MM
MEDIAMAGAZINE

JOKER

DAILY MIRROR
THEORY DROP: GAUNTLETT
ESPORTS
FISH TANK
WOMEN IN THE ARCHERS
THE WIND
SHELTER ADS
MICHAEL MOORE

EMC
MediaMagazine

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Making the Most of MediaMag

Two Water Aid ad campaigns that reflect different contexts

Advertising in Context

Look at the two different Shelter ads on pages 35-39 or two ads for a different campaign you have been studying (e.g. Water Aid's #ShareSunshine versus 'Dig Toilets Not Graves')

Discuss
- What do the two ads have in common? (Think of media language techniques as well as how they function and how audiences might react.)
- What differences do you notice? Using your own discussion, as well as the ideas from Eoin Meade's article, explore why these ads might be different.

Task
Divide the class into two groups – audience researchers and members of the public.

Audience Researchers
Your task is to find out whether this ad is delivering the right messages to the audience. In pairs or threes, compile a list of questions to put to your focus groups to find out whether the ad has affected them in the right way. You will need to frame your questions carefully – the answers may not always be straightforward, or honest. You need to find out:
- What messages they are taking away from the ad
- What sorts of emotions the ad created for them
- Whether there is anything they would like to change about the ad to make it more effective
- What effect, if any, they think the ad will have on their behaviour.

Focus Groups
Your task is to feed back your responses to the market researchers. Before meeting with them, make notes on:
- The main message you have taken away from this ad
- How the ad makes you think and feel
- What, if anything, you would change about the ad to make it more effective
- How you think the ad would affect your behaviour (or not).

Now pair up with someone from the other group and carry out your research. Being able to formulate, in conversation, how and why the ad is or isn't effective is excellent practice to develop your engagement with and interpretations of media products in exam answers.

Theory Drop: Gauntlett

Try and analyse how you have constructed your own 'pick 'n' mix' identity through the media you consume. Begin with a selfie. Choose an outfit, pose, location that you feel sums up your identity. Below is one I took for a project about mediated identities called 'Wearing Text' **https://www.cemp.ac.uk/projects/doingText.php** Next annotate your selfie.
- What do the different elements of media language reflect about your identity?
- What identity are you hoping to create with this pose, outfit, filter, hairstyle etc.?

Now see if you can draw a line between those aspects of your identity and the media you consume, be they advertising, social media, film, TV etc and make a moodboard like the one below.

Take a picture that you feel captures your identity

Wearing text? Create a moodboard of media references and influences for that identity

The 2020 MediaMag
Production Competition

Every year, MediaMagazine holds a competition to showcase the amazing video work you have produced. The idea is to create a platform for you to share your creativity, passion and skills with others, and to get your presence out there in the world. So this is an invitation to you to show us your talent!

Send us your work, either coursework from your film or media course, or projects you've created in your own time, through extracurricular workshops or other short courses, over the last year. **Our deadline for entries is Wednesday 22nd April**

We'll shortlist 25 or so of the most exciting entries for a celebratory screening in NFT1 at BFI Southbank – genuinely the highlight of *MediaMag*'s year – on **Monday 6th July**. There are awards (sadly, no cash but lovely trophies), certificates for all finalists (really useful to add to your CV or portfolio), a networking after-party, and a great opportunity to meet other film-makers, and to share your work with family and friends. Not to mention seeing your work on the giant screen in the world-famous auditorium where so many giants of cinema past and present have appeared.

KEY DATES

ENTER NOW!

- Deadline for entries:
  22nd April 2020*

- Details of shortlisted productions online at englishandmedia.co.uk/media-magazine
  Friday 22nd May

- Awards Presentation at BFI Southbank:
  Monday 6th July

* This is the absolute deadine.
No late entries this year!

CATEGORIES

There are no specific briefs, so you can submit **any form of moving image production as long as it is 5 minutes or under**. We'll be presenting awards in the following categories:

- **Best short film / documentary**
- **Best music video**
- **Best production**
- **Best cinematography**
- **Best editing**
- **Barney Oram Creativity Award***

* This final award is dedicated to the memory of Barney Oram, a hugely inspirational and well-loved Film and Media Studies teacher who died in 2018

Scan the QR code to apply online or find more information on how to enter at
www.englishandmedia.co.uk/media-magazine

We can't wait to see your work – get your entry in NOW! And good luck!

Photo by Vanilla Bear Films on Unsplash

STUDENT CONFERENCE 2019

We have been able to refer to discussions that happened on stage back in class already.
Sophie Lording, Sir John Cass Redcoat School, London

MM editor, Claire Pollard

MediaMagazine takes a look back at the highlights of our student conference in December 2019.

Our students loved listening to industry experts, especially people close to their own age.
Lucy Hunter, Bohunt Sixth Form, Hampshire

Students give the conference the thumbs up!

Incredibly insightful, interactive and enjoyable sessions and I had a blast with each of them.
Dominic Roland, Student at Sydenham and Forest Hill Sixth Form, London

Sir Lenny Henry

Marine Guichard

‘There's always going to be a glass ceiling’ Sir Lenny Henry and Dr Anamik Saha discuss the need for diversity in the media industries

Why Diversity Matters in the Media and Why it's Done so Badly: Lenny Henry in Conversation

The conference kicked off in style with a characteristically sparky interview with Sir Lenny Henry, who highlighted key moments in his route from his bullied schooldays in Dudley, through the thinly veiled racism of the *Black and White Minstrel Show* and children's TV, to stand-up, alternative comedy, to straight drama, Shakespearean roles, a return to education and a doctorate, and finally a knighthood. Predictably, this was a hilarious journey, punctuated by cameos from his on-screen personas. But underpinning the autobiographical anecdotes was his passionate commitment to extend representation in the media industries: the importance of seeing people like himself onscreen and hearing voices beyond the 'appalling' institutionalised racism of British broadcasting, both in front of and behind the camera. Throughout a laid-back and brilliantly funny performance, his belief in the importance of education and his responsiveness to the challenges of his audience well justified his reputation as the champion for diversity in the British media. This was no mere pitstop on the promotional tour of his memoir *Who am I Again?*, witnessed in the endless queue of students snaking round the BFI waiting to speak with him, and the generous time he gave in responding to their questions. Buy his book!

Professor Sonia Livingstone: Can the Internet be Regulated for Online Harms, and in Whose Interests?

Professor Sonia Livingstone talked about the challenges facing media regulation, especially in the digital age. She outlined how any attempt to regulate the internet would need to strike a balance between protecting users from 'harms' (such as images of self-harm and suicide on Instagram or weaponised use of social media in political campaigns) and protecting the rights of consumers and businesses who want an internet that offers choice, freedom and personalised content. There's a point at which regulating the internet could erode democracy and freedom of speech. She talked about the recent government 'Online Harms' white paper and the role of Ofcom in regulating the internet in the public's interest. She asked us to consider whether companies like Facebook have a duty of care to their users, as proposed in the white paper, and whether they should be considered as just services or platforms or as publishers of content.

Professor Sonia Livingstone

Marine Guichard

Students participate in *The Guardian*'s weekly fake news Instagram quiz, *Fake or For Real?*

Marine Guichard

The Guardian Foundation: Understanding the Media Landscape and How News is Consumed

Next up, Margaret Holborn and Lucy McCormick from the Guardian Foundation explained how a 24 hour news operation works. With offices in New York, London and Sydney there's a full editorial team working somewhere in the world 24/7 to report the most up to date news. When the Grenfell fire happened in London the editorial team in Australia were working through the day (and our night) to upload the reports, images and videos and keep the website updated minute by minute.

We also learned how *The Guardian* uses data to work out when and how readers consume the news. Apparently the most users access the website between eight and nine on a Sunday morning! At lunchtimes during the week, there's a huge spike in desktop users, presumably lunching at their computers at work, so this is the time when they are most likely to push short video content because readers will have time to watch. *The Guardian* is data-informed NOT data-driven, which means they analyse how well stories are doing on their website but they still make moral editorial decisions about what the lead stories should be, even if everyone that day wants to read stories about celebrities and puppies.

Young Filmmaker Q&A with Mdhamiri Á Nkemi

The last session of the morning was an interview with young film editor Mdhamiri Á Nkemi, who graduated 8 years ago from the BFI/NFTS Residential Academy and has worked in the industry non-stop ever since, following a trajectory from Ravensbourne College to Most Promising Student Award from the National Film and Television School, through to Oscar nomination, via a rich slate of shorts, documentaries and features. He spoke particularly about his experience on two controversial and contrasting features on the themes of race, culture and urban identity, and the collaborative relationships between director and editor. He explored the editorial choices made in a key sequence from *The Last Tree* which moved between gritty naturalism, choreographed violence and fantasy, and his interaction with Rapman on *Blue Story*; both films have confirmed his commitment to tell authentic urban stories not usually represented on screen. Mdhamiri's key advice to young aspiring filmmakers: collaborate! Network, find people you can work with and value those relationships; make use of all the mentoring opportunities offered by the industry; choose projects you believe in and be prepared to work very, very hard! (See Careers Download page 64.)

MediaMag's Jenny Grahame asks Mdhamiri Á Nkemi about editing *Blue Story* and *The Last Tree*

Marine Guichard

Professor Emily Caston talks to Grammy award-winning music video producer, Juliette Larthe

Emily Caston's interview with Juliette Larthe gave us a fascinating insight into the music industry and the heady combination of creativity, celebrity, technology, economics, politics and meticulous planning behind a 3 or 4 minute music video. It was great to hear that, while there is still a long way to go, there's never been a better time for women to make their mark as producers and directors – although listening to Juliette it's clear you've still got to fight your corner, be super determined, super organised and super proactive. Despite the subject (and the megastars Juliette has worked with such as Beyoncé, Rihanna, M.I.A.), this was a refreshingly honest and clear-sighted discussion of the realities of working in the music industry – from meeting draconian deadlines to being prepared even now to roll your sleeves up and clean a set or make the tea. While Juliette was clear that if you're determined to make it, there are plenty of opportunities for hard-working and talented people, she also pulled no punches about how difficult it is to break into the industry – even more so today, when it is no longer possible or desirable to turn up and work for free as a runner or assistant.

The Riz Test

The final talk of the day came the originators of The Riz Test, Sadia Habib and Shaf Choudry. The Riz Test, as they explained, is a way of looking at how Muslims are represented in film and TV drama, assessing whether Muslim characters are stereotyped as superstitious, sexist, irrationally angry or as a (usually terrorist) threat

Professor Emily Caston asks Juliette Larthe about producing Beyonce, Rhianna and M.I.A.

Marine Guichard

to Western democracy. Taking their inspiration from the Bechdel Test and the actor Riz Ahmed himself, the speakers looked at a range of contemporary media texts from Marvel's *Iron Man* to BBC's *Bodyguard*, considering the problematic representations they offer and how students can critique and challenge these. There was plenty to think about for students and to apply to all sorts of texts back in the classroom.

Sadia Habib who co-founded the Riz Test with Shaf Choudry (above)

WHY DO WE NEED THE RIZ TEST?

Marine Guichard

DAILY Mirror

A PERSONAL REFLECTION BY LYNSEY HANLEY

Election front covers: *The Sun* takes a more 'comic' approach than the *Daily Mirror* whose focus is social justice

Lynsey Hanley grew up in the 80s reading the *Daily Mirror* at a time when it was a politically engaged paper for the working class left. Here she reflects on how the paper's focus has shifted and what that means for its readership.

I didn't learn to read at school; I learned to read at home, by looking over my mum's shoulder at her copy of the *Daily Mirror*. I'd follow my dad to the door as he took it out of the letterbox every morning, then sit down next to my mum as he handed it to her on the settee, and begin deciphering its headlines as I had my breakfast.

For some reason I became hooked on news from a very young age, and read the tabloid press as habitually as the *Beano*. One of the first stories I remember being able to read was its stark front-page tribute to The Beatles' John Lennon, who was shot dead in 1980: 'DEATH OF A HERO', said the headline.

And given the choice of two daily papers to read as a child – *The Sun* at my nan and grandad's house, and the *Mirror* at home – I quickly took a dislike to the former. In the mid-1980s at least, the *Mirror* was full of news, with a distinctive campaigning tone that appealed to me as a categorical, over-serious child. *The Sun* was cynical, even I could see that. My grandparents called it 'the comic'.

By the age of eight I could see a

The *Mirror*: torn between informing an engaged working class and serving up celebrity gossip and lifestyle content

Newspaper owner Robert Maxwell with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at the *Daily Mirror* offices in 1985

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Lynsey Hanley's book *Respectable*

difference in the *Mirror*'s priorities after its purchase in 1984 by the publishing magnate Robert Maxwell (later described by former *Mirror* editor Roy Greenslade as 'the world's most intrusive proprietor'). It had been struggling against its rival for years, attempting to keep alive the idea of a politically engaged working-class readership that saw no reason to vote against its own interests.

Once Maxwell took over from its legendary post-war owner, Hugh Cudlipp, there would be less politics in the *Mirror* and a lot more froth – *The Sun* covered politics, but in a 'they're all in it for themselves' kind of way, whereas the *Mirror* had, for many years, operated on an understanding that its readers actually wanted to be informed.

To my dad, especially, this spelled bad news for popular journalism

and, by extension, for working-class people, who were about to be diddled yet again by forces beyond their control. I grew up, like him, wanting to know the truth about things, and we both had a mania for reading newspapers because of this: it gave us a sense of grasping hold of the chaos and reminding it who's boss.

I must have picked up almost imperceptible signs from my parents that they regarded the *Daily Mirror* as more respectable than *The Sun*, and therefore a repository of more valuable, trustworthy knowledge. But one thing I am certain of is that reading both papers ignited a sense of political consciousness that has never left me.

What they told me, long before I was able to put it into as many words, was that the working class in the 1980s was more fundamentally divided than it had ever been, and that these were not false, politically souped-up divisions but genuine differences in outlook between individuals which had been building up over successive generations of relative affluence.

When I was writing my book *Respectable* a few years ago, which is partly about how mass media and communication has an impact on our lived experience of class, I interviewed

my friend and co-conspirator Richard Wiseman, with whom I studied A-levels in English and Media Studies back in the 1990s. (We're both journalists now.) We had spent years discussing how newspapers had shaped our views of the world. He says:

> The eighties were like Shangri-la to my family. They were checking the share prices on Teletext on their new tellies and couldn't understand why I didn't think that was wonderful. They all thought [Arthur] Scargill was a lunatic, [Margaret] Thatcher was the saviour, and miners were evil because they punched policemen. Yet it just didn't make any sense because my family was made up of really kind, generous people, so when they had these incredibly harsh opinions I just didn't understand it.

> There was this almost visible change after '79. Whenever my family's gone through things from boxes from the fifties and sixties, you'd notice that anything delicate was wrapped up in the *Daily Mirror*… both my grandfathers had been dyed-in-the-wool Labour supporters but switched from the *Mirror* to either the *Daily Mail* or the *Express* in 1979. They'd both desperately wanted to feel proud of Britain and being British.

Their reading choices changed in tandem with their changing outlook on life in Britain: the *Mirror* almost willing us to stay optimistic, the *Mail* and the *Express* providing a vehicle for many older readers' sense of disappointment.

Yet reading a copy of the *Mirror* now, as I sometimes do when it's left on the bus, it seems to be a title utterly torn between its past and present, and perhaps, by definition, between its desire to appeal to an inquisitive and engaged working-class audience, and a suspicion that such an audience can no longer be relied upon.

Its masthead slogan – FORWARD WITH BRITAIN in the Maxwell years – is now THE HEART OF BRITAIN, changing on its website to THE INTELLIGENT TABLOID. A popular newspaper, in the *Mirror*'s view, must now raise entertainment and celebrity coverage to equal status with hard news in order to appeal.

The visual impact of all-colour printing, since its introduction in the late 1990s, cannot be underestimated. The ability to run large, busy, stimulating pictures and headlines in place of much of the text has had its effect on all papers, popular and 'quality'. Yet the result is that a paper such as the *Mirror* now looks, and largely reads, as my nan would have said, 'like a comic'. It can be flicked through quickly, but there's a greater impact on the senses than on one's thoughts.

The overall effect of reading the

Mirror now is a bit like being shouted at, or perhaps cajoled, rather than simply presented with interesting, useful information: an example of the critic Richard Hoggart's warning, in his classic 1957 book *The Uses of Literacy*, against the power of mass-market 'persuaders'. It's a fundamental shift in the way the *Mirror* reports 'news' and the loss, for readers, and our broader culture, is hard to calculate.

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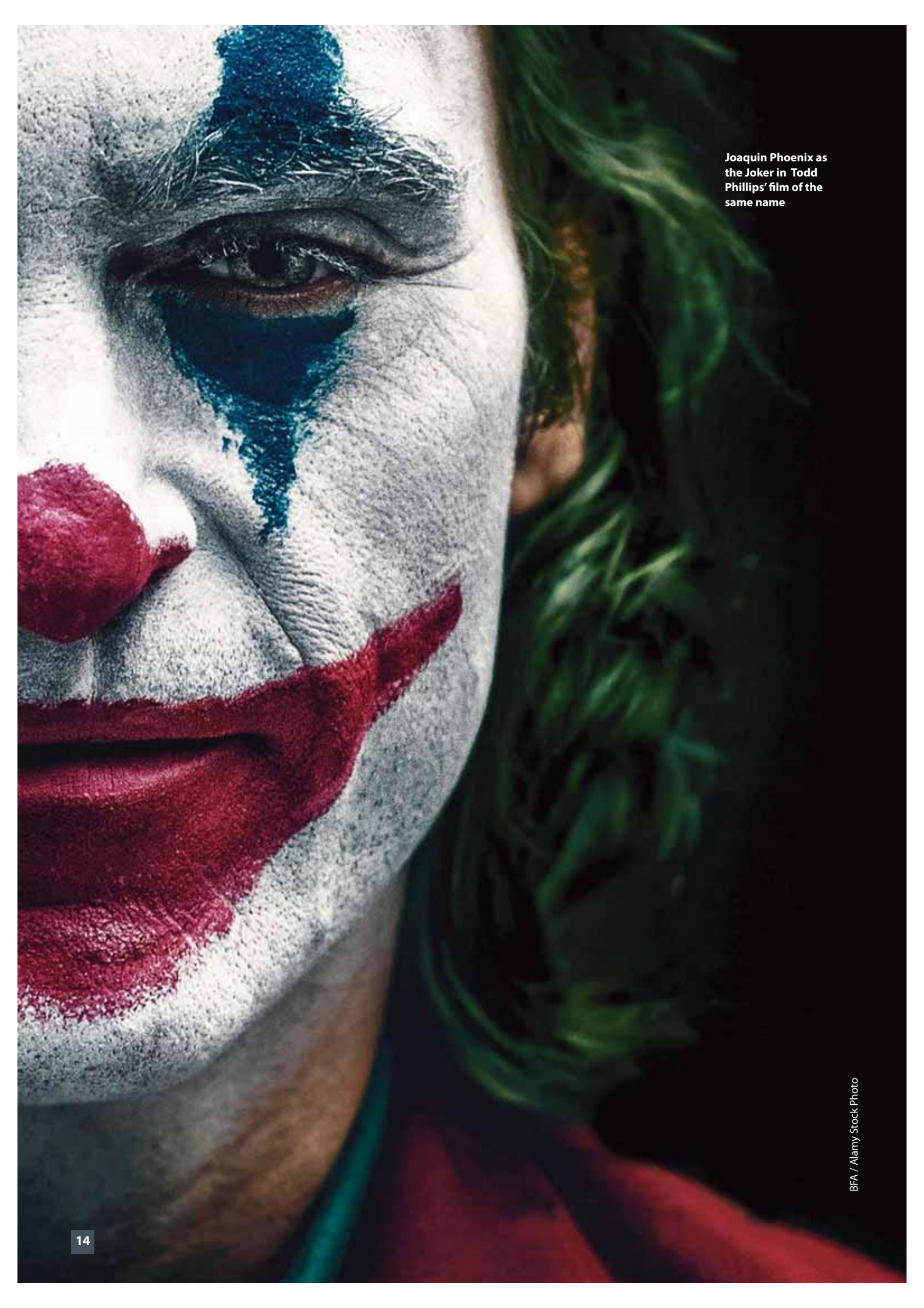
Lynsey Hanley was born in Birmingham and lives in Liverpool. She is the author of *Estates: An Intimate History*, and *Respectable: Crossing the Class Divide*. She is a regular contributor to *The Guardian* and the *Times Literary Supplement*.

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David Hicks / Alamy Stock Photo

Arthur Scargill protesting against the Tories' anti-union bill

Joaquin Phoenix as the Joker in Todd Phillips' film of the same name

THE JOKE'S ON YOU

Todd Phillips' DC origins story *Joker* frustrated and intrigued in equal measure, provoking a varied critical response. Writer and film expert, James Rose examines the fractured mental state of the protagonist, Arthur Fleck, to separate fact from fiction and get to grips with the concept of the 'unreliable narrator'. Or does he? (Warning: contains spoilers.)

One of the most anticipated films of 2019 has become one of the most complex products of mainstream cinema to have emerged in recent years, a quality compounded by its association with Hollywood's ongoing preoccupation with superhero cinema. Through its serious and realistic approach, nuanced central performance by Joaquin Phoenix and assured direction from Phillips, *Joker* sets an incredibly high standard for future origins stories. The film also raises a number of questions about the audience's perception of reality and, by doing so, questions all that is taking place within the narrative: for some it is the account of the rise to power of a dangerous anti-hero while, for others, it is a complex story of a tragically ill man.

The Concept of the Unreliable Narrator in Fiction

The film leaves its audience wondering what has really happened – what's 'real' in the world of the film and what is a figment of Fleck's fractured mind – and in doing this, Phillips taps into the tradition of what has become known as the 'unreliable narrator'. Is Fleck's relationship with a neighbour real? Is he actually sitting in the audience of his favourite talk show? Has his stand-up routine been a genuine success or an abject failure? These and many other questions are left open to interpretation as the audience considers what to believe. As a concept, the unreliable narrator was established by Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). Booth suggests that the character who is presenting the narrative may consciously be adding elements that never happened to the story. With such additions, the narrative combines fact and fiction, truth and embellishment, making it untrustworthy and its narrator unreliable. Two decades later, Booth's work was developed by William Riggan in *Pícaros, Madmen, Naïfs, and Clowns: The Unreliable First-person Narrator*. The book was published in 1981, the same year in which *Joker* is set.

Riggan's text attempts to classify unreliable narrators, with two such categories – 'the madman' and 'the clown' – immediately ringing true for Joker. For Riggan, the clown as unreliable narrator is one who does not take narrative events seriously and deliberately seeks to add to and undermine the narrative wherever they can. For them, this is humorous as it misleads and misdirects the audience as the clown consciously plays with expected conventions. In contrast, the madman is a narrator who is experiencing

Arthur's life has been a tragedy, a deeply traumatic one of poverty, struggles with mental illness and the lack of a father figure to guide and support him.

JOAQUIN PHOENIX

JOKER

OCTOBER 4
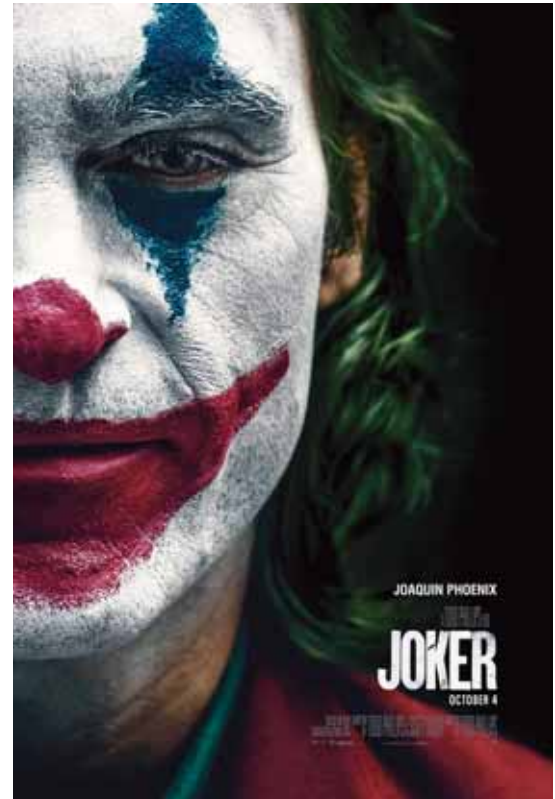
severe mental illness or, through past trauma, is suffering severe self-alienation and dissociation.

As a powerful storytelling device, it is unsurprising that screenwriters would use the concept of the unreliable narrator to destabilise the audience's confidence in what they are seeing. Recent examples include the narrator (Edward Norton) in *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999), Patrick Bateman (Christian Bale) in *American Psycho* (Mary Harron, 2000) and U.S. Marshal Edward Daniels (Leonardo DiCaprio) in *Shutter Island* (Martin Scorsese, 2010). It is worth noting that the crime genre makes frequent use of this technique, where the mystery to be solved becomes far more complex and disturbing as a result of the false additions: the excessively violent murders committed by Bateman are

Joker: clown, madman or both?

figments of his imagination, while Daniels' investigation into the disappearance of a mental health patient is, in fact, his coming to terms with the fact he murdered his own wife.

Is Arthur Fleck Unreliable?
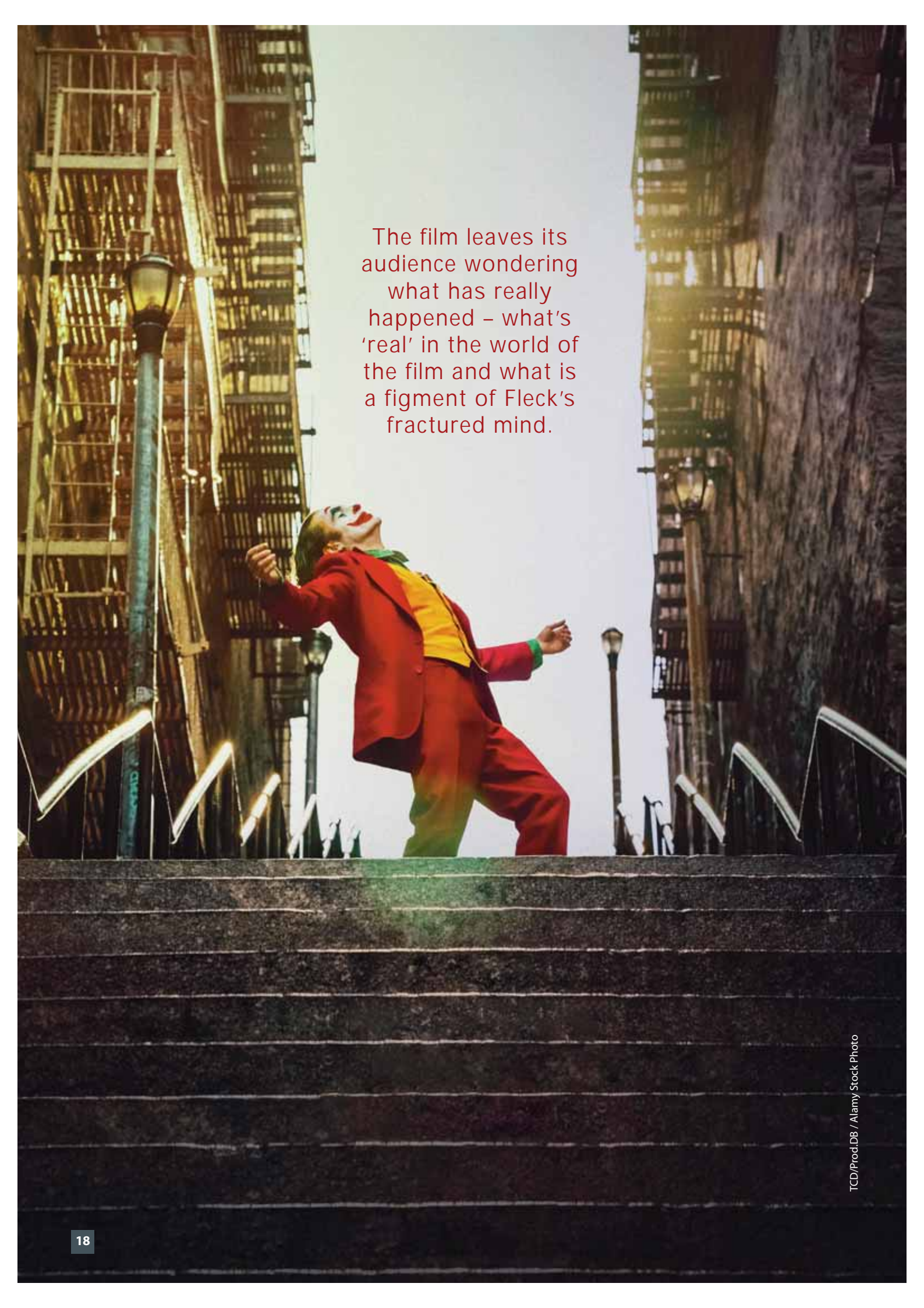
The first presentation of Fleck as an unreliable narrator is offered at the start of the film. In a drab office tinted in grey-blue, Fleck sits opposite his social worker and tries to talk about his feelings since he last saw her. One of her responses directly recalls the time when Arthur was a patient in Arkham State Hospital's psychiatric ward, triggering a flashback for him. He sees himself in an orange room, banging his head against a reinforced glass window. The scene is almost over before it can begin but its significance to Fleck's unreliability only becomes apparent at the film's end: Arthur has been arrested for at least six homicides and is now incarcerated at Arkham State Hospital, a situation presented to the audience as Fleck sits opposite his psychiatrist discussing how he feels. While this ending fits the chronology of the narrative so far, the clothes Fleck wears and the orange room he now sits in are the same as the very early flashback. Reinforcing this is that the women in both scenes are African American and of a similar age, while the clocks in both rooms are set at exactly the same time: 11:11.

The visual connections between the flashback and the ending broadly indicate the unreliability of Arthur's narrative, suggesting that, for the duration of the film, Fleck has not lived out the events the audience has so far seen but has been sitting in the orange room for the whole time, recounting his (unreliable) narrative to the psychiatrist. The flashback at the start occurs because Arthur is reminded of his actual incarceration at Arkham; it is a jarring comment that, momentarily, brings him back to his actual reality. Arthur quickly slips back to the fantasy of the grey-blue room and, from then on, remains there, comfortable in his delusion, preferring to stay in the past which he can overtly embellish, reconfigure and ultimately become the hero within.

Arthur's Narration or Arthur's Truth?

The audience is given further indications of Arthur's unreliable status: his relationship with his neighbour, single mother Sophie (Zazie Beetz), represents one of the few glimpses of happiness Fleck seems to experience throughout the film. She laughs at his jokes, attends his stand-up performances, and sits with him at his mother's hospital bedside. They appear together and seem to be developing a healthy relationship until Arthur lets himself into her apartment. Sophie appears from her daughter's bedroom and, clearly frightened, tells him that he is in the wrong apartment. Arthur turns to her and, again in flashback, every scene where they have appeared together replays again, only without Sophie.

The film leaves its audience wondering what has really happened – what's 'real' in the world of the film and what is a figment of Fleck's fractured mind.

Arthur smiles, recognising what he has previously recounted was just another embellishment, the fantasy of not only wanting a girlfriend but of having a girlfriend who would support him in his creative endeavours (the stand-up act) and at a time of need (at his mother's bedside). It is unclear what Arthur does upon this realisation; in the next scene he is no longer in Sophie's apartment, leaving it ambiguous as to whether he has murdered her or not.

Further evidence of Fleck's unreliability is Arthur's expansion upon the moments in which he and his mother watch their favourite talk show hosted by Murray Franklin (Robert De Niro): Arthur draws himself closer to the screen and imagines he is in the audience. He recounts how he stands up and talks about being raised only by his mother and how he is now looking after her, all of which results in Murray inviting Arthur down onto the stage. Once there, Murray whispers to him how proud he is of him. Aside from detailing how rich Arthur's embellishments can be, it also communicates the film's deeper undercurrent: Arthur's desire for attention and respect from the father-figure he lacks.

Fleck: Clown or Madman?

From Riggan's perspective, Fleck is initially the unreliable clown who is playing out his fantasies as 'jokes' upon the Arkham psychiatrist and the audience. This is made blatant in his statement 'I used to think that my life was a tragedy, but now I realise, it's a comedy'. Yet Arthur's life has been a tragedy, a deeply traumatic one of poverty, struggles with mental illness and the lack of a father figure to guide and support him. Combined, they create a traumatic past resulting in psychotic alienation and dissociation, suggesting both comedy and tragedy, clown and madman.

Regardless of how an audience interprets *Joker*, Phoenix's sublime performance and Phillips' taut direction ensure they feel as confused and as alienated as Fleck; they too are lost in a world that is brutal, cruel and punctuated with deception and deceit. As such, the film is not just Fleck's aggrandising fabrications blended with his traumatic past but a harrowing depiction of his mental state, a series of fleeting images, hopeless imaginings and tragic truths.

James Rose is the author of *Beyond Hammer: British Horror Cinema Since 1970* **(Auteur, 2009). He has contributed to numerous publications including** *Offscreen*, *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies* **and** *Senses of Cinema.*

> ### 🗄 *from the MM vaults*
>
> *Dark Knight, Dark Ideas: The Ideology of Nolan's Batman Trilogy* – Pete Turner, MM44

Smile! Arthur Fleck prepares to put on a show

BFA / Alamy Stock Photo
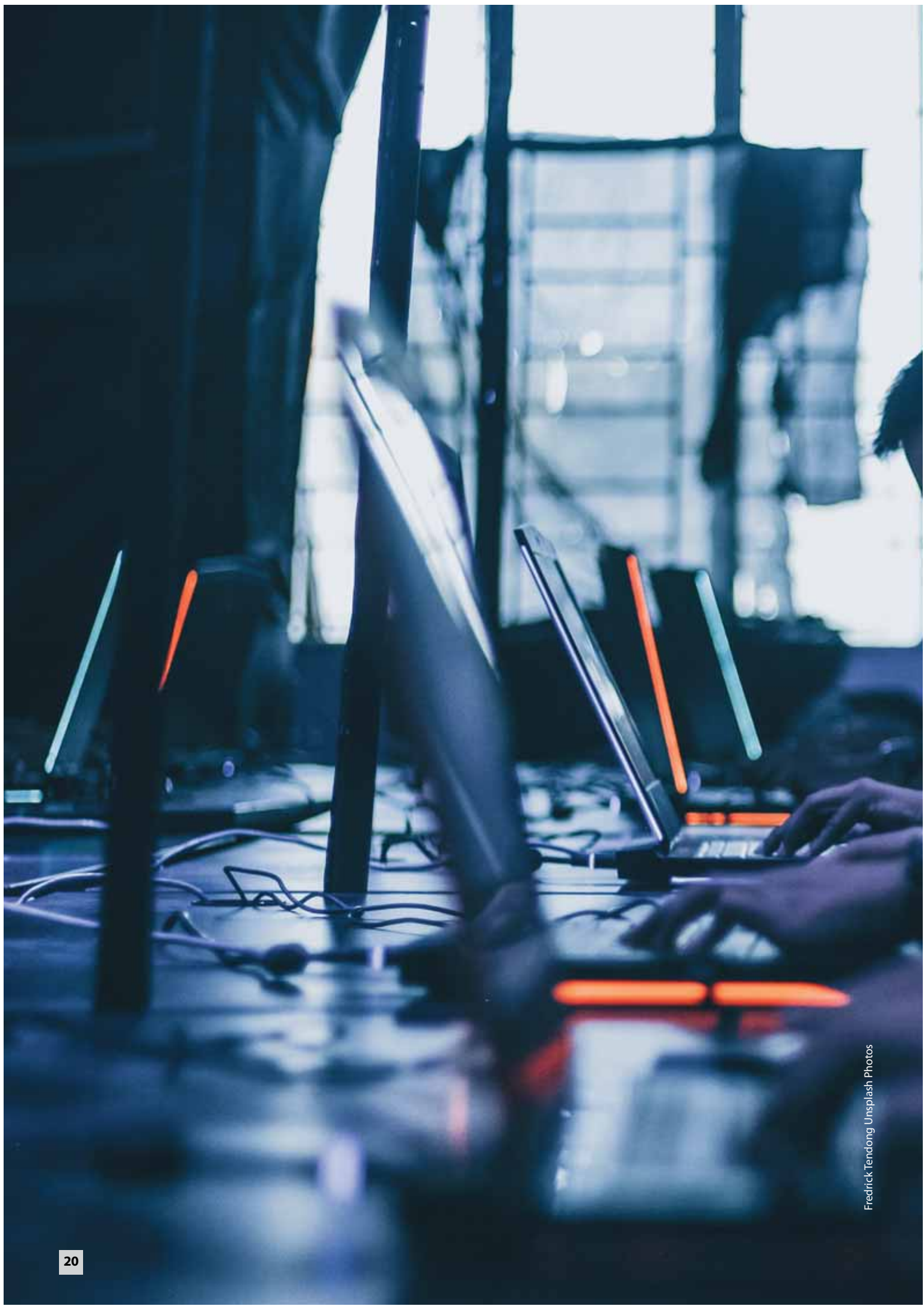
A SPORTING CHANCE

With their recent surge in popularity, there have been calls to recognise esports as a form of mainstream sport, alongside the likes of football or rugby. But are esports a real sport or just a passing fashion in gaming? Josh Wood asks you to plug in your controllers and select your team as he kicks off the debate.

For those of you that don't know, esports (short for 'electronic sports') are video games played at a competitive level. Tournaments and leagues are made for a host of different video games – *Overwatch*, *Call of Duty*, *Dota*, *Fortnite*, *Pub G* and *FIFA* among them – and skilled players can rise up the ranks to win large sums of prize money, online fame and even lucrative sponsorship deals. Some would argue that esports are indeed a 'sport' (the clue is in the name) because they rely on players' skill (and most definitions of sports suggest that they require either physical prowess or skill), though it might also be categorised under the umbrella term 'mind sports'. A mind sport is a game of skill where strategy and mental strength are emphasised rather than physical ability. Activities like chess, card games and other board games would all be considered mind sports. This doesn't particularly help esports get any kind of acceptance amongst the fans of more traditional sports like rugby or football and for some people, esports shouldn't even be compared to traditional sports. Where's the physical effort, the exertion, the sweat? Well, golf, darts and archery all seem to qualify as sports so why not esports? And what about the massive popularity of traditional sports? Surely, esports can't hit those levels.

Let's take football as an example. The FIFA 2018 World Cup in Russia brought in 3.5 billion viewers worldwide, an 11% increase from the previous 2014 World Cup in Brazil. By comparison, the esports equivalent – the eWorld Cup – showcased the game *FIFA 19* and brought in 47 million viewers across all platforms, a 60% increase from the 2018 eWorld Cup. As was probably obvious, football proved more popular than esports; however, esports viewership is growing at an unprecedented pace and could potentially reach similarly huge audiences.

According to the 'uses and gratifications' model, audiences consume media texts for a variety of purposes. Esports can clearly provide a sense of identity, escapism and social interaction and by seeing professional gamers compete to claim prize money, surrounded by people also interested in video gaming, esports audiences are given a reinforced feeling of unity. They can identify as one of the many people also enjoying esports, and can relate to the professional gamers as they too play video games. One of the main defining features of video games which has made them so popular is their escapist quality. The ability to become someone else or do something we would never have been able to do in real life are what

One of the main defining features of video games which has made them so popular is their escapist quality. The ability to become someone else or do something we would never have been able to do in real life are what make video games, and by extension esports, a brilliant escape from the mundanities of life.

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But while escapism is one aspect of their appeal, it's also the sense of community around esports that contributes to their popularity. Esports are accessible through streaming platforms (such as Twitch) and online social media (such as YouTube), so social interaction is easy. Comment sections, where viewers can post opinions on the game, or show their support for their favourite team or player, as well as live chat rooms where the audience can freely interact with each other while the game is being played, allow for live reactions and conversations. This live interactivity fosters a sense of community and, while it is not unique to esports, it's only in recent years that traditional sports have adopted a similar approach.

In terms of audience demographics, esports are interesting too. While many traditional sports like football have been historically popular in the Western world, and niche sports like table tennis and badminton dominated by Eastern participants, this is different for esports, with estimates placing 57% of esports' enthusiasts in the Asia-Pacific region.

The age demographic is different as well. A study from 2016 suggested that esports had one of the youngest average viewership ages: 32, compared to football, tennis and golf, which all had higher average ages at 42, 61 and 64 respectively. Esports' comparably lower average age could be the cause of its recent spike in popularity. Being a relatively new sport (the first recorded large-scale tournament being hosted by Atari for the game *Space Invaders* in 1980, and larger online events only really achieving prominence in the last decade) only younger people have had esports as something they could watch and grow up with.

An interesting dimension to the appeal of esports is that because they rely less on physical ability or athleticism and offer more of a level playing field, men and women can go head to head. Whilst in theory this might see esports as treating women and men as equals, the whole field is still very heavily male-dominated and it has been argued that, much like many other traditional sports, there should be women's only tournaments in order to encourage participation and give women more of a platform to get into the sport.

Media theorist George Gerbner explains that being influenced by patterns of representation over long periods of time can influence how you perceive the world. Since the very beginning, video games have been represented in the media as a male hobby, and while in recent

There can be no doubt that esports are an up and coming phenomenon, with estimates projecting that they will garner 645 million viewers and $1.8 billion of revenue by 2022.

Sean Do Unsplash Photos

years this representation has been challenged (with strong female protagonists such as Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider*, Samus Aran in *Metroid* and Aloy in *Horizon Zero Dawn*) we as a society have been influenced through this repeated assumption that video games are for boys, hindering female involvement in esports.

When comparing esports to traditional sports, especially in a Media Studies context, it is also important to consider the platforms through which they are consumed. For traditional sports, almost all their coverage is on TV, most of which is through a subscription service, though some games are streamed online and viewed on phones and laptops. Esports on the other hand are very different, being almost entirely consumed through streaming services. Platforms such as Twitch or YouTube are the main distributors of esports, with thousands usually tuning in to watch them live. However, as esports have started to pick up steam amongst mainstream sports fans they have appeared periodically on TV, with the likes of the eWorld Cup being broadcast on the big screen.

There can be no doubt that esports are an up and coming phenomenon, with estimates projecting that they will garner 645 million viewers and $1.8 billion of revenue by 2022 (according to *Newzoo*). Though some would argue that they are different to traditional sports, the fact remains that esports provoke the same raw emotions and passion that you would expect to find reverberating around Anfield as the crowd belts out 'You'll Never Walk Alone', or at Headingley as Ben Stokes smashes a six over deep cover. Esports fans scream as much after every multikill or cry out in joy after every successful payload defence past overtime, just like football fans cheer for every goal, or cry after every Championship play-off defeat. And while there might remain some fundamental differences between traditional sports and esports, I feel they're a lot more alike than some may think.

Josh Wood is a student at Hills Road Sixth Form College in Cambridge.

Links and further reading

https://thenextweb.com/podium/2019/07/30/almost-a-billion-people-watch-esports-data/

https://newzoo.com/insights/articles/newzoo-global-esports-economy-will-top-1-billion-for-the-first-time-in-2019/

Brad Pitt, Leonardo DiCaprio and Margot Robbie

Sensory Cinema

Carolyn / Flickr

Film Studies students are experts at decoding the meanings of films but what about that more slippery of qualities, the 'feeling' of a film or the effect it has on the viewer? Mark Reid from the BFI explores the sensations created in a scene from Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time In Hollywood*.

We are quite used to talking about films as encoding 'meaning'. When we study film as a set of signs that function in a meaning-making system, we call it semiotics, which is a common starting point for film and media courses. But we don't really have an equivalent for studying how film encodes and reproduces 'feeling', or 'sensation' in the same way. The 'sensations' of film don't add up neatly to plot constructions, character summations, genre conventions, or themes: they're harder to write about and analyse, but they're fundamental to how film works and how audiences engage emotionally with films.

Feeling and Sensation in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*

To illustrate, I want to examine how a specific filmmaker creates a particular set of sensations in a sequence of film. Quentin Tarantino's latest film *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*, concerns a few days in the life of two fictional characters – a B Movie actor and his stunt double (Rick Dalton and Cliff Booth, played by Leonardo di Caprio and Brad Pitt) – and a collection of characters based on real people – the notorious cult leader, Charles Manson, and members of his murderous 'family'; the actress Sharon Tate, who was brutally murdered by members of the cult; and her husband, the film director Roman Polanski. The sequence I'm thinking of is where the character Sharon Tate drives through Los Angeles at dusk; she's just been to the cinema to see herself play in *The Wrecking Crew* (a poignant moment, where we see the real Sharon Tate on screen, in one of her few appearances, alongside Dean Martin). This gives us an unusual, uncanny sensation, one that Tarantino creates often: mixing different diegeses (a diegesis is a 'story-world', and usually a film exists in only one story-world). In this sequence, the actress Margot Robbie, playing the actress Sharon Tate, watches the real Sharon Tate in a clip from a real film she starred in. It's called 'uncanny' because it is both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time – another 'sensation' we get regularly from cinema.

It's what happens next that is maybe more clearly 'sensory cinema': the Tate character, driving through LA, is obviously all-aglow, because she's been basking in her own reflection on the big screen. Now, as she drives home, each cinema, restaurant and theatre she passes switches on its neon sign as if responding to her movement past them: the restaurants Musso and Frank's, El Coyote, Casa Vega; the Pacific Cinerama and the Nuart Cinema, all flicker on, become real, alive. It's a beautiful moment, a

moment of bliss, the evening lighting up with the promise of pleasure. It's as if Sharon Tate lights up the city just by moving through it.

For those of us who know the real Sharon Tate story, we know that this day, 8th August 1969, is Tate's last night alive – the day she and her friends were brutally murdered in her house on Cielo Drive in Hollywood by members of the Manson Family. In Tarantino's film, however, it's not at all certain that the film will follow the historical story (the 'Once Upon a Time' suggesting that what we are seeing is a fiction, not a reality) so for the time being, this moment is full of romance and possibility.

Pleasure or Purpose?

Why did Tarantino imagine, design, shoot, and then keep the sequence in the final edit, especially if it doesn't give us a story point? Tarantino talked about his experiences growing up in Hollywood, being taken to the cinema in the daytime by his father, who worked in the evenings. Seeing films in the daytime is a guilty pleasure. Sometimes taking a whole day off to watch can be the most luxurious waste of time, and many writers have noted the particular feeling of going into a cinema in daylight, and coming out after twilight. So there is something of this impulse, this sensation – in the neon light sequence – for adults who remember that feeling, or who feel daytime cinema to be somehow slightly illicit, like you've bunked off school.

What kind of moment, and sensation, is it

then? It appeals to our visual sense, but there's movement in there too: the viewing position is from a car passing each site – one of the earliest techniques in cinema was to set up 'phantom rides', in which the camera was placed on the front of a train or tram and gave the illusion of moving on its own through space – it's still a kind of 'primitive pleasure' in film. There's also the 'switch on' moment of each neon sign, the 'light-up', from inert neon tubing to illuminated sign, which we're primed to respond to on some not-quite-primordial level, as if we're not supposed to see neon switching on – think of the 'magic' of the moment when you see a street light come on, as if signalling the sudden shift from day to night.

Perhaps this scene is intended to be pleasure then, but the 'sensation' of a character based on a real life murder victim, moving through Los Angeles, in a black Porsche (incidentally, *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* is a story told partly through cars), while neon signs light up also prompts a more complex set of feelings, depending on who you are as a viewer, and how much you know about the period and the background to the film. I've seen most of Tarantino's films – though I don't like them all equally; I like cinematic portraits of cities, especially watched in the cinema; and most crucially, I knew beforehand what the outcome of Sharon Tate's strand of the story was going to be in the film, and I'd just read a very good piece of film criticism about the film in the *London Review of Books* which informed my reading of the film.

Film Writing or Film Criticism?

At the start of this piece I had wanted to say that there are two types of film (the story-driven kind, and the sensory kind), and two ways of writing about film. But I realised while writing that of course the two different kinds of cinema more likely co-exist in individual films if they're very good, like *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. But I do think there are two types of writing about film that mirror this 'meaning vs sensation' approach. On one hand, there are film journalists, who might report what is happening in film, film culture, and the film industry; who report what directors and actors say about their film; who 'review' the film, which is to say recounting its main plot points and making a judgement (maybe with a star rating) to help audiences decide whether they want to see it.

Then there are film writers (sometimes critics, sometimes academics) who you may not have encountered who have a different approach: to respond to a film as an aesthetic artefact, to feel its sensations, to make sense of what makes them respond in the way they do, to bring out its textures and properties, to feel its resonances (imagine a critic as a tuning fork, 'pinged' by a work of art). If that all sounds vague and fluffy that's because it often is; there are very few film writers who do it consistently well – Mark Cousins, Jonathan Romney, Trevor Johnstone, and Hannah McGill, all writing in *Sight&Sound* magazine, or Michael Wood in the aforementioned *London Review of Books*. There are a few journalists who

El Coyote George / Flickr

The 'sensations' of film don't add up neatly to plot constructions, character summations, genre conventions, or themes: they're harder to write about and analyse, but they're fundamental to how film works and how audiences engage emotionally with films.

Margot Robbie as Sharon Tate in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*

review films who manage to write in that way: Anthony Lane in the *New Yorker*, and his one-time predecessor Pauline Kael, who are (and were) both very funny. These are writers you feel who are responding while they are writing, trying to tease out of themselves how the film is working its magic on them. They tend not to write about films they don't like; what would be the point of that?

So what is there to learn – about 'sensory cinema', and about sensory film writing?

- Write about films you like – for *MediaMagazine*, for *Film Stories Junior*, for example, or set up your own film blog
- Try and capture what the film is doing to you, to your senses, and pay attention to sequences that might not at first seem like they're doing 'narrative work'
- Try not to repeat or re-use the kinds of phrases and formulations and judgements that you've seen other people use in their film writing – or make judgements about whether a role is 'well performed', or a script 'well written' or a scene 'well shot'. Try instead to get under the skin of a performance, a shot, or a scene by noticing the things you're maybe not 'supposed' to notice
- Encourage your film teacher to run a film club and follow Cinema cent ans de jeunesse (see box). And lastly... bunk off school to go to the movies!

Mark Reid is Head of UK Learning Programmes at the British Film Institute (BFI).

> Tarantino talked about his experiences growing up in Hollywood, being taken to the cinema in the daytime by his father, who worked in the evenings. Seeing films in the daytime is a 'guilty pleasure': sometimes taking a whole day off to watch can be the most luxurious waste of time.

Le Cinema, Cent Ans de Jeunesse

For the last 10 years, BFI Education has been participating in a 26-year old international film education programme called 'le Cinema, cent ans de jeunesse' – or 'cinema, 100 years of youth.' The programme invites several thousand young people, from all over the world, to explore a 'question of cinema', ranging from formal properties like moving the camera, using depth of field, the role of colour, to more abstract and conceptual dimensions, like 'play' in film, or 'situations'. This year's theme is 'sensory cinema', or how the senses are represented in film, and how they create sensory responses in audiences.

Alejandro De La Cruz / Flickr

Follow it up

https://www.cinematheque.fr/cinema100ansdejeunesse/en/

https://www.lrb.co.uk/v41/n17/michael-wood/at-the-movies

https://www.newyorker.com/books/double-take/sunday-reading-the-electrifying-critical-mind-of-pauline-kael

https://www.newyorker.com/contributors/anthony-lane

The Theory Drop

David Gauntlett

Mark Dixon unpicks some of the influences on and misconceptions about the identity theories of David Gauntlett.

Gauntlett's work is often simplified to make consumption sound like a dip-in-the-tin of the assorted delights offered by the media industry from which audiences knowingly extract those flavours that they enjoy or identify with the most.

Some of us may know Gauntlett as the 'pick and mix' guy – the sweet-shop theorist who tells us that media consumption is a little like Christmas when Nana passes round her family-sized box of Quality Street. Gauntlett's work is often simplified to make consumption sound like a dip-in-the-tin of the assorted delights offered by the media industry from which audiences knowingly extract those flavours that they enjoy or identify with the most.

Some have also compared Gauntlett's ideas with the dressing-up box some of us had as children: 'Today Mammy, I'm going to be a firefighter or Batman or a pretty Disney Princess'. Remember those fancy dress costumes – the ones that our parents had to forcibly remove before bedtime because we really wanted to believe that we were firefighters, Batmen or Disney Princesses when we wore them? In this reading of Gauntlett's work, the media allow us to shed our identities and replace them wholesale with 'off-the-shelf' personas looted from our everyday viewing.

Except Gauntlett's ideas are actually a little bit more complicated than that.

The Work of Anthony Giddens

Perhaps the best starting point for a more considered appraisal of Gauntlett's work is by referring to the work of Antony Giddens, the sociology colossus who has been a huge influence on Gauntlett. In short, Giddens argues that society has changed, is changing, from one that was wholly organised around 'traditional' identity manufacture to one that is *beginning* (note the italicised emphasis) to enable a 'post traditional' realisation of identity. He suggests that in traditional social structures, our identities are largely forged from local influences: our parents, extended family, peers and so on. Our social roles in a traditional society are 'fixed' for us – we are moulded to adopt concrete notions of gender, sexuality or class. But, according to Giddens, something magical occurred in the aftermath of the Second World War, when the forces of globalisation brought us into contact with a range of influences that made us question the fixed identities constructed for us. Globalisation, via satellites, global media access, and so on, brought us
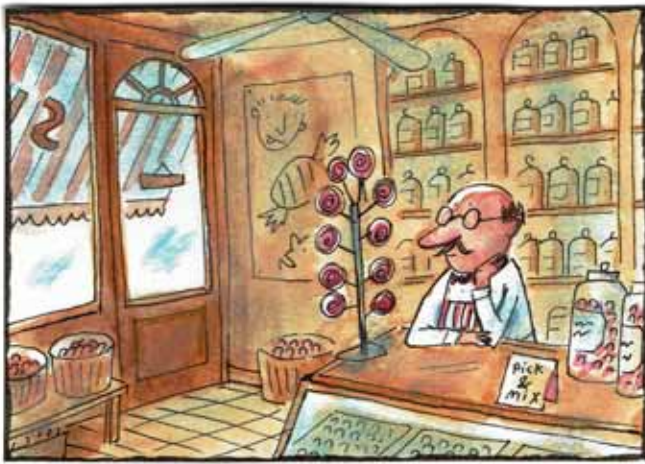
into contact with ideas and cultural ideologies beyond our previously restricted localised worldviews. This meant that audiences could appreciate, perhaps for the first time, that *who* we are, or *who* we might become, wasn't necessarily predetermined. In the post-traditional society, we are allowed, indeed encouraged, to reimagine or engineer our own identities and engage in what Giddens called the 'reflexive project of the self'.

More Media, More Identities, More Choice

Gauntlett, importantly, suggests that the boom in media proliferation of the late Twentieth Century turned up the heat on Gidden's 'post-traditional' revolution. Undoubtedly, media output exploded in the 1980s – more TV channels, more magazines, more books, more producers, more hours of stuff to watch. And that proliferation provided an ever larger choice of media products from which we could assimilate a range of alternative ideologies. Those media products and their narratives also delivered identity templates that we could use to affect our own transformations. Gauntlett highlights, for instance, the explosion of self-help guide books in the 90s as evidence of this 'post-traditional' flourishing – suggesting that these books offered us lifehack blueprints that we could use to fashion ourselves anew. Be mindful/successful/ popular/ brand new, they told us.

Similarly, lifestyle magazines of the Nineties crafted alternative versions of our future selves, and, if we followed the 'how to' instructions offered, we were told we could reinvent our working lives, our love lives and our family time. In this sense, the media proliferation of the period didn't simply offer us a 'pick and mix' smorgasbord of identity choices; it actively modelled the processes needed to effect Gidden's 'reflexive project of the self'.

Narrative, Transformation and Identity

Gauntlett here echoes Todorov's assertion that the power of media narratives resides in the transformations they relate. Indeed, Gauntlett reminds us, most media stories give us central characters who are transformed. Heroes have to learn new knowledge to defeat their foes; they have to atone for past demeanours or master new skills that enable them to triumph in their curtain-call showdowns. In this respect, most contemporary media products offer their readers a streaming parade of 'self-reflexive' role models who prompt us to create our own identity changes.

Thus far, Gauntlett's theory sounds wonderfully rosy; we might be lulled into the belief that the media helps us to realise our true selves, or enables us to unlock our true callings. But Gauntlett is hugely mindful that media output can often produce contrary effects: that narratives routinely reinforce heteronormativity or patriarchal stereotypes, or that beauty ideals affect negative identifications. The media might help us to self-realise, Gauntlett tells us, but it also has the power to make us feel ashamed of our bodies or lifestyle choices.

More Complex Than 'Pick and Mix'?

In this sense, it would be wrong to conclude simplistically that Gauntlett's theories suggest that audiences are wholly empowered by the media, or that readers actively control all of the media messages they assimilate. Of course, his conclusions are more upbeat than those of Butler or van Zoonen, who adopt a much more critical view of the media's negative effects – that patriarchy or heteronormativity are all-controlling. Gauntlett's 'pick and mix' conclusions, in this sense, argue for a more balanced appraisal, championing the idea that the media is a complex battleground of positive and negative effects that readers negotiate with varying results.

....

Mark Dixon is Head of Media and Film at Durham Sixth Form Centre and author of *Media Theory for A Level: The Essential Revision Guide.*
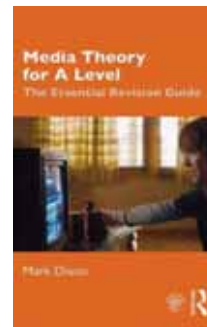
Mark Dixon's *Media Theory for A Level* is published by Routledge

The media might help us to self-realise, Gauntlett tells us, but it also has the power to make us feel ashamed of our bodies or lifestyle choices.

Shelter

AND THE SHIFTING POLITICAL CONTEXT

Eoin Meade explains how two different ad campaigns from the homelessness charity Shelter reflect the context in which they were created.

In the recent election campaign, housing was expected to be one of the most hotly debated issues. As it turns out, Brexit dominated and the Conservatives were returned to power, meaning that each of the last four elections returned a Conservative government. It was just a year after the first of these elections (in May 2010) that the Shelter ads, which form one of the set texts for OCR's advertising unit, were released. Fast-forward to June of 2019 and Shelter was again running a poster ad campaign but by now the national circumstances and mood had changed. So how has that change impacted on Shelter's message and methods?

As with any institution, it's important to keep in mind Shelter's purpose: they seek to tackle the problems of housing and homelessness both by offering advice and support to individuals and by campaigning to improve housing. Both purposes inform the messaging of the two ad campaigns: 'seek advice earlier' in the 2011 ads and a political campaign calling for investment in social housing in the 2019 ads.

When the Conservatives came to power in 2010 they were determined to cut the national debt and so began the 'age of austerity' (see timeline). They aimed to cut spending wherever they thought possible; funding for schools, the NHS, social care, welfare and local governments all came under pressure. As well as adding to the national debt, the global financial crisis had had a dramatic effect on the lives of individuals. Workers' earnings fell (see timeline) and, across the country, ordinary people were facing financial uncertainty. The government was also reforming welfare, which, together with falling earnings, meant that more and more people were struggling to meet the cost of their housing.

Shelter's 2011 advertising campaign encouraged people at risk of homelessness to seek advice early

Seek Advice Earlier

Step forward Shelter and their 2011 ad campaign. At this point, homelessness could be seen as a growing problem but not yet a crisis. What was clear was that many people who previously wouldn't have faced homelessness were now threatened with it. Shelter's ad campaign needed to address the growing social anxiety around financial security and appeal to this new group. What was needed was a reassuring voice, one that spoke to the everyman, people from all sections of society who were suddenly facing an uncertain future.

To appeal to this new group of people threatened with homelessness, the images contained within the ads couldn't be stereotypical – rough sleepers in damp, decaying doorways for example – because the target audience were anything but and they would need to identify with the people they saw in the ads. Conventionally charity ads try to elicit a feeling of sympathy or pity. They do so hoping that the general public will help the charity by making a donation. Instead, Shelter were letting ordinary people know how they could help them, promoting the importance of their advice services.

Each of the images in the ads features a big close-up of an adult face. The models' direct address immediately engages the audience. The faces are quite harshly lit which can be seen to

serve a number of purposes. Firstly, it lends a rather unhealthy look to each of the models, like the colour has left their cheeks because of the stress they are experiencing. It also contrasts strongly with the dark background (symbolic, perhaps, of the difficult situation facing society), highlighting the anxious facial expression of each of the models – these are people who need reassurance, they need Shelter's advice. Finally, it makes it easier to identify with the models. Although they may be of different ethnic backgrounds, the harsh lighting makes this less obvious as it drains their skin tone, reinforcing the idea that homelessness can potentially affect anyone.

Overlaid on each model's face is a piece of text that expresses the different problems that can lead to homelessness – unemployment, mistreatment by a landlord and mounting debt. Each problem is expressed using rhetorical devices that aim to hook the audience – a rhetorical question in the first ad and pronouns ('He''That''It') that produce enigma in the other two. Together, these headlines and the copy allow the audience to see that homelessness is not a simple problem but one that can come about for a variety of reasons. In each case, Shelter is able to reassure the audience that,

How Shelter construct their campaigns is closely linked to the socio-political context as presented in this timeline

Global financial crisis – banks bailed out by national governments, leading to massive increase in the national debt

Average workers weekly earnings: £530.80 (Reuters)

May general election: Conservative/ Lib Dem coalition government replaces Labour and announces start of "austerity" to tackle the national debt

Shelter 'We Can Help' campaign launched

40,000 families living in temporary accommodation (reported in *The Guardian*)

Average Workers Weekly Earnings: £486.60 (Reuters)

POLITICAL CONTEXT: A TIMELINE >

2008 ---------- 2010 ---------- 2011 ----------

whatever your worry might be, 'we can help'.

The ads' action points are all reflective of their cultural context, the digital age. When launching the campaign, Shelter's director of campaigns, Kay Boycott, said that 'there's a growing demand for digital guidance,' and that Shelter hoped to show vulnerable people that, 'help is just a click away.' Below the copy, the primary action point consists of a red search bar, acting as a visual prompt which reinforces the rather urgent text, 'Search 'Shelter Housing Advice' now'. In addition, Shelter's URL and a line providing information on how to text a donation are present on the bottom third of the page.

#BuildSocialHousing

Incredible takeover by @Shelter at Westminster tube station. #buildsocialhousing #housingemergency running up the sides of the escalators and testimonial posters everywhere.

The 2019 campaign ran in Westminster tube station, frequented by tens of thousands of commuters and politicians every day. A political campaign, it appears to be aimed at the general public and politicians alike, not just those who are faced with homelessness. Austerity has caused a dramatic rise in homelessness (see timeline). Coupled with this, a record number of people are now living in privately rented accommodation, the cost of which makes saving to buy a home extremely difficult. The Grenfell Tower disaster of 2017 also highlighted a systemic disregard for those who lived in the existing social housing in this country. Housing and homelessness were seen as growing problems in 2011 but in 2019 the country was said to have a full-blown housing crisis.

Many, including Shelter, put the crisis down to successive governments relying on private developers to provide housing. Instead, they argued, the government should be investing in the type of social housing that offered security to so many low-income families in the post-war years. While such arguments may have fallen on deaf ears in previous years, the government had announced an end to austerity at the end of 2018 and were ready to start investing again. Both the public mood and government policy had created the right conditions to mount a campaign for more social housing.

Push or Pull?

Compared to 2011, we were even more firmly living within the digital age; smartphone usage amongst adults had grown from 39% in 2012 to

May general election: Conservative Government

June: Brexit referendum

June general election: Conservative Government

June 14th: Grenfell Tower tragedy

October: Theresa May, Conservative PM announces end of austerity

165% increase in rough sleeping since 2010 (reported in *Metro*)

60,000 families living in temporary accommodation (reported in *The Guardian*)

Shelter 'Build More Social Housing' campaign launched

2015 — 2016 — 2017 — 2018 — 2019

Shelter's ad campaign needed to address the growing social anxiety around financial security and appeal to this new group.

I CAN SAVE A LIFE BUT I CAN'T PAY MY RENT
#BuildSocialHousing
We need more homes that working people can afford
Shelter

I'M FED UP WITH S*C!AL H*US!NG BEING A DIRTY WORD
#BuildSocialHousing
We need to end the stigma around social homes
Shelter

I'M TOO OLD TO SHARE A ROOM WITH MY MUM AND LITTLE SISTERS
#BuildSocialHousing
We need more homes to help families stuck in temporary accommodation
Shelter

SIX HOMES SIX SCHOOLS I'M SO SICK OF MOVING HOUSE
#BuildSocialHousing
We need more stable homes that families can afford
Shelter

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D FACE EVICTION AT MY AGE
#BuildSocialHousing
We need more stable homes that older renters can afford
Shelter

HOW CAN I SAVE FOR A DEPOSIT WHEN I CAN'T AFFORD MY RENT?
#BuildSocialHousing
We need more homes at low rents to help people into homeownership
Shelter

I WANT A GOVERNMENT THAT INVESTS IN OUR FUTURE
#BuildSocialHousing
We need to boost the economy and save money in the long term
Shelter

A record number of people are now living in privately rented accommodation, the cost of which makes saving to buy a home extremely difficult. The Grenfell Tower disaster of 2017 also highlighted a systemic disregard for those who lived in the existing social housing in this country.

78% in 2018 (Ofcom). The single action point for the June 2019 ad campaign shows an increasingly sophisticated understanding of digital culture. Unlike the rather scattergun approach of the 2011 ads, the single hashtag #BuildSocialHousing is all-encompassing and works across a range of platforms – Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Whereas in 2011, there was an expectation that the audience would pull further information on homelessness from the Shelter website, the 2019 campaign relies on the audience to push the charity's message by spreading it virally through the use of the hashtag.
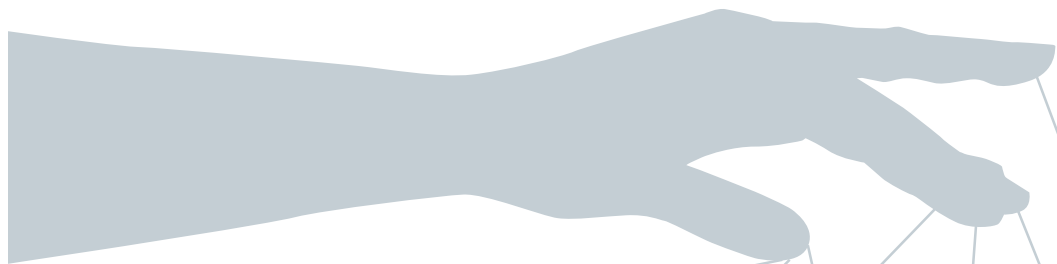
The hashtag also allows the narrative introduced in each of the print ads to be expanded upon and added to by the audience in the online space. The four print ads each tell a different story, individual strands of the housing narrative. Like the 2011 campaign, the posters work together to make it clear that the housing crisis affects all sections of society – working people, young people and old people. The diverse group affected is, again, represented through close-ups of individuals (a doctor, a school girl, pensioner and an adult woman) who are impacted by the lack of social housing. Unlike the 2011 campaign, though, the facial expressions are less anxious and more dignified; their mouths are closed rather than open and their eyes are less searching. Similarly, the lighting in these ads isn't as harsh, thereby emphasising the facial

structure and strength of the individual models. This is reflective of a more matter-of-fact tone in the ads. The text, while still telling the individual stories, is less panicked and more statement-like: 'I can save a life but I can't pay my rent'.

The layout and contrasting colours of the ads dramatise the impact of the housing crisis, or the narrative dilemma faced by each of the characters. One half of each model is cut off by the text layer on the right of the page. As dignified as each of the models appears, there is a clear sense here that the lack of social housing is preventing them from living a full life, an entirely dignified life. The solution, or narrative resolution, is offered in the copy under each headline: 'more homes that working people can afford' or 'more stable homes that older renters can afford'.

While both Labour and the Liberal Democrats pledged to build more social housing in their election manifestos, the ultimate success of the 2019 campaign remains to be seen. Like its 2011 counterpart, though, it makes clear that housing and homelessness, whatever the context, will always be complex and multi-faceted issues that impact on individuals from all sections of society.

Eoin Meade is a media educator and Head of Media Studies at Burntwood School in South London.

WHO'S PULLING THE STRINGS?

The Dizzee Rascal represented in 'Dream' is a playful, mischievous character poking fun at the social expectations of the 50s and subverting the expectations created by the mise-en-scène.

The videos for both 'Dream' by Dizzee Rascal and 'Burn the Witch' by Radiohead make use of puppets from classic kids' TV to very different effects. Dan Clayton looks at what's behind these choices and how meanings are being manipulated.

Music videos have a habit of drawing on wider cultural reference points, with their directors often making use of signifiers from the wider world of popular culture to help them recontextualise the music and artist they are marketing. From My Chemical Romance's 'I'm Not OK' playing with the imagery of 1980s 'bratpack' movies, Weezer's classic 'Buddy Holly' making liberal use of 70s TV smash *Happy Days*, or the Beastie Boys''Sabotage' drawing on the visual language of 70s and 80s US cop shows, music videos often reference other art forms. These intertextual references can be used to provide new jumping-off points for the audience to

Muffin the Mule, the inspiration for Dizzee Rascal's 'Dream' on a 1996 postage stamp commemorating the 50th anniversary of children's television.

At various points we see puppets as street drinkers, breakdancers, single mothers pushing buggies and even at one point a policeman wielding his truncheon

reinterpret the song itself, signal the influences the artist and/or director might wish to flag up to their audience, or just serve as witty visual jokes.

The directors of both Dizzee Rascal's 'Dream' (Dougal Wilson, 2004) and Radiohead's 'Burn the Witch' (Chris Hopewell, 2016) go one step further though and relocate their artists' work in a completely new world: that of 1950s-70s children's TV. Just as each track is very musically and culturally different, so too are the videos and it's interesting to see how they make use of the visual language of vintage children's TV to create meanings and to offer a new way of interpreting the songs they promote.

'Dream' makes use of much of the visual language from the 1950s children's TV show *Muffin the Mule* in which the presenter, Annette Mills sits at her piano and plays, while a puppet mule dances and generally does what mules do. This is what passed for entertainment in the 1950s, along with shows such as *Watch With Mother*. Shot on film but transferred to video, 'Dream' captures the grainy, flickering black and white look of the era. Added to this are the starchy dress, the props of a typical 1950s drawing room (look it up or ask your nan) and clipped Received Pronunciation (Queen's English) tones of the actor playing Annette Mills and you have a whole range of signifiers of

respectable, white middle class life in the UK.

Who better to drop into the middle of this whitebread world than the anarchic presence of Mr Rascal? When the video was made, Dizzee Rascal was just breaking through from the mean streets of E3 and the life of underground inner-city grime into the popular mainstream, and 'Dream' was part of that shift. He's moved between the two worlds ever since, achieving huge worldwide hits with poppier dance tracks (such as 'Dance Wiv Me' and 'Bonkers') while also creating serious social commentary in tracks like 'Sirens' (whose video casts Dizzee as the fox being hunted by bloodthirsty upper-class toffs through housing estates at night). So, the Dizzee Rascal represented in 'Dream' is a playful, mischievous character poking fun at the social expectations of the 50s and subverting the expectations created by the mise-en-scène. He literally adds a dash of colour with his baggy red hoodie and tracksuit bottoms but he also adds colour to a very white

world, because – spoiler alert – Dizzee is black.

The video features a range of signifiers that could all be interpreted as offering a more 'urban' experience than the audience might expect from a black and white children's TV show. At various points we see puppets as street drinkers, breakdancers, single mothers pushing buggies and even at one point a policeman wielding his truncheon (perhaps in a visual echo of the knockabout, violent humour of traditional Punch and Judy shows).

The juxtaposition of the two worlds – the song's narrative of Dizzee Rascal's own early musical career, delivered in his trademark Multicultural London English and the world of 1950s kids TV – creates a tension which sometimes spills over into close-up shots of worried expressions on the face of the prim pianist (particularly when the breakdancing puppets start brawling with a puppet PC) but by the end she appears to have bought into the inspirational message of the

> **The village life in this video however is full of sinister undercurrents and a whole host of intertextual references to the 1973 British horror classic, *The Wicker Man.***

Right: *The Wicker Man* **(1973)**

Above: A scene from Radiohead's 'Burn the Witch' 2016)

BFA / Alamy Stock Photo

song, joining in with the line 'Just Do It' with some gusto. In terms of the video's use of sound, the song samples Captain Sensible's 1982 cover of the song 'Happy Talk' from the 1949 musical *South Pacific* and the carefree, innocent atmosphere of the song provides an uplifting backdrop to the grittier elements of the lyrics. Whatever mischief the Rascal has brought to the staid, whitebread world of *Muffin the Mule*, is all in good spirits and designed to spread a positive message about realising your dreams, whatever your background.

Radiohead's 'Burn the Witch' is an altogether darker affair. The video, directed by Chris Hopewell, makes use of the stop-motion animation style featured in the children's TV shows *Trumpton*, *Chigley* and *Camberwick Green* (written by Gordon Murray and first shown from 1966-69). These gentle programmes painted a picture of quiet village life that rarely suffered more than the occasional moment of jeopardy. However the village life in this video, is full of sinister undercurrents and a whole host of intertextual references to the 1973 British horror classic, *The Wicker Man*. Arriving at the village in what looks like an official vehicle, an inspector or administrator of some sort is shown around what appear to be various picturesque scenes of bucolic innocence – a beautiful cottage, a couple of children playing on a see-saw, a miniature village – which gradually reveal a darker dimension. The cottage is being painted with an 'X' on the door, perhaps signifying it is a plague house; the see-saw turns out to be a ducking stool for witches (a reference back to the song's title); the display of produce on the stall drips blood from a newly-slaughtered carcass.

As the tour goes on, the deployment of sinister signifiers is too much for any audience to miss and the series of cuts to close-up shots of the inspector's face reveal a gradually more horrified expression. But what does it all mean? Well, the music is a clue: it is Radiohead after all, so you're hardly likely to bask in its jolly warmth and pop stylings. The jabbing strings and Thom Yorke's keening wail suggest that all is not well and this reaches a climax as the local inspector is ushered up a ladder to inspect a gigantic wicker man, before being locked inside it. The stop-motion remake of this iconic scene from *The Wicker Man* (a film in which a policeman visits a remote Scottish island to search for a missing girl, before finding out that the inhabitants have reverted to a form of paganism that demands blood sacrifices) is rendered all the more sinister by the use of the *Trumpton* figures, whose blank, expressionless faces stare on as the flames climb the gigantic wicker figure and finally lick at the feet of the outsider. Unlike the 1973 film however,

> The jabbing strings and Thom Yorke's keening wail suggest that all is not well and this reaches a climax as the local inspector is ushered up a ladder to inspect a gigantic wicker man, before being locked inside it.

the inspector escapes and is seen making his way through the undergrowth. Is this perhaps dictated by the intertextuality? Rather like the literary concept of metaphor, intertextuality draws on reference points from outside the 'thing' being described. By drawing on another domain – in this case, the connotations of a childlike, innocent world created by the *Trumpton*-style figures – to paint a different dimension for the song, Hopewell can establish a completely new framing of the song, but he might also have to accept the generic conventions associated with the form he is bringing in. It's kids TV and in kids TV, characters are not burned alive by occultist pagans. If they were, the *Night Garden* would be an abattoir for Tombliboos and Pontipines, and *Waffle the Wonder Dog* would be euthanised for maiming a child. Therefore, the happy ending – the escape from the burning wicker man – might be a nod to the structural expectations of the genre Hopewell is getting intertextual with.

What's interesting about the videos is that while both have intertextuality at their core and a similar set of reference points to draw on, the effect is very different. 'Dream' offers a subversive, playful take that pokes gentle fun at a stereotype of traditional British culture, while 'Burn the Witch' uses the same palette to paint a dark and disturbing picture of the underbelly of the same world.

Dan Clayton is an education consultant at the English and Media centre and associate editor of *MediaMagazine.*

THE POWER OF NATURE

Setting the scene in The Wind

Anna Cale unlocks the mysteries of one of silent cinema's greatest achievements, Victor Sjöström's 1928 film, *The Wind*, currently a set text for OCR Film Studies A Level.

Do you ever feel like you're caught up in a seemingly endless struggle against adversity? Are you strong enough to fight back? This is the central theme of *The Wind* (1928) directed by Victor Sjöström, which stars silent-cinema screen goddess Lillian Gish as a young woman pushed to her limits by the unending harshness of the prevailing, remorseless winds in the inhospitable American desert that has become her home. It's a triumph of endlessly building tension and sensitive melodrama, driven by an exemplary central performance by Gish.

Gish plays Letty Mason, a smart Southern belle who leaves her comfortable existence in Virginia to start a new life in Texas, the harsh life of the pioneers now her destiny. Even from the start of the film we feel the winds of change blowing through as she travels towards an unknown new life.

She is to stay with her rough and ready cousin and his family, but as an unmarried woman, they see her as a sexual threat. Not feeling entirely welcome, she quickly marries a local man, an unfulfilling and dismal outcome as she is forced to choose between two equally unattractive cowpoke suitors. But she also falls for a handsome and sophisticated stranger, and things take a further turn for the worse for Letty. He rapes her and she accidentally kills him. Consumed by guilt, she buries him, only to find that the never-ending wind erodes the grave to expose the hand of her victim for all to see. The constant wind becomes her enemy as she tries to find a solution to her terrible situation, but she fights back valiantly against it.

There are a number of key themes in the film dramatised through its mise-en-scène. The power of nature, survival and the battle against adversity through the actions of Gish's character Letty and her determination to fight against the effects of the wind in revealing her secret. These themes are demonstrated visually through the use of setting, props and acting.

Setting and Environment

The Wind is realistic but also bold in its depiction of the harshness of living in the American desert. The power of nature and the elements, represented by the prevailing powerful wind that blows throughout, is a key theme of the film.

The film clearly demonstrates this theme from the outset, using title cards to warn of the dangers of man's attempts to control nature and harness the earth. The film presents us with an environment that cannot ultimately be controlled. 'Man, puny but irresistible, encroaching forever on Nature's Fortresses', announces a title card as we see the character of Letty pass through the desert landscape, the wind blowing remorselessly around her. The scene confirms the feeling of man's ultimate inferiority and sets the tone very clearly for the viewer through the visualisation of the elements at work. The wind is perhaps a metaphor for nature's determined struggle to fight back.

The Wind uses location shooting in the desert, and evokes the atmosphere of a Western in its use of the open landscape. Most of the exteriors were shot in the Mohave Desert, where temperatures soared to 120°F during filming. This created very difficult working conditions for the cast and crew during the production.

The film's dominant visual theme and recurring visual motifs are dramatised by the power and effect of the strong winds and the images of sand shifting and moving. In 1928, no special effects existed to create a realistic representation of the effects of the wind and the sense of physical movement. Instead, aeroplane propellers were brought in to whip up the sand and create a tangible sense of the wind. The actors worked within those conditions and very much lived the experience of the environment the director sought to create for the film.

Although it is a silent film, there is a powerful sense of sound created by the visual representation of the wind and its constant presence. Everything the characters do is affected by it; it dominates every scene, enveloping the viewer as if we too are experiencing its effects.

The use of moving sand in the film to transform, submerge and then reveal things also adds to the sense of movement and the passage of time in the film, and the harshness of the environment; Letty even uses sand to wash dishes. This also contributes to the slightly fevered dream-state the film evokes as sand is whipped away by the wind, never standing still.

Costumes and Props

Domestic scenes in the film are used to illustrate gender stereotypes and roles, through Letty's interactions with the family and her potential suitors, the handsome stranger and her husband. There are a number of expectations placed on her throughout the film to conform and change. Several of these are demonstrated through the actions and reactions of the actors, but they are also suggested through the interior settings, the use of clothing and props and domestic representation.

Letty's pretty, sophisticated clothes in which she arrives give way to practical local dressing as she becomes part of the scenery, forced to conform to her fate. There is a wonderful contrast between her delicate beauty and the crudeness of her new family enacted in their dress and behaviour.

The director Sjöström uses simple iconography to convey complex messages in the film. When Letty is told she must marry, the director cuts straight to a wedding scene symbolised by a close-up shot of three sets of hands, and a handful of props to convey the situation: a ring, an open book and the wedding celebrant's gun belt. This is quickly followed by a shot of a very basic house interior, containing unwashed dishes and clutter, to highlight the life of domestic toil and drudgery that now awaits Letty. Sjöström also uses the dissolve technique between scenes to convey the passing of time.

Lillian Gish in the 1928 silent film *The Wind*

Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

> Although it is a silent film, there is a powerful sense of sound created by the visual representation of the wind and its constant presence. Everything the characters do is affected by it; it dominates every scene, enveloping the viewer as if we too are experiencing its effects.

You can run but you can't hide - the prevailing power of *The Wind*

> Letty displays unenviable stoicism as she relentlessly battles against the wind which wants to destroy everything. Gish allows us to understand the mental anguish of her character through a mostly nuanced and delicately balanced performance.

TCD/Prod.DB / Alamy Stock Photo

Acting and Performance

There is an overt physicality in the performance of Gish, which occasionally seems over the top and theatrical, compared inevitably with the more subtle realist performances we are familiar with today. She uses her bodily movement and facial expressions to convey the harshness and difficulty of her predicament. The director gives her space and time to build the character. Letty displays unenviable stoicism as she relentlessly battles against the wind which wants to destroy everything. Gish allows us to understand the mental anguish of her character through a mostly nuanced and delicately balanced performance. We feel her sense of isolation, and her endless struggle against her surroundings throughout.

Most of the film is occupied with the shifting physical experiences and mental state of Letty. We experience the extreme environment through her shocked response to the constant effects of the wind. The use of cinematic effects creates a sense of delirium, visual images which impact viscerally on the viewers' own experiences. When Letty hallucinates in terror at the sight of the partially buried body of her attacker being revealed by the shifting sands, a white stallion appears in the dust storm as an omen of doom. It's an extraordinary image to end the film.

Conclusion

The Wind is a melodramatic film, which exploits extreme emotions and the setting of an impossible, harsh environment and the untameable power of nature to create a heightened sense of jeopardy. But it's a silent classic, in which Gish showcases arguably one of the greatest silent performances by an outstanding actor at the height of her career. The film is much admired and has been restored in recent years by director and film historian Kevin Brownlow with a new score by Carl Davis. The film, made in 1928, sits on the cusp of a new era in cinema. One of the most creative and masterful examples of silent cinema as a form, it presaged the end of the silent age, then at the very peak of its artistic power, and looked ahead to the sound revolution. Its compelling storytelling, composition and artistic merit mean it still powerfully resonates over 90 years later.

Anna Cale is a freelance entertainment writer and blogs about films at restispropaganda.wordpress.com

THE FARMER WANTS A WIFE

SEXISM AND THE SOAP OPERA

The Archers has a place in radio history but is it short-changing its predominantly female audience with its representation of women's lives? Caroline Birks pulls on her green wellies and sets off to Ambridge to find out more.

GENDER, SEX AND GOSSIP IN AMBRIDGE:
Women in The Archers

CARA COURAGE
NICOLA HEADLAM
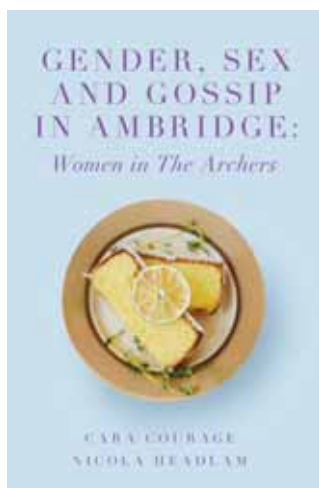
You may think that *The Archers* isn't the kind of soap that is associated with controversy. Billed as 'an everyday story of country folk,' the show has sometimes been regarded as 'cosy' and 'background noise'. But in April 2019, the soap hit the headlines because of new research which found *The Archers* to be thoroughly sexist. *The Daily Mail* took a particularly sensational viewpoint when reporting the publication of the study, breathlessly exclaiming 'Academics slam *The Archers* as more sexist than *James Bond*' in their headline. In fact, while the study found that much of *The Archers*' dialogue failed in terms of gender equality, the academics behind the study, Cara Courage and Nicola Headlam, are both huge fans of the show describing it as 'an addiction', listening to the nightly episodes as well as the Sunday omnibus. They write about the show with huge fondness and take part in the Sunday tweet-along but also recognise its shortcomings,

describing a 'love/hate relationship' with the long-running programme.

The popularity of *The Archers* is undeniable: it is the world's longest running soap opera; it has been named Britain's fifth most popular radio programme and regularly attracts 5 million devoted listeners. So, what is it about this supposedly sexist soap that continues to attract its audience (58% of them women, according to RAJAR figures in 2008) and are there any positives to be found in the ways that women are represented?

The first episode of *The Archers* aired in 1950 and aimed to deliver educational information about farming to listeners. Women were often positioned in the background, playing a supporting role to the hard-working, male farmers, cooking their meals and raising their children. It wasn't until 1975 that the show had any female writers and with their arrival, the female characters became more rounded, having careers of their own. Today, characters such as Ruth and Pip Archer are both farmers, whilst Helen, Fallon

The popularity of *The Archers* is undeniable: it is the world's longest running soap opera; it has been named Britain's fifth most popular radio programme and regularly attracts 5 million devoted listeners.

and Natasha are all entrepreneurs with successful businesses. However, listeners have questioned why women in Ambridge only 'aspire to careers… in farming or retail' and this is illustrated by Phoebe Tucker's recent return to Ambridge. After completing her degree at Oxford she has returned to the village and is now working on an eco-friendly project to 're-wild' some of the village's farming land.

Criticism from listeners about the roles of women in the show is what prompted research by Cara Courage and Nicola Headlam and led to the publication of *Gender, Sex and Gossip in Ambridge* (Emerald Publishing 2019). The research uses the Bechdel-Wallace test to investigate the representation of gender in the soap by applying several rules: 1. A text must have two women in it and the women must be named. 2. The women must talk to each other. 3. They must talk about something other than a man. The researchers had to make some adjustments to the test which they describe as a rather 'blunt instrument',

but found that over 5 months, 'women's conversations about something other than a man constituted less than 40% of the total airtime' and that 'one-third of the 128 episodes studied…did not contain any conversations between women at all.' They concluded that 'the women of Ambridge are not accurately represented by the frequency or the subject matter of their conversations'

So, are women in *The Archers* stereotypically represented? Let's look at some of the key roles women have in *The Archers*. 'Matriarchs' such as Peggy Woolley and Jill Archer are the heads of important families within the village. They have out-lived their husbands and now impact on family and village life through their wisdom and financial security. Peggy for example, has recently launched the Ambridge Conservation Trust, a competition in which the best environmental scheme won £500,000 – money that was due to be inherited by her family. The concept, which was Peggy's attempt to leave a legacy, saw families bidding against each other, causing arguments

and unhappiness in the process. While the matriarch is often a positive representation, revealing women to be strong and capable, characters like Peggy and Jill have been criticised by Nicola Headlam as manipulative, using their financial security as a way to control their children's lives. This was demonstrated when Jill paid off Kenton's debts in order to stop a family feud or when Peggy gave money to Helen Archer following her marriage to Rob Titchener – a relationship which ended in disaster

Despite this criticism, the presence of older female characters can be seen as a positive thing. In a modern media world, it is rare for an older woman to find a voice on television or radio but June Spencer (Peggy) turned 100 in June 2019 and is still an active member of *The Archers* cast. The fact that she is at the centre of significant storylines, or is regularly heard in scenes with the younger members of Ambridge, suggests that these characters have relevant opinions and ideas. Their wealth and capability are unusual when we consider the stereotypical representation of age which usually presents a picture of the elderly as weak, infirm and vulnerable.

Another stereotypical role that we find in most soap operas is 'the gossip'. The role of the gossip in the radio soap is particularly important because the listeners rely on these characters to keep them up to date with events in a village that they cannot see. With a limited number of cast members available to appear in each episode, gossip keeps things interesting and informs us of what is going on. We also wouldn't get to know any of the silent characters without gossip – characters such as Molly Button, Richard Thwaite or Terry Two Phones wouldn't exist. In *The Archers*, Susan is the chief gossip and defends her position by saying 'in years gone by I might have been one of the Brontë sisters or even Charles Dickens'.

Susan is a divisive character, one that many listeners dislike. Her voice is described as 'whiney and insistently grating' and her strong rural accent reveals her humble beginnings. Susan manipulates her voice to gain

information from the other villagers, an essential quality of the village gossip. Her roles at the dairy and as manager of the village shop mean that she is able to move around the village, collecting and passing on information as she goes. She is sometimes disliked and feared by others but her gossip affords her a great deal of power. She uses her knowledge to climb the social ladder – something she is desperate to do, despite her shame at having spent some time in prison. Susan can also provide comic relief and at times her gossip and comedy are combined, for example when she stole Constanza the Llama at Fallon's hen night and then spent several episodes feeling incredibly guilty about it.

In fact, Susan is actually similar to other characters such as Linda, Tracy and Clarrie in their enjoyment of gossip. Clarrie, for example, is featured in many scenes with Susan but is more sympathetic and caring towards those around her. It is claimed that Clarrie and Susan perform the role of 'Greek chorus' commenting on the events happening in the village. All three of these characters also fulfil other soap opera stereotypes: Linda (the busybody), Tracy (the loud-mouth), Clarrie (the long-suffering wife). So, despite the important role of delivering news and updating stories through gossip, these female characters are reduced to the narrow, familiar, representations we find in all soaps.

But it could be argued that *The Archers* is trying to move beyond restrictive gender stereotypes. Recent storylines to do with mental health issues have affected both Elizabeth Pargetter and Will Grundy, while Shula Hebden Lloyd wants to become ordained as a vicar, a traditionally male role. Victims of abuse are not just vulnerable women and we now have a woman as vice-captain of the Ambridge cricket team. So, perhaps *The Archers* is slowly changing to represent gender in a more balanced way; but it has a very long way to go. Cara Courage suggests that although the women in Ambridge are not represented in an up-to-date, recognisable way, it does deal with recognisable emotions, whilst Zoe Williams in *The Guardian* says 'If *The Archers* were to expunge all sexist tropes…they would end up with no women at all'.

Caroline Birks is a Film and Media Studies teacher in Cambridge.

L-R: Jane Garvey, presenter of BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*, Cara Courage author of *Gender, Sex and Gossip in Ambridge* and John Rowe who plays Jim Lloyd in *The Archers*

Roger Green Flickr

In a modern media world, it is rare for an older woman to find a voice on television or radio but June Spencer (Peggy) turned 100 in June 2019 and is still an active member of *The Archers* cast.

📚 *from the MM vaults*

Generation Ambridge – Caroline Birks, MM57

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MOORE'S THE POINT

The moment of doom: the 2016 Presidential Election result is projected on the Empire State Building in New York

Never one to shy away from appearing partisan, documentary filmmaker Michael Moore has criticised American government, military, healthcare and gun laws through his work. In his 2018 agitprop film, *Fahrenheit 11/9*, he takes an unapologetic stab at American democracy. Mark Ramey looks at how this film is characteristic of Moore's documentary style.

Michael Moore's work is an urgent appeal to make the world a better place so in this current climate of environmental and political turmoil it seems apt that his unique agitprop approach to film documentary is something A level Film Studies students are being encouraged to study. Moore isn't a conventional academic theorist but rather an auteur of documentaries with a unified aesthetic: he writes, directs, produces, presents and narrates his work which has, over numerous documentary features, shown a signature style and common thematic approach.

Moore is arguably the world's most successful and recognisable documentary filmmaker. His latest feature-length documentary *Fahrenheit 11/9* (2018, available on Netflix) based on Trump's 2016 presidential campaign and subsequent election, perfectly illustrates his guiding aesthetic, not least in the opening sequence.

But before we look at it more closely, answer this question: 'What's the best way to start a documentary charting Trump's journey from TV star to White House supremo?' As a documentary filmmaker (or any filmmaker) one would have to decide how to frame or present the information and, in the

case of Moore, it's always political.

Moore's film begins with his characteristic mid-western voice narrating over a news archive montage from the infamous election night of 2016. Hilary Clinton's Democratic camp is triumphant, confident of victory, whilst Trump's Republican team are glum, resigned to defeat. Then the results start to roll in and the mood in both camps starts to shift until the unimaginable occurs: Trump is declared 45th President of the USA.

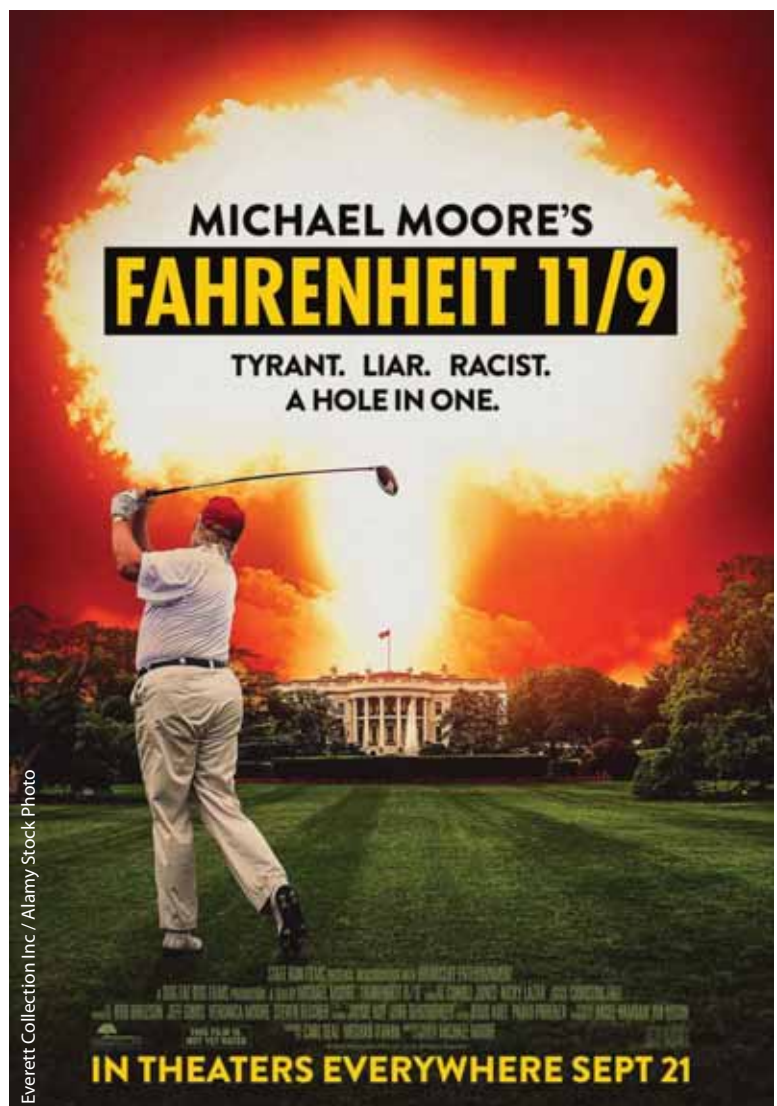As this opening montage ends we cut to an aerial extreme long shot of the Empire State building at night. Moore's voiceover leaves us in no

Election night despair in the Clinton camp

Moore is very clear on his perspective: the American dream has become an American nightmare thanks to capitalism and the tyranny of men like Trump who are sinners not saints.

doubt of his political stance: 'At 2.29 a.m. on 11/09/2016 our new leader's image was projected onto the Empire State Building.' Cue an ominous and overpowering low angle shot of the image. 'How the fuck did this happen?'

Would you have started your Trump doc like this? Would you have represented the USA as a unified nation wedded to democracy and equality? Or would you have shown the USA as a broken nation, corrupt and elitist. Moore is very clear on his perspective: the American dream has become an American nightmare thanks to capitalism and the tyranny of men like Trump who are sinners not saints.

MICHAEL MOORE'S
FAHRENHEIT 11/9
TYRANT. LIAR. RACIST.
A HOLE IN ONE.

IN THEATERS EVERYWHERE SEPT 21

Moore's Ideology

Democracy is not a spectator sport, it's a participatory event. If we don't participate in it, it ceases to be a democracy. (Moore, 2009)

Michael Moore rose to prominence in the 1990s, after a career in journalism, with the satirical USA TV shows *TV Nation* and *The Awful Truth*. In 2003 he cemented mainstream success with an Oscar for *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) and a year later a Palme D'Or for *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) which is currently the most financially profitable documentary film at the worldwide box office. What all these texts have in common is a comic approach to USA focussed social issues that, in Moore's view, need urgent attention. His work is never academic or highbrow, it is always witty and engaging. For example, his documentaries can feature harrowing archive material edited to up-beat populist songs. He is also adept at staging darkly comic stunts at the expense of authority figures and conducting authentic single camera, on location, interviews. This aesthetic has made his work very accessible: the source of both his popular acclaim and demonisation.

Throughout his media career Moore has consistently and pointedly banged a left-wing drum. His angle is broadly socialist, anti-establishment and his focus is contemporary America. He opposes big business and unrestricted capitalism (*Capitalism: A Love Story,* 2009 and *Roger and Me*, 1989). He doesn't support aggressive American foreign policy (*Where to Invade Next?*, 2015). He champions democracy and the liberal dream of equality for all, and he opposes those seeking to create powerful cliques for profit and self-aggrandisement (*Fahrenheit 9/11;*

Fahrenheit 11/9). He wants to quell USA gun ownership to avoid mass shootings (*Bowling for Columbine*) and he wants the USA health-care system to help the poorest not just those who can afford it (*Sicko*, 2007). Where you sit on the political spectrum – right or left, pro or anti Trump – will affect how you react to Moore's work, whether you accept or reject his ideology.

Moore always expresses his opinions plainly and boldly: he is a left-wing propagandist; a self-styled 'man of the people'. His 'everyman' branding is evidenced by his iconic baseball cap which signifies both his plain-talking, down-to-earth style and his patriotism. However, this characterisation does not win over everyone, especially those who disagree with his politics. He is demonised by Republicans who trivialise his arguments by pointing out his weight and his wealth (he is a self-made millionaire). An example of this personal and abusive approach is the 2004 book written by David T. Hardy and Jason Clarke unsubtly titled,

Michael Moore is a Big Fat Stupid White Man (a play on the title of Moore's 2001 best seller *Stupid White Men*).

Documentary Style

Moore's aesthetic is largely inspired by observational documentary filmmaking that originated in the 1960s. Moore also participates in his films and interviews people on their own turf using a single camera. He avoids self-reflexivity (characteristic of Nick Broomfield and Louis Theroux) so we rarely see the film crew trailing him or hear him reflecting on what is being captured; the form of documentary interests him only insofar as it helps spread his message. His voiceover guides the spectator and is used to introduce his topics in an expositional manner. He also uses lots of archive footage steering clear of classical documentary filmmaking by eschewing a neutral pose and allowing humour and satire to guide his off-screen voice and on-screen persona. A good

The 'everyman' image of Michael Moore

example of this in *Fahrenheit 11/9* would be his reference to presidents Bush and Trump as 'idiots' and the numerous heartfelt interviews with survivors of the Flint water crisis – the responsibility for which he places solely at the doors of the White House.

Satire

A lot of political people, especially people on the left, have forgotten the importance of humour as an incredible weapon, and a vehicle through which to effect change. (Moore, 2013)

However, it is in Moore's use of editing that his humour finds its satirical bite. He is a master of montage, fully aware of the power of the edit to present his truth. Critics attack Moore for this subjective sleight of hand but montage, even back in the days of Vertov in the 1920s, was always an effective manipulator of objectivity. In *Fahrenheit 11/9* Moore uses a number of montages to music and voiceover: one such montage presents the case that the USA media who so loved the comic circus that was Trump's election campaign because it generated high ratings, helped legitimise his clownish aggression and inept gaffes. Thus politics became a spectacle rather than a debate.

Thematically, Moore's documentaries are about contemporary America: his patriotism is what drives his filmmaking. He wants America to be a better place and he feels the Democratic liberal cause has been crushed by unregulated capitalism and political corruption. *Fahrenheit 11/9* fits this template exactly. Trump is presented unapologetically throughout as a narcissistic monster, a sexual predator and a liar. The montage of TV interviews where Trump awkwardly

> Montage, even back in the days of Vertov in the 1920s, was always an effective manipulator of objectivity. In *Fahrenheit 11/9* Moore uses a number of montages to music and voiceover

and creepily talks about his daughter is given a paedophilic and incestuous twist in Moore's barbed critique. But Moore doesn't stop there. In one of the final sequences of the film he shows archive footage of Hitler delivering a speech at a rally and dubs Trump's voice onto the images. Manipulative editing to the fore again, but no less brilliant satire: Trump may be a fool, Moore is arguing, but he is as dangerous to the free world as Hitler.

Moore makes us laugh by making fun of the rich and powerful. As a successful filmmaker he knows he has to engage and retain his audience, but his reasons are fundamentally political: the system is broken and if we don't fix it we are in big trouble. Moore is not a passive defeatist: he's an activist. *Fahrenheit 11/9* ends with an inspiring speech by a teenage survivor of a school shooting in the USA. Moore finds hope in the young. It is their activism, *your* activism, which could change the world. Participate and protest, Moore argues, or perish.
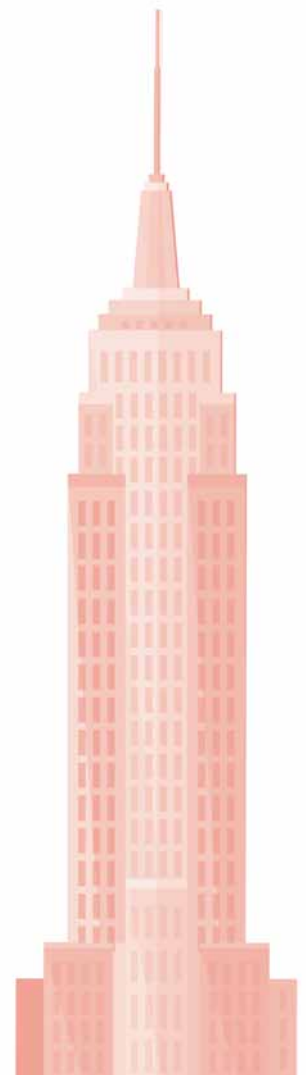
Mark Ramey is Head of Film Studies at Collyers College, Horsham.

📁 *from the MM vaults*

Agent of Change: The Documentaries of Michael Moore – Pete Turner, MM35

FISH TANK

POWER AND PATRIARCHY

The teenage coming-of-age-story was historically all about the boys but British director Andrea Arnold's female-centred work, takes a sensitive look at complex characters suspended between girlhood and adulthood. Claire Pollard explains how this theme is portrayed in Arnold's 2009 feature, *Fish Tank*.

Director Andrea Arnold has made several award-winning shorts and three feature films here in the UK. But her most recent film, the outstanding road movie *American Honey* (2016), took her British social realist aesthetic to middle America where she has recently been directing on several big budget American TV dramas such as *Transparent*, *I Love Dick* and *Big Little Lies*. Despite this transatlantic shift Arnold's work is still recognisably hers and there are many parallels between *American Honey* and her best-known Bafta-winning British movie *Fish Tank* (2009).

She honed her craft in the UK, making films about the experiences of young working-class women and she is, to my mind, our most important (and most under-rated) filmmaker. Wikipedia will tell you her films deal with themes of class and poverty, and while this is certainly

true, I would argue that at the heart of her work are female characters struggling in a patriarchal society to find spaces where they can practise and exercise power.

As such, Arnold's films are a good starting point for film and media students exploring intersectional feminism: the idea that sexism and patriarchy are experienced differently in diverse parts of society. Oppression is something all women have to contend with but factors such as class, poverty, ethnicity, religion, cultural context, age and sexuality can dramatically affect the extent to which a woman experiences sexism. An underpaid, overlooked female producer at the BBC is undoubtedly a victim of the patriarchy but has to admit some inherent privilege – her experience cannot be compared to that of a teenager, living in poverty, with a difficult or loveless home life and little hope of escape. The latter are the women that Arnold is concerned with.

Katy Jarvis as Mia, the Essex teenager longing for escape

> Arnold's films are a good starting point for film and media students exploring intersectional feminism: the idea that sexism and patriarchy are experienced differently in diverse parts of society

The Fish Tank

The title of the film is a metaphor for how the three women, Mia Williams, her sister Tyler and their mum, Joanne, are trapped inside their flat. They are all stuck, looking out – Mia and Joanne repeatedly through windows, Tyler through the television and lifestyle shows she consumes. Although Joanne is an unpleasant character, one can't help but feel for her: she has had adult responsibility forced on her at an age where she was unable to cope. For Joanne, anger, frustration and resentment have set in early in motherhood and now the whole family's sole method of communication is curses and insults. When Tyler and Mia say goodbye at the end they exchange declarations of hate rather than love, despite both being extremely sad to part.

Almost all Arnold's work uses images of the natural world to reflect her characters. In *Fish Tank* there are repeated symbolic images of caged animals: we see a hamster with his little feet on the window of his cage; a horse chained to a block of concrete under the A13; an ornamental butterfly on Joanne's dressing table, wound and draped with beads and chains; and of course poor Tennents, their dog, who never gets a walk. Arnold draws a direct line between her characters and these creatures who should be running wild and free.

The mise-en-scène enhances this sense of these women being trapped, both geographically – we hardly see Tyler or Joanne off the estate – but also developmentally: they're all suspended somewhere between girlhood and adulthood despite their different ages. Tyler, probably only in year 6 or 7, is fully made up, swigging from a cider can with her mate or sunbathing in a bikini on the lawn

Joanne's room reflects her mental state: trapped somwhere between girlhood and adulthood.

> As the film ends, Mia is no longer just gazing out at the horizon but driving towards it, unlikely to return.
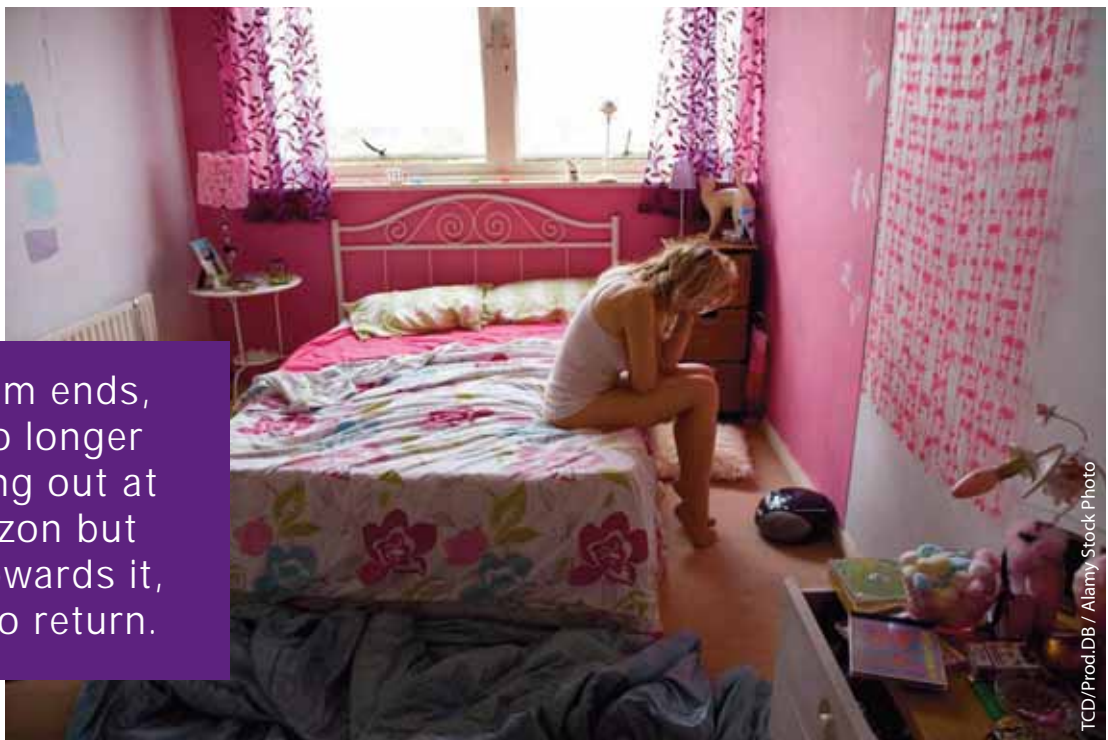
TCD/Prod.DB / Alamy Stock Photo

outside the flats. She's learning a version of feminine adulthood similar to her mum's: angry, sexualised and glamorous. She's also perfecting the language used by women to bolster their self-esteem by putting others down – the women getting make-overs are 'butters', a girl in a reality TV show is 'making a fool of herself' and her mum and her friends are 'skanks' and 'tramps'.

Joanne's bedroom is that of a teenage girl: pink walls, a pink beaded curtain, ceramic painted face-masks and a cat bedside lamp, with a cow-print toadstool at her dresser and pink heart-shaped cushions on the bed. On the living room wall is a frieze of a tropical beach. With its palm tree and sunset, it symbolises the romantic escape she has longed for since she was a girl but will never have. She is acutely aware of her older daughter's burgeoning womanhood: she tells Mia to 'get some clothes on' when Joanne's boyfriend Connor is in the house. Joanne feels threatened by Mia's relationship with him – whenever she sees them bonding she belittles her daughter. When he lends Mia a camera, Joanne says, 'Don't lend it to her, she'll break it' and when her daughter braves the water to help him fish, her response is: 'Oh trust bloody Mia'. Like Snow White's evil step-mother, Joanne is terrified of no longer being the fairest of them all.

Mia is the most outward looking, literally in terms of spending time looking out of the fish bowl of the flats, but also in the way she pings around the estate and the Essex locale, a tightly wound ball of energy and frustration. She's driven by passion, curiosity and instinct. It's no surprise then that the happy end to her story isn't getting an audition at a sleazy nightclub, liberating a horse or winning the older man (who is clearly struggling to deal with his own adult status of parent, husband, breadwinner etc.), but getting out. Mia is no longer just gazing out at the horizon but driving towards it, unlikely to return.

Women with Purpose

All Arnold's female leads are women and girls who are constrained or held back by the facts of their lives but who exercise agency and control wherever they can. Jackie in *Red Road* (2006) becomes obsessed with the man who has destroyed her whole world. Star, the young protagonist of *American Honey*, is used to being abused and controlled, rather than looked after. These women, like Mia, move purposefully and instinctively; their actions are not always well thought-through and they put themselves in situations where they are vulnerable. In *Fish Tank* we have moments of fearing for Mia's safety but Arnold's women are brave and resourceful, and as adept at getting themselves out of trouble as they are at putting themselves in harm's way; and they grow from these experiences. It's what makes Arnold's characters so inspiring and her narratives ultimately uplifting.

Sex and Power

The film begins with Mia looking for Keeley, a friend to whom she wants to apologise. When she can't find her, she gets angry, calls Keeley's dad a 'c**t' and then headbutts another girl. As we've established, words of kindness and conciliation don't come easily to the Williams family. As Mia watches Keeley gyrating in a crop top with a group of lads looking on, you get a sense that dance has been an important part of their friendship, except for Mia dance is mostly private, spiritual almost, and never sexual. For Keeley it's a weapon, a tool for getting guys and for establishing her status among the other girls (possibly this is the reason for their rift in the first place). *Fish Tank* deals with Mia's naivety about sex: the women and girls around her know that sex can mean power and the film shows Mia coming to that realisation, a little later than everyone else. When she walks out of the night club audition, she is making a decision not to deal in that obvious

sort of power-play, she wants something more meaningful.

The narrative of females using sex to get what they want is not new, but through Arnold's lens we are never encouraged to judge. The girls within the film do a lot of judging and 'slut-shaming' which prevents them from ever supporting each other. It is almost the saddest thing about this film and a comment on how hard it can be for some women to succeed. The patriarchy benefits from a 'divide and rule' approach: you can't take it on if you're not united.

Mia is at an age where she is trying to work out what her sexuality means, what she is and isn't comfortable with, what she wants to give, or not, to the men around her. Although the sex scene with Connor is uncomfortable for the viewer – not only illegal but a gross misuse of the power he has

established over all three women – Mia has power in this situation too. She has power over him and his desires which he can't seem to control, but also over her mum, Joanne. This is the final two fingers up to the woman who has failed her. At the film's end there's a sense that things have shifted between Mia and Joanne. Mia looks on, as Joanne suddenly seeming older and a bit sad, dances in the fish tank to Nas. They don't hug but they do dance, a mirror image of each other, Tyler clinging to Mia's waist as Joanne adopts the moves of her daughter, seeking to understand her only now as they part.

Claire Pollard is the editor of *MediaMagazine*.

BRITISH FEMINIST FILMS TO LOOK OUT FOR

There are some brilliant films about girls by women directors in 2020. Try and catch one if you can.

Rocks

Rocks is the latest film from established feature director Sarah Gavron (*Brick Lane*, 2007 and *Suffragette*, 2015). 'Rocks' is a Hackney teenager who's left as sole guardian of her 5-year-old brother. Struggling to maintain normality and dodge social services, she relies on the support of her friends. Gavron spent a lot of time working with the actors who star in this film to perfectly capture the language and vibe of a mixed friendship group in one of London's most diverse boroughs. It's tense, moving and inspiring to see these outspoken, opinionated and kind young women looking after each other and their families. It's unmissable. Due for release on 24th April 2020.

Make Up

Make Up is the debut feature from director Claire Oakley. 19-year-old Ruth is staying with her boyfriend in an out-of-season holiday park. Convinced he is cheating, she begins to look for proof but ends up discovering more than she bargained for. It got brilliant reviews at the London Film Festival so should be released later this year.

How to Build a Girl

Coky Giedroyc (yep, sister of Mel) directs the fabulous Beanie Feldstein (*Booksmart*, 2019 and *Lady Bird*, 2017) in *How to Build a Girl*, based on the memoir of feminist journalist Caitlin Moran who grew up in a family of nine in a small house in Wolverhampton. The film premiered at the Toronto Film Festival in September so watch out for a release date in late 2020.

from the MM vaults

Female Film Directors: Red Road – Vanessa Raison, MM20

Andrea Arnold's films repeatedly use images of animals and creatures to symbolise key themes

ALL YOUR MEMES ARE BELONG TO US?

ARTICLE 13
AND DIGITAL COPYRIGHT IN THE ONLINE ERA

Who owns what's available on the internet and who is responsible for material that belongs to someone else? Sophie Muir offers a personal take on what Article 13 might mean and why she sees it as a threat to internet freedom.

> Up until now, if your copyrighted work was being used without your permission, it was your responsibility as the rights holder to apply to have it removed. Article 13 shifts this responsibility onto the owners of the platforms to take action.
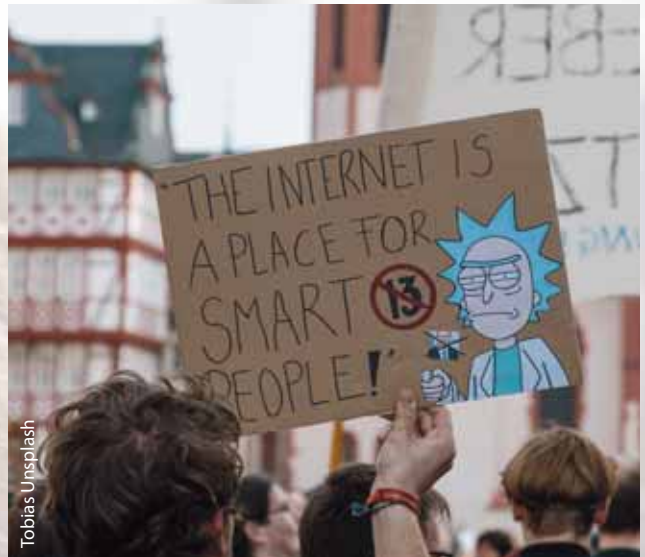
I f you use the internet at all (and who doesn't?) then you have probably seen talk of Article 13 floating around, often followed by hashtags such as #saveyourinternet and grave warnings about our internet freedom being threatened. But what is the truth behind the legislation that's become known as Article 13 and what might it mean for us?

Article 13 is itself one of many articles which make up *The European Union Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market*. Article 13 is possibly the most controversial part of the directive which is why the debate about the directive falls under the commonly used name of 'Article 13'. The directive isn't at all new – there has been discussion about copyright issues in the digital age for many years now – but it has just been amended, and it is these amendments such as Article 13 which have caused recent controversy and worry amongst some creators, audiences and the people and companies behind the biggest platforms.

You might be thinking that this will not affect you or the way we use our internet but it will: particularly now that the directive has in fact been passed by the European Council. This is why it is important to understand the consequences of the amendment to the directive. The main opposition to it has come from tech giants such as Google because ultimately, the directive will shift responsibility for copyright enforcement onto websites rather than the rights holders. Up until now, if your copyrighted work was being used without your permission, it was your responsibility as the rights holder to apply to have it removed. Article 13 shifts this responsibility onto the owners of the platforms to take action.

So what are the implications? One interpretation of Article 13 is that EU internet users will have large amounts of content blocked from them, because, for the tech giants, simply blocking all content which

might violate copyright is safer than taking the risk. This could affect the way we use media – especially social media – if the directive is strictly adhered to. As part of its campaign against Article 13, Google produced images of what our news feeds might look like in the future once the directive is implemented. Shockingly, the images they produced were simply blank news feeds with no images and limited text. Google are highlighting a key consequence of the directive which many other opponents are also pointing toward: censorship.

The best way to understand the implications of Article 13 – which is arguably the most detrimental of the 17 articles which make up the directive – is to look at what might happen to YouTube now that the directive has been passed. YouTube has argued that, due to the wording of Article 13, they cannot take the financial risk of supporting such a wide variety of content on their platform, especially considering that the amount of content which falls under the limitations of Article 13 could be enormous. Their CEO, Susan Wojcicki has argued that the 'creator economy' is under threat from the directive.

Wojcicki gave the example of the most-viewed music video in YouTube history, 'Despacito' by Luis Fonsi featuring Daddy Yankee (a Justin Bieber remix adding to its views from April 2017 onwards): 'The video contains multiple copyrights, ranging from sound recording to publishing rights. Although YouTube has agreements with multiple entities to license and pay for the video, some of the rights holders remain unknown. That uncertainty means we might have to block videos like this to avoid liability under Article 13. Multiply that with the scale of YouTube where more than 400 hours of footage are uploaded every minute, and the potential liabilities could be so large that no company could take such a financial risk.'

According to Wojcicki, as a result of Article 13, 'EU residents are at risk of being cut off from videos that, in just the last month, they viewed more than 90 billion times'.

One consequence of Article 13 that has worried campaigners is that of the 'meme ban'. Memes are by their very nature, an adaptation of an existing image or idea, and according to Article 13, 'online content sharing service providers and rights holders shall cooperate in good faith in order to ensure that unauthorised protected works or other subject matter are not available on their services'. Does it then follow that platforms would be better off banning the use of memes due to their use of copyrighted content? For me, as a young and frequent social media user, I find it both exceedingly difficult and frightening to even try to imagine an online space which follows the guidelines of the directive.

Beyond the inconvenience of this, it is also important

For me, as a young and frequent social media user, I find it both exceedingly difficult and frightening to even try to imagine an online space which follows the guidelines of the directive.

The influential Silicon Valley group including Google, Facebook, eBay, Amazon and Netflix are very much in opposition to the directive as it could be detrimental to their EU users.

to consider how many people's jobs and livelihoods this could affect. Think about those content producers and personalities who have come to be known as 'YouTubers'. As a result of Article 13, these people may no longer be able to reach out to their audiences, ultimately causing them to lose income streams or even their jobs. One example is Pewdiepie, currently one of YouTube's most popular content creators. The majority of his channel's content is meme-based (i.e his content consists of him imitating and spreading humorous and popular internet content), which means that under Article 13 his channel's content is likely to be blocked from all EU residents.

So, what does this mean for the future of the internet? Many seem to be asking the same thing but at the moment it looks as though there is a large and influential opposition towards the directive despite it being passed. The influential Silicon Valley group including Google, Facebook, eBay, Amazon and Netflix are very much in opposition to the directive as it could be detrimental to their EU users. Further, despite the directive including an exception that explicitly excludes Wikipedia and GitHub from these rules, a large group including Tim Berners-Lee and Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales, signed an open letter arguing against the directive.

On the other side of the two-year argument there have been smaller industry bodies representing content producers who are in favour of the directive for understandable reasons. It is important to consider the reasons it was proposed initially and the positive effects that the directive could bring about. Antonio Tajani, the president of the European Parliament, said that passing the directive would 'put an end to the existing digital Wild West by establishing modern rules'. Furthermore, last year in June there were 84 European music and media organisations that declared their support for the directive which suggests many people are optimistic and in favour of changing the future of internet use in Europe. So, it seems as though the battle is still ongoing and social media platforms are continuing to encourage their users to become informed on the subject matter and stand up for what they feel is right. Equally, this is what I am encouraging my fellow internet users to do too.

Sophie Muir is a budding film and media journalist.

Further Reading

https://www.wired.co.uk/article/what-is-article-13-article-11-european-directive-on-copyright-explained-meme-ban

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-47708144

Mdhamiri Á Nkemi

At the *MediaMagazine* Conference Mdhamiri Á Nkemi spoke to media students about his job and the experience of editing two of the year's most exciting British films, the much talked about *Blue Story* and the critically acclaimed *The Last Tree.* We asked him to explain for our readers what his job entails and what he's up to next.

Public domain

What is your job/ job title?

I'm a film editor, mainly working in the film and television industry.

What does that mean?

My job comes in quite late in the filmmaking process! After the script has been written, and the film has been shot, all that material comes to me in my editing suite. With the help of an assistant, I watch and organise everything that's been filmed, and then put it together to make the film.

This will involve choosing which camera angle works best for the scene, which version of the actors' performance to use, and which moments to keep in (or take out!) in order to tell the story in the best possible way.

Once I have a first edit of the film, the director will come in and I'll work together with them on making sure the edit is communicating their vision, and sometimes this means going back over scenes I've worked on already and reworking them. It takes patience but it's all part of the process!

After the director and I are happy, we will start showing the film to the rest of the team, and at this point we'll begin adding in music, sound effects, and visual effects. This stage is usually the longest, as it's my job to make sure everyone is happy with the direction the film is heading in, but also that the director's vision stays on track.

After my job is done, the film is then handed over to the composer, sound designer and colourist, who are the last stage in the

Nothing can beat the experience of hearing people really react to something you've worked hard on, hearing them laugh, gasp, and cry in the right moments.

Marine Guichard

Mdhamiri at the *MediaMagazine* conference in December

It's my job to make sure everyone is happy with the direction the film is heading in, but also that the director's vision stays on track.

filmmaking process. They work with the director to make the film look and sound great before it's released into the world.

What was your route into the media industry?

I started out reading a lot when I was little, and that eventually led into an interest in making films. At the beginning I was borrowing cameras from friends and bullying/begging my family to act in them, and then eventually I went to college to study a BTEC course in Creative Media Production. During this course I realised that editing was my passion, and so went on to study it further at Ravensbourne University. During the course I worked on a LOT of short films, and made a lot of filmmaking friends who I'm still working with now.

After graduating from Ravensbourne I worked as an assistant editor in an advertising company, where I had the opportunity to see how the professional industry works. I was sitting in rooms with the editors I was working for, seeing how they worked, what kinds of conversations they were having with the directors, how they would fix any challenges that came up. This was invaluable experience for me, and it came in very handy once I was sitting in the editing chair myself.

After being an assistant for adverts I realised that I wanted to move into feature films and television series, so I applied to the National Film and Television School. Over the next two years I learnt a lot about working on these kinds of projects, and again made a lot of contacts that I'm still working with today. Most of the projects I worked on in the year after graduating were with people I'd met during my time at the school.

What's the best thing about the job you do?

The best thing is watching a project I've spent a lot of time on with a live audience. Nothing can beat the experience of hearing people really react to something you've worked hard on, hearing them laugh, gasp, and cry in

the right moments. There's something really magical about knowing those decisions you made in the editing room have directly led to an audience having an enjoyable experience, and hopefully they also leave the cinema thinking about it long after the credits roll.

What's the worst thing about your job?

At times the amount of time it takes! It's different depending on the project, but if a film isn't going as smoothly as it should, or the team involved don't agree on the direction it should go in, it can end up with the editor having to try out a lot of different versions before getting to an edit that everyone is happy with. As I said, it does require a lot of patience and perseverance, but it pays off in the end once you have a finished film after all that hard work.

What advice would you give young people wanting to work in the media industry?

I can only advise based on my experience, but I would say at the start of your career to try to work on as many projects as possible, go out and make films with your friends on the weekends, apply for work experience opportunities etc.. All of these experiences you'll learn from, as well as maximising your chances of meeting the right people who can help you take your career further. A film director I met when I was 17 (still studying my BTEC) is someone I've ended up working with many times since, and we've just made our 2nd feature film together, so it really does work.

What's next for you?

I've just been working on a television series called The Pale Horse, which is an Agatha Christie period murder mystery for BBC One, coming out this year. I'm not sure what my next project will be yet, but I'm hoping for something that pushes my career onwards and upwards!

DASK FILMS PRODUCTION TIPS

As year 12s across the country gear up to plan and shoot their production work, Dask Films offer tips for getting it right in this new regular feature. In this issue, learn about production crew roles and who to choose for them.

When it comes to how big a film crew should be, the answer is 'how long is a piece of string?' I've shot footage where it's just myself and one actor and I've been on at least one film set where I counted one hundred people working on the one production. But if it's your first film as part of your media coursework, chances are you've been put into a small group and you're trying to figure out who should do what when filming. This is a short guide to give you an idea of what some of the essential roles are even for a small crew. Here's an image from the set of our upcoming short film *Reset* to give you an idea of who does what.

Dask Films is a UK-based video production company

1 BOOM OPERATOR/SOUND:

Good sound is crucial on any film. If the sound quality is poor it can obscure the dialogue and it can be physically painful for your audience to sit through. Yes, most cameras will be able to record sound, but you will soon find that the cameras' built-in mics are sorely lacking. That's why it's essential to have someone paying attention to the sound the whole way through. Consistency is key on this job: if the recording level has been a little too quiet for the first half of filming, you may want to stick with it so you can adjust it all to the same settings later on. For this role you ideally want someone tall, with a good ear for detail, good upper body strength (try holding a stick above your head for three minutes and you'll see what I mean) and infinite levels of patience.

2 CLAPPERLOADER:

Arguably one of, if not the most iconic production role, the clapper loader is key to making the post-production run smoothly. The clapperboard serves two functions; firstly at the start of each clip the clapperboard appears to show the scene, shot and take that you're currently on. This means that when you're looking at the clip in editing you can tell exactly which take is which. Secondly, the 'clap' sound as the arm hits the board helps to sync the sound to the video. This job throws a person literally into the middle of the filming process. It works well for someone who is completely new to filmmaking and can learn on the job, someone who can follow instructions precisely and can get in and out of frame very quickly.

5 DIRECTOR:

If you've done all your homework and you're very lucky with the team you have recruited, there should be little else for the director to do on set beyond deciding what's a good take and shouting 'action' and 'cut'. But this is rarely the case on indie or no budget film projects. That's why it's vital the director has a good understanding of every job that's being undertaken in the project. You may find yourself framing the shot, adjusting the lighting or just making sure that everyone is fed and happy. In most film projects, the director is the driving creative force, meaning they are the one who is responsible for making sure the film is finished on time. They are often the writer and producer of the film as well as planning out the day's shooting. This job is ideally suited to a person who can be a bit obsessive, someone who is laser focused on getting the job done whilst at the same time having the people skills to make others feel included and giving them space to make their own creative choices.

4 PRODUCTION ASSISTANT:

Their job is to record on paper every shot. As filming progresses, they keep a 'footage log' that records the shot number, whether it was a good take or a bad take and some notes about why e.g. 'plane coming over'. The production assistant works closely with the clapperloader (or it could even be the same person!) The reason this role is important is that when filming is finished you can hand over the footage log to your editor who can see straight away which takes to use, which will speed up your workflow tremendously. This job works really well for someone who is less interested in the technical stuff, but is very detail-orientated and always on top of things.

3 DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY (DOP):

In layman's terms, this is what we might call 'head camera operator'. This person is responsible for setting up the shot, adjusting the lighting and creating the mise-en-scène that will hopefully show a real flare for cinematography. For this role you want someone with a leaning towards the technical, who knows how to get the best out of whatever camera you're using. Someone with a passion for photography is often a good choice for this. If they can tell a good story with one picture, think how good they'll be with 24 frames per second!