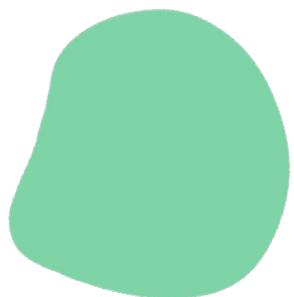
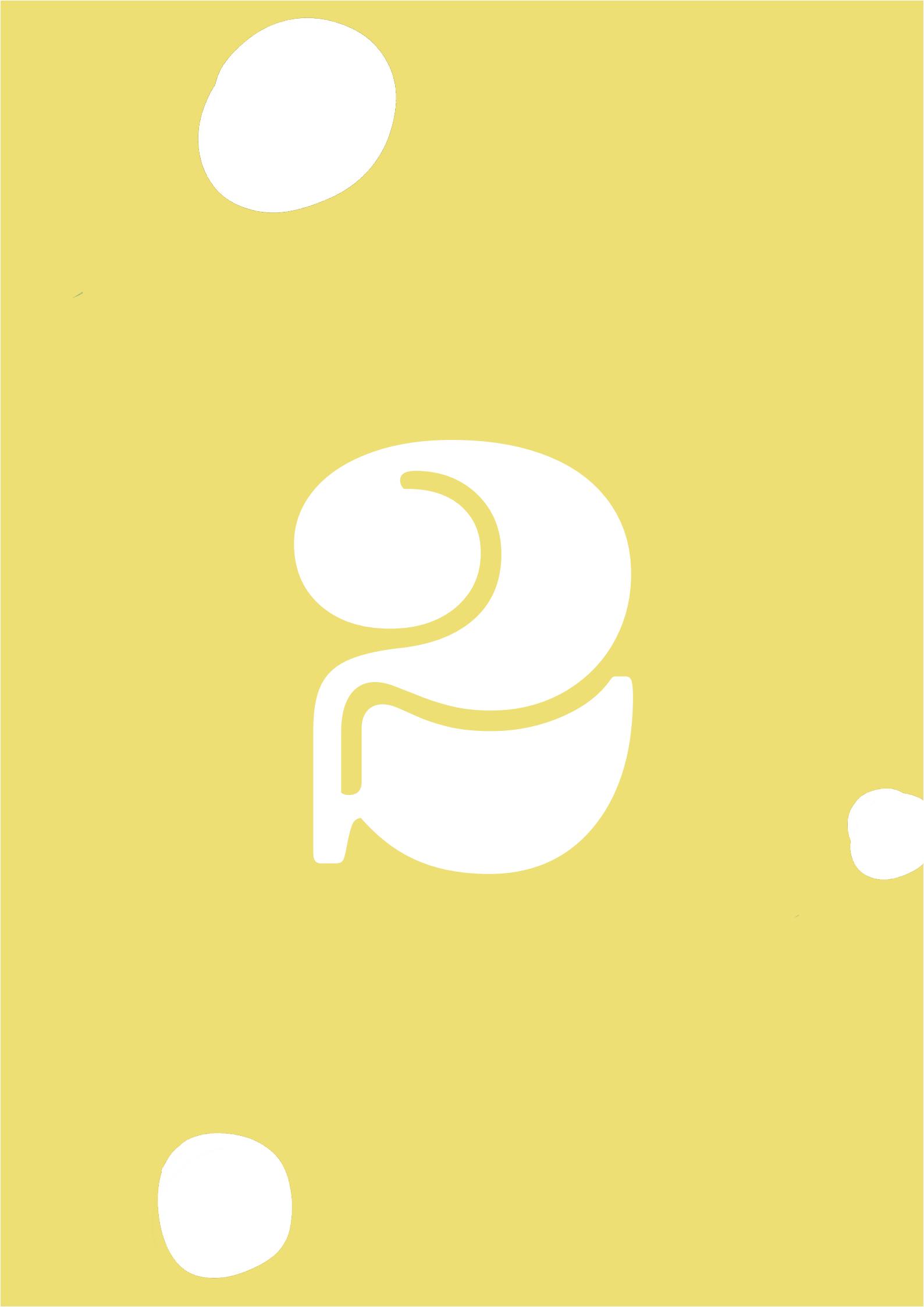


“Cinema is the the most beautiful fraud in the world.”

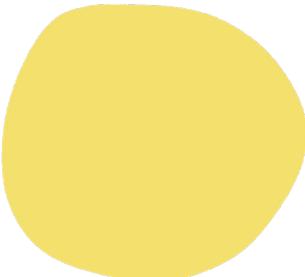
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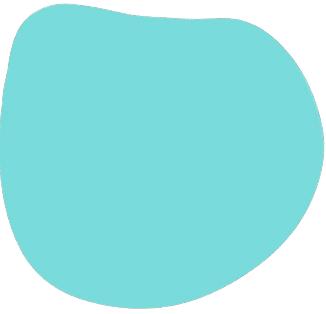


“Cinema is magic in the service of dreams”



Djibril Diop Mambety

1



“I always travelled with the films because I want the audience to be my teacher so that I can learn for the next one”

Sally Potter



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The Batman

A Cut To Review



by: **Sam Willis**

When the announcement of another live action incarnation of Batman came along, so did the outcry of scepticism and vocalisation of worries by nerds worldwide. So shortly after the Snyderverse's attempt at the caped crusader, with Ben Affleck donning the cowl, comes another iteration, one that serves more faithfully to the comics that originated the hero, in a grounded, worthy entry into Batman's theatrical lineage.

Based on the popular comics Year One and The Long Halloween, the film depicts the reclusive, billionaire orphan Bruce Wayne, in his second year operating as a vigilante known as Vengeance to the criminals and crooks of Gotham. A masked serial killer known as the Riddler begins murdering high-profile, government officials, in a mission to 'unmask the truth' and bring those corrupt individuals to a swift but twisted justice. Aided by Lieutenant

James Gordon and cat burglar Selina Kyle, Bruce follows the Riddler's clues and uncovers a conspiracy revolving around governmental figures and the criminals of the city, such as mob boss Carmine Falcone and his henchman Oswald 'Oz' Cobblepot. There are many components of the film that I believe make it a successful reboot of this fan favourite story and suggests that the material is in the right creative hands to be sculpted for the future.

The director Matt Reeves succeeds in creating an ambience of darkness throughout the film. The environment of Gotham, a rain-drenched city rife with corruption and violence, is shot beautifully in certain scenes with an ending highlighted with a sweetness of hope, with the sunlight depicting the dawn of a new beginning and transition for our hero. The fighting is choreographed and shot incredibly well, showing us a Batman, who doesn't pull any punches with his mental state

reflected in the violence he inflicts. Efficiently and tactically storming his way through multiple thugs as an unstoppable force in pure darkness, only lit by the muzzle flashes of guns, is a standout scene for me.

The cast of the film is immense, with Zoe Kravitz as Selina Kyle, Jeffrey Wright as James Gordon, John Turturro as Carmine Falcone, Andy Serkis as Alfred and Colin Farrell who is unrecognisable as the Penguin. The film possesses a modern gallery of incredibly talented actors in iconic comic book roles, most notably Robert Pattinson, who provides a familiar yet unique portrayal of the caped crusader. We see a version of Bruce Wayne, very different to the billionaire, playboy persona of Christian Bale in The Dark Knight Trilogy or Ben Affleck in the films of Zack Snyder. Instead, we see a damaged, reclusive Bruce, still struggling from his childhood trauma of losing his parents and using his vigilantism as a channel to express his rage and vengeance, depicting a version of Batman who is brutal and relentless in his violence. Pattinson shows the transformation of the character, from an unstable, lost orphan claiming he is following his family's legacy, into the saviour of the city and becoming an incorruptible symbol of hope for the betrayed public.

Another cast member that shines is Paul

Dano, who is perfect for the Riddler. From the opening scene, we see his ruthlessness and trickery, as he lurks in the shadows, stalking his prey - the corrupt mayor of Gotham. The point of view shots and lighting cues make this introduction immensely creepy, depicting an unhinged antagonist who is as brutal as he is intelligent. His appearance is inspired by the real-life zodiac killer, with a visual nod to David Fincher's *Zodiac* with the costume, which emanates mystery and unpredictability. When his alter ego is revealed to be an unassuming man, it creates an even more threatening idea - that he could have been anyone. The character's psychopathic outlook on life is a result of his deeply traumatic upbringing due to the consequences of corruption. Although we are told snippets of his backstory, it isn't important. The Riddler is just the product of the conditions he was raised in, the embodiment of the misplaced trust in governmental institutions, who could have gone down a very different route if granted a healthy upbringing. Dano's worthy portrayal follows in the footsteps of Heath Ledger's masterful turn as the Joker, as he depicts a volatile, calculating villain. Inspiring a worryingly real potential of incels and keyboard warriors, he is disenfranchised and losing faith in society's governance to rise up.

There are many creative choices in this film focusing on Batman himself that I really do admire. We see a very grounded interpretation of the character with realistic explanations for his conception, such as a leather-stitched cowl, the wingsuit for his gliding capability, and a Batmobile that appears to be a souped up, durable car, not an indestructible tank. There is an absence of a ridiculous-sounding, gravelly bat-voice, or a high-tech voice-modulated growl. We are

“INSTEAD WE SEE A DAMAGED, RECLUSIVE BRUCE, STILL STRUGGLING FROM HIS CHILDHOOD TRAUMA OF LOSING HIS PARENTS”

are a useful and practical addition for Batman’s array of gadgets acting as an Iron Man-esque heads-up display that really aids the detective element of Batman. This is elaborated in the narrative as he solves the riddles posed to him with a composed, intellectual response. The black eye make-up has become an in-joke with previous Batman films, worn by the actors in the costumes



Still from *The Batman* (2022) dir. Matt Reeves

which miraculously disappears once the cowl is removed. This iteration clearly includes this feature in an admirable, direct approach.

Another triumphant component of the film is the music. Michael Giacchino is making his way towards becoming one of the greatest film composers of all time with credits for Pixar films such as *Ratatouille*, *Inside Out* and *Up*. Not a stranger to the superhero genre either, he previously composed the scores for *The Incredibles*, *Doctor Strange* and the MCU’s Tom Holland-led *Spider-*

given a portrayal of an infant Batman, using his own, slightly lowered in pitch, natural voice, which is rarely used, relying on his appearance to instil fear instead. The recording contact lenses

man films. In *The Batman*, Giacchino creates distinct character themes that expertly embody the essence of the characters whilst matching the tone of the film. Selina Kyle, or Catwoman, is accompanied by a piece that features a cascading piano steeped in slow jazz and sweeping strings reflecting her sultry and sleek appearance, tragic past and the romantic entanglement she has with our hero. The Riddler and his killings are accompanied by a haunting vocalist, shrouding him in a mysterious and creepy atmosphere until his grand scheme is unveiled and the score crescendos and erupts into a pompous orchestral score. However, Giacchino's masterpiece is the hero's theme as he nods to the ominous nature of Danny

Elfman's score for the Tim Burton films and Hans Zimmer's triumphant magnitude and grandeur in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight Trilogy*. The track has an orchestral beauty which echoes the traumatic struggles of the hero and his desires to be a symbol to vanquish crime whilst building with a relentless piano motif, illustrating the fear and dread held by the thugs of Gotham.

The Batman succeeds in giving a new take on the beloved characters and story, although its runtime may seem daunting. The film commits to its unified story with a devoted director and cast, and creates a tale of accepting the problems of the past and looking forward, with hope, to the future.



Still from *The Batman* (2022) dir. Matt Reeves

TITANIC

A Cut To Review



**by: Bobbie-Jo Glendinning
Molly Bailey**

TITANIC.

Iconic. A tragic love story between two people worlds apart in class that comments on the stereotypes of the rich and the poor as the protagonists Jack and Rose break barriers and fall in love whilst being plunged into the devastating reality of the sinking of RMS Titanic.

Rose, engaged to a power-hungry, proper and aristocratic gentlemen, is faced with conflicting emotions when she meets young Jack, who tries to save her from making a catastrophic choice, beginning their journey in teaching one another how to live free from the constraints of social class.

She had nothing but happiness; he had nothing but freedom.

In order to review this classic, we have organised a structure that contains three acts which we will individually analyse and fully review.

Primarily, within the first Act we see the

beginning of Jack and Rose's journey onto the 'unsinkable' ship that is about to start its voyage. Fundamentally, the film starts by building the story around the difference between the protagonists' lifestyles through an abundance of establishing shots. There is a clear differentiation both in the *mise en scène* and in the cinematography concerning the representations of the parlour suite combined with the lack of visuals of the deck that Jack stays on. As Rose and her family are first boarding, we clearly get this distinction between the classes epitomized because these shots are contrasted with frames of the lower classes having health and lice checks as well as using a completely separate entrance in order to not disturb the rich guests. Within the first act, the audience already get a sense that the first class is more important than their 'inferiors'.

In addition to this, the cinematography often puts the higher classes visually above the others with higher camera angles as well as a clear juxtaposition between the first shot of Rose and her family and the

first shot of Jack trying to gamble his way onto Titanic. Furthermore, when viewers first see Rose, she looks glamorous, surrounded by riches, beautifully golden lighting and angelic tones as the narration reads: "outwardly, I was everything a well-brought up girl should be".

On the contrary, at the first glimpse of Jack, even dull, grey lighting is clearly being mixed with the visuals of cigarettes and alcohol as the obnoxious sound of the Titanic's horn plays in the background of the gamble sequence. The costumes of the characters are very different from that of Rose and her family too as we see britches and shirts along with Fabrizio donning a navy beret. This is only the beginning of the clear ideology of rich vs poor within social class in 1912, though. The complete infatuation and spontaneity that Jack has in life is consistently followed with remarks like "when you got nothing, you got nothing to lose", as he points out when he gambles everything he has with him.

As the story progresses, we see an unlikely bond form between Jack and Rose - starting with Jack saving Rose from herself. She is completely miserable despite, according to society, supposedly having all the benefits that produce happiness, and so this is the beginning of the journey to Jack and Rose enriching one another's lives while attempting to defeat the constraints of the class system (specifically touched on within the whole dinner with Rose's family). Personally, I believe that the comments on society's structures and how two people can be drawn together despite their differences

"THE FILM DEFINITELY SHINES A NEW LIGHT ON ROMANCE, PROVING HOW SOMETHING THAT STEMS FROM HATRED OF THE POORER CLASSES CAN TURN INTO AN EPIC."

was something that wouldn't have been considered during 1912, but nevertheless, the film definitely shines a new light on romance, proving how something that stems from hatred of the poorer classes can turn into an epic.

In Act Two, we see the infamous scene in which Jack draws the picture of Rose, the main focus of this act clearly being the depiction of her newly found comfort with him within her parlour where she had actually previously been seen feeling uncomfortable, surrounded and overwhelmed by her rich life. The mise en scène here continues to show her family's vast amount of wealth and yet all that Rose is focusing on is Jack and their growing relationship. The idea of class, moreover, is completely rejected in this moment of the film with the character both cheating on her fiancé whilst wearing the necklace

and completely abandoning her wealth through the representation of the lack of rich garments and, basically, her modesty. In my opinion, they are equal here, with no contrasting shots or any real differentiation in their lifestyle. However, many may argue that the fact that Rose is simply sitting, waiting for the man to do the work for her, is a representation of the ideology of the housewife and breadwinner from the period. In addition, the same could be said in relation to their social positions, with Jack's clear 'worker' status in this scenario in opposition to Rose's 'doing nothingness', as a high-class citizen would.

As Act Two progresses, we witness a love scene between the two protagonists which quickly proceeds into the framing of Jack as a thief and, subsequently, to his arrest. The way in which Rose instantly believes

that Jack has truly stolen from her only reinforces the idea that the lower classes are untrustworthy and shouldn't be respected. Equality is quickly abandoned because he is instantly blamed, Cal even referring to Jack as a 'professional', implying that people of his status perform this kind of crime all the time.

Splitting the film into acts means the final part is the whole sinking of the ship episode, the tragedy of the Titanic. It involves the panic as a result of the iceberg hitting the ship and also Rose's realisation that she truly loves Jack and doesn't want to marry Cal. After listening to her mother, she finally understands how ridiculous the idea of class is in this situation. Talking to her mother makes Rose completely reject the idea. In fact, this scene is a defining moment for her, ending with the character



Still from *Titanic* (1997) dir. James Cameron.



Still from *Titanic* (1997) dir. James Cameron.

ultimately fighting back against Cal and capitalism itself.

The sequence of Rose going to free Jack and the viewer's first look at how quickly the lower decks of the Titanic have flooded comes next and, personally, I think the flooding scenes are the best part of the film. They inflict a true feeling of anxiety and claustrophobia, an unescapable feeling that we can feel through the screen. Specifically, an immensely heart-wrenching moment during the deaths on the ship is when the Captain purely sinks along with it. When he bravely walks to his wheel, as the water engulfs the ship, and creates, in my opinion, one of the saddest and purest moments of the entire film.

Titanic concludes with the iconic scene of the protagonists' holding each other while

blue, cold lighting surrounds them, as they are seconds away from death. As one would expect, this creates a physical reaction in the viewer, making our hearts ache for the characters... Ache for love, for injustice, for death. Arguably, the most famous scene of the ending in which Rose lets go of Jack, perfectly adds to this coldness that the film builds on, creating an atmosphere of complete isolation.

Concluding this analytical review, I believe that this production is an iconic masterpiece that people truly love to pointlessly hate. Some see a simple, soppy love plot and go as far as to argue that the placement of the story within a tragedy such as the Titanic, doesn't do the event justice. However, I believe that this is a film that completely captures the contrast between

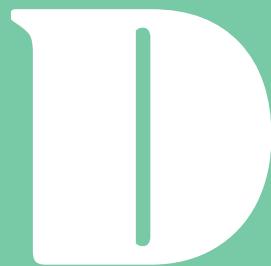
the rich and the poor as well as the conflict between gender and masculinity within relationships. Overall, the cinematography, mise en scène and ideologies, at the time, created a new standard to cinema that I would highly recommend divulging into.



Still from *Titanic* (1997) dir. James Cameron.

“We are Lady Parts”: Religion, Self-Expression, and Punk

by: Maria Gulina



irector and screenwriter Nida Manzur's television show *We Are Lady Parts* (Manzur, 2021) opens on a group of young Muslim girls in London playing in a punk band, singing songs with provocative lyrics. They need a guitarist, and there is a suitable candidate - our protagonist and narrator, Amina. However, on top of having a very real and intense case of stage fright, she only dreams of love and marriage. It's only after seeing the handsome brother of the band's drummer that she agrees to being a part of the group.

The show tells the story of each of the girls within the space of six episodes, with their dramas and traumas including family separation and coming out as queer among their religious peers. The girls are all characterized differently, both in their life stories and their appearance. Some of

them have their heads covered, some not. Of course, there is a romantic plotline, but it is rather satirical, comparable even to a modern day “*Bridget Jones's Diary*”. But there is also a storyline about an influencer who wants to do a provocative interview with the girls, which causes a wave of backlash and internet hate condemning the Muslim women for singing ‘evil’ singing punk words. This becomes an interesting twist in the narrative that allows the viewers to reflect on cancel culture, media visibility and authenticity.

In my opinion, Muslim women can find in the show many more pressing issues. Their relationships with their parents, for example, as well as their relationships with other female friends who do not see acknowledge the punk band at all. There's also a plotline involving men from marriage

apps who are looking for a stereotypical housewife archetype, not a woman from the modern-age.

So, why does this niche show about young Muslim women living in London, playing punk rock feel so relevant to me, an agnostic Eastern European woman in her mid-30s with no musical training? Well, representation is deeper than just a checklist of physical features and personality traits. Among all those types of relationships the most important one is still the relationship you nurture with yourself. These stories revealed to me how important it is to prioritize yourself, protect your roots and traditions, and stay firm in your values and intentions. It's about finding your own voice.

In fact, one of the most touching moments of the series comes at the recital of the poem "Speak" at an open mic. The time has come for Amina to speak up, to muster the courage to realize her true desires, and give herself a voice through her guitar.

Whilst the main conflict arises from what the world expects from them, the most important lesson is your self-expression and the pursuit of your dreams. This show is about women supporting women, and the culmination of the whole story is not a romantic kiss, but a successful concert in a backyard garage.

Oh, and I have to say, their songs are pretty good too.

Amina's poem:

Speak, your lips are free.
Speak, it is your own tongue.
Speak, it is your own body.
Speak, your life is still yours.

See how in the blacksmith's shop
The flame burns wild, the iron glows red;
The locks open their jaws,
And every chain begins to break.

Speak, this brief hour is long enough
Before the death of body and tongue:

The Father

A Cut To Review

by: Irene Li

alising you don't know who to turn to for help as your mind betrays you. This plot sounds familiar maybe for the science fiction or thriller genre, but this is based on the reality of people with Alzheimer's.

In a repetitive and fragmented narrative, the film presents an immersive first-person view of an older man, Anthony, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. Anthony faces the difficult decision, to either accept a carer hired by his daughter, Anne, or leave his old apartment and move to a nursing home. The film is highly psychological, as we, the audience, are put into Anthony's shoes and gradually lose all sense of control over reality as Anthony's memory fades and he loses his grasp of what is real and what is not. We are absorbed into the inner psyche of an "Alzheimer's" patient, a world of doubt and insecurity, loneliness and helplessness. Highlighted by Anthony's search for his watch at the beginning of the film, the film's creative choices such as identical floor plans for different places, Anthony's multiple outfits, the disappearance of the frescoes and changes in the apartment's decor, the uncertainty of his daughter Lucy's wellbeing, and rotating actors for the roles all give the film an air of suspense and disorientation.

Imagine you find yourself living in a time-warped world, what you see as morning, the people you trust see as night. You think something went wrong. Your memory becomes disordered, your whole world turns into pieces, as if things have suddenly changed in a flash. When you have witnessed what you believe to be true, others think you are lying. You try to prove what happened, but the more you try, the more confused you become. Then, you start to doubt everything, accidentally saying hurtful words and harming those you care for. Eventually, the patience of those around you runs out, and they think you are being unreasonable and intentionally difficult. Your own memory begins to fade, forgetting the faces and names of your loved ones, and everything about yourself, re-

“Perhaps the aria at the beginning of the film takes us into great sorrow; “Let me freeze again, let me freeze again to death.”



Colour is used deftly throughout the film, with a large use of cool, dark tones and low saturation. The three spaces in which Anthony lives are Anthony's apartment, his daughter Anne's flat and the nursing home. At the beginning of the film, Anthony's flat is shown in warm tones, and changes, moving from warm to cool and finally to the coolest tone in the nursing home. The warm tones give a sense of familiarity and relative security, while the cool tones give a sense of strangeness, unease and helplessness, suggesting the changes in Anthony's emotions. The colour of Anthony's flat is an elegant black and brown, presenting the house itself as grand and classic whilst at the same time revealing Anthony's loneliness and emptiness. In Anthony's dream, blue is used extensively to create a cold, creepy atmosphere as Anthony walks out of his room and into a hospital-like place; the closer he gets to the source that is calling him, the brighter the light becomes. When Anthony is guided to a room by the voice of his daughter Lucy, he sees her lying in a hospital bed; her room is a dull, lifeless yellow, which is often used in zombie films to suggest death and doom. The colour is sug-

gestive of Lucy's death, yet Anthony's background colour is still the blue of the hospital and does not seem to be influenced by this yellow. This separation shows the distance between them; they are in different spaces, so close yet so far, out of reach. This scene also emphasises the fact that Lucy's death is a lingering nightmare for Anthony.

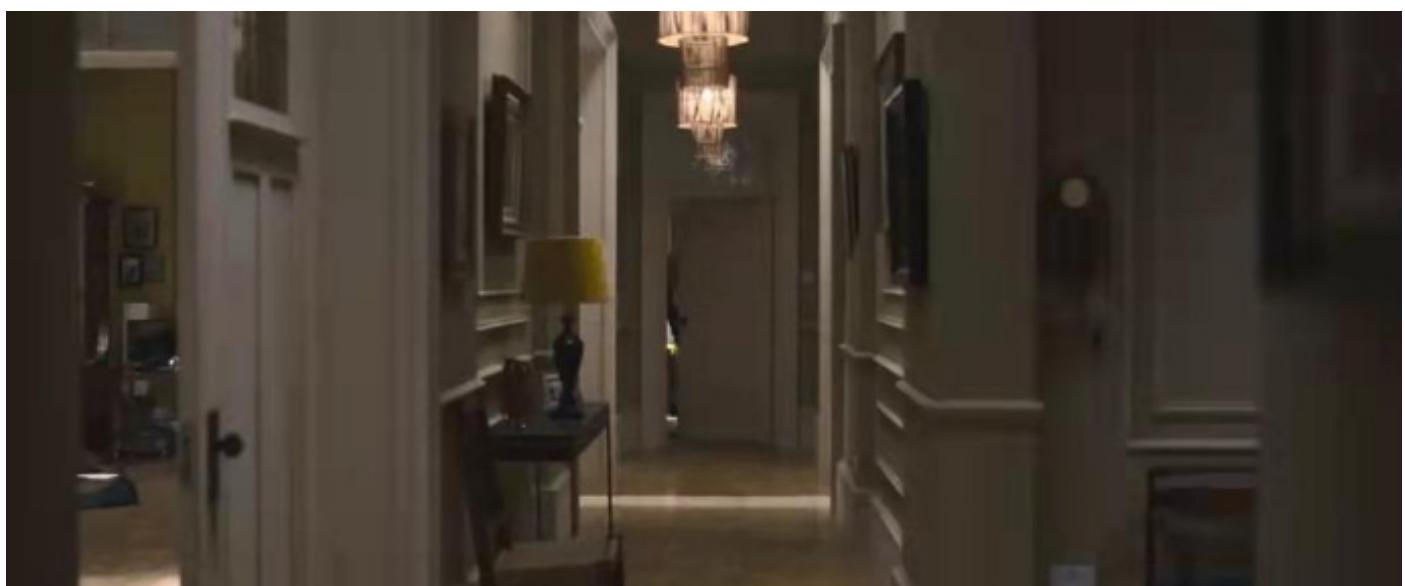
It could be said that the film is a thriller, a documentary of people with Alzheimer's and that the horror it presents is a constant distortion of space, a confusion of reality. It is brutal and frightening because it is real. Perhaps the aria at the beginning of the film takes us into great sorrow; “Let me freeze again, let me freeze again to death.” Like the memory of an Alzheimer's sufferer frozen in ice over time, until death. The film also depicts how Alzheimer's takes a toll not only on the sufferer but on the sufferer's family. Anne is shown putting up with Anthony's mood swings and irrationality, and is even distrusted and suspected of wrongdoing by him. She hides her tears of despair and pain behind an awkward, tender smile; as the pressure builds up, she even generates an evil intention. At the same

time, it is also an educational film about life. What is the meaning of life? Life will come to an end one day; memory fading with the passing time is the greatest torment because it is not a quick and clean end. It is like a candle in the wind, blow out and light out, give out intermittent light, until burned out. The film summarises the difficulty of ageing and illness with a line from Anthony

at the end: "I feel as if I'm losing all my leaves". Against the monumental force of time, memories are fragile and life is small and weak, but at the same time, they are precious. Every life has an end, and perhaps it is the acceptance of fate that makes us cherish the people we love more.



Anthony's house - Still from The Father (2020) dir. Florian Zeller



Anne's house - Still from The Father (2020) dir. Florian Zeller



Hostpital - Still from **The Father (2020)** dir. Florian Zeller

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Available through: Apple iTunes [Accessed 20 February 2022]

Raise the Red Lantern (1991): A contrasting example of the Fifth Generation Filmmaking

by: João Eduardo Lima Belchior

Chinese cinema largely remains an uncharted sea, even if a few islands have now come into view" (Reynaud, 1998). Due to the Chinese political landscape of the last century, combined with strict censorship, it is very difficult to have a global panorama of Chinese Cinema. For more than eighty years, directors have been forced to change and adapt their scripts, or even abandon the production completely. Moreover, even the films that manage to surpass the censorship of the Film Bureau (The Chinese Film Bureau was created after the establishment of Mao Zedong's Communist Party in 1949. It not only has control over individual productions in mainland China, but also hold annual meetings in which the themes and genres to be produced in the following year are discussed. (Cornelius and Smith, 2002-) , never see the same international distribution and availability of the films made in the West. In this essay, I will try to explore the Fifth Generation of Chinese Cinema, giving a historical, political, and social framing. Having established the characteristics and motifs that make this New Wave so important and recognizable in the

panorama of Chinese and Global Cinema, I will analyse Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991) and ponder on why this film should be considered a Fifth Generation film, even if it incorporates elements that go against the original spirit of the movement.

After the Chinese Civil War (The Chinese Civil War lasted four years and was fought between the Nationalists, led by Chiang Kai-shek and the Communists lead by Mao Zedong - who win the war in 1949), the Communist Party of China (CPC) gained control of the country. Mao Zedong is faced with a "ruined country" (Cornelius and Smith, op. cit.) devasted culturally and industrially. Several were the strategies implemented by Mao during the first seventeen years in power, but they all failed and just led to an even greater economic ruin and famine (The Great Famine lasted from 1958 to 1961, in which statistics predict to have died between 15 and 55 million people.) In May of 1966, hoping to transform China into a communist role model for the world (and to reinforce his power over his growing number of opponents), Mao starts the Cultural Revolution - a decade-long movement that would divide and hurt the country even



Still from *Yellow Earth* (1984) dir. Chen Kaige

further. In a newspaper, the CPC urged the masses to eradicate the old culture, ideology, customs, and habits (Ribao, 1966), to avoid a “dictatorship of the bourgeoisie” (Phillips, 2016). In answer to the appeal of Chairman Mao, groups of students form a non-military (but extremist and violent) movement.

Entitling themselves The Red Guards, these people would destroy and torment anything and anyone related to the Nationalist and Imperialist Past of China. People were physically injured and killed with no regulation and schools, churches, shrines, libraries, and shops were closed and vandalized. It is only in 1968 that Mao recognizes this movement to have grown out of control and sends the youth from the cities to the countryside to be “re-educated”, by learning from the peasantry. This often-meant poor living conditions and hard work.

In 1976, with the death of Mao Zedong, the Cultural Revolution ends, and the country begins to open doors to the outside world.

It takes, however, two years for the Beijing Film Academy (BFA) to reopen and give the chance for a new range of people to learn the art and craftsmanship of Film. These students were the first to have the chance to learn with the innovative cinema that had been made around the world over the past few decades (and had been banned in China until then). The Italian Neorealism and the French New Wave would become great influences of these future filmmakers. Graduating in 1982, these students (of which partake, Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Tian Zhuangzhuang, Hu Mei, and others) would start making films right away, and soon would be defined by local critics as the Fifth Generation (The reason to call the BFA graduates of 1982 The Fifth Generation is argued between critics. Some believe it has to be with the necessity to demarcate the political and aesthetic role they had in the Chinese Cinema. Others attribute it to the fact that they were the fifth class to graduate from the BFA, and others say it has to do with the

formal and stylistic breakthrough from their ancestors' work. (Reynaud, op. cit.).) Chinese Cinema from its beginnings in the 19th Century until the Present has been divided into Generations. The Fifth (or the Chinese New Wave) started in 1984 and moved as a uniform movement until 1989. The generations that preceded this movement, and that inevitably, in one way or another, influenced it, are not so

“THE GENERATIONS THAT PRECEDED THIS MOVEMENT, AND THAT INEVITABLY, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, INFLUENCED IT, ARE NOT SO EASILY DEFINED.”

inspired by the Soviet films of the same genre. During the Cultural Revolution, Cinema was in halt for ten years, so, when the Fifth Generation started making films they were, possibly unknowingly, responsible for reviving film production in China. However, the films made by these filmmakers would not be like their ancestors'. Their personal experiences during the Cultural Revolution and the access to different types of films until then unseen would make them see Film through a new set of lenses. One and Eight (Yige hé bāge, 1984) directed by Zhang Junzhao, and its more known follower, Yellow Earth (Huáng tǔdì, 1984), directed by Chen Kaige would be the stage for experimentation, where the directors that would later find national and international acclaim would work together for the first time (Lu, 2002). Yellow Earth “has a new kind of structure, I [Chen Kaige] was more concerned about how to express my attitudes than with telling the story as such” (Chen, 1989). This can be seen in the warmth of the relationships between the characters, and the emotional and psychological complexity of them (especially of female characters). Until then, with the political turmoil of the past few decades, human relationships were “stripped bare” (ibid.), and women were generally portrayed as one-purpose beings, only focusing on getting married and serving their husbands. However, the Fifth Generation breaks with this concept. They are craving for more realistic and relatable characters and relationships.

In both One and Eight and Yellow Earth, the cinematography (one of the most distinguishable cinematic elements of this movement) was under the responsibility of Zhang Yimou. In Yellow Earth, we see a high

easily defined.

The First Generation were the pioneers of Cinema in China. Emerging at the end of the 19th century and going until the end of the 1920's it was mostly a collaboration between local artists and American immigrants. It is in this period that the first studios were created. Their predecessors, the Second Generation, built their way on the basis founded by them and developed the industry. Making, mostly, martial arts films. The Third Generation was the 'Golden-Age' of Chinese cinema (Cornelius and Smith, op. cit.). The Fourth Generation were mostly propagandistic filmmakers,

horizon-line that gives space in the frame (that usually is given to the character) to the harsh setting and its bold colours. China (on the silver screen) is no longer just the big cities and intellectual people. Possibly influenced by their personal experience and by the years of 're-education' in the countryside, the Fifth Generation opts to portray the rural area of China and the people that leave there. Clark (1989) argues that this choice of shooting this side of China serves "to emphasize this generation's typical refusal to present attractive characters reaching happy endings". I believe that it is also their personal experiences during the Cultural Revolution that made them see that there is a great distance between real life and the stories previously told in Chinese Cinema. Life does not have a clear ending and often is far from happy. So, in that sense, Fifth Generation films are more life-like with more ambiguous endings leaving the audience thinking about what would happen next. The choice of diluting the boundaries between film and life, carries, in itself, a message, often political.

Chinese cinema from the Fifth Generation onwards has always some sort of political message behind it, without ever being too obtrusive. It is impossible to avoid it. Even choosing to film and represent a more rural and not-so-educated side of China (so often hidden by the Chinese government) carries a political message. Films' political connotations "are either imposed by the authorities or implied by the artist" (Ye and Zhang, 1999). So, we can note how this generation's attitude towards the concept of Nation changes from their ancestors. For filmmakers of the Third Generation, China and the Communist Party were often seen

as the same thing, and there was always a great sense of pride and patriotism when representing it (Clark, op. cit.). However, for the New Wave filmmakers, being born into the Mao era and going through the hard moments of the Cultural Revolution, where the Nation and the wellbeing of the people were often not the same thing, they were more prone to reinforce the individual interests of the people over those of a Faceless Nation. For them "patriotism should acknowledge a humanism that extends beyond national loyalties" (ibid.). However, the Chinese government does not always approve of this juxtaposition of the individual over the Nation. Wu Ziniu's film Dove Tree (Cezi shu - 1985) was the first Fifth Generation film to be censored by the Chinese Government, never seeing its release, neither nationally nor abroad. The film portrays the Sino-Vietnamese border conflict and was viewed as a problem since "humanity came before other considerations, including patriotism." (ibid.). Other filmmakers to avoid having their film productions stopped, often adopt an "ahistorical approach" (Ning, 1990) to their stories, making them more approvable by the Film Bureau. By using the Past to tell stories that might have some connections with the Present, a director can more easily spread his message and point of view to the audiences. However, when questioned about this, filmmakers normally fail to acknowledge these political commentaries or connotations. Some critics tend to point out the historical inconsistencies in these films, but they fail to see (or pretend to ignore) that historical accuracy is almost never the point.

Zhang Yimou started directing his own films in 1988, with Red Sorghum (Hong gao liang). His films are often set in a pre-Mao era and even

though the artist identifies as “apolitical” (Ying and Robinson, n.d.), it doesn’t take long for the viewer to find political messages in his films. His earlier films are saturated with the colour red. Even though the colour can be a symbol of loyalty in the Chinese culture it is also the colour of the revolution, of the communist government, of Mao Zedong’s red book, of the Red guards, and it doesn’t take much work or imagination to connect some of these elements to the bold use of this colour in Zhang’s films. Red is one of the biggest motifs in *Raise the Red Lantern*, Zhang’s film which I will delve deeper into.

This film explores the life of Songlian (Gong Li), a woman forced to leave college due to lack of money after her father’s death, in 1920’s China. To help her family, Songlian marries an older man, becoming one of his four concubines. To announce which of the concubines the Master is preferring on each

given night, a set of rituals is rigorously followed, one of them being the lighting of red lanterns in the chosen concubine’s house. I believe that the lanterns are symbolic of the power the master has over the concubines. It is his choice when and where the lanterns are lit. This idea is intensified when Songlian, on their wedding night, asks for the lights to be turned off to which he answers “What? I have these lanterns so I can see.” It is his house and his rules. The rest of the rituals – the, so envied, foot massage, and the ability to choose what the menu for the following day will be – all attributed to the chosen concubine, exist only to give the wives a fake sense of control. As we can see later in the film, with the death of the third concubine (He Saifei), the Master is the only person with any sort of control in the house.

Under the light of the Fifth Generation filmmaking, and the political commentaries



Still from *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991) dir. Zhang Yimou

made by the filmmakers of this generation, we can make the parallel between this story, the Chinese government (the master) and the people who now begin to have some control over their lives (concubines).

In *Raise the Red Lantern*, female characters present a deep emotional and psychological complexity - even deeper than the Master's, whose intentions are only seen indirectly, since he is never fully disclosed in the frame (By never showing the embodiment of the Master's, rarely heard, voice. We can project different 'Masters' to his body and behaviour, making this not the story of these four concubines, but about various women and of China). Zhuoyan - the Second Wife (Cuifen Cao), Meishan - the Third Wife, Songlian, and even Yan'er (Lin Kong) - the fourth wife's maid, throughout the film show different wants and needs that separate them from the bidimensional female characters of the previous generations. From the first scene of the film, where Songlian is, in a close-up, arguing with her mother (out of frame) we can see this emotional complexity. Songlian in her dialogue directly questions what the role of a woman is, and when accepting her future as a concubine, she starts crying, gently. The static camera does not cut away, lingering on her face, letting the audience see the tears falling slowly, giving the scene a deeper emotional charge.

The open ending of *Raise the Red Lantern*, where Songlian goes "mad" also shows the complexity of this character. The death of Meishan - the third concubine - had a deep psychological impact on her. It scared her. This along with the introduction of the fifth mistress, leaves, as it's common in this Generation's films, the audience wondering

what will happen next. How will the other wives treat this new concubine? Will her faith be the same as Songlian's? And what will happen to Songlian, will she forever be stuck in that mental state?

However, even though several parallels can be made between the film and the motifs of this New Wave, Zhang's filmmaking often goes separate ways from the original aesthetic and form of the Fifth Generation he puts it, "filmmaking is an individual activity and should not be confined by 'isms' and 'waves' (Ying and Robinson, *op. cit.*). Even though the influences of his contemporaries and of the New Wave itself are clear in his work, inclusively in *Raise the Red Lantern*, his convictions and his ideologies also shine through. Zhang once called *Red Sorghum* a "bastard film" (*ibid.*) for the way it balances the Fifth Generation form and stylistic abstraction with a more theatrical and linear plot (to please the national audiences used to the melodramas of the previous generations). This term, "bastard-films" can be applied to several of his productions, including *Raise the Red Lantern*.

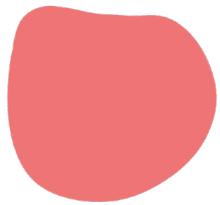
This film follows a clear three-act structure with a prolonged development of the characters and the narrative. The camera is often immobile featuring, unlike other films of the New Wave, almost no change of setting (after Songlian gets married, the entire film is set in the Master's house). This increases the theatricality of the film, which is often a characteristic associated with previous generations and to which the New Wave is, generally, against.

All in all, even though *Raise the Red Lantern* features elements that do not go in line with the customs of the Fifth Generation, I

believe the film can not be excluded from this movement. The, never confirmed by the artist, political message along with the complexity of the female characters, and the warmth (and coldness) of the relationships between them can only be contextualized in this movement. The bold use of colours and the prevalence of the setting over the characters also reflect

the Fifth Generation's influence. Even though Zhang Yimou refuses "to be categorized into any school" (Ye and Zhang, op. cit.), and his approach to Cinema and storytelling, including in *Raise the Red Lantern*, is very personal, one can't ignore the Fifth Generation core behind it.

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Repetition and difference: Three faces of Chaplin

by: Bruce Bennett



Earlier this year I was asked to suggest three feature films by Charlie Chaplin for screening at the Dukes cinema in Lancaster to accompany the release of a new documentary about the film-maker, *The Real Charlie Chaplin* (Middleton, Spinney, 2021). I would love to have picked some of the many short films he made for Keystone, Mutual and Essanay studios, but in concentrating on feature films, I've selected three films that give a sense of his development as a film-maker who was always concerned with the balance between aesthetic perfection and popular appeal: a classic silent film, a transitional film that demonstrates his innovative and uncertain approach to sound, and a talking picture that shows another side of Chaplin as director and performer.

The Circus (1928)

A fire that destroyed Chaplin's studio during the shoot, a running battle with the IRS over unpaid taxes, and an ugly divorce case resulting in a record settlement, meant that it took two years from the beginning of shooting in January 1926 for the Circus, Chaplin's fourth feature, to

be released. Perhaps because of its unhappy production history, the film is not mentioned once in Chaplin's lengthy 1964 autobiography, but, nevertheless, it is a beautifully structured film. A favourite of Swedish director Ingmar Bergman, who apparently watched the film every year on his birthday, it recounts the story of a tramp - the character Chaplin had played since his second film, the 1914 Keystone Studios short, *Kid Auto Races at Venice* - who happens upon a travelling circus where he is employed as a clown.

It is the ideal scenario for a silent slapstick comedy, providing the narrative pretext for a string of physical stunts and tricks. The Circus is thus a film about performance. It exposes the backstage mechanics of putting on a show and, in showing us the tramp's repeated and unsuccessful attempts to succeed as a circus clown, offers an exploration of the nature of screen comedy. In particular, it demonstrates the centrality of the play of repetition and difference. The tired circus clowns try to teach the tramp their routines, but it's only when he misunderstands their instructions - when he makes mistakes that introduce chance and unpredictability - that their worn-out gags suddenly become funny.

“It is stupid to treat Charlie as a clown of genius. If there had never been a cinema he would undoubtedly have been a clown of genius, but the cinema has allowed him to raise the comedy of circus and music hall to the highest aesthetic level.”



These sequences are a demonstration of how humour works, and exemplify film critic André Bazin's observation that Chaplin understood the specific nature of the film medium:

It is stupid to treat Charlie as a clown of genius. If there had never been a cinema he would undoubtedly have been a clown of genius, but the cinema has allowed him to raise the comedy of circus and music hall to the highest aesthetic level. Chaplin needed the medium of the cinema to free comedy completely from the limits of space and time imposed by the stage or the circus arena' (147).

Like many comic characters, Chaplin's tramp is an inveterate outsider, a tragicomic figure, whose nonconformity is underlined by his chaotic appearance and characteristic walk. He misreads basic social cues and struggles with tasks as simple as negotiating a staircase or eating a meal in a restaurant, and so, unlike the heroic protagonists of other films, is fated to fail, destined always to end up on his backside. The circus ring is the perfect, circular symbol for the lack of progress the tramp makes: never moving forwards, never escaping, always ending up back where he started. For Chaplin, the setting of the circus also

reminds us of cinema's roots in unpretentious popular entertainment, a genealogy that he saw as crucial to the medium's identity, hence his self-deprecating description of this film as 'low-brow comedy for high-brows'.

Modern Times (1936)

Modern Times is probably Chaplin's best-known film, released at the peak of his fame, when this man who had grown up in such poverty (he was committed to a South London workhouse at the age of seven) was almost certainly the most recognisable individual in the world. The images of Chaplin working on an assembly line and ensnared in the mechanism of a gargantuan industrial machine are some of the most familiar images of the star.

The title is an indication of his ambitions to make a film that was grand enough to match his global stardom, and this was also the first of his films to use a shooting script. Up until this point, he'd relied upon improvisation in front of the camera to work out the stories, an approach that was common when making slapstick shorts, but was increasingly impractical with logically complex feature films. The film tells the story of a factory



Still from *The Circus* (1928) dir. Charlie Chaplin.



worker who loses his job and then struggles to survive as he is thrown from one situation to another. It is an episodic film, built out of discrete chapters, almost like a compilation of short films. Apparently inspired by newspaper stories about farm workers driven to breakdowns after moving to the cities to work in factories, *Modern Times* appears to be set in contemporary America, and so can be interpreted as a critical commentary upon US capitalism in the wake of the great depression. Reviewing it on its release, novelist Graham Greene complained that Marxists would 'claim it as their film', but in retrospect it's clear that the film is a much less partisan response to

the challenges of modern life. The strategic vagueness of the setting, and its visual similarity to European and Soviet films of the period, mean that it is presented as a universal fable.

Chaplin shared the opinion of some film-makers and critics that the widespread introduction of sound cinema in the late 1920s had destroyed the imaginative potential of the medium, reducing it from a sophisticated art form to mundane realism. At the same time, like a lot of film-makers, Chaplin valued the universal quality of silent cinema, a medium that crossed linguistic and cultural boundaries.

As soon as the characters on screen begin to talk, that universalism is destroyed, and it also posed the perplexing question for Chaplin of what the tramp should sound like.

Consequently, he resisted the pressure to produce synchronised sound films for several years. For instance, his previous film, *City Lights* (1931), had a soundtrack with music and sound effects but no spoken words; it opens with a dignitary giving a speech before a statue is unveiled and, instead of his voice, we hear a farting kazoo on the soundtrack, as if to remind us of Chaplin's dismissive

attitude to talking pictures. *Modern Times* was Chaplin's first film to incorporate spoken lines, although, defiantly, he still retained intertitles and long dialogue-free passages. Nevertheless, this is the first film where we hear Chaplin's voice on-screen, although the moment is withheld, dramatically, until a virtuoso moment towards the end of the film where the tramp sings a comic song in a nonsense language. As if to underline the fact that he was leaving the silent cinema behind, *Modern Times* was also the last film where Chaplin played the tramp.



Still from *Modern Times* (1936) dir. Charlie Chaplin.

Monsieur Verdoux (1947)

‘Chaplin Changes! Can you?’, asked the original posters for this film, indicating that it was the first film since the early silent comedies in which Chaplin, sporting naturally white hair and a genuine, primly waxed moustache, played a character that bore no resemblance to the tramp. As director Claude Chabrol observes, this was also the first full talking picture directed by Chaplin, since, although there are visual references to earlier films scattered throughout the mise-en-scène - revolving doors, dancefloors, a flower shop and a bowler hat - there are virtually no slapstick gags. Made shortly after the industrial slaughter of the second-world war, this film about a serial killer, based on

the French murderer, Henri Landru, is an improbably light comedy. Chaplin’s previous film, The Great Dictator, was uncompromising in its attack on fascism, but the ambiguous moral tone of this satirical film makes for far more cutting and uncomfortable viewing. Writing about Monsieur Verdoux, André Bazin asked, ‘what have we here - a comedy or film à thèse [a thesis film]? Is its purpose to prove or even to explain anything?’. These questions reflect the film’s uncategorisability and its apparent distance from other films by the director.

However, like The Circus, this is also a film about performance, drawing our attention to this as a central theme. The polygamous Verdoux is a performer who thrives by passing



Still from Monsieur Verdoux (1947) dir. Charlie Chaplin.

himself off as a series of different characters to seduce the women he encounters, but one of the delights of the film is watching a very different sort of performance from Chaplin. What makes his acting in the silent films so fascinating is the combination of acrobatic grace and physical dexterity that allows him to swerve and glide around his heavy-footed antagonists; as Vaslav Nijinsky observed to Chaplin in 1916, 'Your comedy is *balletique*, you are a dancer'. Although it's not a slapstick film, Chaplin dances through *Monsieur Verdoux* with just as much physical precision and apparent effortlessness as he did in any of his earlier films. Perhaps the most unlikely feature of the film - even more improbable than the idea of a serial killer comedy - is the fluidity of Chaplin's delivery of lines, spoken with just as much assurance as any of his physical gags. Although the film is set in France, the

dialogue is in English and, thankfully, none of the actors attempt a French accent. This fundamental break from realism invites us to read the film as an allegory rather than a film that is specifically about French society - it could be about any culture, any place. Crucially, though, it also allows Chaplin to speak in his own English-accented voice, one that after years of elocution lessons and transnational socialising bore no traces of his impoverished London origins. He directed a further three films over the next 20 years, taking speaking roles in them, but I think it is with *Monsieur Verdoux*, finally, that he found the perfect match between voice and character, between sound and image.

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We Need to Talk About the Significance of Red and Blue in ‘We Need to Talk About Kevin’



by: **Bobbie-Jo Glendinning & Molly Bailey**

We Need to Talk About Kevin (Lynne Ramsay, 2011) follows the life of Eva Katchadourian (Tilda Swinton) as she navigates the challenges of motherhood. After giving up her travel writing career, she falls pregnant with her son Kevin who experiences some early developmental issues in which he struggles to bond with his mother. As she becomes pregnant again and experiences the ongoing challenges of being Kevin’s mother, she questions her role as a parent who cannot bond with her child. The film progresses into a dramatic telling of a school shooting and continuously tackles the psychological problems present in both Kevin and Eva and, in turn, the similarities and differences between each character. The film concludes with Kevin expressing his fear of moving to an adult prison as he approaches his 18th birthday and Eva adapting to new life without her family. Throughout We Need

To Talk About Kevin, the use of colour is one of the most fundamental aspects of the filmmaking process that is difficult to ignore. The overwhelming use of red and blue and the way they are juxtaposed seems to be represented in an obvious and stereotypical way. The red motif is, often, used to symbolise feelings of anger and violence and the blue aspects create an atmosphere of sadness and detachment.

The opening scene of the film tackles an experimental style image combined with a confusing storyline to start. The opening shot consists of the camera smoothly approaching a window that has very little detail other than a sheer voile covering it, blowing in the wind. As the camera meets the voile, the scene’s lighting becomes heavily exposed into a dream-like white light. This entire shot is very cool-toned in colour and transitions with a cut, rather jarringly, straight to the image as shown above. The crowded bodies are all covered in a red substance that we come to learn is juice from a tomato festival. Eva moving slowly through all of the figures in an, almost, choreographed wave

that engulfs the image. This juxtaposition of colours seen within the first minute of the film, sets up the rest of the narrative motif that we will become so familiar with later.

Similarly, it is interesting that, as the audience is first introduced to Eva, we are presented with an environment in which we learn very little about her character and why she is there. The camera zooms in slowly as we get closer to the bodies and a kind of montage takes place interspersed with tomatoes being thrown. The scene remains chaotic throughout its framing and we, as the audience, wonder if this is a good or bad experience for the people involved, much like the way Eva's life is represented as a wider theme. The bodies seem aggressive with each other but the various facial expressions and movements of the people are hard to read. We are invited to question what is going on, what the relevance of this festival will be in the film as a whole and why this

“THIS JUXTAPOSITION OF COLOURS SEEN WITHIN THE FIRST MINUTE OF THE FILM, SETS UP THE REST OF THE NARRATIVE MOTIF THAT WE WILL BECOME SO FAMILIAR WITH LATER.”

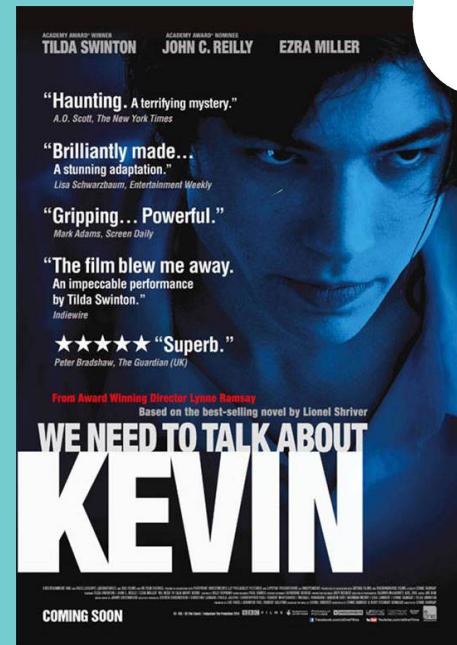
is justified as the opening sequence of such a hard-hitting film. Eva is lifted, somewhat euphorically, into the sky as we learn more about how she feels about being there. Her face seems thrilled at being around so many people and being part of such a messy event. This is juxtaposed directly as we follow through the events of Eva's life in which she is presented with nothing but messy events but not in the positive light that we see here. As the scene progresses, she is lowered onto the ground and buried in the red substance. The whole scene seems metaphorical in its representation of the events to come later. Eva is buried in the self-hatred that she has and the mess that engulfs her as a result of Kevin's actions. From the very start of her motherhood, she struggles to understand him, leading to him performing an event that ends with her overwhelmed by the aftermath of his bloodshed. Exploring the scene further, Eva begins to cover her face as the camera



cuts to an extreme close-up of the tomato juice on the floor as various splashes run through it, reminiscent of the gore and violence as a result of Kevin's actions. The scene transitions to a room engulfed in red as a depressed-looking Eva lies on her couch, venturing outside and finding that her house is covered in red paint.

This use of red is paralleled later in the film as Eva stands in front of a supermarket wall stocked full of tomato soup. This links directly to the opening sequence and represents how close she is to the old lifestyle that she actually enjoyed, that she wrote about in her travels and one in which she had a whole future ahead of her - all, ultimately, ripped away by Kevin. This is demonstrated further through the fact that, within this scene, Eva is hiding from someone who is browsing the aisles of the store. It proves that, even within a domestic setting, Eva still cannot escape from the horrors of her son as she is confronted by the mother of one of his victims. The constant use of red throughout the film, and the subsequent juxtaposition with the scenes steeped in cool-toned blue lighting, allow for parallels to be drawn between Eva and her old life and how she longs for some normality once again.

Within the film's non-linear structure, we have flashbacks intercut with present-day Eva. The flashbacks mark out the significant moments shared between Eva and Kevin, while the present-day involves Eva dealing with the trauma (we are yet to discover) of her son's school shooting. Earlier in the film, Eva's house and car are paint-bombed by the



vandals that clearly have a dislike for Eva because of the crimes her son has committed. Contrastingly to the opening sequence, in which Eva embraces being coated in red as a symbol of her freedom and joyous lifestyle, here the red paint represents the blood of the crime that her son has committed. She is caked in the blood of her son's victims and spends the rest of the film trying to get her house back to normal. This action of rectifying her paint problem reaffirms the idea that Eva is desperately trying to return to some kind of normal life after the horrifying murders her son committed to spite her.

Eva is continually basked in red lighting, dons red outfits and interacts with red coloured items, be that solo or with Kevin in the flashback sequences. The colour is so often used it becomes self-reflexive in nature, drawing focus to itself in every frame it is used. This is a deliberate technique in bringing forward those ideas of anger and

the impending violent nature of both Eva and Kevin. The colour connects the two characters in a beautiful and complicated way that becomes even clearer in the contrasting nature of the colour blue within the film.

The colour blue creeps into the film in a very different way to that of the colour red. The blue is a calmer force, being seen only after the forefronted red items, images and motifs. However, blue is no less important than red, as it highlights a contrasting set of emotions and motifs that run throughout the film. Blue can be seen in most sequences that involve Kevin, be it the colour of his bedroom walls, his first bow or just a t-shirt he is wearing. The use of blue is most importantly used to contrast the two characters, Kevin and Eva, in an underlying way that represents the dynamic the two share throughout the film, be that in action or personality. The red and the blue battle one another just like Kevin and Eva do throughout the film. Both fail to accept the fact that they are one and

the same, but rather fight one another to be the opposite of what they are. This is an interesting representation throughout the film as it allows for the colour palette created to be reminiscent of the target that Kevin so obsessively practices his archery with. The various aspects of both Kevin and Eva's life seem to be battling one another directly and each becomes a 'target' for the other. Furthermore, the blue amplifies the feelings of detachment that the two characters share not only from one another but, more extremely, the world. The colour, often, can be seen in the film set as the colour of a room, for example in the clinical hospital walls, the visiting room of the prison or the bathroom walls of their home. The colour is less distracting here, muting the emotions and atmospheres of the moments. However, the importance of the colour blue here is still to represent the detachment the two characters feel within the various spaces of their 'worlds'. This provides an interesting

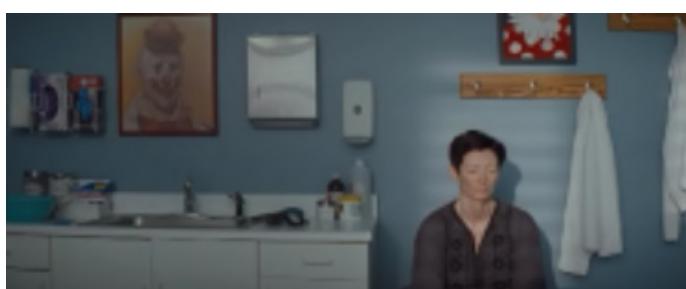


Still from We Need to Talk About Kevin (2011) dir. Lynne Ramsay

contrast to the purpose of the colour red throughout the film.

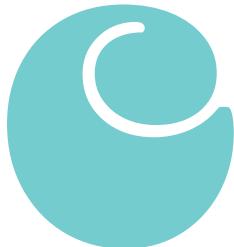
The most significant use of the colours blue and red in the film is the school shooting sequence. This shows Kevin being placed into a police car all while locking eyes with his mother who watches him through the crowd. The flashing red and blue lights of the car are impressively used to drench the characters in their corresponding colours. The camera cuts to Eva as the red light flashes and then cuts back to Kevin when the blue light flashes. The power play they have both been battling their entire lives has come to its climax at this moment, and even in the most vulnerable and stressful time they still desperately battle one another and their own natures. In this moment of realisation Eva takes on her son's guilt (the red light acting as the blood of his victims) and the blue light engulfing Kevin represents the detached-ness he has felt this entire life, while also being a representation of the law and justice he will soon face as a murderer. Overall, the use of red and blue in *We Need to Talk About Kevin* is an interesting

artistic device that conveys the important dynamics and psychological conflicts that are prevalent throughout the film's narrative. The colours juxtapose one another as a representation of the film's characters Eva and Kevin as their mother and son dynamic is challenged through their detached nature from one another. The constant juxtaposition of the two colours could be said to be a metaphor for their wider relationship and the psychological theme of nature vs nurture. Throughout the film, the audience is constantly called to question both Eva and Kevin's nature. Is it due to the kind of mother Eva is that Kevin is represented as detached and psychotic or should we interpret it as something more biological, ultimately represented through the scenes that demonstrate the various events of Kevin's upbringing? In conclusion, through colour, the film challenges the viewer visually, ideologically and psychologically in the way it characterizes various aspects of Eva and Kevin's personalities and the similarities and differences shared between the two.



Colour as an aspect of the mise-en-scene

by: James Rist



Colour functions as an element of mise-en-scene and is crucial in resonating a specific effect amongst viewers, shifts in colour create a transition of emotion for an audience, and the tone of a particular scene can be set through the choice and shade of colour in the frame. In the films *The Limey* (1999) and *Don't Look Now* (1973), colour is used as a signifier within the narrative for placing action, time, character emotions and foreshadowing of future events in the plot. Although different in genre and style, Soderbergh and Roeg both utilise colour with their mise-en-scene to build uneasy and dramatic tensions. Bordwell and Thompson explain a key aspect of colour in *Film Art: An Introduction*, using two stills from Yasujiro Ozu's film, *Ohayu* (1959), stating the director 'places bright red objects against cooler colours, and our eyes move irresistibly', indicating the influence of contrasts to draw the eye to where the director intends it to be.

The importance of colour within the mise-en-scene of *The Limey* expands upon Bordwell and

Thompson's ideas in their example of *Ohayu*, as Soderbergh incorporates colour as a window into the psychology of the main character, Wilson. The film introduces him as he arrives in Los Angeles and enters his hotel room, placing him in the centre frame as he sits on his bed, backlit by the warm orange glow of the sun. Soderbergh uses a flashback and cuts to a shot of Wilson's daughter shrouded by a cold blue tint, juxtaposing the previous shot. This creates a sense of unease around these memories, both for the audience and for their opinion of Wilson's motivations. The juxtapositions of warm and cold frames suggest Wilson's own personal disappointment in how he acted in the past, with the flashback reminders of his daughter, Jenny, being a driving element of the plot as Wilson seeks revenge for her murder. The colour blue is critical within the film, as it also links the character of Jenny to the film's antagonist, Terry Valentine. Valentine's first appearance occurs through the window of his lavish house when the audience has not yet been introduced to his character. He is a distant figure standing beside his swimming pool, overlooking the city. Framing him through the blue tint of a window creates a sense of mystery that heightens the audience's intrigue



Stills from The Limey (1999) dir. Steven Soderbergh



and suggests that he is a dominant figure tied to the death of Wilson's daughter. The prop choice of the chairs in the mise-en-scene also looks to create a juxtaposition between himself and Wilson as they are coloured red and blue, tying to the plot of Wilson's vengeance, seen in the last shot of him with blood splattered across his face after his shootout with the gang members.

Colour is also used to tie the film's conclusion as Wilson kills Valentine to avenge his daughter with the heavy use of blue lighting in the frame as he stands over Valentine's body on the beach. This could be viewed as a call back to the earlier flashback of his young daughter standing on the beach and reminds the audience of the connection between Wilson's conflict with Valentine and the link he has to his daughter. Again, the flashback is shown, although the colours have shifted to a more natural, warming glow this time. That is contrasted to a graphic matched shot of Wilson, visible through a low-key use of blue lighting. It shows the conflicting mind of the character. He feels he has amended an aspect of the past by not feeling the guilt of a poor relationship with his daughter but

also understands that his criminal actions still drive his life. Within the director's commentary, Soderbergh states, 'The definition of memory is that it's a form of regret,' implying that Wilson's view of his daughter and the past has changed with his actions. The shot and past are still the same, yet the colour has shifted.

The integration of colour within mise-en-scene is very prominent in Roeg's *Don't Look Now*. The film does not use the same quantity of cuts as *The Limey*; therefore, it can be argued that the film prioritises mise-en-scene. Focusing more on the visual scene enhances the fear created through Roeg's direction. In David Thompson's essay *Don't Look Now: Seeing Red*, he states that 'Roeg's mastery of what Alfred Hitchcock famously called "pure cinema" manifests in his visual sleight of hand and, above all, in his refusal to be bound by the conventions of dialogue-driven narrative and simple chronology.' Roeg is influenced by 'pure cinema' approaches to filmmaking, which creates a stronger influence on the audience by including bold colours and stylised, surrealist approaches to mise-en-scene.

Roeg strongly portrayed the pure cinema

approach within the film's opening scene, where the death of the Baxter's daughter, Christine, is aligned with John Baxter's fate and foreshadows his eventual demise. The daughter is first seen in the centre of the frame, pushing a wheelbarrow. She is dressed in a bold red raincoat and pants that distinguish her from the rural setting. Ideas on colour are sewn into the viewer, as Christine's actions outside are

“**ROEG'S MASTERY OF WHAT ALFRED HITCHCOCK FAMOUSLY CALLED “PURE CINEMA” MANIFESTS IN HIS VISUAL SLEIGHT OF HAND AND, ABOVE ALL, IN HIS REFUSAL TO BE BOUND BY THE CONVENTIONS OF DIALOGUE-DRIVEN NARRATIVE AND SIMPLE CHRONOLOGY.”**

linked and are further enforced when Baxter spills water on the slide causing the red of the coat to ooze across the frame with a similar consistency to blood. Later in the scene, the colour spreads and begins to cover the slide, with the shot fading to reveal a horrified Baxter emerging from the water with his daughter, still wearing a red coat, in his arms. Roeg overloads his mise-en-scene with red in the film's opening to enforce its importance on the narrative. Through the use of the daughter's costume, the prop of the son's bike, the red ball that leads to the daughter's death and Baxter's slide, the colour roots itself as a source of fear and dread for the characters and audience. Elizabeth Watkins' essay on the subject of colour within the film states, 'red underscores and disrupts a filmic system as it unfolds from the scarlet hue of Christine's raincoat in the opening sequence and persists through the fragmentary form of associative editing.' Watkins is here indicating that the persistence of the red costume creates meanings that can be supported through the narrative and create strong associations of danger for the viewer.

As the narrative and setting shift to Venice, the mise-en-scene also changes. It shifts from the rural opening scene to the busier urban streets that are surrounded by water. The choice of Venice, whilst making for a more visually engaging mise-en-scene, acts as another integral aspect to the creation of trepidation amongst viewers, with the symbol of water as a contributor to the angst of the characters on screen as the use of colour. For instance, the first time the figure is shown sitting on the pews occurs through the subjective camerawork as we gaze from the perspective of John Baxter. The camera zooms in to show the small figure in a red coat running across the frame over water, with the camera cutting back to John.

inverted as the camera focuses by looking at her reflection in the water and cross cuts to John Baxter staring at the slides of the church he will repair, with a small figure in a red coat sat on the pews. Linking the red coat of Christine and the unknown figure that troubles the viewer as they are connected by costume. These two mise-en-scene, encompassing the present and the future of the narrative, therefore, become

The enticing draw of the colour red is further increased by the use of the zoom and juxtaposes to the cold, detracted feel of John wearing a blue jacket. His psychological distance is suggested through an extreme long shot, where his coat is shown in full, from the view of his wife and enforces the colour of the costume within the mise-en-scene as an indication of his fears. The contradiction of Baxter's blue to the mysterious figure's red reinforces Baxter as somewhat dismissive and attempting to move on from his daughter's death; however, the parallels in costume gain his curiosity, eventually being his hamartia, as he is unable to dismiss what he sees.

The enigmas created by adding colour within

a film's mise en scene can be a director's most favourable tool in forming an encapsulating narrative. *The Limey* and *Don't Look Now* utilise colour as signifiers for the story's deeper meanings, with *The Limey* utilising matching shots with contrasting colours to form a greater understanding of the character's memory. It can be argued that *Don't Look Now* follows a similar approach, with the understanding that Baxter's memory of his daughter's death haunts and controls his present, with the colour red acting as a warning that is enticing to the eye and links to the idea of being drawn in as the film's title suggests.



Still from *Don't Look Now* (1973) dir. Nicolas Roeg

TITLE: FEATURED SCRIPTS

INT. HOUSE IN GERMANY- 1979 - NIGHT

Rainer Werner Fassbinder (34) paces around the room. Something is troubling him tonight. He sits down on the armchair who once belonged to his mother, lights a cigar, and picks the third issue of the CUT TO JOURNAL. In between puffs of smoke he confesses:

RAINER WERNER FASSBINDER

Oh no.... Its already May and I've only directed 20 films this year.... I have no more inspiration.... Maybe I'll find something in the CUT TO Journal - Featured Scripts Segment...

Venison

1

*Written by: Bobbie-Jo
Glendinning*

EXT. WOODLAND LANDSCAPE – DAY TIME

Establishing shots of a woodland landscape. Fog covers the ground like a white blanket, making the environment look beautiful and mysterious. Sun shining through the trees. It's clearly the change-over from winter to spring. The sound of birds, wildlife and rustling leaves on the woodland floor. A doe steps into frame, sniffing the air and ground. Her beauty is accentuated by the way the sun shines on her golden brown coat.

A man, GEOFF, watches her through the gaps in the trees. He wears earthy tones including a hat to cover his hair that ties in a knot in the back of the hat. He is laid on the ground with a gun resting against his shoulder. For a moment he watches her through the scope of the gun. Taking in her and the landscape's beauty. Relishing in its glory and the escape it provides him. His breaths are calculated so as to not disturb. He takes one more big breath in and takes the shot.

Geoff stands over her now, observing her once more. She's dead instantly, Geoff is no armature at this. He almost looks sympathetic for the animal he just killed, even after knowing he wouldn't return home without one. The camera focuses on her eyes. They are almost human-like in the way they are bright blue in the sun. Kneeling down he strokes the coat on her face. He stands up and walks off screen.

CUT TO BLACK:

TITLE SCREEN

FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Geoff is in the comfort of his home now, made clear through his attire of plain white t-shirt and baggy trousers. His long hair still in a knot on the back of his head, brown identical to his eyes, sticks to his forehead and neck with sweat. He stands at a counter in the kitchen. The lights are on, but the room looks and feels dark, and regardless of the sweat on Geoff's face, it looks cold. A pan sits atop of the stove, red meat laid inside sizzling away as it cooks. Standing by it, Geoff chops vegetables into cubes and places them into a large pot that sits on top of another ring on the stove.

THE CORNER OF THE ROOM

The room he stands in is a small almost square shape. A table covered in tarpaulin just in the corner of the shot stands on four legs but with no chairs. Piles of his hunting gear lie on the floor around it, and atop it lies the remains of the animal he killed earlier. Its coat looks black in the false light of the kitchen in contrast to the beautiful golden brown it was in the sun. Eyes still open, faded blue.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUED

The noises of Geoff's food cooking and his activity of chopping can be heard still. He's even humming a little. A tv stands in front of a couch that's actual colour or pattern is disguised with sheets of thick soft blankets in a variety of brown shades. A beaten-up wooden coffee table between them, nothing but an ashtray and an unopened can of lager on top of it. The TV plays aloud on what looks like a news feed, static with lack of signal:

REPORTER (V.O)

Reports that 27-year-old HANNAH KAINES has gone missing after going on a hike in the area of the Lake District, Grizedale Forest with her boyfriend, ROBERT COOKE. Mr. Cooke reported Hannah missing to her family from his car after being separated from her in Grizedale Forest late yesterday afternoon.

On screen the image of a woman in a graduation gown. The feed goes on through a short presentation of images of Hannah in different ac-

tivities that shows the active character she is. Hannah is a fair skinned girl with a light coating of brown freckles on her face. Her hair is dark black and very long. Her smile is perfect, and her beautiful blue eyes are astonishing.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUED

Geoff stands at the stove stirring the pot of what is now venison stew. Whistling over the tv's news feed. He lifts the wooden spoon and tries some of the piping hot thick stew before picking up a bowl from the now messy bench. After filling the bowl with a great portion of it he turns to enter the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUED

The news feed now displays the weather predictions for the country in the coming days. Geoff places the bowl on the coffee table before going over to the tv and putting a DVD into the player. He sits down on top of the sheets of animal skin on the couch and presses play, before picking up his bowl of stew. Bear Grills plays on the screen as Geoff enjoys mouthful after mouthful. He chews as he watches, but then his face turns sour. His mouth moves around as his tongue catches the item that is displeasing his taste buds. He raises his hand to his mouth and out he pulls a long thin black hair.

CUT TO BLACK:

THE END

2

Our Rainbow Baby

Written by: Naomi Onakunle

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. HOUSE - DAY

BRIANNA enters the living room breathing heavily with each step. One hand is holding a phone to her ear, whilst the other is gripping onto nearby furniture for support as she makes her way to the couch. She places a couple of paint samples onto the coffee table.

BRIANNA

(mumbles to herself)

Red, orange, yellow-

(pauses)

...mmm yeah, that does sound like a
lot.

(chuckle)

Well, at least you'll be able to stay
at home and relax for a couple of
weeks

She pauses, looking down at her belly, rubbing her unoccupied hand against it.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

(smiling, mumbling to herself)

Well, somewhat.

EXT. OUTSIDE WORKPLACE - DAY

JOSHUA exits the double doors of his workplace, making his way towards his car with a briefcase in one hand and his phone to his ear in the other, chuckling slightly.

JOSHUA

Ha! I hope so.

(smiling)

Hey uh, have your parents arrived yet?

(pauses)

Mhm, ooo is she making her signature apple pie again? Ah, save me a slice will you? Thanks, love.

He reaches his car and tilts his head awkwardly to the side, caging his phone between his ear and shoulder. He begins to pat down the side of his suit in order to locate the whereabouts of his keys.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Hold on a second honey, ah, gotta get my keys.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

BRIANNA hums and unconsciously nods in response whilst simultaneously tracing the fabric of the couch.

BRIANNA'S MUM (O.S.)

(yelling)

Brie, the pie's ready!

BRIANNA whips her head towards the sound of the voice before heaving herself upwards off of the couch and begins to walk towards the kitchen.

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

Hey babe?

EXT. OUTSIDE WORKPLACE - DAY

JOSHUA finally locates the keys and proceeds to open the car door, chucking his briefcase onto the passenger seat and grabbing a bottle of sparkling water from the glove compartment. He opens it, the bottle emitting a hissing sound.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Yeah?

He takes a swig from the bottle, sighing contently at the refreshing feeling.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

Do you wanna text me when you're-
(gasps, eyes widen)

She slowly peers down at her trousers.

EXT. OUTSIDE WORKPLACE - DAY

JOSHUA is still drinking.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

(mouth full with water)

Hm?

He swallows before taking another big swig.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

BRIANNA (CONT'D)

(feels her trousers, slight panic)

Meet me at the hospital. Now.

EXT. OUTSIDE WORKPLACE - DAY

JOSHUA's eyes widened.

CO-WORKER

(jogs over to JOSHUA, panting
slightly)

Hey Josh, you forgot this on your
desk

JOSHUA whips around, water shooting out of his mouth and onto his CO-WORKER's face. His CO-WORKER stares wide-eyed at him, face dripping. JOSHUA's face pales as he nervously chuckles, rubs the back of his neck and slowly reaches out to grab his belongings from CO-WORKER's outstretched hand.

JOSHUA hurriedly gets into his car, avoiding eye contact with his CO-WORKER as he pulls out of the parking lot, making his way to the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

BRIANNA is sitting down on the hospital bed, rocking back and forth, breathing heavily. Her parents are on either side of her whilst a Nurse is kneeled down in front of her, enquiring about her contractions.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

JOSHUA bursts through the double doors like an enraged bull, and proceeds to call out for BRIANNA.

RECEPTIONIST

(calm but assertive tone)

Sir! Sir, I'll have to ask you to lower your voice please. Now, how may I help you?

Calming down, JOSHUA makes his way over to the RECEPTIONIST to ask about BRIANNA's whereabouts.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

JOSHUA enters the room, face beaming brightly though still quite worried at the sight of his wife who is now laying in the bed. She shifts her head to face his direction and reaches out a hand, which he grasps and begins to caress. She smiles before her face contorts in pain as another contraction hits.

A DOCTOR enters the room and after a few gentle prods at BRIANNA's stomach, the DOCTOR concludes that she is ready to go into labour.

DOCTOR

Ok, deep deep breaths. On the count of three, push ok?

Both JOSHUA and BRIANNA nod in unison.

DOCTOR

One. Two. Three. Push.

BRIANNA grunts, gripping tightly onto the sheets of the hospital bed. Beads of sweat slowly travelled down her face.

JOSHUA stares on intently, biting his nails in anticipation.

DOCTOR

Again, I can see the head. One. Two.
Three. Push.

JOSHUA

(encouragingly)

You're doing great honey, keep pushing

BRIANNA turns to face him accusingly, as if he isn't the sole reason for the pain she's having to endure. He smiles sympathetically and reaches out to caress her hand.

DOCTOR

One more big push.

BRIANNA grunts and gasps out in pain, squeezing JOSHUA's hand in a vice grip. Pain envelops JOSHUA's face as he clutches his knee

in a poor attempt at balancing out the pain felt in his hand. Worn out and panting, BRIANNA's body becomes slack. The DOCTOR begins to clean up whilst one of the Nurses places the infant onto BRIANNA's heaving chest. She sighs contently and stares up at the ceiling before closing her eyes.

Silence.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. HOUSE - DAY

BRIANNA exits the kitchen after placing some rice in a pot on the stove to cook. She walks into the living room to collect the recently washed and dried laundry in the laundry basket, and proceeds to make her way upstairs to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

She places the basket on the floor, humming to herself as she begins to take out and fold the clothes before laying them down on the bed in different piles. Halfway through, she stumbles upon a small blue knitted baby bootie. The humming ceases abruptly. She slowly reaches down to pick up the baby bootie, holding it ever so gently. She stares at it, eyes lowered slightly. A giggle from the corridor can be heard.

BRIANNA turns her head towards the corridor in shock, a frown beginning to form on her face as she makes her way over.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Once she enters the corridor, the giggle can now be heard behind the closed door of the baby room. She slowly makes her way to the door, baby bootie still in hand. She raises her unoccupied hand to the door handle, gripping it tightly before pushing it open and releasing the breath she didn't know that she was holding.

INT. BABY ROOM - DAY

Her hand falls from the door handle as she stares into the room.

INT. WORKPLACE - DAY

JOSHUA is sat at his desk, eyes baggy and answering emails with a cup of steaming hot coffee pushed to the side. He places his index finger and thumb to the crease of his eyes, rubbing slightly, be-

fore looking towards the right side of his desk. A small card with the sentence Congratulations on Being a New is located on the right side of the desk, next to a Father! photo of him and BRIANNA on their wedding day. JOSHUA places the card down-side up so that he can no longer see the writing, before running his hand through his hair and lowering his head onto the desk, sighing in frustration.

INT. BABY ROOM - DAY

BRIANNA walks into the room, the door closing slightly behind her. She runs her hand across the yellow walls and then faintly across the crib. She halts.

BEGIN FLASHBACK

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

After a few minutes the Nurses take the baby from BRIANNA to clean and run a few checks. JOSHUA smiles down at BRIANNA, raising her hand to his lips every few minutes.

Hushed voices can be heard from the Nurses, and one of them leaves the room before returning with the DOCTOR. The hushed conversation continues before the DOCTOR ushers the Nurses out of the room. Coughing slightly, the DOCTOR makes their way towards the couple and places a hand onto JOSHUA's shoulder.

BRIANNA opens her eyes and looks towards the DOCTOR, exhausted but smiling all the same.

BRIANNA

(tired)

Is my baby ok?

DOCTOR

(sighing, stuttering)

Uhm... Th-there's no easy way to inform you both but...

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. BABY ROOM - DAY

BRIANNA gasps, pulling her hand away from the crib as though it had burned her. She brings both hands to her chest, the blue knitted baby bootie held close to her fast-beating heart as tears begin to fall down her cheeks.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

JOSHUA walks through the front door completely exhausted and is confronted with the harsh aggressive smell of burning. He drops his briefcase and rushes towards the kitchen to locate the source of the burning.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

JOSHUA turns off the stove before placing his hands on the kitchen counter, sighing in relief. He looks around trying to locate his wife's whereabouts before concluding that she must be upstairs. A look of annoyance washes over his face as he makes his way upstairs to the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

JOSHUA

(controlled but angry)

Brie, are you trying to make us
homeless by burning the house down?!
What on earth is wrong with

He pauses as he realises he's been ranting at the now abandoned laundry and that BRIANNA is not there. Colour drains from his face as he stumbles out of the room, calling out to her. Frantic, he goes to check all the rooms upstairs, passing by the baby room a couple of times.

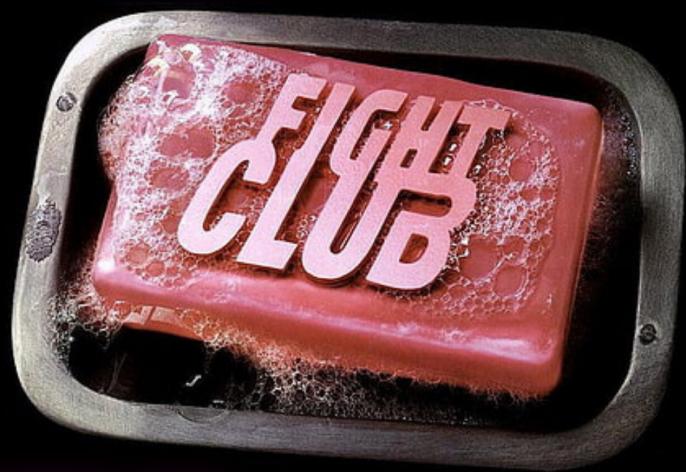
In a panic he pauses outside the baby room, running his hands through his hair, trying to think. That is when he hears it. The faint cries of his wife.

He pushes the door open and is greeted with the image of his wife sat on the floor, hunched over in tears. All the previous anger felt before is washed away as he rushes into the room, embracing her.

INT. BABY ROOM - DAY

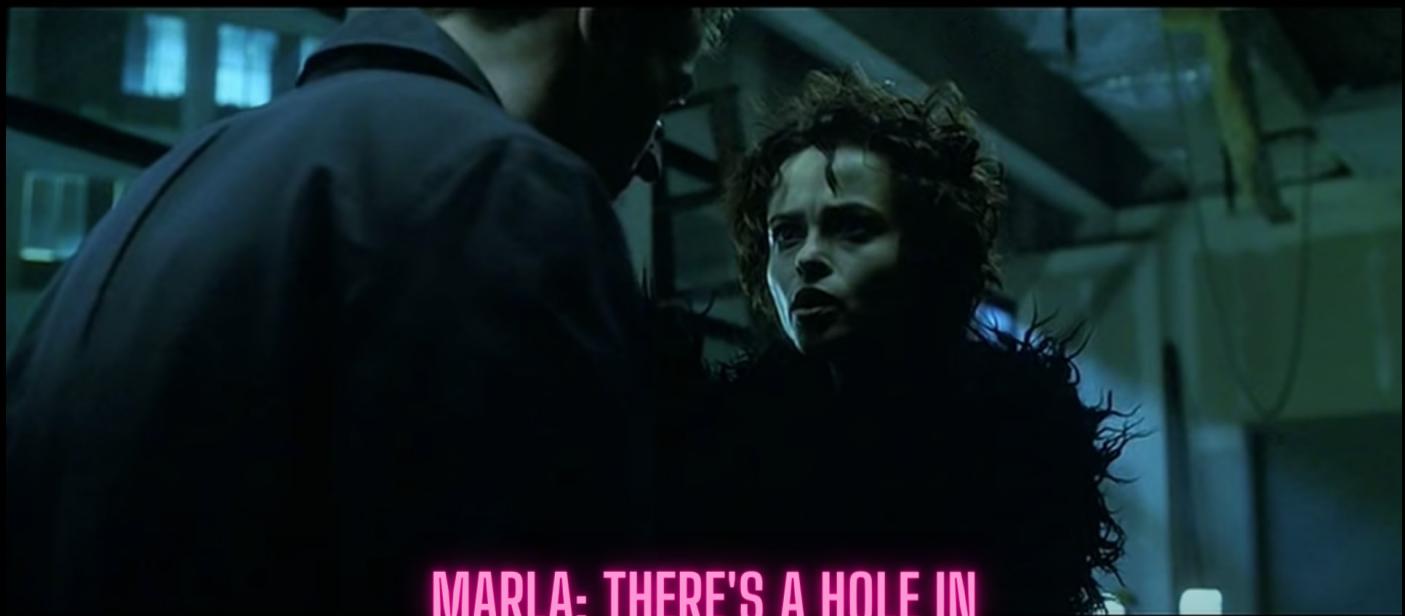
BRIANNA drops the baby bootie to the floor and nuzzles into the crook of his neck, seeking out any form of comfort from her husband, as her cries begin to increase. JOSHUA continues to hold her, rocking them back and forth slightly.

His eyes travel across the room, taking in the yellow walls, the now discarded blue knitted baby bootie on the floor and a singular curved red stripe that conveyed the beginnings of an unfinished rainbow that the couple had begun to paint on the middle wall, where the crib rested against.



A FIGHT CLUB RETELLING

BY BOBBIE-JO GLENDINNING



MARLA: THERE'S A HOLE IN
YOUR FACE...



NARRATOR: YEAH, DID IT MYSELF.
ONLY ALIVE COZ... WELL, WE NEED AN ENDING RIGHT?



MARLA: WTF
NARRATOR: OH YEAH... THAT WAS ME TOO.



NARRATOR: DIABOLUS OR DEUS EX MACHINA?
(I GUEES BOTH, SINCE I'M THE HERO AND THE VILLAIN)



MARLA:
(WHISPER)
I'M LEAVING YOU

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROGER ASHTON-GRIFFITHS

So, I just want to start by asking you a few questions about your education, particularly in Lancaster. I noticed that you were born in Hertfordshire and grew up in Manchester. Is that right?

Yeah, I mean, Hertfordshire is only a matter of historical fact. I moved north before I was two. So as far as I'm concerned, I'm a Northerner.

So, what was it that made you pick Lancaster as opposed to somewhere very close to Manchester?

Back in the day there were processing companies and you had to list, I think five Universities and list them in order. You had to bracket them, and I bracketed all five. But I think from memory it was Lancaster, Sheffield, Hull, Cardiff and another place I can't remember. Lancaster made me an offer I couldn't refuse.

Do you have any particular memories about Lancaster that stand out? Any favourite memories that stand out to you?

These are formative years and whilst I couldn't lay claim to a memory from every single day I was there, some of the great memories of my life arise from that time. Incredibly important memories, all of them from seminal events, but it was a deeply, deeply valuable time.

You did your undergraduate degree in Music, is that right?

Yes

I noticed that for your Postgraduate Degrees you went on to Fine Art and Creative Writing. What was it that made you take Fine Art and Creative Writing? And what was it that stood out to you?

It was probably what I was doing at the time, but I always regarded those three as the creative triumvirate, so why would I not? I was fortunate to be able to do so. It would be absurd not to. Also, a Postgrad, Music becomes very, very dry, academic and historical. It's alright but at the time it wasn't my cup of tea.

So, the fact that you took Fine Art and Creative Writing did that have a lot to do with where you were with your career at that time?

Not necessarily in my career, but to do with my creative processes. I feel it is about the business of making creative life, and there are a number of ways to do it. Being an actor isn't the only one. So, I don't see it appropriate to do things which are obviously blatantly creative, and to enjoy the opportunity. I would tell you and anyone else who listens, it is all about self-improvement.

Is it difficult to balance that with professional acting?

The main difficulty of course is that my core academic background is in Music. So even with a PhD in Creative Writing, I don't feel as if I could go and teach Creative Writing because I don't have the Undergraduate basis on which to build it. I feel less so with my MA in Fine Art because it's very specialised. So, that was sort of difficult in terms of balancing it with my work. Also, there was one occasion, I was doing an exam and the car came to pick me up from the exam hall to go off and shoot something that afternoon. But, that was the most inconvenient moment, so yeah it worked out ok.

You were in opera after university. What made you make the shift



Roger Ashton-Griffiths in Merlin (2008-12)

from opera to acting on screen? When did that decision come and where did it come from?

I think it's fair to say it was whilst I was studying Music. I also had a strong vocational sense that I needed to be an Actor and then Opera seemed to me to be a combination of the two. It was both acting and music. I never abandoned being an Opera Singer. If somebody were asking me to go sing an Operatic role now I would happily do it. I just sort of stepped over onto the dark side accidentally and the acting took off in a way the Opera singing did not. I probably worked harder at it as well. I always had a very strong vocation to be an Actor, and in a sense, Opera became a way in. In that sense, it may not have been a shift; just a stepping stone.

“I ALWAYS HAD A VERY STRONG VOCATION TO BE AN ACTOR, AND IN A SENSE, OPERA BECAME A WAY IN.”

Did you find that you enjoyed acting on screen more?

I love acting on screen. I like working on screen, it's interesting. There are a number of the same rules with acting for stage and screen. The thing about doing theatre is you are stuck in the same place doing the same thing for months on end. But you can be lucky with the people you work with. Jolly unlucky sometimes as well. The great thing about film was you go somewhere and you spend two or three weeks doing it and then you go home. I kind of prefer that. Plus, I am interested in the technicalities of filmmaking as well.

I just want to mention an interview that you did with a Scan, which is Lancaster University student

magazine back in 2014. You were asked what advice would you give to people who would like to follow a similar path into the industry? And you said, ‘Don’t do it. Get a proper job, it’s too hard other than an irresistible vocation.’ Has your mind changed on that, or do you still agree with that?

I am even more resolute in that position. There's no financial security. There's no sense of job security. There's no communion with colleagues. There's none of these, the only reason for being an Actor is that there's a compelling vocation to do it. There's no other reason to do it. It doesn't make sense. However, returning to the earlier point about creativity, I think my position has changed since then, that I feel if you are strikingly inclined to be an actor, then it is perfectly alright to be a manager to create art or to be a critic. All these things are creative and you don't have to be in front of a camera to be creative, there are all sorts of ways of doing it.

If you could go back, would you change what you did, maybe as an Undergrad or even after that? Would you change the decision to go into Acting? Would you do something else?

No, I was always committed to it. I was one of those saddos who didn't have a choice. It was always going to happen.

I spent a lot of time in Lancaster in the theatre. It was really the place where, I suppose, I grew up. It was the place where I began that process.

We are aware you have worked with Jane Campion in Bright Star and Portrait of a Lady. We are just wondering what you think of Jane Campion winning Best Director Oscar in 2022 and what your experience with her was like, especially now that she's someone that's quite big within the film industry?

She was already big when I worked with her. She'd already won the screenplay for The Piano when I worked with her for the first time. I mean, she's been a huge, towering figure in the film industry for decades. Personally, she is homely and pleasant. It's not quite like working with your mum, but it's something along those lines. She's a highly agreeable person, fairly creative, and intense in her thinking, but not in the presentation. So, she's perfectly easy and fun to work with and nice, just great. She won it fair and square. What's not to like about Power of the Dog? It was a good movie, in a fairly patchy year. I'm pretty cool with her really.

How was working with Heath Ledger?

It was one of the easiest and most charming experiences ever. He was an extremely agreeable individual and it was a great loss when he died. I worked with him a couple of times, most of them in the Czech Republic. I turned up to set once for 'Brothers Grimm' and he and Matt Damon were buddies together, and they were both completely charming. I thought for a long time that Matt Damon is possibly the finest living screen Actor. It was a great joy to meet him and he had taken pains to say: "I loved you in"... I forgot what film he had looked me up in, but he took pains to do that. He couldn't have been nicer. He has the warmest and most agreeable smile of any. And both of them exemplify the fact that the people at the top don't bullshit. They are just nice, decent people. Tony Hopkins, I worked first with on 'Shadowlands' and then I did a Woody Allen movie with him. There was only one day when we were going to overlap on set so I thought I would just go and knock on his door to say, Hi. But I couldn't because he came and knocked on my door first! It's immensely generous of him; he's worked with dozens of English character actors since I last worked with him but I hadn't worked with anyone like Tony Hopkins. He came in and had a nice chat, told me about his new marriage

and so on. Utterly, utterly charming and ineffably beautiful people.

So a lot of us at Lancaster are wondering if you have any top tips for working on a set, whether that be from an actor's point of view or anything else?

It is no different to being a Solicitor or Postman. You turn up on time, you're doing your job rigorously to the best of your ability. You're trying to get on with your colleagues as best as you can, and then you go home.

Is that generally the same or more so when you're working with higher production value shows or films?

Exactly the same. You can never regain a damaged reputation. You protect your reputation, above all else. Also, be respectful of everybody. Because if you go to the RSC's, (Royal Shakespeare Company) and there's a bloke on the stage, at the back carrying a spear, say, he may well have been to a good university, got a first and then used a Postgrad year in RADA. That is what's got him into the background carrying a spear. So, don't diss him because he is carrying a spear. Everyone on that stage is there because they like what they do and they're going places. The story is that

"IT WAS ONE OF THE EASIEST AND MOST CHARMING EXPERIENCES EVER. HE - HEATH LEDGER - WAS AN EXTREMELY AGREEABLE INDIVIDUAL AND IT WAS A GREAT LOSS WHEN HE DIED."

you're never unkind to someone on the way up because you'll meet them again on the way down. So respect everybody. Do the job. Hopefully you'll be alright.

How has your experience been for you in getting a foothold into the film industry? Was it easier than it seems? Or is it more difficult?

I mean, it's a difficult question because if I'd not managed to get into the industry, I'd be saying, oh Christ, it's so difficult! It was impossible. But I did, so I thought it was alright. It was the usual route. Equity was a closed shop back then. It was a Union thing. In order to work you had to be a member of the Union. In my case, Equity. In order to get an Equity card, you



Roger Ashton-Griffiths in The Lobster (2015) dir. Yorgos Lanthimos

had to have had a job, so you see, it's a Catch-22 situation. There are various ways around it, one of them was going to Drama School, which I didn't do. There was an allocation of Equity Membership available for those who leave. I got mine from joining the Opera company. So, I have my equity card, I was in a position to work and so I got some photographs and sent them out with letters, which is all you can do. So, I got to working.

Something that really stood out to me about your filmography is there's a big mix of fantasy projects, things like Game of

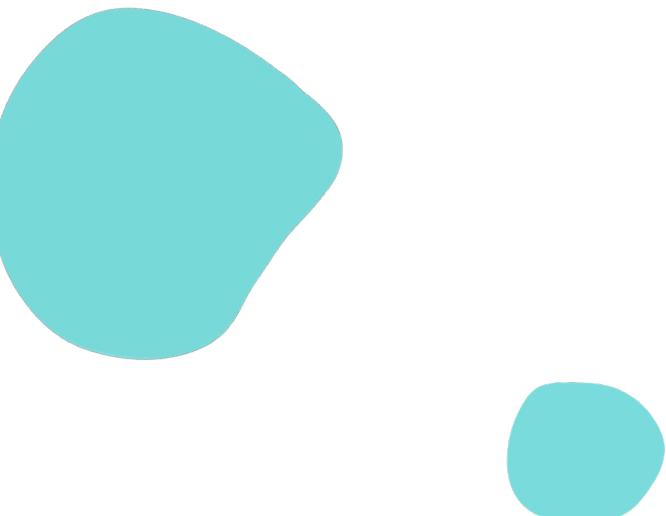
Thrones, Merlin, Doctor Who, and then real-life dramas like Coronation Street, Father Brown, Doctors, The Bill. How did you have to adapt to different genres? For example, fantasy and real-life drama. How do you have to adapt your own acting style?

I think it's an intelligent process that you have to understand in the moment and also understand how you're going to present it. So, knowing the difference between a short and long lens, for example, is quite important. If you've got a long lens, then you've got relatively little



Roger Ashton-Griffiths in Game of Thrones (2011-19)





what it is that you think your character's doing. And so, if it's not internalised, then I think it makes anything different if it's on a green screen.

I have an inevitable question about Game of Thrones. Were you familiar at all with what it was about? Had you watched the show before you were in it?

backward and forward movement. If you've got a short lens it's the opposite. It's just some knowledge of those things. So that relationship with the camera is important.

Was it difficult working with green screen and visual effects?

No, it was dead easy. I did one shot at the Odyssey where we had a green screen on the blue screen, we were dealing with the Cyclops. I can't remember the set up now, but we were dealing with two things that weren't there. People say that acting is about reacting, and it is up to a point, but also I think it is about knowing

No, nothing at all. I thought I'd turn up and there would be some sort of a handbook, which would say who I was, what I was doing, why I was there, but there was nothing. Basically, 'There's your position, please sit in it'. And 'action!', and off we went. I hadn't the first idea. Pedro Pascal filled me in the first week because I wanted to learn. I said, 'Why has he got a gold hand?' (Pointing at Jamie Lannister). Pedro nearly fell off his chair, he thought it was hilarious. I knew absolutely nothing. So, it was all slightly winged. But that's not the first time.

Have you watched it all since then?

Yeah.

Also, if you do a film with Woody Allen, you're not allowed to see a script when you're shooting, so you are completely in the dark. You only know what your character is doing on that day. There are other people who do workshops. You get to develop it and improv the

whole thing together. I mean, it's a great range of different styles of doing that. There's nothing particularly unusual about turning up to do a show without knowing anything about it. I mean, you mentioned *The Bill*. It is a much more lowly production. No one knew anything in *The Bill*. You turn up on *The Bill*, you stand there and say your lines and go home. *Corrie* is the same. I mean, I did, I think, seven episodes of *Corrie*. I don't watch it, I don't follow it, I don't know one person from another. I just knew I was a doctor and there was a person dying. So it's not that unusual. I was having lunch in the *Corrie* canteen when all the techos and all the actors were basically the same. So, sitting next to a person, I said, What do you do? She said, 'I'm in it!' I said, 'Oh are you? how long have you been in?' '8 years!', she said, as if I'd been watching.

Woody Allen, especially since you've just mentioned it again.

I can't tell you. It's just Woody's way of working, he thinks it gets the best results. It's just down to the auteur to say we will get best results if the characters don't know what the rest of the story is about. Myself, I don't understand it. I will do it. And between you and me, I still got to copy the script out.

As an actor, somebody who has to adapt a character that somebody's created for the screen. Can you tell us what's important about a good script and how it affects your ability as an actor's ability to portray the character? So, if you're not given the script by Woody Allen, how do you feel as an actor who has to accurately portray the character?

You just mentioned working with Woody Allen and that you're weren't allowed to see the script. In an interview with *Flicks and the City* in 2014, you were talking about your two different experiences with script. One being with Woody Allen in which you weren't allowed to see the script. And then the other was with Mike Leigh in which you spent several weeks researching the script. I was fascinated why you weren't given a script from



Roger Ashton-Griffiths in *Gangs of New York* (2002) dir. Martin Scorsese

The scripts are the scripts. A good script is a delight, a sensible approach to the storytelling. There are also subdivisions of scripts which are written, so there are scripts that are written as if they are the word of God and you're not expected to change a single word. And there are other scripts where they invite improv and you can change your lines in consultation, you don't just come and rewrite it all. 'Maybe I could do this? Maybe I could do that?' 'Yeah. Good idea.' Trying out that sort of collaboration process is the best. If you got a good script with a collaborative director/scriptwriter then that's the best. You could get a pants script with someone who refuses any of it to be changed., then all you can do is the best you can, which is often not good enough I'm afraid.

Have you ever turned down a script?

Yes, I guess I have. On more than one occasion. I also nearly turned down 'A Knights Tale' because I thought it was rubbish. My agent suggested I might be wrong. And she was correct. I was wrong.

Finally, I'm just wondering if you've got anything planned for the future, are you working on any projects at the minute?

None that I'm allowed to talk about, I am afraid. But yes, projects and writing as well. There's projects and things in the pipeline.

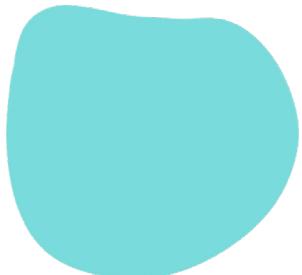
Is there anything that you would like to use the space to quickly promote that we can tell students to go and have a look at?

I did a film last year called The Score and I think it can be very interesting. It's Johnny Flynn, Will Poulter and Naomi Ackie as the three stars. Maliki Smyth is the director. I think if you can find it, it'll be worth looking at.

Brilliant, thank you very much for having the interview with us. We really, really appreciate it.

I wish you well with all your studies.

Thank you very much.



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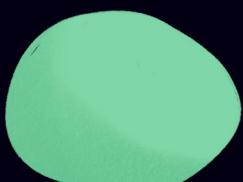
Bruce Bennett

and

Roger Ashton-Griffiths



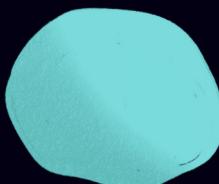
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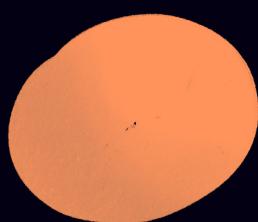
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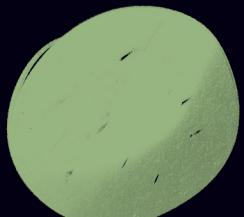
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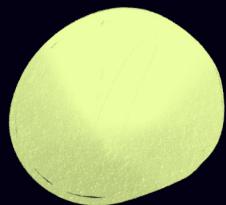
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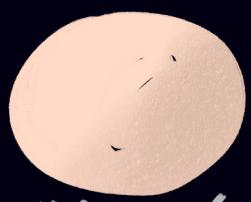
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