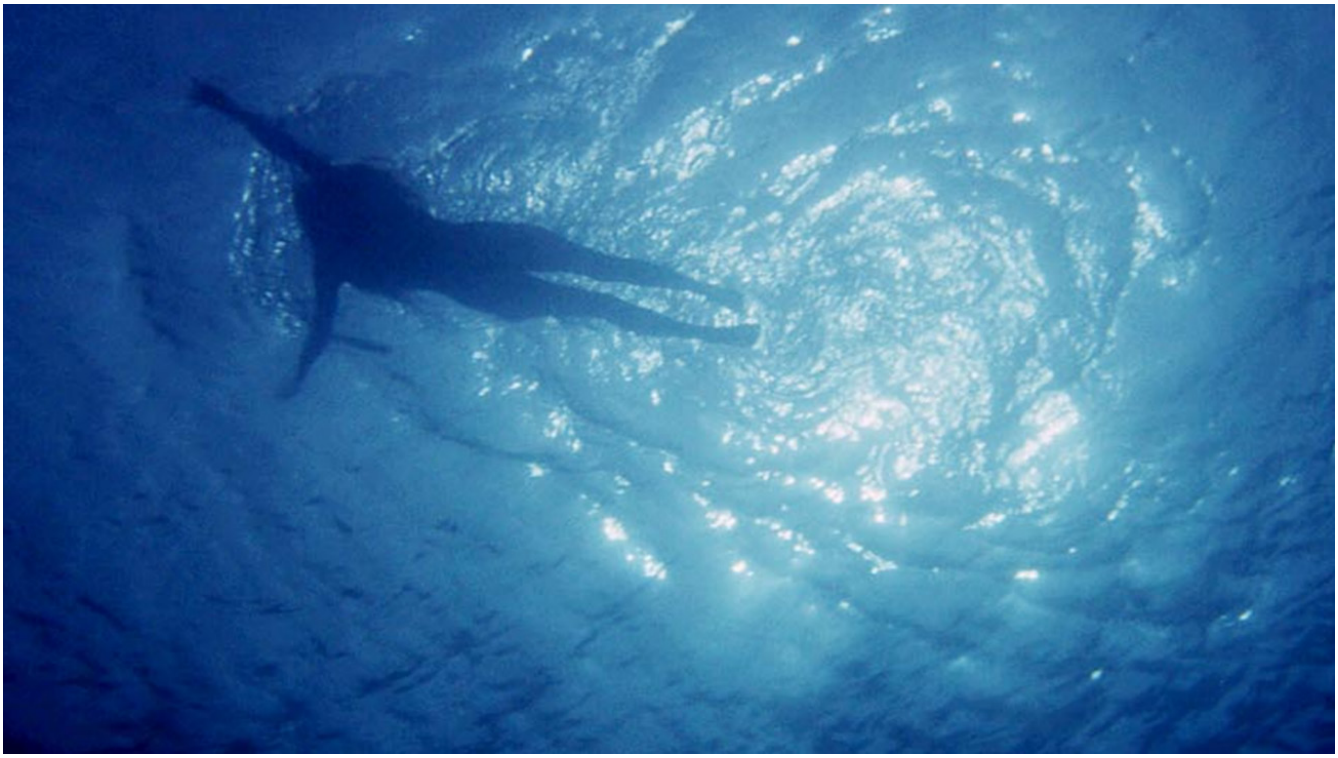

Still from Jaws (1975) dir. Steven Spielberg.

Tayarisha Poe's Selah and the Spades takes back control of the teen drama genre

by: **Inés Cases**

After a long lockdown, my Amazon Prime free trial was coming to an end and, being the stingy university student, I was not going to start paying for it. I skimmed through the options, rummaged through the Amazon Originals in hopes of discovering a hidden gem among the rubble of their back catalogue.

Then, I landed on Tayarisha Poe's Selah and the Spades (2019). A brooding teen drama polished in cold blues and dark greens, Poe's directorial debut is exactly the coming-of-age story we've been missing.

We follow Paloma, the new girl at an all too prim and proper Prep School where the student body is divided into five underground factions. The school seems completely oblivious to their existence, but adults have always overlooked the cliques and gossip, haven't they? It's all part of growing up.

But this is no child's play, especially when Paloma befriends senior Selah Summers. Ambitious, mysterious and supreme, Selah is the leader of the most powerful faction, the Spades. She takes a liking to Paloma and thinks she may even have finally found her successor. But power is difficult to let go of when you're already at the top, and suddenly, we find ourselves wrapped up in a ruthless game of control.

A critic darling at Sundance, what set this film apart isn't the story, but rather the way it's told. Poe's style is strikingly candid, closer to a fly-on-the-wall documentary than the beautified teen melodrama we're

Still from Selah and the Spades (2019) dir. Tayarisha Poe

so used to. Poe has elevated the teen drama genre by stripping away the invasive adult gaze. However, that doesn't mean that she shies away from the teen tropes we all know and relate to. There's this innate need to belong that runs through the whole film like a loose thread. She knows that teenagers crave nothing more than to find their place.

We have Paloma, played by Celeste O'Connor, the outsider who quickly realises she needs to fit in somewhere if she wants to survive. It would've been easy for Poe to direct all her energy into her side of the story because new girls are so easy to root for.

Instead we're most drawn to Selah. She has her place, she's at the top of the school, but Poe invites us to scratch deeper beneath the surface. Girls like Selah aren't Queen

B's forever. They're biding time, growing up, taking control of their bodies and their lives the only way they can - by controlling everything around them.

That leads to the most important monologue in the film. Selah introduces Paloma to the Spirit Squad, the school's cheerleaders, and during the rehearsal she looks directly into the camera and tells us what separates them from the other cheerleaders we've been introduced to in so many teen movies. They're in control of their bodies, their uniforms and their choreography. These girls are polite, well-trained but they're not people-pleasers. Selah makes it clear that they perform for no one but themselves.

So, what does it mean to be a teenager? Poe's answer is short and simple: it means being pushed, poked and prodded. You're moulded to how other people want you to be, to how they want you to act. But it also means taking back control. When you're on the cusp of adulthood, choices are made, lessons are learnt, and some people are bound to be lost along the way.
'Cause when you're seventeen you've gotta grab onto that control wherever you can hold tight for dear life,' Selah tells us, 'cause they always wanna take it from you, don't they?'

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AGFA and a Defence of Low Genres

by: **Iolo Williams**

B-movies and countercultural cinema scenes are often forgotten in broader discussion of film history. I don't mean movements like New French Extremity, I mean bad movies, filth and the sordid canon. The rise of it's so bad it's good! cinema - thanks in part to YouTube channels like RedLetterMedia (RLM) - has led to a high demand for wider access to trash films.

One such example is Twisters Revenge (1988) directed by Bill Redbane, which was covered on a spotlight episode of RLM's Best Of The Worst series. Released in May 2019, this episode used an old VHS copy of the film for the colour commentary, as is often the format of these bargain bin movies. However, this year, home release company Arrow Films announced a Redbane boxset which would include Twister's Revenge, a surprise to be sure but a welcome one. This allows RLM fans and trash fans to unite, purchase and own a slice of this in-demand trash.

With the cultural significance of film restoration and archiving coming to the forefront of film fan culture, companies like Criterion and Eureka are distributing cinematic classics and restoring them for high-definition home consumption. It is, in my opinion, high time that other companies follow suit, or rather raise the question of how important these processes are to cinema history and its preservation.

The American Genre Film Archive (AGFA) are at the forefront of this work, by both archiving and releasing restored prints of films for Hi-Def home consumption. It just so happens these films include Batpussy (1973) and an anthology collection of anti-drugs PSA's titled The Scare Film Archives Volume 1: DRUG STORIES! These films or para-artforms to film are lost to the public, sitting deep within the cultural miasma, waiting to be released. Admittedly, it takes a strange sort (well, me) to buy these home releases, but I feel that this

“I think as diligent film consumers and passionate fans of B-movies as a medium, we should accept all the ugly cousins at the table, all the sub-subgenres, all Futia-tinted gore filled orgy parodies.”

organization serves a much larger purpose within film history and its studies.

A fantastic example of AGFA’s efforts within archival history, and it’s knock-on effects throughout film studies, is the (now sold out) Blu-Ray release of the Wakaliwood Supa Action Volume 1 (2010) which brought Ugandan DIY commando cinema to the world of home releases. One of the films were available through the Wakaliwood website as a signed DVD, a product still available for the Supa fan, but it was a less than stellar release. Instead, the new AGFA release included many versions of the film, including with or without VJ Emmie, a range of adverts for future projects, short films, YouTube videos about the films, art, sound, and alternative reversible cover art for the Blu-Ray itself. It’s safe to say that the release was every B-Lovers dream. However, it also spoke to a larger cultural power that AGFA used effectively to empower the Wakaliwood filmmakers. A new global audience now had access to the DIY commando cinema, which had been severely lacking outside of memes and torrents, and gave back to the creators. Also, these films, Who Killed Captain Alex? (2010) and Bad Black (2016) both directed by Nabwana IGG, are now available to be rented from AGFA in Digital Cinema Packages (DCP). This changes a passionate set of films from internet fandom obscures to cinematic historical figures in a more concrete sense. It also sparked a tour for some of the actors and creators across North America.

But what is the importance of these films? Well, counter-culture is just as imperative as dominant culture. In some cases, it delivers scarily accurate premonitions of future events or trends. The original Fantastic Four movie (1994) is well engrained within the Filth Buff’s cultural dictionary. In 2020, Star Wars made a return to the Holiday Special format for a Disney+ release. But these are major IP’s, I hear you scream. The Wrong Turn (2003-2014) saga was revamped in 2021, Maniac (1980) was remade in 2012 with Elijah Wood in the starring role. These recurrences are just the cultural miasma spitting out its old relatives in new forms, though this doesn’t exactly speak to the beauty of these old rough cuts and forgotten gems.

Tommy Wiseau as Johnny in The Room (2003) dir. Tommy Wiseau

The truth of so bad it's good! is that they are enjoyable in a way that is not, in most cases, intended. Nevertheless, they are thoroughly entertaining, and attract a large cult following, which is what makes it so enjoyable! The collective spirit and cult value of the films is what should speak as evidence for their historic, cultural relevance. If Criterion can include The Rock (1996), they can include The Room (2003). After all, the latter had a much bigger impact on the world and so should be admired just as much. The reality is enjoyment is not the absolute factor in the 'value' of a film. If that were the case Forrest Gump (1994) wouldn't be held in such high regard; the matter of 'taste' is subjective, made objective by snooty award shows and critics. Boring films are considered good for what purpose? Because it's sad to watch a boat sink? Because it's thought-provoking to have someone explain why war is bad in a prolonged monologue over footage of the good guys getting killed?

The truth is that these films aren't good by any objective standard of cinematic value, they are good because they are enjoyed by the right people. 'Good' in this sense means worthy of high regard, and it's therefore given a coveted space in the film canon. These pieces of cinema often exclude 'low forms', a few make it through like John Waters' diverse work. Why is it then that we know about slasher films through the lens of only three examples? Are we as an audience afraid to admit that we like the violence in Cannibal Holocaust (1980)? Is there no place for controversial cornerstones in the great pantheon of cinematic classics?

Why are we not allowed to praise a film like Batpussy in the same breath as Citizen Kane (1941)? I assume you thought that title was a passing joke, but no, I'm afraid it's not. In the age of the internet, the porn parody has become a popular meme, however, this film is the original porn parody. Although it is officially dubbed by the companies involved, AGFA and Something Weird, as a sexploitation parody. The film follows the titular character as she stops 'dirty muthafuckas fucking' in Gothum City. This is as significant a film as Citizen Kane in its destruction of the rules and cinematic conventions, yet perhaps its content has held it back from archivists' interest and relegated it to obscurity. Luckily for film history, it has been given the status it deserves by these diligent film archivists and restoration artists.

Still from Cannibal Holocaust (1980)
dir. Ruggero Deodato

These 'low art' rule breakers are left in the sidelines from general audiences, something that perhaps I understand Cannibal Holocaust is trying at times. However, this does not excuse their omission from film archives and restoration efforts. Film is an entertainment media, if we were and are entertained why should we settle for bad VHS rips or Japanese subtitled torrents (as was the case for The Holy Mountain [1973] for many years). I think as diligent film consumers and passionate fans of B-movies as a medium, we should accept all the ugly cousins at the table, all the sub-subgenres, all Futia-tinted gore filled orgy parodies.

If I were reconstructing the grand palace of cinema, I would perhaps slide in some films from AGFA, Vinegar Syndrome, Second Run, Arrow Films, Something Weird, Shameless, and the weird and wonderful world of B-home releasing and film restoration. It would include Batpussy, Who Killed Captain Alex?, The Room, Cannibal Ferox (1981), Killing American Style (1988). For too long have the archives been dominated by Hitchcock, Fellini, Varda, Kurosawa and Kubrick. It is time for the rise of IGG, Redbane, Breen and Shervan. Preferably recorded on an old digital camera and narrated by VJ Emmie.

How Christopher Nolan's 'Dunkirk' will change the way Hollywood makes war blockbusters

by: **INÉS CASES**

Few filmmakers have elevated the blockbuster like Christopher Nolan. Known for his mind-bending storytelling and use of practical effects, he is arguably one of the best working today and it's his dedication to producing mainstream films with elements of unconventional cinema that makes him so singular as an auteur in Hollywood. You may, when referring to his greatest works so far, name titles like The Dark Knight (2008), Inception (2010) or maybe even an earlier film like the twisted thriller Memento (2000), and you would be completely in your right to favour them.

Nevertheless, I believe Dunkirk (2017) to be Nolan's defining masterpiece, and that always seems to surprise people. I've heard complaints of boredom, because for some, the film just didn't stick. Some have sighted the lack of character development, criticised the story or even blamed the overwhelming score. Ironically, I would tell them that it is exactly those choices that make the film so interesting to me.

To fully understand why Dunkirk is so unusual compared to other Second World War films, we need an overview of what audiences were used to seeing from this genre.

Hollywood's love affair with World War movies began before the First World War even ended in 1918 - Cecil B. DeMille's The Little American (1917) is considered to be the first Hollywoodian film about the Great War. These war blockbusters became a staple throughout the 20s and 30s with contributions from some of the industry's most acclaimed directors of the time, including John Ford and Alfred Hitchcock. When war broke out again in 1939, so did Hollywood's interest in the war movie.

The Second World War has always captured the American public's attentions, because unlike its predecessor, they felt directly threatened by what was happening in Europe and Asia. The assault on Pearl Harbour, for example, was not only a direct attack on their military, but an unprecedented attack on their silence. Theodore Roosevelt's decision to not participate in the war alongside the allied forces in 1939 was being provoked. The United

Still from Dunkirk (2017) dir. Christopher Nolan

States declared war on Japan, Germany and all other Axis powers the following day and civilians overwhelmingly supported this decision. This was a stark contrast to the reaction when they entered the First World War in 1917, at which point the public favoured neutrality. But suddenly men were going to war and the women and children at home didn't feel so distanced from the action.

It's also worth noting that the Second World War lasted a lot longer than the First. Fighting and warfare was taking place around Europe, East Asia and North Africa, so the events tend to be much more diverse. Casualties were greater too, especially for the American army, who from the 16 million who served in the United States Armed Forces lost over 400,000 souls. Compare these numbers to those of the First World War - 4 million deployed with 65,000 causalities - and it becomes apparent that civilians on the home front were losing loved ones at a much higher rate.

So, what does this have to do with the film industry?

Naturally, with all conflicts throughout history, there comes a time when ordinary people on the home front begin to get tired of their own worrying, grief and mourning. In the early 40s, the demand for cinematic escapism from working-class audiences increased. The public wanted laugh-out-loud comedies, thrilling action and epic romances. These movies didn't necessarily have to ignore the war; they just had to be far enough from the realities of war to make them feel optimistic about what their loved ones may be experiencing abroad.

In response, Hollywood's finest began directing, writing and producing a slew of movies. Some opened with tense action scenes and featured hopeless romance, like Michael Curtiz's Casablanca (1942). Others were made to rouse spirits, like Mrs Miniver (1942), which became a phenomenon in the States as it

took the emphasis away from the frontline and put ordinary women and domestic life in the spotlight. Wives of soldiers were inspired to support from afar and Winston Churchill, when asked about the impact of the film, stated that its impact was "worth more to the British cause than a hundred battleships". Granted, some films mentioned the violence of war, but the main consensus from the studios

"BUT NOLAN HAS STRIPPED HIS FILM OF ITS WORDS, LEAVING ONLY THE EYES, THE EARS AND THE RESULT IS ALMOST PRIMITIVE."

was to stick to light-hearted dramas. People needed relief just as much as they needed to be involved in the war effort.

The war ended in 1945 and so did America's interest in war movies. People grew tired of conflict and Hollywood entered a renaissance of comedy and musicals. For the first decade after the war, there was a general agreement that the past needed to be forgotten and studios moved away from their romanticised illustrations of warfare.

That was until David Lean's The Bridge on the River Kwai (1957) was released to rave reviews. It became the highest-grossing movie at the box office that year and took home the Academy Award for Best Picture. Set in a Japanese prison camp, the story follows Lieutenant Colonel Nicholson whose troops are tasked with building a bridge over the River Kwai. Conflict erupts amongst officers and soldiers as their loyalty to the allied cause is put into question. With the film's success, public interest in the Second World War was revitalised and, contrary to the romantic style of the 40s, audiences wanted grittier, more realistic depictions of the event.

The next milestone in war movies came with The Longest Day (1962) directed by Ken Annakin, Andrew Marton and Bernhard Wicki. Notable for its documentary-style realism, it follows officers and soldiers on different beaches of the D-Day landings. Most remarkable, however, is the personable dialogue moulded for the characters, because each soldier acts as a unique perspective of Operation Overlord.

The trend of world war movies never really died. In every decade leading up to the 21st century, there have always been big-budget blockbusters and Oscar winners. Demand may have decreased in the 70s when gangster films became a staple, but that decade still saw films like Patton (1970) and A Bridge Too Far (1977) achieve critical and box office success. The 80s saw a new interest in civilian stories as Sophie's Choice (1982) as focus shifted on warfare movies about Vietnam rather than the world wars.

However, one film seemed to single-handedly

revive the genre as a whole - Steven Spielberg's Saving Private Ryan (1998) was released to universal acclaim. Led by Tom Hank's Captain John Miller, the film follows a group of rangers tasked with bringing home Private Ryan after three of his brothers were killed in combat. Today, it is considered one of the most influential films of all time, especially famous for its take on the D-Day landing of Omaha beach. War films have always been violent in principle, but audiences had never seen bloodshed and killing on this scale. Dale Dye, a Marine Veteran who worked as the film's military advisor, stated: "I knew whatever else we did with that film, that sequence was going to live on" (Clark, 2018). Dye was right; Saving Private Ryan was a phenomenon and it's impossible to discuss the war genre without at least mentioning it.

It was so influential, in fact, that war movies released in the 2000s and early 2010s tried hard to recreate what Saving Private Ryan had. Clint Eastwood's Flags of Our Fathers (2006) didn't hold back on the graphic nature of battle, especially in the scene depicting the Battle of Iwo Jima. Handheld shots that gave the scene its sense of frantic chaos and the demurred colour palette was chosen to highlight any blood and severed limbs. David Ayer's Fury (2014), a more recent contribution, was also heavy-handed with the bloodshed and chauvinistic portrayal of the soldiers. Mel Gibson's Hacksaw Ridge (2016) is another film notable for its bloody depiction of battle, and though Gibson rarely relied on computer visual effects, he did use them to add more blood and injury to the battle scenes to emphasise the violence.

It would be wrong to say that Nolan's Dunkirk was not influenced by Saving Private Ryan as well. Spielberg's influence is clear in the close-up shot of Fionn Whitehead's Private Tommy burying his head in the sand to brace himself from the dive bombers. Reminiscent of Tom Hank's Captain Miller, he slumps down on the beach of Omaha speechless at the

Frames comparing Spielberg's Saving Private Ryan (1998) and Nolan's Dunkirk (2017)

violence he is witnessing. This is their shared "language of horror", as Nolan stated, after also mentioning Lewis Milestone's All Quiet on the Western Front (1930) as an influential film in the development process.

The film takes us back to that infamous week in 1940 when the "core and brain of the British Army", as described by then-Prime Minister Winston Churchill, were stranded on the French beach, waiting to be either killed or captured. A miracle came in the form of Operation Dynamo, the largest military evacuation the world had ever seen at the time, and over 300,000 men were brought home to Britain. Nolan, who has always featured time as a prominent theme throughout his filmography, chooses to crossover three storylines that take place at different times: one follows a young private on the beach as he spends the week trying to find a way home; another follows a civilian vessel occupied by Mr Dawson, his son and a teenage volunteer as they go out to Dunkirk for a day to help; and the last follows a couple of spitfire pilots with one hour of fuel in the tank. The storyline are interwoven together to produce two hours heart-pumping action. Hans Zimmer provides a score that is so loud it's almost frightening and, in a way, it leaves no room for talking.

But that's exactly what remains so remarkable about Dunkirk, unlike films such as The Longest Day and Saving Private Ryan, the whole film has been stripped of its dialogue. We follow the characters in the air, on the sea and beach, but the lack of development makes them so impersonal to us that our main focus becomes Dunkirk itself. "It's a different film", stated main editor Lee Smith, "there's very little dialogue. [...] It was kind of like editing a silent movie. [Nolan] wanted you to experience what it was like to be one of those characters."

Still from Dunkirk (2017) dir. Christopher Nolan

By stripping the characters of their backstory, they suddenly embody every man who fought to escape Dunkirk. Nolan's objective was never to give his audience an emotive story, but rather, a more isolated experience of what it was actually like to be there.

The impact of Nolan's choice to break away from the usual character-driven tropes in the war genre is already being felt. Sam Mendes' First World War epic 1917 (2019) received widespread acclaim but was also noted for its similarities to Nolan's film two years prior. Both follow soldiers with little to no backstory, leaving the location, cinematography and thunderous score take centre stage instead. Both films were nominated for multiple Academy Awards and were hugely successful at the box offices, and only time will tell if more filmmakers will venture in the same direction.

For decades, directors have relied on the people in war movies to provide that emotional connection. After all, war has always been fought by humans, and so surely we need that mouthpiece to navigate us through it.

But Nolan has stripped his film of its words, leaving only the eyes, the ears and the result is almost primitive. Tommy, for example, isn't a man who wants to survive to see his family or home, or any other individual details that provide a backstory. Tommy is merely a man who wants to survive, same as every man on the beach.

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How Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela (2013) adapts the Colonial Bard

by: **Chiana Dickson**

Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Goliyon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela (2013) presents not only an adaptation of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet but a piece of cinema that writes back to the empire that enforced the study of such out of place works in their culture in the first place. This adaptation of a classical text in a postcolonial world may be accurately summed up by Helen Tiffin's idea of "canonical counter-discourse" (Tiffin, 1987) in that Bollywood revisions of the "colonial bard" remove the past coloniser's superiority over a text or cannon. This is achieved by maintaining some of the plays original themes whilst assuming a more culturally appropriate tone.

The dismantling of supposed literary superiority through film, however, is an interesting one. Whilst adaptations of any kind can be seen as problematic, the adaptation of a colonizing text to fit with contemporary India's cultural issues prompts questions not only of fidelity to Western source material but also about the creation of an intertextual film through the conflation of Western writing with indigenous texts and myths. With regards to Ram-Leela specifically, one may apply Harold Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence: the idea that an adaptation is haunted at all times by the legacy of the original text (also discussed by Hutcheon). This means that Ram-Leela's ideological correction of the Western play and its ambition to reduce Western power over the story was at risk of failing. This essay intends to argue that specifically because of its format, Ram-Leela can renegotiate Romeo and Juliet's influential power through a post-colonial adaptation of language into physical action and the creation of a "double-genesis" that incorporates many indigenous sources (Goff, 2014, pp.6).

There's a history, according to Nandi Bhatia, of Indian visual spectacle such as plays and film creating "carefully couched messages of protest through re-representations of the plays" (Bhatia, 1998, pp.98) A key element to remember in this analysis of Ram-Leela is that during colonial rule there was an emphasis in schools on the importance of the mimicry of Shakespearean language and memorisation of speeches from his plays. This makes Bhansali's decision to remove

"When one applies post-colonial theories of adaptation to a film such as Ram-Leela we get a work that modifies the original text of Romeo and Juliet through a variety of forces and factors, namely processes of intertextualising and re-culturing."

language in certain scenes of his film and rely solely on props and physical direction all the more important as it removes oppressive rhetoric altogether. When Ram and Leela meet, Bhansali made the creative decision to remove conversation and in doing so, removed one of the most famous lines of Romeo and Juliet, "my lips two blushing pilgrims [...] give me my sin again" (Shakespeare, 2000, pp.54). Many critics, one being Cedric Watts, have commented on the significant weight the nature of language has in Shakespearian work which is usually saturated with paradoxical wordplay (Watts, 2000, pp.19). In the removal of speech, we begin to see this negotiation of overpowering colonial influence as the speeches that would have been memorised as part of 'cultural civilisation' are erased from modern practices. Despite directly removing Indian voices from the scene, the film surmounts the prospect of silencing past colonial people's voices (and therefore risks subjugating them) by transferring narrative power to the music that accompanies the action on screen. In the dance between Leela and Ram, traditional Bollywood style music dominates the auditory experience and adapts the themes of the original speech - for example, "I tasted blood [...] lips meet lips" - so that the power of the story is handed over to Indian heritage. In light of the removal of verbal communication, the film relies instead on the integration of indigenous Hindu symbolism through visual spectacle to adapt Act 1 Scene 5 in order to reclaim Indian history and produce a different dominant source material. The setting of the meeting at the Holi festival, for example, places the source plot at the mercy of post-colonial culture as the party is integral to the meeting of Romeo and Juliet. Post-colonial adaptation theories can be seen here to put colonising source texts to one side through the introduction of native religious intertextuality which removes the possibility of the Western text overpowering this adaptation. What's more is the introduction of intertextuality through the final religious festival, Navratri which is synonymous with 'Rama Lila' - this being a dramatic re-enactment of the life of the previously exiled Rama and the triumph of good over evil. Just as the film is seen as an adaption of Romeo and Juliet, it could equally be seen as a direct adaption of this native Indian tale instead, and again this dismisses the anxiety of the influence of the coloniser through

Still from Golivon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela (2013) dir. Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

the incorporation of aboriginal sources.

The films modern adaption of original renaissance costumes distinctly places Ram in the early 2000s of Western clothing, contrasting those around him after his return from exile. Whilst not as noticeable in his meeting with Leela, the Western precedent this sets creates a significant altercation in the 'stand-off' with his Indian Juliet. The use of his water pistol in counter to her loaded gun displays a significant shift in authority with the Indian woman dominating the relationship from the beginning; just as Leela is more powerful than a Westernized figure, post-colonial India has come out more powerful than the UK, especially in world economics. Moreover, in the creation of this visually Westernised Ram who is also an aspiring pacifist from the base subject of Romeo - an emotionally aggressive boy who glorifies fighting through a comparison to love "oh brawling love [...] she will not stay the siege of loving terms" (Shakespeare, pp.40-1), Bhansali is lowering the position of the West directly by offering adapted figures

who were once a brutal regime but are now significantly weaker. This is a message mirrored in the next scene through the meeting of Karsan (Paris) and Baa (Capulet). The Western figure is placed at the Indians feet, visually lowering them in status below the past-colonist, and is forced, despite trying to communicate in English, to speak the native tongue. In the face of violence, Karsan is visibly shaken (a stark contrast to the boastful Paris of the original play) and we immediately see the unsuitability of the match - a metaphor, perhaps, for the incompatibility of Western influence and literature in Indian culture. This is arguably conveyed again later through the assertion that "relationships are not made at gunpoint" which whilst at first may relate to the relationship of Leela with Karsan and Ram, can be applied convincingly to the brutal repossession of India by England in the 1850s.

On the other hand, the meeting scene also initially becomes problematic when one considers the Hindu symbolism in the clothing of Leela. The saffron yellow colour Leela wears in the first meeting is symbolic of purifying fire as it burns any impurity in the

Still from Golivon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela (2013) dir. Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

soul. In light of this, one may see the water pistol in the hands of Ram as extinguishing this flame, leaving Leela just as Romeo left Juliet and England left India tainted and corrupt. Desmond and Hawkes asserted that a reason for film adaptation may be educational as "a pedagogical medium that teaches the masses about their literary heritage" (Desmond and Hawkes, 2013, pp.493). If this is indeed the case, one could take this as an optical allegory for the power England once exercised in India. The previous assessment of Ram as a mildly Westernised figure corrupts the virgin Leela's purity just as a once virgin untouched land was plausibly raped by colonisers for its resources and labour. This provides a precarious, lingering reminder that India may never truly be able to rebel against an event that has already happened and had such a profound impact. That said, Bhansali chooses to omit any consummation of Ram and Leela's relationship and therefore removes the sexual encounter between Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare's original text. This becomes important when one

Still from Golivon Ki Raasleela Ram-Leela (2013) dir. Sanjay Leela Bhansali.

considers that Leela is arguably untainted by Westernisation as she refuses the Western marriage arrangement. She is never fully exploited and therefore Ram (emblematic of the West) was never able to have a crippling lasting effect on her. The film cleverly depicts the conservation of purity through the adaptation of Western tales into an Indian context as, despite intrusion, it presents itself as relatively unsullied. Unlike the unfortunate Juliet whose innocence, through her naivety and devotion to her dominating figure, was ultimately stained forever.

In conclusion, when one applies post-colonial theories of adaptation to a film such as Ram-Leela we get a work that modifies the original text of Romeo and Juliet through a variety of forces and factors, namely processes of intertextualising and re-culturing. The impact of this is resounding and demonstrates the appeal that Romeo and Juliet has to contemporary readers, especially when one considers the energy the play carries in terms of its rage, vitality and volatility set in a divided world where leaders offer no coherent guidance. This fictitious scenario is a reality in India where the supposedly unifying empire fractured the country and effectively abandoned the true needs and wants of its colonised people. Ram-Leela talks back to the empire and dismantles it in the process.

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Spike Lee, Independent Cinema and an Intervention into Hollywood

by: **Sarah Andrews**

Hollywood built up much of its film system around the aspiration to commercial success. A standardisation of filmic genres, character stereotypes and actors, with just enough variety to keep audiences coming back, creating what Bazin calls 'the genius of the system' (Andre Bazin, cited in Douglas Smith, 2013, p.3). Along with this 'genius', therefore, came a repeatability of thematic and stylistic techniques in making films that produce commercial and aesthetically artistic efficiency. Where, for Hollywood, '[E]ach studio has a personality, each studio's product [showing] special emphases and values', (Leo Rosten, 1932, cited in Richard Maltby, 2003). For Independent cinema it then became the director who lay claim to this 'personality', not the studio, to create films as an auteur in line with whichever emphases or values they instead seek to present. Spike Lee is a quintessential example of this type of director with 'a vision and an agenda' (Janice Richolson, 1991, p.12) who suggested in an interview that the reason some other films worked so well was because 'they took the camera out of the studio and shot and documented what people were going through' (Spike Lee cited in T. McGowan, 2014, p.143). Lee is a director who not only used the content of his films to intervene into Hollywood, but also to intervene behind the scenes into the day to day lives of viewers, putting the lives of ordinary people, in particular African Americans onto the screen. This essay aims to explore the various formal features and subject matter in Lee's films to investigate how they may contribute to a departure or challenging of or create a controversiality within the Hollywood film system. Sequentially, a discussion will be built up debating whether this 'intervention' can be recognised as significant or not.

One of, if not the most prominent aspect of Lee's films is his inclusivity of, and attention drawn to, the African American community. Primarily, this is shown through the selection of cast members in most of Lee's films, who allow him to project his views about African

American society both on them and through them, into a milieu comprising still more African Americans. This idea is put froward by Lee himself, saying that 'Every group, every culture and ethnic group needs to see itself on screen' (Spike Lee cited in Janice Richolson, 1991, p. 12). What makes this an intervention into Hollywood then is the fact that Lee is presenting a type of reality that, for the time, wasn't commonly seen in film; the quotidian and unspectacular elements in the lives of ordinary people and places, in particular African Americans. Secondarily, Lee demonstrates his inclusivity through his selection of crew members, saying that 'It was not common to see on these sets any black [crew member]. That's changed now, and that didn't happen overnight' (Spike Lee cited in T. McGowan, 2014, p.143). In much the same way that African American influence in wars has helped to contribute socially to a progressive change against prejudice and racism, with Lee saying that '[w]hether people want to hear it or not, this country has evolved' (Spike Lee cited in T. McGowan, 2014, p.142), there is much to suggest that Lee wanted to encourage this same evolution through his films.

As seen in She's Gotta Have It (1986), Lee extends his passion for African American representation through direct reference to other, famous African Americans. He makes use of the mise-en-scene in Nola Darling's apartment through her artwork to highlight the significance of black history and to emphasise that it should be acknowledged as something important. It is a political and racial statement, addressing any cinema

"LEE IS A DIRECTOR WHO FUNCTIONS AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR DEBATE IN GENERATING IMPRESSIONISTIC VIEWS SURROUNDING HIS WORK AND PROVOKING CONTROVERSY AND DISCUSSION."

audience members to recognise that, as Nola suggests to Mars, it is something you are supposed to know'; in this instance that something being 'Malcolm's birthday' (Malcolm X). The artwork too is used to redirect viewers' real-life attention to moments of black prejudice, as the camera focuses on a cut-out newspaper statement saying 'honor student slain by cop'. In this shot, Lee makes use of an unbalanced angle to encourage the viewer to notice the statement and perhaps also to suggest or remind them that there is something more sinister and incorrect about it. In these ways and more, Lee makes the decision to move away from mainstream Hollywood and strives to 'once again [address] racism in films' (Earl Sheridan, 2006, p.178) both on and off the screen. What makes this move significant is that it occurred at a time when 'Black power movements [had] cooled' meaning these typed of 'films also ceased' (Earl Sheridan, 2006, p.178), and so, Lee essentially fought

against the current of social interest to try and refocus viewers' attention to aspects of race. Thus, by incorporating an all-encompassing approach to race into his films, Lee already begins to follow what Geoff King suggests as one of the three key dimensions of independence from Hollywood in offering a 'challenging perspective on social issues' (Geoff King, 2009).

Somewhat controversially however, this set up of an attitude in the film to support active acknowledgement of black history is later altered. In one scene, Mars, played by Lee, jumps onto Nola's bed showing her some 'special African moves' and exclaiming 'oo ba a oo' as if intimidating an African language. This introduces potentially the largest fault in the film as the propensity to be didactically misleading or confusing. Is Nola's reaction to laugh at this performance designed to encourage the audience to ignore the aforementioned seriousness built around race in the film, and to laugh with her? Or is it intended to trigger a sensation of disappointment in seeing a woman, apparently so passionate about her race, proceed to laugh at it? This seemingly irreverent approach is continued through dialogue between characters in the film with one man (Greer) referring to the other leading male characters as 'ignorant, low-class ghetto negroes.' In this instance, however, Lee rather than being facetious is most likely reiterating the importance of racial pride, making use of Greer as a man attempting to seem something other and stereotypically whiter than he is. This point is exposed when Mars names Greer a 'pseudo-Blackman' and again during a sexual scene with Nola; non-diegetic, tribal-sounding African music adds an element of tradition and historical relevance which is ironically absent in Greer as he dresses and styles his hair in a Western manner. In this way, it becomes harder to clearly interpret Lee's initial intentions within the film and can leave the question hanging of whether Lee's intervention racially with this film is truly significant, or if Lee is in fact following narrative tendencies of Hollywood not to 'tell their audiences a story' but instead 'show the actions and events from which viewers can construct the story.' (Richard Maltby, 2003, p.469)

Films made later by Lee such as Malcolm X (1992), BlacKkKlansman (2018) and Bamboozled (2000), present a stronger voice and clearer argument for racial emancipation, showing men and women more consistently passionate about race. Bamboozled for example, rather than using comedy or artwork to suggest the need to still fight for racial equality that is apparent in She's Gotta Have It, far more powerfully exposes this need head on through a more modern satire. Black actors are shown controversially performing in blackface makeup to a positively receiving audience, filled by both white and black people alike, which blatantly resurfaces how little society has progressed or potentially even regressed. Lee utilises dialogue to put forward powerful and defensive arguments as a main character exclaims 'These are negroes we are talking about, not some lab mice in a cage [...] We do not all think, look and act alike'. And yet this very same

character later also claims that 'No one in any way, shape or form should be censored [...] Because who is to judge? Who is to stand and say this is right or this is not?'. Lee is speaking directly and didactically to his viewers here just as he does in Malcolm X, encouraging his audiences to stay awake to taboo, controversy and in this case, racism in society. This then secures Lee's intervention racially into the Hollywood system where She's Gotta Have It may not have succeeded. Another aspect of directorial influence which Lee uses to force the reader to remain attentive is his use of editing. By detaching from '[d]evices such as "invisible editing"' (Richard Maltby, 2003, p.469) and choosing instead to deliberately disrupt the smoothness of continuity editing, Lee here intervenes into the Hollywood film system stylistically rather than thematically. Immediate evidence of this can be seen in She's Gotta Have It in the way Lee utilises a photographic montage sequence and accompanying jazz piece to mark some transitions of space and time in the film, such as a large jump from Summer into Winter or a smaller jump where Jaime takes the train to Nola's apartment. Unusually but intriguingly, Lee also uses this transitional editing at the start of the film as if to suggest the viewer too is making a jump, into the film. It is worth noting here that the use of jazz throughout the film is significant. The music, unlike in the majority of Hollywood cinema, transfers from diegetic to non-diegetic sound as it forms a theme song which plays

Still from BlacKkKlansman (2018) dir. Spike Lee

over sections of the film as well an in them, be it in a dance performance, being whistled or visibly played on piano. The improvisational qualities associated with jazz too are important in reflecting the freedom of style seen in the film, a freedom that is reflected in the unusual take on a documentary style. Handheld camera movement and a coolness to the acting style allows a more casual depiction of people and places in the film. In one instance a shot of an empty road hovers almost awkwardly on the screen for around 5 seconds awaiting a character to enter the scene. Unlike in Hollywood cinema where the camera works to operate, almost undetectably, around the actors, here it is almost as if the actors operate around the camera. This idea is exemplified in a comedic scene where the character of Mars cycles and crashes into the camera, as if to say he has made the mistake and not the camera operator.

It is unequivocal that '[e]diting renders Lee's camera movements and angles more visible' (Delphine Letort, 2016, p.12), with one striking and yet seemingly unnecessary use of an aerial shot presenting Nola's apartment to appear like a theatrical stage rather than a filmic scene; depicting her bed centralised in the room with actors and furniture framing it. At another point in the film, this same aerial perspective switches to and from repeating shots at an ever-increasing pace in concurrence with a distinctive mash up of traditional African and contemporary jazz music. Seen in the film Bamboozled too, is a different approach to using repeating shots in that Lee plays over short shots exactly as they are. This creates a feeling of déjà vu and yet simultaneously naturally leads the viewer to focus more closely, wondering for a second if it is their own mind or the film that has created this blip in time. These dramatic and abstract style choices indicate a clear way in which Lee intervenes into the comparably smooth and faultless aspirations visible in the Hollywood cinema style. He unapologetically draws attention to various formal features in his films, encouraging the formation of a type of viewer opposite to that sought by Hollywood. Lee is not looking for an 'ideal spectator' who is 'capable of forgetting his or her physical circumstances.' (Richard Maltby, 2003, p.463) Instead, he wants the viewer to be an active participant in watching the film, to notice how it is structured and look for any references it makes. It is as Kellner suggests, that Lee '[requires] an active reader to produce the meanings' out of such an 'open and polyvocal' (Douglas Kellner, 1997) style of directing and storytelling.

The role of gender and sexuality also plays a thematic role in She's Gotta Have It. In watching the film however, much of the edifying results of the film come across as ultimately nonprogressive or as Hooks suggests 'not satisfying'. (Bell Hooks, 2008, p.9) The film, rather than presenting an autonomous woman with a liberated sexual desire instead is exposing a power battle primarily between three men. The storyline largely revolves around control and if Nola has a role to play, for the most part, it is losing it. Examples of where this occurs crop up time and again throughout the film where

Nola takes a step towards authority and then allows it to slip out of her grasp, at one-point retorting to the fact that the men wanted to '[decide her fate] by the flip of a coin'. The epitome of this subjection to male influence is shown through a rape scene where in response to the question of 'Who's pussy is this?' Nola replies to Jaime 'it's yours'. The ending of the film poses the potential for an extent of redemption when Nola directly addresses the audience 'it's about control, my body, my mind, who's gonna own it, them? Or me?'. There is so much promise in this statement and yet despite implicitly suggested finality, the closure of returning control to Nola is never fully made as the words 'it's mine' are never at last spoken.

It seems that although Lee may have a positive, and even feminist, goal for women in film saying of Sloan in Bamboozled that she was, the 'most sympathetic and the most intelligent' (Spike Lee cited in George Crowdus and Dan Georgakas, 2001) character, in effect he has presented some women who fail to wholly achieve their desires and in fact diminish into comparably weaker versions of their character. They become closer to what Hollywood may categorize as damsels in distress with Piehowski suggesting that 'Lee abandons Sloan to the stereotype of a mad black woman. From such a perceptive director this failure is jarring'. (Victoria Piehowski, 2012, p.1) Thus, while Lee's films may break Hollywood gender and sexuality stereotypes about what is physically presented on screen, they do not seem to break the stereotypes themselves. Women with power or liberation are deemed incapable of controlling it and Western precedence of romanticism and fidelity are seen to be more respected than any level of sexual liberation secured by Nola, even though 'the possessive arrangements of an ideology of romantic love were a bad, White male idea in the first instance.' (Houston A. Baker Jr, 1993, p.165)

Overall, Lee is a director who functions as a springboard for debate in generating impressionistic views surrounding his work and provoking controversy and discussion. His lack of didactic clarity is able to act both as a critique in making his political statements weaker as well as a praise, where the ambiguity instead is the very thing that adds a level of significance in initiating discussion and maintaining attention from viewers. What Lee may lack in direct thematical strength in films such as She's Gotta Have It, he makes up for in the triggering of such debates as well as the production of other more serious films. Even in She's Gotta Have It, where the political, racial, or sexual messages may be potentially misleading, Lee instead pulls through stylistically with a creative use of editorial choices. A more modernist take on an interview documentary style, as well as a combination of inventive music, camera angles and an absence of spectacle in exchange for a focus on the everyday proves Lee to be an inventive and aspirational director, endeavouring to explore something new and most importantly, detached from the Hollywood film system. Although it may be true to say that intervening elements such as these may not all be unique or original

to Lee, what becomes significant is that they perpetuate over time with Lee and other directors in the Independent sector of film continuing to experiment with film and challenge the classical security of mainstream cinema. Just as Lee noted how the works of Gordon Parks and Michael Schultz etc 'paved the way... for me!', he and other directors like him continue to pave the way for future Independent directors and in doing so make a grander combined and largely significant intervention into the Hollywood film system.

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Magical Realism: the Fairy-tale of the Future?

by: **Ethan Blan**

When we think of a fairy-tale, the things that come to mind may be magical beings, a fantasy world, or a parable-like story that teaches us a lesson about life. Each of these aspects, among countless others, contribute to what we know to be fairy-tales.

We might think of Cinderella, for example, a classical tale about a servant girl who overcomes her dreadful circumstances to attend a ball and fall in love with a Prince, with the help of a little magic. Stories like Cinderella aim to create a world unlike our own; a world that feels magical, yet vaguely believable.

Centuries after Cinderella was first told, following many advances in technology and science, a new genre of fairy-tale was born - magical realism. Made famous by such filmmakers as Guillermo del Toro through Pan's Labyrinth (2006), Tim Burton in Edward Scissorhands (1990) and Hayao Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli films, including Spirited Away (2001).

Magical realist films are often clearly visually and narratively linked to classical fairy-tales, as Tracie D. Lukasiewicz notes, "Magical realism's fairy tale happenings are taken out of that genre's world, where they are a normal part of life..." (Lukasiewicz, 2010). A notable convention carried over from classical fairy-tales into magical realist films is the female protagonist - think Goldilocks, Little Red Riding Hood. Worlds of magical realism portray a binary world; a world both familiar and unfamiliar; one where magic exists, yet life as we know it, continues.

This essay seeks to investigate a number of magical realist films and their conventions in relation to the classical fairy-tale, all the while answering whether magical realism is the fairy-tale genre of generations to come.

The Magic of Studio Ghibli's Realism

Perhaps one of the most notable examples of magical realism in contemporary cinema; Hayao Miyazaki's animated films (produced by Studio Ghibli) are each a love letter to the classical fairy-tale.

In an interview with Midnight Eye, Miyazaki said of stories, "I believe that stories have an important role to play in the formation of human beings, that they can stimulate,

Still from Howl's Moving Castle(2004) dir. Hayao Miyazaki

amaze and inspire their listeners", (Miyazaki, Hayao Miyazaki, 2002). Here, Miyazaki echoes the notion that, while a story should indeed entertain its audience, a good story teaches the audience a lesson; improves them as a person - something Miyazaki clearly tries to accomplish with his films.

Princess Mononoke (1997), for example, appears to be a parable about climate change and the environment, communicated through its secondary narrative arc - a war between magical, fantastical protectors of nature, and a forest-destroying, industrialist Queen. In his book 'Starting Point', Miyazaki notes:

"Anime may depict fictional worlds, but...at its core it must have a certain realism. Even if the world depicted is a lie, the trick is to make it seem as real as possible. Stated another way, the animator must fabricate a lie that seems so real viewers will think the world depicted might possibly exist." (Miyazaki, Starting Point, 2009)

In Princess Mononoke, we are presented a world of oppression and corruption, symbolised by 'Iron Town', a city of forges, chimneys and enslaved peoples. Which, under the leadership of Lady Eboshi, strips the surrounding land of all nature. In a specific scene, Eboshi personally fires upon beings who attempt to replant trees in the vicinity of Iron Town; somewhat comparable to deforestation in the Amazon, as invaders destroy the habitats of the natives.

In a world in which the environment is of

increasing importance, it is understandable that this topic would appear in a fairy-tale, if indeed fairy-tales are meant as parables.

Miyazaki's Howl's Moving Castle (2004), meanwhile, is a clear parable of pacifism, in the wake of the Iraq War, which Miyazaki was very much against. Carl and Garrath Wilson explain that, "[Howl's] magical abilities will become co-opted into a great industrial war machine that serves little purpose other than nihilistic destruction" (Wilson & Wilson, 2015). This shows the utility of magic in Studio Ghibli films – it is used not necessarily for good and to create amazing things (as is the case in classical fairy-tales; Cinderella's horse and cart, for example). Rather, as would realistically be the case, magic is used to wage war, to manipulate and to kill; magic is simply another tool that can be used for human destruction.

"PERHAPS IN THE PROBLEM-FILLED WORLD OF TODAY THESE LESSONS MUST BE TOLD IN SUCH A WAY, AS MIYAZAKI CHOOSES, TO HELP THE PEOPLE OF TOMORROW LIVE IN A BETTER WORLD."

As in the shot above, war is given its own callous beauty, seemingly calm as the planes float above the clouds. Miyazaki's films often blend a fantasy world, in all its glory, with the dirt and destruction of war or industry.

As fairy-tales, the films of Studio Ghibli are visually stunning, presenting magical characters and worlds only Miyazaki could think up. Though the stories told in these films offer lessons which, despite being of great importance, are cruel and clear. Perhaps in the problem-filled world of today these lessons must be told in such a way, as Miyazaki chooses, to help the people of tomorrow live in a better world.

Guillermo del Toro's Fairy-tales

Renowned for his dark, fantastical films, Guillermo del Toro is a filmmaker like no other. In an interview about his 2006 film Pan's Labyrinth, he said, "I believe that fairy-tales are a way for us to understand the world...they were originally created to tackle inner struggles in a fable" (Toro, 2007). Del Toro very clearly understands what makes a good fairy-tale; his films Pan's Labyrinth and The Shape of Water (2017) (which won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 2017) are commonly referred to as fairy-tales, as Tracie Lukasiewicz describes del Toro's Pan's Labyrinth as a, "dark and vicious fairy tale" (Lukasiewicz, 2010).

In his film the Shape of Water, del Toro tells the unlikely and problematic love story of a mute woman, Elisa, and a fish man (referred to as 'the Amphibian Man') in Cold War America. Shape is a dark yet beautiful film, set in a nondescript American town. The love between Elisa and

the Amphibian Man is arguably the antithesis of how a classical fairy-tale would present love between two characters.

Their first meeting, for example, is set in a dirty, shadowy laboratory, which compared with Cinderella's first meeting with the Prince - in the ballroom of a castle - is the visual opposite. We can infer the meaning of this antithetical visual choice by del Toro to be that 'love can be found anywhere' - a simple parable, albeit void due to the persecution that Elisa and her lover receive from the Government authorities. Therefore, the message of the film ought to be, 'love can be found anywhere, though you may not be allowed to live in happiness', itself the antithesis of many classical fairy-tales.

Alberta Natasia Adji argues that the film, "focuses on how racial exclusion and social inequality patterns are explored and applied to capture the ways of life of the "others" (Adji, 2019), which can be reflected through the characters of Elisa (a mute), Zelda (a black woman) and the Amphibian Man. Each of these characters are somewhat outsiders from mainstream American society in the 1960s. Therefore, they reflect the notion that anything is possible if you work together, despite your differences. As an immigrant to the United States himself, del Toro would surely have endorsed this as the parable of his film.

Still from Birdman (2015) dir. Alejandro González Iñárritu

Birdman and the Psychological Fairy-tale

Alejandro Gonzales Iñárritu's Birdman (Or the Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) (2014) is as tragic as fairy-tales come; a film that deals with mental health through the lens of magical realism. Riggan (Michael Keaton) is an outdated Hollywood superhero actor who attempts to put together a Broadway play, all the while dealing with his inner-alter-ego 'Birdman', a winged superhero.

'Birdman' comes to encapsulate Riggan's precarious mental state, his dark side, if you will. As in the shot seen below, 'Birdman' controls Riggan, tempting him to become someone that he is not, telling Riggan, 'you save people from their boring miserable lives', clearly a falsehood, as Riggan is an obsolete actor. No one cares about him, except himself and those who believe they can profit from him. Birdman is what Riggan wishes he was but knows he cannot be.

All of this culminates in the film's ending, in which Riggan jumps out of the window of his hospital bed. The result is left ambiguous - either he kills himself or he flies among the birds as his inner self, Birdman - Iñárritu gives his audience the choice to decide for themselves which is the real ending. Maria Izquierdo explains, "the conflation of the two endings further establishes an association between artistic creativity, mental illness, and supernatural abilities" (Izquierdo, 2019).

Therefore, Birdman is a parable about mental health, using magic and fantasy as a means of portraying Riggan's mental struggles and, in the end, his suicide. Whilst certainly not a fairy-tale meant for children, Birdman is a story we can all learn from - a way for the argument for better mental healthcare to be delivered to wider audiences - through entertainment. Iñárritu's film is certainly not a fairy-tale in its traditional sense, but in some ways, it strives to achieve what classical fairy-tales strove to do; to teach audiences a lesson.

Conclusion: The Future of the Fairy-tale

To answer the question as to whether magical realism constitutes the fairy-tale of future generations, we must first ask why people read and watch fairy-tales. Not only do we learn things from fairy-tales, but we also seek comfort in the magical lands and characters presented to us. Fairy-tales are similar to cinema in that regard; escapism relaxes the mind like nothing else.

If the mind escapes to the dark world of Guillermo del Toro's Pan's Labyrinth or the war-torn land of Howl's Moving Castle, how do we truly escape? Alberto Rios describes it as such: "Magical realism is not escapist; it's there, witnessing" (Rios, 2015). Should a fairy-tale world be unrecognisable to us - if it reminds us of our own world; the horrors of war, poverty and death - is it a fairy-tale after all?

Perhaps, fairy-tales serve a different function in our modern age. In a world of climate change, overpopulation, terrorism and technology. Fairy-tales must be truthful, even painfully so.

As Hayao Miyazaki said, “stories have an important role to play in the formation of human beings, that they can stimulate, amaze and inspire their listeners”, (Miyazaki, Hayao Miyazaki, 2002). What better way to teach future generations to respect their planet and each other (and the dangers that may arise if they fail to do so), than through the genre of the fairy-tale?

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Il Contorto Fiume:
Mario Bava and A Genealogy of the Italian Giallo

by: **JAMES BRADSHAW**

Deciphering when Italian cinema first engaged with the horror genre has proven arduous. 'Reconstructing' lost films, such as Il mostro di Frankenstein (Eugenio Testa, 1921), has depended on piecing together surviving stills, fragmented promotional material, and contemporary reviews. Although this process has had limited success, it has still made 'pinpointing the first Italian horror film' a nearly impossible job (Hunter, 2016, p.18). However, Italian cinema's engagement with 'horror imagery' can be traced as far back as L 'Inferno (Giuseppe Berardi and Arturo Busnengo, 1911) and can be seen in later texts like Il cadaver di marmo (Ugo de Simone, 1915) and Malombra (Carmine Gallone, 1917). That is not to say that these films were designed to be, nor marketed as, horror films. Instead they are merely evidence of the ways in which 'early Italian cinema explored issues and images that were designed to, in some way, provoke a reaction of shock, horror or terror' (Hunter, 2016, p. 27).

However, this was no easy feat in an era of strict censorship; decree-laws issued in May 1914 and October 1919 outlawed 'anything offensive to morality and public decency; glorification of crime, violence and superstition; adultery for sexual gratification; and insulting institutions of the state' (Bonsaver, 2019, p. 66). When censorship intensified under Mussolini's premiership (1922-1943), the production of horror films in Italy ceased altogether. It was not until the release of Ricardo Freda's I Vampiri in 1956, that the production of horror films resumed in Italy. Capitalising on the financial success and popularity of Britain's Hammer Film Productions, I Vampiri ushered in a Gothic period during which films often played on the 'anxieties about the breakdown of traditional Italian class and gender power relationships' (Wood, 2005, p. 56) within Italian society. It was during this time that Mario Bava rose to prominence, first as cinematographer for Freda on I Vampiri (finishing the film after Freda quit mid-production) and then as a director in his own right. Not only would Bava produce some of the most significant Gothic

"THE INVALUABLE WORK OF DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES LIKE ARROW FILMS, HAS MEANT THAT LONG FORGOTTEN GIALLI ARE NOW READILY AVAILABLE AND RESTORED IN PRISTINE CONDITION."

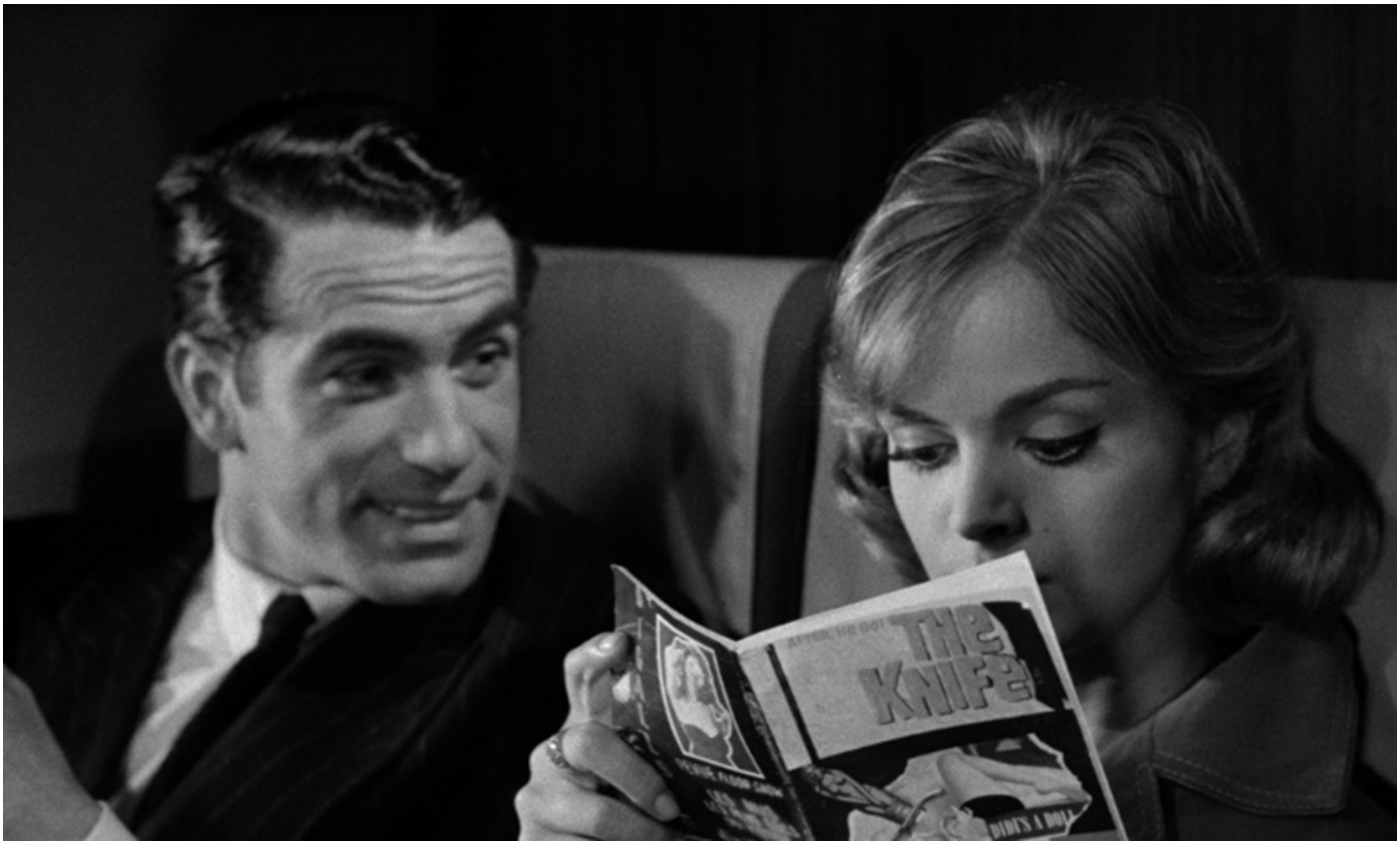
films to come out of Italy, he would also lay the foundation for the new, uniquely Italian 'genre' that would soon emerge: the giallo.

Defining the Giallo

The literary roots of the giallo date back to 1929 when the Milanese publishing house, Mondadori, first launched a series of detective novels complete with a fresh yellow cover design (gialli being the Italian word for 'yellow'). The series was an immediate success and 'signalled the beginning of one of the longest-lasting series in international publishing' history (Mondadori, 2019). Despite the increased popularity of gialli throughout the 1930s and 1940s, it was not until the early 1960s that they would first appear on screen. However, unlike its literary counterparts, the cinematic giallo 'appears to be less fixed as a genre' (Needham, 2002), and it's around this issue of unfixability that much of the critical discussion around the giallo has been centred. Needham himself has been critical of the 'Anglo-American taxonomic imaginary that 'fixes' genre both in film criticism and the film industry' and believes that the giallo represents 'something different to that which is conventionally analysed as a genre' (2002). Whilst Needham has highlighted the permeability of the giallo, and its ability to adapt to popular trends, his position has been criticised for reducing the giallo to 'at once all things and nothing' (Olney, 2013, p. 105). For Olney, the giallo possesses a 'strong generic identity' (2013, p. 106) and can therefore be identified and catalogued into a definitive collection of films -but this position is also problematic. Whilst clear comparisons can be drawn between gialli like 6 donne per l'assassino (Bava, 1964) and Profondo Rosso (Argento, 1975), it is much harder to identify the 'generic identity' in films like Una lucertola can la pelle di donna (Fulci, 1971) or Lisa e il diavolo (Bava, 1973). To find a satisfactory solution to the question of definition, it is best to turn to the Italian film industry itself.

The term 'filone' came into use during the heyday of popular cinema in Italy (between the 1950s and 1970s). In Italian the word has multiple meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. It can refer to 'a loaf of bread, a thread or cord, or the principle vein in a mineral, or to express when is "in the tradition of"' (Totaro, 2011).

Mikel J. Koven, in his study La Dolce Morte, examines the various meanings and settles on 'the main current in a river' (2006



Still from La ragazza che sapeva troppo (1963) dir. Mario Bava

, p. 4). Providing greater clarification, Donato Totaro offers the following analogy:

If we think of a larger generic pattern as a river, in this context the giallo as genre, several smaller "streamlets" branch off from that genre-river, occassionally reconnecting to the main flow farther "downstream". (2011).

Both Koven and Totaro agree that thinking of giallo in terms 'of its own various filone' is the best way 'to account for the fullness/richness of the giallo and the ever-changing Italian film industry' (Totaro, 2011). Through this analogy, we can see how the giallo was able to incorporate popular trends in Italian cinema (such as the poliziotteschi or il sadiconazista) by adopting new stylistic and thematic features. The earliest pioneer of this new filone was Mario Bava whose film, La ragazza che sapeva troppo (1963), would lay the foundation for next era of Italian horror.

La ragazza che sapeva troppo (The Girl Who Knew Too Much)

Young American, and giallo admirer, Nora Davis (Letícia Román) boards a flight from New York to Rome to visit her elderly Aunt Ethel. However, on the night of her arrival, the frail Ethel tragically dies. En route to inform Dr. Bassi (John Saxon) at the hospital, Nora is attacked and left unconscious. Briefly regaining consciousness, she witnesses the murder of a young woman before promptly fainting. In the absence of a body the authorities dismiss her story, believing it to be a delusion. At Ethel's funeral Nora meets Laura Toranni (Valentina Cortese) and agrees to stay at her

house, which is located near where she witnessed the attack. During her stay, Nora learns of three other murders that had taken place within the vicinity. Bizarrely, the victims' surnames ascend in alphabetical order (A, B and C). Fearing that she will be the next victim, Nora recruits the help of Dr. Bassi and reporter Andrea Landini (Dante DiPaolo). Together they discover that Laura is the killer, who then attacks Nora before being shot dead by her husband. The film closes with Nora returning to New York, accompanied by Dr. Bassi.

The importance of La ragazza che sapeva troppo in the history of the giallo is a subject for debate (Brown, 2012). For Tim Lucas, the film is not as significant as the subsequent 6 donne per l'assassino (2007). However, Needham holds the film in higher regard, stating that it was an 'explicit and successful attempt to say to the spectator, in effect, "The Italian giallo has arrived"' (2002). Perhaps the most appropriate way to categorise the film is as a 'Gothic giallo' (Brown, 2012, p. 184), a bridge between La maschera del demonio (Bava, 1960) and 6 donne per l'assassino that links the Gothic and giallo eras.

Bava did not set out with the intention of pioneering a new type of cinema, he had originally intended the film to be a Hitchcockian romance-thriller in the style of The Man Who Knew Too Much (Hitchcock, 1956). However, his assessment of the lead actors convinced him to 'emphasise the more macabre aspects of the story' (Brown, 2012, p. 184). Despite this, the film retained a markedly light-hearted feel, at least in comparison to the more violent works of directors like Dario Argento and Lucio Fulci. As with La maschera del demonio Bava leaned heavily on the use of chiaroscuro lighting, 'evoking a look closer to that of a film noir' whilst using 'shadow play and deep focus to transform his Rome locations into a setting of menace' (Gallant, 2018). The most obvious example of the this occurs in the scenes preceding Ethels death, during which Bava employs slow lingering cuts as a way of fixing the spectators gaze on the writhing Ethel. Suspense is heightened by reverse cutting between extreme close-ups of Ethel and Nora's faces, until the camera finally settles on Nora's half-illuminated haunted expression (Fig. 2. And Fig.3. illustrate how Bava's reliance on these stylistic conventions). According to Gallant, Bava was 'reported to have lost interest in the plot altogether, instead channelling his efforts into the film's luscious visual style' (2018). Stylistically, the film owes much to the Gothic productions that came before it. However, despite prioritising style over substance, the film provided a narrative framework that would be adopted by later gialli. This narrative framework revolves around a young foreign (often female) tourist who witnesses a murder by a masked assailant. Then, due to incompetant law enforcement, the tourist is forced to take up the role of amateur detective to solve the case. Recruiting the help of a journalist, or a rogue police officer, the reluctant sleuth often finds the vital piece of information that allows the case to be solved. The final twist comes in the unveiling of the killer, often amongst the least suspected characters. The weak narrative line is interupted by a series of highly stylised, and later increasingly graphic, murders.

Not only did La ragazza che sapeva troppo establish a narrative framework, it also con-

Still from La ragazza che sapeva troppo (1963) dir. Mario Bava

Still from La maschera del demonio, (1960) dir. Mario Bava

tained characteristics that would become synonymous with the giallo. This included engaging with psychoanalysis, or the rejection of it - for example in L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo (Argento, 1970); a critique of superstition and religion - as in Non si sevizia un paperino (Fulci, 1972); sexual sadism or perversion - like Cosa avete fatto a Solange? (Dallamano, 1972); and a tendency towards metafiction - such as Tenebrae (Argento, 1982).

As previously mentioned, in spite of the films pioneering work, Tim Lucas argues that is 'is not quite a giallo in the sense that term is used today; it doesn't possess all the necessary generic criteria, most conspicuously in its lack of color and graphic violence' (2007, p. 449). However, this criticism can be dismissed if one subscribes to Brown's 'Gothic giallo' theory. Building upon this film, 6 donne per l'assassino would introduce the 'silent, black-clad, white-masked killer, who, armed with an iron claw, stalks and brutally slays half a dozen beautiful female models' (Olney, 2013, p. 103) - that would become a permanent feature of the filone for the next two decades. In the space of four years, Mario Bava had successfully overseen the most significant transition in Italian horror cinema, the ramifications of which can still be seen today.

Conclusion

The 1970s marked a 'Golden Age' for the giallo, but by the latter half of the 1980s the 'rate of production was beginning to slow' (Gallant, 2018). Dario Argento, another pioneer of the filone, had moved into the realm of the supernatural with the critically acclaimed Suspiria (1977) and his imitators followed suit. Aside from the odd foray into other popular genres such the commedia sexy all'italiana film Quante volte... quella notte (1971), Bava continued to direct successful gialli until his death in 1980 at the age of 65. His final film,

Shock (1977), included scenes shot by his son Lamberto, who would later enjoy his own success with the Argento-produced Dèmoni (1985). In his later works, Bava managed to 'reaffirm his belief in the alchemic properties of film, its ability to convert "almost nothing" into images of terror and beauty' (Ishii-Gonzales, 2004). His legacy left a mark not only upon the history of Italian cinema, but can be felt as far as America and Japan. In recent years the invaluable work of distribution companies like Arrow Films, has meant that long forgotten gialli are now readily available and restored in pristine condition - opening a whole new world for horror fans and critics alike to explore.

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Visions of Bodies Being Burned:

Horror Movies, Music and clipping.

by: **Iolo Williams**

Rap music has developed as a referential genre of music, and its use of sampling, loops, and pop culture solidifies that fact. One such widespread frame of reference is movies, from Wu-Tang Clan's Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers) (1993) referencing old Kung-Fu movies to the late MF Doom's side project, King Geedorah, referencing the Godzilla villain in its title. Movie references are ever-present and have become integrated into the foundations of the modern rap game.

As an old-head and Wu-Tang fan, these references have always been in the forefront of my listening to broader rap music. Low and behold, when I stumbled into the gateway drug to experimental rap - Death Grips and their opening track on the mixtape Exmilitary (2011) - I was shocked by the sample used. It's an intersection perhaps with my own teenage, and now secret, goth-hood and obsession with all things deemed 'dark': the trio sample Charles Manson. I was hooked. I fell deeper and deeper into the horror-core rap game, and following Death Grips I went back to Three 6 Mafia who directly sample horror movies and use graphic horror movie aesthetics in their music. This also opened my eyes to bands like Daughters and Swans, noise rock bands who fully immerse the listener in the aesthetic of stress and angst, and who, every year, are reaching a larger audience due to their popularity with critics like Anthony Fantano. I believe that there is a valid dialectical relationship between movies and music that has opened the door for experimental and noise music in horror movies.

This brings me to clipping., an experimental trio who have adopted a cinematic style. Heavily story-focused with graphic lyrics and sound design stripped straight out of the avant-garde, their most recent album is perhaps their most intently cinematic. The trio's instrumentalists, Jonathan Snipes and William Hutson - both of whom work within the film industry as composers and in music departments - bring strange samples and reeling loops influenced by ambient horror movie noises. On the narra-

"I HOPE THAT THIS NEW CARVED PATH LEADS TO FURTHER EXPLORATIONS OF THE HORROR GENRE IN EXPERIMENTAL RAP."

the group, we have Daveed Diggs, star of Blindspotting (2018), who brings graphic description and flow that evokes the panic of a horror movie. On the track Something Underneath (2020) we follow the story of the world falling apart, and as we hit the final verse, Diggs delivery hits a frantic pace, his rhyme structure punctuating the concluding words on each bar to bring the panic of the attack to the forefront. The instrumentals over this final verse have fast-paced, pounding drums with screeching electronic noises to further unsettle the piece and their listeners. By pushing into this space of horror-core and emulating the sound design of horror movies, the screeching noises are similar to those used in films like the 13 Ghosts (2001) remake.

Why then, is this band relevant to cinema or genre or this journal? Well, music has long been in a dialectical relationship with cinema – the dawn of the talkies was brought in by films such as The Jazz Singer (1927); Baby Driver (2017) was constructed and choreographed to its titular song playing over the credits. However, I believe that clipping., and other horror-core rappers, actively extend this trend of the horror genre influencing music and culture. The movement that comes to mind first, at least to me, is the goth-rock movement of the late 70's and early 80's, especially since bands like Bauhaus and Siouxsie and the Banshees were highly influential figures in the fashion of the fans and the musical stylings of goth-rock. Their darker subject matter was heavily influenced by the movies and this referential style of music. Songs like She's in Parties (1983) by Bauhaus references the creation of a film and includes the sounds of a horror film – with lines like "she's acting her reaction" and "special effects by Loonatik and Drinks", we get the image of a film set in the production of some kind of slasher/thriller. The music video for the track also evokes this horror aesthetic, filmed in black and white with the band stood around an abandoned warehouse in their iconic black-tie-chic. More explicitly related to the horror genre is their song Bela Lugosi's Dead (1982), which is filled with creaky guitar strings, echoey reverb and feedback samples to create a horror soundscape in honor of the titular horror icon, Bela Lugosi, renowned for playing villains like Count Dracula in Tod Browning's Dracula (1931) and Ygor in Son of Frankenstein (1939). The sounds taken from classical horror movies in their simplistic, yet eerie, construction evokes im-

Bela Lugosi as Count Dracula in Tod Browning's Dracula (1931)

ages of echoey, creaking, gothic mansions.

So, let's fast forward nearly four decades later to 2020 and the release of clipping.'s Visions of Bodies Being Burned (2020). Now, we see the influence of a new genre of horror in the aesthetics and sounds of the music. The use of analog synthesizers is a throwback to Carpenter's horror soundtracks, and the sound-alikes that follow lay down the foundation for the eerie looping kalimba lines that occupy certain areas of the songs. The booming creaks and echoes rattling through them evoke the slashers that rose in popularity after Bauhaus's exit from the spotlight. Additionally, they wear their cinematic influences on their sleeves, especially with the track '96 Neve Cambell (2020) evoking the mythos of the final girl trope, the band choosing the final girl from Scream (1996) as the namesake for the song. It samples knife drags, door knocks, and breathing to create its central hook to highlight this intersection, and the intertextuality of the song is central to understanding its lyricism; Diggs here plays the role of the killer whereas Cam and China, the featured artists, perform as the final girl who ultimately survives the onslaught of the killer. It's clear that this trio are influenced by the classic horror movies of their teens, and when discussing their latest record as a concept album they even used the analogy of old horror movie VHS boxes

(Fantano, 2020) to discuss how they wanted the piece to do as promised on the cover.

Thus, we can take a look at the cover to discuss how it's influenced by horror aesthetics. Personally, I think it speaks more clearly to the new wave of 'clean' horror aesthetics that focus on minimalism in their horror spaces - Get Out's (2017) sunken place, for example, somewhere dark and abstract, filled with objects made unnatural by their surroundings. These clean, black spaces allow for the focus of the scenes to be driven by the objects and subjects within them.

The cover of the album has teeth arranged in a square, spaced symmetrically. They range from clearly animalistic fangs, to human teeth, to pieces of what looks like teeth. The amalgamation of animal and man present in the cover has links to the aesthetics of songs like Say the Name (2020) and Enlacing (2020), which discuss perception and the morphing of human forms in various contexts. The former, the story of the birth of some kind of devil child, akin to Rosemary's Baby (1968), includes lyrics like "this not a dream, it's a memory" alluding to a fugue state, and possibly the sex scene of Rosemary's Baby which is mistakenly labelled a dream by Rose in the film. As well as this, it also has references to Candyman (1992) with recurring motifs of bee's, the sound of buzzing and racial tensions. Enlacing more directly refers to a euphoric and terrifying drug experi-

(from left to right) Courtney Cox as Gale Weather, Jamie Kennedy as Randy Meeks and Neve Campbell as Sidney Prescott in Wes Craven's Scream (1996)

ence which can be seen in the samples of balloons and gas cartridges that are being played live on the KEXP performance (KEXP, 2020). So, this cover shows us a close awareness of the cosmetics of modern horror, with the tracks alluding to a more nostalgic sense of horror. Although the subject matters may have changed, clipping.'s mixing of experimental hip hop sounds with the lyrical allusions to modern horror resumes the tradition pioneered by Bauhaus and other goth-rock bands by transcribing it into hip-hop by bands like Three 6 Mafia. Clipping., however, show a new variation in their use of experimental hip-hop tracks and scoring - Snipes and Hutson use their basis in the film industry to bring a cinematic foundation to the beats and music of the tracks, whilst Diggs overlays his lyrics to tackle these modern horror concepts.

I hope that this new carved path leads to further explorations of the horror genre in experimental rap, as well as horror movies looking to experimental music as a valid, if not valuable, form of scoring films. With bands like clipping., Daughters, Swans and Death Grips - all of whom bring intense, noisy, stress inducing music to a larger and larger audience - I trust that the successful integration of the horror genre into Visions of Bodies Being Burned, and its commercial and critical success, will open many more producers' eyes to the potential behind this music to further the genre on screen.

Tony Todd as Daniel Robitaille/The Candyman in Bernard Rose's Candyman (1992)

TITLE: **FEATURED SCRIPTS**

INT. BACKSTAGE OF THE OSCARS- NIGHT

Chloe Zhao (39) walks around with her recently won Oscar in her hand. Tired, she sits in a black armchair in a corner, and picks up the second issue of THE CUT TO JOURNAL. Reading the Featured Scripts Segment, she feels inspired.
Later when asked about her career and what motivates her to make films, she answers.

CHLOE ZHAO
I often feel like an outsider wherever I go, so I'm always attracted to stories about identity and the meaning of home.

*However, she forgets to mention the importance the CUT TO JOURNAL has in making her feel at home wherever she is in the world. Nonetheless it is true. Maybe she will next time.

1 Heated Needles

Written by: Iolo Williams

EXT. Desert – Day
The sun beats down heavy on the red sands, two men stand facing each other, the closer MAN is wearing a black hat.
BALLOON WEARER stands opposite him covered in balloons painted to create the effect of clothes.
Sat on a horse nearby is WOMAN who wears a black hat and a shawl over her shoulders, she clutches a lever action rifle and cocks it once.

MAN
(smiling)
Well met Vanguard

BALLOON WEARER
Well met

MAN fires to the centre balloon which pops, splashing the floor with Futia blood. Another balloon also pops on his back, creating a mist of pinkish purple.

MAN approaches his fallen prey and where the blood has met the sand, he reaches into the ground which has been rendered cushion-like in its flooding. His hand returns with an evergreen sapling whose needles are metal.

MAN returns to his horse handing the tree to WOMAN who now appears to be pregnant and has holstered her rifle.
The pair ride on.

Time fades as the light flickers through its stages, the woman births a child, the three characters age in seconds. MAN dies and

the child, now BOY, takes the reigns donning his hat and holster. The woman ages and dies and he takes her shawl. He now rides with the tree in hand.

Snow begins to fall on the desert sands and BOY pulls back on his reigns. In the snow stands WAX FACE in bright pink cow print whose face in emotionless and blank, molded of wax. He steps down into the snow, tree in one hand, the other resting on his holster.

WAX FACE
Well met Boy. I knew your father.

BOY
I wish I knew the man you speak of.

WAX FACE
You ride too well Vanguard, perhaps shotgun suits you better.

BOY
Well met, friend.

WAX FACE draws and fires a shot which lands. A red crayon chipping BOY on the shoulder marking the white shawl. BOY draws from his holster; it’s a sawn-off lever action rifle!
He fires and blows a perfect wax hole in WAX FACE’s chest. No blood leaks into the sand.

BOY walks forward to an uncovered piece of ground in the snow. He bends down and plants the tree in the ground. As he steps back it grows to full size standing 7 foot tall, it’s needles now stiletto blades. BOY reaches forward and pricks his finger. The blood turns the blades red hot, the heat has returned to the great desert.
WAX FACE melts into a pool of red which we watch in close-up. The blood melts into the snow, which is beginning to melt, super-heated. A great steam rises into the air from the snow and creates visual heatwaves across the red sand.

BOY stands and as he does, the steam rids him on the shawl and hat. As the hat releases from his head his hair flows down in loose curls that enrobe his shoulders. We see his face now, thick moustache and soul patch. His clothes now, flared trousers, loose white shirt and white Cuban heels. BOY looks good.

He swings onto the horse whose saddle and bindings have also risen with the steam and rides into the now setting sun.

EXT. DESERT – NIGHT

The sky is filled with bright stars of pink, purple, white and red that all stand stark on the pitch-black sky. Galaxies lazily curl across the sky in flows and rhythmic oceans. BOY lies back against his sleeping horse; he’s cleaning his rifle by the light of his turquoise campfire.

BOY
There had been a great deal of worry generated in a small town down the way.

SOME DUDE O/S
Sure.

BOY
And we had been riding there to sort that shit out.

SOME OTHER DUDE O/S
Yeah.

BOY
We sat now about 2 minutes from town, and gunfire had filled the air all day. We’re planning to ride in around dawn and catch them off guards somewhat.

BOTH DUDES O/S
Okay man.

EXT. TOWN – DAWN

BOY rides in looking fresh as ever, the place is empty, but the floor is a bed in the cushion pinkish-purple, blood-drenched sand. The horse can’t walk very well anymore so BOY launches him off with a command before wading through the ever-deeper layers of pillows and blankets that fill the road.

As the BOY wades deeper and deeper into the pillows he comes across some saloon doors which he swings through.

INT. SALOON

The room is lit in variable neon brightness, the walls are covered in bright red pillows. Everything is quilted in the pinkish-purple blood of the town’s victims.

The patrons stare and gawk at BOY as he enters. There are a few notable faces, COWHEAD, GUTLESS, TWELVE ARMS, all play cards at a

table in the corner. TWELVE ARMS is playing dealer.

SATYR, EYELESS and BOARD are sat at another table drinking. BOARD is struggling to stay upright, the end of his 2x4 frame gets hammered into the chair by BARKEEP. BARKEEP looks like a cartoonish version of a wild west saloon owner, white apron and bald patch included.

BOY takes up a seat at the bar between the FISHEAD TWINS who are drowning their sorrows.

BARKEEP
What'll it be feller

BOY
Sarsaparilla

BARKEEP slides a shot glass down the bar, but JOHN FISHEAD intercepts and gulps it down, spraying the excess out of his gills into BOY's face.

BOY fires from his hip and the blood from his gills web and pull JOHN FISHEAD's limp body into the walls where he is enveloped in pillows.

SIMON FISHEAD turns his eyes, which lazily swish whiskey that float in them, toward BOY. No other patrons seem to react. TWELVE ARMS deals another hand.

SIMON FISHEAD
(To BOY)
FISH NOISES

BOY
I don't take too kind to insults.

The remaining FISHEAD twin pulls a knife, in a split second his eye is burst, and the whiskey freezes into a brown crystal from his face. Red webs from his gills pull him into the ceiling, leaving the crystal hanging from a pillow.

BOY
Another if you would.

BARKEEP slides another glass which BOY drinks, heartily. He swing around just in time to join TWELVE HANDS for the next hand.

END

2

ISPC

Written by: IOLO WILLIAMS

INT. THE HALLS OF THE INTERGALACTIC SPACE PIMP CONFEDERACY

The grand, brass halls of the ISPC are empty but vast, there's the sound of reverberating hooves as our first ambassador arrives. APRO D. ZEYAK who is flanked by his two best mules, he wears gold, and his skin is bleached white signifying his use of the finest girlie. He lands and takes up his seat on the council, his mules at his side.

The screaming in the distance signifies the arrival of the C.A.T.S, and soon in they flip, following their leader KITI, a purple robot with rotating arms and legs, who carries a metal cane that she swaggers in against.

APRO
KITI how goes it in C.A.T?

KITI
Alright, thanks heartily to your great slabs of girlie D., efficiency is at an all time high.

APRO
I'll be sure to keep some corners for you.

KITI
In return, you're sure to get some champagne level shit next time.

APRO nods and a gurgle rings through the halls.

APRO nods and a gurgle rings through the halls.
In sways DOUGHNAUGH with vomit flooding the front of their shirt

from their limp, swaying, mouth.

They raise their hand in a greeting, the other two return in like. KITI takes her seat, and the seated pair wait for DOUGHNAUGH to reach his throne, the last remaining seat.

KITI

D., Naugh has pulled his weight this time for sure but his journey has been long, in that time our batches have all but dried up.

APRO

KITI baby it’s all good, if they die it’s a net positive and if they live, they’ll still need the milk. It’s ok, they’re a good person, I believe in them whole heartedly.

DOUGHNAUGH nods in appreciation and takes their seat.

KITI

Shall we?

The three extend their hands as a large square table descends from the ceiling. The table is a tri-colour tie-dye pattern. As it settles, they place their hands on the table and glassiness settles over their eyes.
Smaller versions of them appear on the table and walk amongst the colours.

APRO

Sector MTD has had high productivity but a great cash of low quality Girlie has been found, we suggest a trade from C.A.T.S to us for a sector of your choice.

KITI

A counter, we ask to double the current Girlie shipments.

APRO

How does that sound Naugh?

DOUGHNAUGH

Affirmative Grunt

KITI

Settled then!

The colours morph and move fluidly to change into a slightly different pattern.

APRO
Any other business

KITI
We would like to begin synthesis at quality level Pink to save resources for the Bureau’s, can you dig?

APRO
I dig.

DOUGHNAUGH
Affirmative Grunt

KITI
It’s dug, motion passed.

The three smaller forms melt into the colours and their larger counterparts remove their hands from the table. Their thrones are now dimmed to a green oxidised copper colour.

The three stand, aged many years now aside from KITI who stands a brighter pink.

EXT. Girlie Mine 2000

The sprawling caverns of white, giant spoons carve out powder into minecarts. We follow one as it is then pushed down into a large quarry where the Girlie slabs are created.

Each has a huge colour dye added to it, steaming cauldrons of blue, yellow and pink. Apart from a central small slab.

The minecart we are following heads straight to this mould. It’s poured in and a man appears with a large hammer. He swings the hammer with complete accuracy, and it collides perfectly to complete the mould.

We see now it is embossed with a large insignia of two mules rearing up next to a large ‘D.’ This is the finest Girlie in the universe, the great bleacher of D.

SUDDENLY A GREAT FLASH OF PURPLE AND GREEN IN THE ATMOSPHERE!
It’s APRO on his mules, riding in to collect his supply. He pulls out his giant metal claw which sucks out the form and pulls it into a metal container that fits up his sleeve. He taps his sleeve twice and zooms off into the galaxy.

INT. SMALL SHACK

A famished family sit around a crumbling pile of whiteish powder with hints of blue, yellow and pink.

They all take small spoonful's of the crumble and spoon them into their mouths. A passing smile at each other reveals eroded teeth. A young man stands stark upright, he fumbles with a small container. He is ZEEK.

ZEEK
I've had it, I will become the perfect Bleached, and sae us all from this place.

OLD MAN
Don't be so foolish, no one can Become a perfect bleached. It's a fool's errand.

ZEEK
Behold a D. Slab!

He reveals a slab marked with the insignia. This is smaller than the previous, however.

Gasps from the family.

OLD MAN
You fool what have you done

ZEEK
I have saved us all!

ZEEK quickly places the entire slab in his mouth.

He begins to lighten in complexion, and the room itself begins to lighten.

SUDDENLY ZEEK BURSTS INTO WHITE FLAME!

He is gone.

OLD MAN
Told him.

EXT. SOMEWHERE ELSE – MOMENTS EARLIER

Gentle vacuum gulls float through the gravitational waves.

A BRIGHT FLASH

Zeek appears now clad in a green and purple suit, his skin The Perfect Bleached.

END

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WESTERN:

An Extended Interview with Sir Christopher Frayling.

British educationalist and writer Sir Christopher Frayling, provides detailed insight into one of the most celebrated genres: the Western. We explore how the genre has traversed over time, discussing: masculinity and gender in the 'Spaghetti Western', the use of music, it's transnational appeal, and it's renewal in contemporary cinema.

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

“What was the first Western you remember seeing?”

“Stagecoach - not in 1939 when it was made, but in the early 1950s on television.”

“What, in your opinion, is the most underrated Western?”

“Everyone goes on about John Ford’s The Searchers these days but there’s an earlier film called Wagon Master, which I think is a much better film. It was made in black and white in late 1940s and because of the emphasis on The Searchers everyone stopped talking about John Ford’s earlier work.”

“What do you think is the best Western remake?”

“The Magnificent Seven by Sturges and ‘Seven Samurai’ by Kurosawa, Fistful of Dollars and ‘Yojimbo’ by Kurosawa are all big favorites of mine. Both transposing Japanese history to the Wild Southwest. I was thinking about Westerns remade from Westerns, which stumped me at the time. Critic Pauline Kael wrote interestingly that it was significant that these two innovations in the genre should have come from outside America.”

“If you had to face a western character in a dual, who would you be the most anxious to pick?

“Yule Brynner (as the Gunslinger) in the original Westworld because the gunslinger keeps getting up again!”

“Who’s your favourite female character in any western film?”

“Joan Crawford as Vienna in Johnny Guitar, the saloon owner - who’s by far the most savvy character in the entire film. Famously, there is a duel between her and Mercedes McCambridge: two women having a duel, which I think was a first in a Western (certainly in the 1950s). She’s gutsy. She’s savvy and she’s the centre of the action.”

Masculinity & Gender in the Spaghetti Western:

“Seemingly, one of the most appealing qualities of the Spaghetti Western is the frequent use of complex and hyper-masculine characters. Could you explain the differences between the type of masculinity presented in the Spaghetti Western compared to the brand of masculinity offered in the Classical American Western?”

Fistful of Dollars (1964) dir. Sergio Leone

“Firstly, most of the Spaghetti Western’s were made by people who grew up in 1930s Italy, under the fascist regime of Mussolini. They watched Hollywood movies which were all dubbed into Italian, which they had to be by law. They loved these movies, they mythologised them in their heads as a model of freedom and modernity. They didn’t understand the dialogue but there were these larger than life heroes so when they had their opportunity in the 1960s, everything got exaggerated. They magnified them because in memory these characters were much bigger than they really were. So there’s a kind of rhetoric about the Italian Western where you know Hollywood movies very well but you pump them up and make them bigger, make them more magnified.

"THEY LOVED THESE MOVIES, THEY MYTHOLOGISED THEM IN THEIR HEADS AS A MODEL OF FREEDOM AND MODERNITY."

So that's the first thing about masculinity, there's an element of strong masculinity in the American Western but it gets pumped up into something much much more emphatic in the Italian Western. The second is a technical reason, I think most of them were shot in a ratio called Techniscope. Techniscope is a sort of poor man's CinemaScope where you get two frames for the price of one, it's a very grainy kind of film and what they discovered was it was very good at one thing CinemaScope wasn't. CinemaScope wasn't very good at close ups. It was great at long shots and great at medium shots but close ups were fuzzy. Whereas Techniscope for some reason, the extreme close ups are very sharp, much sharper than CinemaScope. When they discovered that, then suddenly you get these huge closeups of mens faces in Italian Westerns as if Jean-Luc Godard said about Gary Cooper "he belonged to the mineral kingdom, that his face is like a piece of geology, like a rock on mount rushmore". So you get these physiognomies filmed with the Techniscope lens in extreme close up where they're big, there's lots of facial hair, lots of grime and lots of makeup. One of the things people don't notice about the Italian Westerns is the amount of makeup the American actors are wearing: they all wear a lot of dark makeup to make it look as if they've been in the sunshine a lot. So it's partly about pumping up Hollywood, partly about the use of closeups and partly because they're all on the edge of parody.

"THE DIALOGUE IS EXAGGERATED, THE AMOUNT OF PEOPLE THEY SHOT IS EXAGGERATED, EVERYTHING IS EXAGGERATED! SO MASCULINITY IS EXAGGERATED AS WELL."

These films, there's an ironic sense about them and a gallows sense of humour and part of that is to exaggerate everything. The dialogue is exaggerated, the amount of people they shot is exaggerated, everything is exaggerated! So masculinity is exaggerated as well.

> "..THEY WANTED TO BRING BACK THE MAGIC OF GOING TO THE PICTURES IN THEIR CHILDHOOD, PART OF THAT WAS PUTTING THEM UNDER A MAGNIFYING GLASS SO THEY BECOME BIGGER STRONGER MORE MACHO."

I think there is a dark side to it, I mean it does relate also to the attitudes to gender I think. A lot of American critics writing about the American westerns were worried that the Madonna-whore-complex comes through in these films. That you're either saintly like Marisol in Fistful of Dollars (Leone, 1964), a sort of Virgin Mary or you're a prostitute and there doesn't seem to be much in between. You don't get a Joan Crawford character who happens to be strong in her own right, a strong member of the community and actually there's a slight element of that. I think that in addition to all this exaggeration it's filtered through Italian attitudes towards gender and that I think is the dark side to this masculinity. These are the main drivers of the attitude to masculinity but it's huge and it's making these heroes as big as they are in memory for the filmmakers. The filmmakers mythologised them in their memory; the Clark Gables, the Gary Coopers, the James Stewarts and the characters of the 1930s. They magnified them in their minds, they wanted to bring back the magic of going to the pictures in their childhood, part of that was putting them under a magnifying glass so they become bigger stronger more macho.

That's another point, Machismo rather than toughness. The American Western is very much about toughness, punching people and smashing up the bar room and lots of punching. Whereas the Italian Western is about machismo, like a bullfighter, a matador, striding out into the arena, dressed in his resplendent costume with trumpet music and a ritual. I think the attitude towards masculinity is much more about that kind of machismo rather than American cunning. So it's a cultural thing, and like everything about the Italian Western it's much more interesting to approach it as an Italian product than it is to approach it as an ersatz American. It's the italian elements that make them interesting I think, there difference between them and the American Western and I think masculinity is a part of that."

“The western genre has often been criticised for its treatment of women. Once Upon A Time In The West was the first film in which Leone introduced a female lead.
Do you think Cardinale had any sense of agency in this film, or does she fulfill a scopophilic need? And why did he decide to introduce a female lead at this particular point in his career?”

“When he made Once Upon A Time In The West (Leone, 1968) he was determined, having made three films on the trot. He hadn’t really drawn breath and wanted to reflect a little bit on the western but also to cut loose from the assembly line approach to making Italian Westerns. By 1968 over seventy westerns were being made a year in Italy and Spain, it’s astonishing! When Hollywood was making about fifteen a year, he wanted to cut loose and one way of cutting loose is to have a very different approach to the western. Enter Bernardo Bertolucci who co-wrote the treatment of Once Upon A Time In The West, he claims that he introduced Leone to Johnny Guitar (Ray, 1954). When they sat in a viewing room, watching all these westerns and preparing to make Once Upon A Time In The West, Leone was particularly struck by Joan Crawford in Johnny Guitar. In fact, there’s lots of references to Johnny Guitar in Once Upon A Time In The West, the model train set that Mr Morton has is very similar to Vienna’s and there’s many more. The first thing about Cardinale is that Joan Crawford’s character in Johnny Guitar had persuaded Leone that you could make a western that pivoted around a female character. Although there’s a bit of debate around this in the literature, some people think Cardinale is very put upon as Jill. Bronson arrives and starts ordering her around, Frank abuses her and all sorts of things.

“BY NINETEEN SIXTY-EIGHT OVER SEVENTY WESTERNS WERE BEING MADE A YEAR IN ITALY AND SPAIN, IT’S ASTONISHING!”

That’s true, but at the same time she is the pivot around which the whole story works. I think there might be a connection in the Fellini film 8 ½ (Fellini, 1963) where Cardinale plays the character who represents the water, she brings water to the film crew, she represents the water in this film too, she represents the life giving water of the west with the well. In the final scene where she brings nourishment to the rail gang, this multicultural rail gang that’s working, that’s arrived at sweetwater so she represents the water. She represents

Claudia Cardinale in Once Upon A Time In The West (1968) dir. Sergio Leone

the flourishing of nature and water in the west I think, if you think of it like that she is in fact the pivot around which the whole film revolves. Bertolucci also said that Leone didn't get the point, Leone had a very broad sense of humour.

When they first suggested that Cardinale should play an important part in the film, the scene where she arrives on the train at Flagstaff and she comes down and arrives on the platform, Leone supposedly said "I've got this great idea! You put the camera underneath her and as Jill arrives we immediately notice she's not wearing any knickers!" Bertolucci said I don't think that's the point Sergo, I think we're trying to get beyond that, really it's not a joke she's an important character. So, it took a bit of time to persuade Leone to get off his rather old fashioned masculine ways of telling stories of the western. Everytime Cardinale gets interviewed she says "wasn't it great actually to make a movie where the female is the central character,who makes sense of the entire structure of the film".You could say there's Cheyenne who's sort of the romantic bandit, there's Bronson who's the avenger and there's Frank, the gunman who wants to be a businessman. They all make sense in relation to Jill and she's the one who survives, she's the punchline of the movie! All the rest have died basically, Bronson rides off into the sunset with a body over his horse, Frank has been shot, Mr Morton has died in the desert, Cheyenne has died and she's the one who survives! She is the future, she's the new America. So if you put all that together yes I see her as I never used to when I first wrote a book about Spaghetti Westerns in the late 1970s, I was perhaps a bit more radical in my approach to things. I saw her as more put upon, as a kind of victim but the more I see the movie the less I think like that. They certainly didn't think that's what they were doing, they thought they were doing something very radical. It's 1968, let's make a woman the central feature of a western for the first time since Johnny Guitar and that's what Bertolucci thought he was doing and he was very proud of that."

"Yes, I heard about the under the camera shot and I thought Cardinale said it was a rumour..."

"It was gossip between the two chaps! They never actually did it, she probably never learnt about it at the time. It was Bertolucci remembering the sort of salon-talk as they sat there watching this film. It's great actually cause I've managed to interview Argento, Bertolucci and Leone. It's fascinating trying to piece together the jigsaw as Steven Spielberg said "no one ever likes to take credit for a flop". The only film Spielberg's made that he hasn't been sued for was 1941 because nobody wanted anything to do with it! In the case of Once Upon A Time In The West, everybody wanted to claim that it was their idea, because the movie has become such a classic. Bertolucci thinks making the central character was his idea, Leone claimed it was his idea and Argento has claimed it was his idea. I think it shows what a success the movie has become in people's minds that they all want to claim credit for it. Oral history when you're writing movie history is very slippery, I mean there's a case of last person standing.

"..the truth is they thought they were doing something very radical and in the context of the western it certainly was."

Now, Argento is the only one still alive and the stories get bigger. There's a lot of veteran Hollywood people who've made all sorts of outrageous claims, I mean the classic was Saul Bass, the graphic designer who was the visual consultant on Psycho. After Hitchcock died, Saul Bass started giving interviews saying he directed the shower sequence and Hitchcock wasn't there to say otherwise. But what he'd forgotten was that Janet Leigh was still alive so she came out and said "no of course he didn't be silly, of course Hitchcock directed it what are you talking about ''. So you have to be very careful talking to these people, the truth is they thought they were doing something very radical and in the context of the western it certainly was. Since then the feminization of the western has proceeded apace, there's been a lot of movies of course including Meeks Cutoff (Reichardt, 2010) more recently and things like that where the females are the heart of the story. But in 1968 it was very radical, it was treated as a very macho genre and so yeah i'd go with Bertolucci's interpretation."

MUSIC & WESTERNS

“Ennio Morricone was never really regarded as a serious musician by his Italian musical peers, because he directed music for films. But now, he’s regarded as one of (if not the best) Italian composers of his generation. When do you think this shift happened, and why?”

“I think the Roman (particularly the Italian) music establishment is very snobbish. If you’ve done music for a movie, it’s treated as a blot on your CV and you can no longer be treated as a very serious musician. When I interviewed Morricone I said, “Oh for goodness sake! You’re treated as probably the most famous film musician of the late 20th Century. Isn’t that enough?” - “No, I want the music establishment to accept me,” said Morricone.

Like a lot of things to do with the Italian Westerns - when the rest of the world started taking him seriously, then the Italians started taking him seriously. He was so prolific and spread over many genres; he could turn his hand to almost anything: horror, musicals, romances, westerns - you name it! He said to me once, “I only scored 35 Westerns..” and I said, “Only! That’s more than all the great American (Western) composers put together!” He says, “Yeah, but it’s not much when you’ve done 400-450 films”.

Ennio Morricone Conducting / Photo by Jim Dyson

People started taking him very seriously outside of Italy, and started writing about him and reviewing the concerts. The music establishment took another look and started saying that he's not just a good movie composer, he's a great composer. When he did his scores, he wrote out not just the theme, but every single part for every single instrument in the orchestra. It was all out of his head. It upset him until his 80's that he wasn't taken more seriously by the Italian music establishment, and I think that's very sad. Now of course, he's had an influence on classical composers, as much as on film composers."

"In contemporary Western films such as The Sisters Brothers (2018), there is often little emphasis on music. Do you think this may be the result of Western music being overused, to the point of cliche?"

"Up until the 1960s, the themes of American Westerns were by composers such as Aaron Copland, where he takes an American folk tune and does variations on a theme to make it contemporary. That was basically what the American Western soundtrack was. Copland had two students: Jerome Moross and Elmer Burnstein, so the tradition of Copland was carried into the 1950s and 60s American Western.

The breakthrough in the 60s, was bringing in contemporary instruments, arrangements and a much more youthful sound. With A Fistful of Dollars (1964), you've got a stratacoustic guitar, so it sounds like The Beach Boys. The natural sounds like the anvil and the whip crack were a breakthrough, but it became a cliche. Whenever you see a television advertisement with a final duel, it's going to be something like the music from The Good, The Bad and The Ugly (1966). So, it had to move on.

From the 1970s onwards, you get composers who have had no experience of the Western before. I think The Sisters Brothers are a very good example of that. It's very discreet and not emphatic. It's not trying to create a sense of scale. It's slightly functional but it doesn't feel folky, at all. It feels contemporary. So you no longer have to use traditional American music for the Western - unless you're doing a parody. You can't get away with doing a Morricone score now; it's been too debased. I think they use music in such a particular way in Leone films - partly as punctuation so we get an ironic joke. It's a very particular use of music in relation to the image, and not many directors use music in that way.

"When I did that book on Once Upon a Time in the West (1968), which Tarantino did the introduction for, he said something

"YOU CAN'T GET AWAY WITH A MORRICONE SCORE NOW; IT'S BEEN TOO DEBASED"

I never really thought about. He said, (paraphrasing) "In Once Upon a Time in the West, the music was written before the movie was shot, so the whole movie was shot around the score. Now that breakthrough is the origin of the jukebox movie. You choose your favourite rock/pop theme, and you build the movie and edit it around your favourite tracks. That all begins with Morricone and Leone.""

THE TRANS-NATIONAL AND TRANS-MEDIA WESTERN

"As I'm sure you know, the western today is a far broader genre than it was even 20 years ago, expanding further into other franchises, such as video games and music. Clearly then, the Western still has appeal today, although less so directly through film.
Why do you think a Western video game, like Red Dead Redemption (which is so similar to the Spaghetti Western in style, narrative and characterisation), is so much more successful now than the traditional Western?"

“Well, going back to when I was growing up, there was a Western on television every night, in some cases two, then there were two Westerns in the cinema every week and so we all knew the rules, we all grew up with the Western. It’s a little like the horror movie today. People understood the language of the Western and there were certain things you could take for granted: the visual language, the role of the hero, etc. Today, you can’t assume any of that. So, I think what’s happened to the contemporary Western, and this relates to Red Dead Redemption: it taps into lots of other genres in a way that it never did in the 50s.

Red Dead Redemption, 2010

So for example, the baddies come out of horror movies. Take the lone ranger, the Johnny Depp film, he’s like a character in the Evil Dead - you have a log cabin in the middle of nowhere, or Deliverance - horrible people are going to come out of the woods and do horrible things to you, and they all have beards, bad teeth and they drink too much whiskey - that’s what baddies are like in Westerns now.

In the same way, weaponry - the Sisters Brothers is a very good example, because its set actually before metallic cartridges and modern guns were invented, its set during the Gold Rush of 1845. So how do you get round the fact you’ve got these percussion pistols that take about a quarter of an hour to load? Well now they’re like gangster movies from the point of view of the weaponry where you almost have automatic weapons, they’re not like traditional guns where you just fire once.

So, there’s the gangster film, the horror film and what Red Dead Redemption or the contemporary Western does is not just tap into the rules of the Western but also into all these other genres. So you get all sorts of visual language, and character appearances.

“IT’S A KIND OF HYBRID GENRE NOW, IT IS NO LONGER THE TRADITIONAL WESTERN AND THAT IS QUITE INTERESTING.”

But I think it’s because the audience wouldn’t follow you if you made a traditional Western these days. I

remember I once showed 'The Searchers' to my students at the Royal College of Art and it is, although rare, a Western which begins indoors and then follows John Wayne ambling across the wilderness on his horse, then someone at the back started chanting "fast forward, fast forward!". Already they were bored stiff, within 5 minutes! There is something about the pace of the traditional Western where you can't speed up horses; they're not spaceships, they're not cars. Whereas I think Red Dead Redemption moves very fast. It gets away from the pace of the traditional Western by jazzing up the editing and also having much more extreme things going on.

As another example, the language of the traditional Western is re-worked for a contemporary audience. Then there is the aspect of living the life of the wild west which I think is really interesting. In the 50s, they never made much about the crafts of the west such as what it's like to wrangle horses or brand cattle, they just took it for granted because America was still to some extent a rural country when the traditional Westerns were made. Now, most people live in cities and feel very remote from the rural aspects of the Western.

So, what do you do about that? Well, you emphasise the crafts of everyday living in the West. You never used to do that. It's found a way of telling those stories to appeal to a contemporary audience that doesn't empathise with the idea of the Western anymore. You've got to tick a few other boxes to get their attention."

"RED DEAD REDEMPTION IS THE KIND OF PROJECT MADE BY PEOPLE WHO LOVE THE WESTERN, UNDERSTAND IT AND WANT TO REWORK IT AND MAKE IT COME ALIVE AGAIN."

"The Western film has been adopted into other languages and countries, which establishes the transnational appeal of the genre. Why do you think the Western has secured such a transnational appeal?"

"I mean, if you take the Italians in the 60s, there was this love of the Imagery of the Western; the look, the costumes, the horses, the wide-open spaces, monument valley was like going to the moon almost. But this was slightly separated from its ideology. The Italians bought the visual experience of watching a Western which

they adored and slightly separated it from the "a mans gotta do what a mans gotta do" and "the American way" and all those things. They treated it as a kind of free language and separated it from its ideological origins and I think that is crucial in understanding the European attitude to the Western.

That, at a time when Hollywood wasn't making these films anymore, is the reason we made our own; to feed the interest precisely because we wanted our fix of Western. We liked our heroes a bit ironic, we didn't like John Wayne, we liked Clint Eastwood and Hollywood began to twig this as well.

"THE MYTH DOESN'T WORK ANYMORE, SO THE MYTH HAS TO CHANGE AND MOVE ON TO MATCH THE EXPERIENCE OF THE VIEWERS. I THINK THAT HAPPENED IN ITALY AND I THINK IT THEN HAPPENED IN NEW HOLLYWOOD."

"There's a moment in a book by Michael Herr, where they showed the John Wayne movie 'The Green Berets' on a large screen to the American troops out in Vietnam. They thought it was so bad, it was a comedy because it bore no resemblance to their experience of warfare at all. It was basically a traditional Western shown to an audience which no longer identified with it. It's like, you're in Ancient Greece, and a day comes when nobody believes in Oedipus anymore. The myth doesn't work anymore, so the myth has to change and move on to match the experience of the viewers. I think that happened in Italy and I think it then happened in New Hollywood.

So what do you do about the landscape? Well I think the Sisters Brothers is really interesting - it's partly made in Spain (Almeria), they then moved to France and then moved to Romania for the mountains. When I saw the film, I must say I was completely taken in!"

(The Sisters Brothers, 2018)

"In fact, in a lot of the traditional Western locations, there are now too many telegraph poles you can't shoot there anymore. So, people have found a way of presenting these wide open spaces using non-American locations, and it works! You don't have to make it in a national park in America anymore, you can actually create your own Western landscape. You still need an American actor in the lead, for credibility, but you don't need an American landscape, horses or wranglers! But it's strange, we love the myth, the visual experience of it and the morality play; the elemental elements of the Western are still very popular. But we're not awfully fond of the traditional ideology and I think we've found a way, in Europe, of telling those stories and squeezing the bits we don't like out of it.

CONTEMPORARY WESTERN:

"I think no one could make a John Ford movie now, in fact, not even John Ford himself."

John Wayne in True Grit (1969) Henry Hathaway

"What are some common characteristics that could attract the modern audience to a contemporary western film? Have they changed over time?"

"I think if you take True Grit (2010) as an example, it was a huge hit at the box office - partly because of the older audiences. There's a folk memory of the John Wayne version, which they carry. They wanted to compare and see what they've done with it, but mainly people like Coen Brothers films, and the Coen Brothers audience went with it.

Years ago I was researching in Los Angeles, and I went to the American Film Institute library and found the John Wayne's original script of True Grit (1969) and like in the novel, Rooster Cogburn is in the original script. He takes opium, he drinks too much. He is an absolute rascal. And he has a rather shady past, and John Wayne put a line through several of these things here: no opium thank you very much, at least don't emphasise it, not too much about the drinking. so he tried to customise the part of Rooster Cogburn to his persona. John Wayne did it very very successfully, whereas Jeff Bridges doesn't give a damn about any of that. Let's make him as disreputable as possible, he drinks too much, you can't understand a word he says he mumbles he's grizzled all the time, so they weren't constrained by the image of John Wayne, in a way that I think either way was in 1968. Well, what that tells us I think is that the director brings to the individual film. There are various things where you can see the surrealism of everyday life - their quirkiness (which is their trademark) comes through.

The Western was the backbone of Hollywood from the 40s to 60s, but none of that is sayable anymore. Now, True Grit (2010) is more about the Coen Brothers than it is about the Western. I think the Western has become like heritage movies in England; it's a form of costume drama, which doesn't really have the same generic rules. In that space, individual directors bring their particular projects and construct an individual. The ideology of the story becomes much more character-driven; much more about the individual relationships and much less about the embeddedness in history. I think it's changed very dramatically. A lot of the things that were associated with the traditional Western have become unsayable: The technological arrival, you know they aren't horses, great, you know they the railroads have arrived, capitalism has come to the west, fantastic progress and all those things that were part of the ideology of the tradition; the attitude to native Americans, the attitude to the environment and the slaughter of the buffalo, and the Western has

almost completely gone from American historical textbooks. For the reasons I've said, because so much of it is unsaleable. You could never do it anymore, so things happen. But you can't take for granted that the audience is with you, you've got to create a universe in and of itself with each film, I think."

"In contemporary western films, do you think the men are being depicted in a more realistic way, compared to the past hyper-masucline characters? And, do you think the female status in these modern films have been promoted, at all?"

"THE WORLD WASN'T QUITE READY FOR AN ALL FEMALE WESTERN AT THAT STAGE."

"In the 1970s I actually wrote a Western, which was called Jack Slade Desperado. It was taken from a Mark Twain story called Roughing It (1872), where he has a little section about this character called Jack Slade. I can't remember the exact reference but Jack was married, and his wife kept getting him out of trouble. He went around sort of shooting people and doing all the things that Western gunslingers do. But, he kept falling foul of the law and his wife would arrive at the last minute and bail him out. I thought that was interesting as a theme.

I think they've been various films which, which was the one with Madeline Stowe called the Bad Girls a few years ago, they had a sort of Wild Bunch movie and it was all women. It wasn't awfully successful, and the world wasn't quite ready for an all female Western at that stage. The few American Westerns that featured strong female characters played by Barbara Stanwyck in 40 Guns (1957) or Joan Crawford in Johnny Guitar (1954) - (or there's one about a wagon train entirely consisting of women made in the 1950s) - scholars have revisited these films, trying to see if there are the seeds of future developments in them. There's a kind of redefinition of American western heritage going on, in the rebound from developments in society.

There's been a lot of Westerns where they're not exactly feminised, but the traditional masculinity is challenged. Television movies have great female characters in the West: Annie Oakley, and Calamity Jane - all these female characters, have suddenly become feminist heroines. It's being redefined all the time, which I think is interesting. But, I think it is your generations' job to write the

great Western about a female character that clicks with contemporary audiences. It's your generation that's got to come up with a way of telling that story that clicks with contemporary audiences, which challenges the traditional masculinity of the Western I'm not sure I can. Can anybody think of a film that's done that? There are a few are at the edges but there hasn't been a great western. But they've been attempts, I mean Baz Luhrmann tried it with Australia but it was a disaster. By putting Nicole Kidman at the centre of the action but it didn't work, it's tricky. And there was one not very good film with Brigitte Bardot and Claudia Cardinale, but again it was very much a male gaze, they were treated as kind of sex icons. I didn't think it came off at all. Again, they tried in Heaven's Gate (1980). There was an attempt in the Isabelle Huppert character, to make her the moral center of the film. It needs someone to build up the story from the ground up, and maybe someone should find historical figures that haven't been."

ADVICE QUESTIONS:

"What would your best piece of advice be for a student wanting to excel in becoming an academic writer or critic?"

"I can only speak from my case. I chose a very eccentric subject was Spaghetti Westerns at a time when really, nobody else was writing about them. So, a distinctive area that I could call my own was important.Secondly, I sent a copy of the book to Leone. It got me into the Leone family and they began to trust me. Various things flowed from that. The biography which I did of Leone subsequently, would not have been possible if I hadn't had that entree. So, if you write about someone, send it to them! Sometimes, they get back in touch and it opens all sorts of doors - particularly in film. People are quite flattered when you write about them. Well, it depends what you've written! If you say they're terrible then maybe not.. So that was important, but also, not worrying about what other people think. A lot of people mocked me for studying the Italian Western. They said, "This is a heap of junk. Those films are terrible. You're wasting your time. You will destroy your academic career if you persist in studying this dreadful subject!" But if you stick to your guns (literally), you find a subject that suits you."

"What is the biggest factor that has contributed to your success?"

"I was very lucky. My writing about Italian Westerns coincided with people's attitudes to these films changing, whereas in the 1960s nobody liked them. I felt like I was a prophet in the wilderness. There was something about them that clicked with me. Partly the visual style of the films, partly the music and partly because it was the 1960s when we all had posters of Che Guevara on the wall, Bob Dylan protest songs and Catch-22. It captured a moment. It's like pop music, we like American pop music but we don't necessarily like Donald Trump. We like the culture but were slightly separated from the context it originated from...and that's what I loved about the Italian Westerns! So by the time I wrote Spaghetti Westerns, the world was beginning to change. It just came out at the right moment, so timing and luck is important here. It's not just what you study, it's the moment, do people notice? An awful amount of academic books come out and nobody notices or they notice ten years later.

To get noticed you need a subject that is in the ether, its contemporary and people want to read about it. I was very lucky where that was concerned, then I appeared on television when the book came out and one thing led to another. I started to make a television programme about the movies, interviewing, they used to have a season of films on BBC Two, The Films of Woody Allen, The Films of Francis Ford Coppola and so on. I did that for about eight years and I really enjoyed it! It was all because I had been

interviewed on the radio and television about a book I had written. I wrote a book that hit the moment when it came out, there was enough national interest for people to want to know about it, so that's an important aspect of it for me.

I have had a lot of trouble with the Research Excellence Framework because a lot of the things I do don't fit. I curate exhibitions, I make the odd radio and television programmes and they don't count as research which strikes me as daft! I did a TV series about horror a few years ago and I put more research into that than I did my PHD, much more and it took me four years. But as I said it all began choosing a subject that captured the moment, didn't seem out of date and seemed urgent. Everyone wanted to hear about it because they wanted reasons why they should like Italian Westerns and I gave them lots of reasons."

What's the best advice you have ever been given?

"Well, you know when you're driving along, and on the road there's a yellow box? When they first appeared, nobody knew what they were but there was a road sign that said "do not enter yellow box unless your exit is clear". That's a good rule of life. Don't get involved in a situation unless you can find a way out of it!"

"DON'T GET INVOLVED IN A SITUATION UNLESS YOU CAN FIND A WAY OUT OF IT!"

"If you decide to do something, make sure you've got something else in your mind too in case it doesn't work. I know I've been accused of doing too many things at once but I always have two projects on the go together: the main one I'm working on and another one like a B movie buzzing around in my head."

"Also, watch lots of movies! I think an awful lot of people who write about film become very specialist and only watch the films that they're interested in. But I think it is very important to understand the broad field, the culture that is going on and the stuff around what you're studying. I'm a great believer in keeping going. Keep going, keep watching as many things as possible and don't get tunnel vision. Particularly if you're lecturing, because the chances are the people in the audience are more hip to what's going on around your subject than you are, so if you don't understand all that then maybe you could seem a bit eccentric. And keep writing! It's like getting on a bicycle; when you can do it,

you can do it. I don't think ideas are ideas until you write them down, then they can become communicable and therefore have a kind of validity. It's how I focus my thoughts."

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"And communication too! Umberto Eco said that scholars have an obligation to be clear in what they write and it's very easy to write difficult, technical stuff that only two or three people understand. What's difficult is distilling those very difficult, complex ideas into direct communication with the audience and I feel that very, very strongly. If we have a good idea we should be able to share it. Too much film writing, because it has an inferiority complex about it being a discipline, over does the formality as if it established its credentials. So the way to avoid that embarrassment is to be as difficult as possible; if we're difficult, then we must be a serious discipline. I don't see the need for that. And the paradox of writing about a mass communication medium in a way that doesn't communicate seems to me to be a bit daft."

"How do you overcome self-criticism in your work and how do you keep motivated?"

"It's interesting because I wrote stuff in the 1970s that I would completely rewrite now. In the 70s, we asked about class all the time. We didn't write about the environment or gender. Now, if I wrote about those subjects, I'd write about little else than them because those are the subjects that people are really interested in. I feel slightly ashamed in a way that all the things we didn't notice in the 60s and 70s are now taken for granted. So when I am revisiting some of those pieces, I have to refract them through the context of how people see things today, and I don't see anything wrong with that.
I always used to say to people when they were doing their PhD's, what you're doing is creating; you're throwing down the gauntlet and you're putting over your ideas. At that moment, it is the best you can do. It's your first word on the subject in 20 years, not the last.

"WE CAN'T TRANSCEND THE ERA THAT WE BELONG TO."

I would say that self-criticism is key to writing about film. Otherwise, if the pair of spectacles through which you view things is out of date, then everything you write is going to be out of date as well. But it's all provisional. History is a moveable feast. The questions people are asking in the 50's are nothing like the questions they're asking today, and the questions they're asking today will seem very out of date in 20 years - but that's how it is. We can't transcend the era that we belong to. What you do is make your contribution as best you can, and keep it."

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Heated Needles

ISPC

Proofreading

Iolo Williams
Victoria Drave

Spotlight Interviews

Ellie Ball
Yueqi Tang
Niamh Wynne
Sarah Andrews

Page Design

João Belchior
Victoria Drave

Cover Design

Iolo Williams

All the members of the Cut To team

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