MMedia Magazine

Owen Jones interview

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SURVEILLANCE

MOCKINGJAY
– Ideology and Dystopia

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CLOSE ANALYSIS

MM

EMC
MediaMagazine

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Why not subscribe to our web package which includes a downloadable and printable PDF of the current issue or encourage your students to take out their own £12 subscription?**

As this issue of *MediaMag* goes to the printers, the country has been revving up for the 7th May election, and with any luck most sensible A2 Media students will have been following the press coverage, those contentious TV debates, and the Twitter storms generated by ill-advised MPs, tabloid pundits and online opinion-formers. We'll be revisiting it all in hindsight in our September issue, so there'll be plenty of material for next year's A2 students; but this edition also features the ideas of two people – Owen Jones and Russell Brand – who have approached the political process from very different perspectives, and simple introductions to some key theorists such as Zizek, Gramsci and Althusser. You'll have loads of ammunition here to debate issues about the Media and Democracy, ideology, power, and politics and the media. Do read Lydia Kendall's application of these ideas to the dystopian world of *Mockingjay*, and Sean Richardson's piece on John Carpenter's neglected masterpiece *They Live*.

If you're studying representation and identities, don't miss Kathy Oborne's piece on disability in the media, *MediaMag's* analysis of a VisitEngland commercial, and an introduction to *The Last of Us*, an action-adventure survival horror game which takes an unusual and empowering approach to gender representation. Elsewhere, there are case studies on the sinister implications of surveillance by social media, and the ethics of 3D printers; regulatory issues raised by swearing on TV; and Steph Hendry's essential grounding in the relationship between media industries and their audiences. All useful stuff as you head towards the exams. But don't forget those everyday media stories too – for example, who'd have thought Jeremy Clarkson and his hissy fits could be such a threat to the status of the BBC…

Good luck!

Jenny Grahame

P.S. Huge thanks and congratulations to the many students who have submitted entries for our Production and Writing Competitions! Currently 150 and still rising! We'll be in touch with you all after Easter.

In September's MediaMag

contents

Hidden gems of media history

Most of the Media A Level or Applied specifications you're studying focus on the use of contemporary texts, no more than five years old (with a few exceptions, and a different historical perspective in Film Studies). This keeps your ideas fresh, allows you to apply current debates and theories to new and ground-breaking material, and prevents you (and your teachers) from recycling tired old case studies from the past which have little relevance to today. But there are, of course, times when there's no substitute for a little background research, archive clips or tasters of iconic moments from media breakthroughs of the past.

MediaMag made a random inspection of the BBC archive to see what is on offer. Unsurprisingly, with over four million archived items and a million hours of recording, it's a treasure trove. To name just a few, the *James Bond* archive offers 15 BBC programmes from 1958 to 2008; one of the several *Dr Who* collections includes original documentation, pitches, treatments and previews from 1962, while another covers the handovers between each Doctor and his successor; alphabetical lists of archived programmes, presenters and people are also contextualised by different archivists explaining why some texts survived and others didn't. Even the famous test cards and continuity (the bits between the programmes) are archived.

Amongst a series of collections of archived programmes on BBC4 is its Talk collection, described as 'A collection of BBC programmes where celebrated interviewers try to get behind the public mask of some of the most influential figures of the 20th Century.' Here are interviews with Martin Luther King, Orson Welles, Muhammad Ali, Sir David Attenborough, Jane Fonda, Joan Crawford and Lauren Bacall, as well as some of the greats of British comedy, politics and literature, questioned in the changing broadcast styles of the day by the great and the good – a fascinating glimpse of the ways interviews have been conducted over time, as well as a taste of history.

The World Hobbit Project: update, thanks, and final appeal

In the February issue of *MediaMagazine* I was really grateful to get the chance to tell you about the then-just-launched **World Hobbit Project** – the most ambitious attempt to study film audiences across the world (www.worldhobbitproject.org) and request your involvement in the survey. Thank you to all of you who did respond. This is a quick update, and a repeat of the invitation to any of you who haven't done it yet. To date, we have received an astonishing 32,000 responses across the world, which will give us the largest body of data and materials ever assembled.

This, in the teeth of the fact that the final film of *The Hobbit* turned out to be far from a critical success. Which makes the research potentially all the more valuable. When we close the questionnaire, we will be able to ask: what are the various grounds on which people have criticised, even rejected, the films? What did different kinds of people want but not get from the films? We are therefore really keen to hear the voices of those who don't often get heard in research of this kind, which tends to be dominated by fans and enthusiasts.

If you were disappointed, we want to hear your thoughts. (The very critical Mark Kermode completed our questionnaire, and posted a vlog of himself doing it!) Even if you 'dropped out' before the final film, we still want to hear your views. And if you know any younger people who have seen the films – the ones who again don't get heard much in research of this kind – it will help us enormously if they are interested to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire will remain open until early May.

Thanks – and a repeat of the promise that when we have some results, the most interesting and relevant will be written up for *MediaMagazine*.

Martin Barker, University of Aberystwyth

The Case for Global Film

Another site which can provide you with a wealth of background, incisive reviews and coverage of non-Western film which may not always appear on your radar is Roy Stafford's blog *The Case for Global Film*, available at http://itpworld.wordpress.com

Beautifully clear, well archived, and full of eclectic discussions of 'everything that isn't Hollywood (and a little that is)' this site has been up and running since 2008. It's a mine of interesting debate on cinema old and new from across the world – its most recent posts cover films from Russia, Colombia, Ecuador, Argentina, Spain, the US, and Glasgow. This is a blog with a mission. Its editorial statement claims that

the whole concept of film as an artistic, industrial and cultural phenomenon has developed through a specific history and seen the emergence of a group of widely used assumptions. For instance, Hollywood dominance for long periods has seen other forms of cinema routinely discussed as 'alternative' to the Hollywood mainstream or 'norm'. Associated with this in complicated ways is the emergence of 'World Cinema' as a concept – one that is offensive (or irrelevant) to many practitioners, scholars and audiences. Left out of debate altogether are the popular films in different languages that don't get a release outside their own language groups. We need new terms and new ideas about how all forms of cinema contribute to 'global film culture'. That's what we want to explore.

This is a challenging site, for really serious film students, offering a portal to a whole range of other blogs, journals, resources and industry data. Interestingly, its top posts include several films which are, or have been, WJEC Case Studies for GCE Film Studies, and the site includes links to the blogs for Roy Stafford's widely-regarded *Media Students' Book* (co-authored with Gill Branston) and *The Global Film Book*. If you are interested in looking beyond Hollywood, you'll find its breadth and reach really exciting.

Picturehouse and Cinemania: Screenings & Talks For Under 24's

Want to meet other young film fans and discover great films from around the world? Keen to hear from industry professionals about their work? Fancy curating your own screening in a cinema near you?

Cinemania is a new initiative taking place at 12 cinemas across London to give under 24s the opportunity to engage with film, meet a range of people from the film industry and get involved in programming their own film events as part of our youth ambassador programme. Tickets are just £4 for under 24s, and discounts are available for school groups. The screenings run on a monthly or fortnightly basis at each participating cinema. Just to give you a taster of the type of thing on offer, forthcoming screenings and talks include:

• 22nd April: TWO DAYS, ONE NIGHT + talk on film journalism from the editor of *Little White Lies*

• 23rd April: PAN'S LABYRINTH at Cineworld Feltham

• 27th April: CLASSIFICATION OF HORROR FILMS with The British Board of Film Classification at The Gate, Notting Hill, 4pm

• 14th May: MARIA FULL OF GRACE at Deptford Cinema, 7pm

To find out more about Cinemania, or about getting involved in the youth ambassador programme, email Leah Byrne at **leah.b@picturehouses.co.uk.**

You can also visit www.cinemanialondon.com and follow us on Twitter **@CinemaniaLDN** or on Facebook at **www.facebook.com/ CinemaniaLondon**.

If you're outside London, there's still plenty of stuff going on in Bath, Brighton, Bradford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, and many other cities. Picturehouse have a year round programme of educational screenings and events at their cinemas across the UK. If you want to find out more, email your school address to Lucy Orr (**lucy.o@picturehouses.co.uk**) and she will add you to the appropriate mailing list.

Cinemania is presented by Picturehouse and Film Hub London. Managed by Film London, the Hub is a proud partner of the BFI Film Audience Network, funded by the National Lottery.

The Front Page was compiled by Jenny Grahame.

WHEN HARRY MET
OWEN

A MediaMag interview with Owen Jones

Guardian columnist and left wing activist Owen Jones was definitely one of the standout highlights of the 2014 *MediaMag* conference. Harry Cunningham caught up with him at the end of the day, and asked Owen to explain his passion for politics, why he got involved in the media industry and how he communicates complicated ideas to a mass audience.

For Owen Jones, a columnist for *The Guardian* and a regular on some of the UK's flagship political programmes, including *Question Time* and *Newsnight*, writing is simply a means to an end. It is a tool for campaigning against what he sees as the complicity of the media, politicians, the police and the banking industry in the corruption of our society.

Jones' parents and his grandfather were communists. He tells me:

I became a columnist by accident. I grew up in a family that was always quite angry about the way society was. I guess if I had any kind of teenage rebellion it would be because my parents felt just so defeated by everything in the 80s. They spent much of their life fighting for a different kind of society, and they were defeated in the end. There was a sense of resignation; so that's why I always talk about hope, and hope for me is about how you change society. Tony Benn [the late Labour MP who campaigned for his party to adopt more left leaning ideas in the 1980s] always used to say you get change from 'the burning flame of anger at injustice, and the burning flame of hope at a better world' and I believe in that because my parents were so passionate. My parents took me to demos. I was taken to the poll tax demo at Glasgow in 1990 and that was a big taste for the first time of the power of political protest. I started to chant but I didn't know what it was, but that's still my proudest political moment. I think it was largely a backlash against my parents for being so ground down and defeated.

It was because of those experiences that in 2011 Jones was able to write a book – the award winning *Chavs* – which explores representations of the working class in the media, arguing they are portrayed in a negative light by both newspapers and television.

The timing was very good. It came out for all the wrong reasons: austerity, a Tory government of millionaires, an economic

crisis, people's living standards falling, huge inequality. And so because of that people wanted to talk about class again, and off the back of my book I was asked to write and go on TV; and then it just escalated and eventually I ended up getting a slot in *The Independent* and then *The Guardian*. It wasn't by design though: half the time I wasn't sure what was going on. It wasn't my ambition, I just used it to get across all the things I believe in.

Now a leading media practitioner himself, with access to some of the highest circles of society, Jones drew on his experiences again and published a second book in 2014: *The Establishment and How They Get Away With It*. In it, Jones suggests that the influence of wealthy people in the political system is having a corrosive effect on democracy: a concept he describes as 'socialism for the rich'. He suggests it is this, above anything else, that is the root of people's anger towards Westminster. Almost every instrument of power in this country, he argues, has fallen victim to the selfish ideology of a select group of people.

Even the media, Jones points out, which are owned largely by billionaire conglomerates and corporations, refuse to pay their interns, so that those of poorer backgrounds – indeed perhaps even some readers of this magazine – cannot get a foot on the ladder and have a say in setting the news agenda. Instead, he argues, newspapers and

CHAVS

THE DEMONIZATION OF THE WORKING CLASS

'Superb and angry' **Guardian**
'Eloquent and impassioned' **Evening Standard**

OWEN JONES

private companies distil the terms of debate so that ideas that are too radical are ridiculed and closed down.

To those *not* in the know, it can sometimes come across like a highly complicated conspiracy. So how does Jones go about presenting his arguments in a way that doesn't alienate his audience, particularly when he's put on the spot?

Most people don't think in terms of Left or Right, they think in terms of issues to be addressed and they want to hear something that's convincing and coherent, that resonates with experience, and is told in a language they

understand; and that, for me, is the key point of political communication. I'm also interested in communicating to an audience that is as broad as possible, not just with people who already agree with me. And that means I have to speak in ways that aren't just designed to appeal to my own audience.

One of the platforms that Jones has used to convince people of his arguments is the BBC's *Question Time*. When he appeared in November 2012, he seemed to rile Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan-Smith when he brought up a story about a severely disabled man who, just days after recovering from a stroke, was found fit for work and died shortly afterwards. Jones admits:

It's a very highly pressured event ... on *Question Time* you're with all these powerful politicians, and there's a big audience. You've got to not patronise people, but speak to people's experiences and not make it too complicated; and that can be difficult, but that's how I see things.

One of the biggest stories of 2014, and one which Jones addresses in his latest book, was the rise of the UK Independence Party (UKIP). Not only are they, along with The Green Party, committed to holding a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, they have also expressed an interest in giving people a direct say in issues that affect them more often. Surely this is at least a start on the

road to fixing some of the problems Jones' exposes? Indeed his own industry – the media – could then play a larger part in fostering the debate. Jones doesn't agree…

I'm not a big fan of referenda. I think they are important on constitutional issues like independence or in or out of the EU – I do support a referendum on the European Union – and on what electoral system you use. But on other issues I don't support them, because referenda are generally used by demagogues. They've got a history of being used by demagogues because you can't debate issues in detail, so often it's the powerful people who benefit most from referenda and you end up with a big powerful media who just scream at things, and so you don't end up having an educated debate.

But it's not just a case of simply disagreeing with UKIP. Jones believes they are actively upholding the status quo of 'the establishment', whilst pretending to stand for change – something the media are not always on top of.

I think they're the party for the rich by the rich whose policies are about shoving as much wealth into those at the top, whilst trying to make people angry at immigrants. Polls suggest that what people voting for UKIP believe, and what UKIP leaders believe, are very different. Voters want public ownership of public rail, higher taxes on the rich, living wage, all those sorts of things; but their leaders believe in privatisation of public services, deregulation and slashing taxes on the rich. That gap needs to be exploited and exposed.

Perhaps the reason people are turning to UKIP is because of a vacuum of alternative ideas, a vacuum that Jones clearly wants to fill.

'Our generation's Orwell'
RUSSELL BRAND

The
Establishment
And how they get away with it

OWEN JONES
Author of *Chavs*
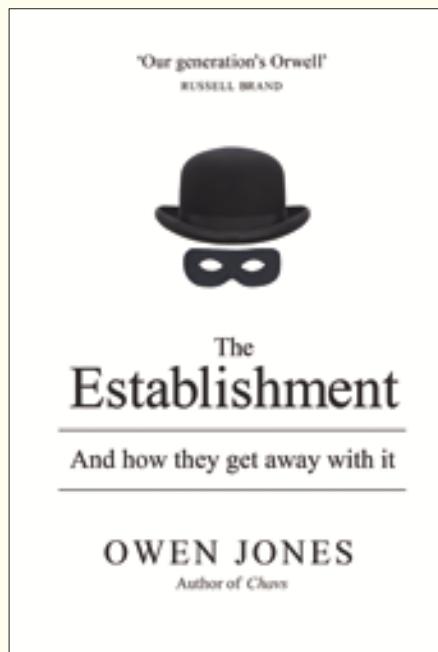
My third book is going to be an optimistic book. It's called *The Politics of Hope* and it's about how things can change and looking at alternative ideas…

I thought I'd end our interview by quizzing Jones on what students can do today if they too feel angry and despairing at the state of the country. He says the key is to

think about an issue you are most passionate about, and find other people like yourself – UK-Uncut put tax avoidance on the agenda, there are living wage campaigns that some young people are involved in, join a political party or a trade union – and if all of us do that, maybe we'll be able to change society like our ancestors did, and everything will be fine in the end and we'll all live happily ever after.

Harry Cunningham is a writer and currently studies English at Loughborough University. He has freelanced for *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Leicester Mercury* and *Writers' Forum Magazine*. Follow him on Twitter: @harrycunningham

The Establishment (Allen Lane: £16.99) is available in hardback from all good book stores.

TWO KEY CONCEPTS

The Relationship Between Audience and Institution

In the last century, media products were produced by economically powerful organisations which packaged and sold them to carefully defined audiences. But in our digital era, the rules of the game are changing, and the balance of power between institutions and audiences – two key media concepts – is shifting. Steph Hendry summarises what you need to know about contemporary media institutions and their audiences.

The concepts of audience and institution are crucial in developing your skills from the simple technical analysis of individual texts towards a deeper analytic understanding of how the media work. The two concepts are inseparably connected. While their business models and products might differ, all institutions need audiences if they are to generate profit. But whilst every institution needs an audience, contemporary audiences are increasingly able to access media in ways which bypass traditional media institutions.

Institutions Are Businesses

Media institutions are the organisations which underpin, control and own TV programming, films, music, news, magazines, newspapers, radio programming and digital content. Most institutions (with the exception of those which are government-funded or have charitable status) have the same primary aim, which is to make money through the production, promotion and distribution of media products.

- **The production process** provides audiences with the media products they want. It needs to consider the audience's desires and should provide the gratifications the audience expects.

- **The promotion process** researches and identifies the target audience for the product, and uses advertising and marketing strategies to inform and persuade them of the value of the media product.

- **The distribution process** uses the most appropriate methods for getting the product to the audience and making it as easy as possible for them to access it.

Variations In Funding Models

Different institutions have different models of income generation, as shown in the chart below.

These different business models and potential income streams will impact on the way each institution produces, markets and distributes its products. For example:

- Because the **BBC** is funded by a licence fee and it has a public service remit, it is more likely to screen programmes with a regional interest than other broadcasters.

- **ITV** relies on income generated by advertisers. This means that appeal to a large audience are seen as more valuable than ones with smaller niche audiences

- **Sky One** needs an income from subscribers and may well invest in programming that attracts a loyal audience, who are more likely to invest in a long term subscription to guarantee early access to the shows they enjoy.

- **The MailOnline** receives more income the longer a reader stays on the site, so stories will feature lots of images and videos, and sensationalised or controversial headlines will be constructed to 'tempt' readers to 'click through'.

The Importance of Branding

Funding models have a huge impact on production choices, but so too does the institution's need to attract an audience. Most institutions do this by creating a brand image. Creating a brand helps an institution market its products to the audience by associating them with a distinct and unique 'personality'. Just look at the different brand personalities of supermarket advertising, for example, where Waitrose is represented as a sophisticated, affluent gourmet experience, while Asda (or Aldi) is associated with the family values of economy, good value, and unpretentiousness.

According to one definition, *brand = product + personality*. Knowing the brand means that the audience can feel reassured when they access a product produced by a familiar, well-loved brand. Consider the 'personalities' constructed by two very different institutions: **Disney** and **Marvel**. Both are associated with blockbuster film, but our expectations of their products may be quite different.

Disney is known as a family-friendly brand that focuses on children's entertainment. It has built on its original reputation for animation, created early in the 20th century, through the construction of a 'universe' of merchandising and branded products, including Disneyland and the Disney Princess franchise. Parents can feel reassured that a Disney product will provide a wholesome form of entertainment appropriate for children. Disney has used a number of now iconic logos (the dream castle, Walt Disney's signature, Mickey's ears) to allow brand recognition across all their products.

Some Institutions	Examples of Income Sources
BBC	Licence fee paid by the public.
	Sales of DVDs, magazines, merchandising and other BBC products.
	Sales of programmes and formats to other broadcasters.
ITV	Fees paid by advertisers buying advertising space on the channel.
	Programme sponsorship.
	Sale of its programmes and formats to other broadcasters.
Sky One	Income is generated by subscription fees and advertising revenue.
Sony	Sales of hardware such as PS4.
	Sales of games and associated merchandising.
	Advertising and sales via online community.
	Sales of music.
	Film sales.
	Licensing of music (for advertising, gaming, film soundtracks etc.).
	Profits from online games and standalone gaming products.
The MailOnline	Sale of advertising space.
	Advertorial features.
	Sponsorship.

Marvel is inextricably associated with the superhero genre as the film production studio developed from its hugely popular original comic book publications. Marvel superhero films may well contain lots of violence; but they will also reinforce mainstream values around duty, sacrifice, personal responsibility and the need for the strong to protect the weak. Like Disney, the Marvel brand constructs a familiar and reassuring expectation for the audience. Going to see a Marvel superhero film is unlikely to offer

In the past, this relationship was seen as a power relationship, where most of the power was in the hands of the institutions. This model was based on the idea that the audience was passive and received information from powerful institutions.

Whilst it is true that in the 20th century audiences had little obvious impact on media institutions, the history of the mass media in the late 20th/ early 21st centuries is a history of technological changes which have altered audience behaviour. As a result,

music industry also repackaged old releases, often with bonus tracks or other incentives to buy. This was effectively an attempt to encourage people to buy something they already had (but on vinyl or cassette) for a second time.

- In the mid 2000s, *Spotify* offered an online music service in an attempt to counter free download culture. People could either enjoy free music with ads, for a limited time, or pay a monthly subscription and get access to music without ads.

many surprises, but it is precisely this familiarity that has enabled the studio to produce enormously successful films since the late 1990s.

Although the two studios each have a distinct brand image that helps audiences frame their expectations of products from each institution, this is in fact a false distinction: in fact, **Marvel Studios** is owned by **Marvel Entertainment** – which is owned by **The Walt Disney Company**.

Changing Relationships Between Audiences And Institutions

Creating a brand may not always guarantee success but it helps institutions to create a relationship with their audience. Of course, in order to produce, market and distribute media products effectively, institutions need to know *who* their target audience is, *what* that audience wants, and *how* to find it. Rather than thinking of audience and institution as two separate ideas, it is sometimes worth thinking of them in terms of the relationship they have with each other. The media product is the meeting point between the two. Media institutions need to create products that media audiences want to buy into; without an audience, the institution cannot succeed.

institutions have had to continually change in order to keep the audience interested. For example:

- In the 1950s, *Hollywood feared it would lose its audience to television*. Film studios developed new technologies with lots of marketing ideas in an attempt to draw audiences back to cinemas, including 'Percepto!' (a device to deliver strategically placed electric shocks to seats in cinemas), 'Smell-O-Vision' and 3D.

- In the 1980s, *the development of VHS* made access to Hollywood films easier and more convenient. To lure viewers out of their homes and back into cinemas, film studios invested in multiplex cinemas which provided more choice, and more glamour and luxury for cinemagoers.

- In the early 2000s, *the music industry* feared people would no longer buy music if they could download it for free. With profits threatened by the free availability of their entire back catalogues via file-sharing, major industry figures such as Metallica and Dr Dre, and various recording companies led by A&M Music, sued Napster for facilitating file-sharing. They released extravagant CD box-sets that offered audiences more than just a musical experience. The

- In the early 2010s, *online streaming services* offered audiences documentaries, films and box-sets that they could subscribe to and watch on demand. This has provided access to older media products, and to products not originally broadcast by the subscribers' local institutions.

Institution And Audiences In The Digital Age

As the digital landscape has developed, audiences' relationships with institutions have continued to change. Audiences now have more freedom to access media products *when they choose*, rather than *when they are told*. Mobile technology allows audiences to carry TV programmes, films, music and all that is on offer on the internet on tablets and smartphones. Modern audiences now expect to be able to communicate directly with institutions, and to be able to construct their own media products for themselves. The ability to download and/or stream films and music on demand has led to a change of attitudes regarding media products; contemporary audiences do not see them as having much monetary value, since they are so widely and freely available.

New Business Models

The fragmentation of modern audiences and the rise of 'free culture' means that all institutions are now having to reconsider their business models.

- The music industry can no longer generate most of its profits through the sale of music itself, so other ways to make money have been sought. Sponsorship, merchandising, and the income generated by live shows are some of the ways it seeks to recoup its investment. Music artists no longer just sign away the rights to their music; a '360 deal' is a contract that gives the record company a percentage of all the income generated by a musical artist. This would include income from live performances, merchandising deals and any other income the musician generates.

- The movie industry has invested enormous sums of money into 3D technology, in order to encourage audiences into cinemas.

- The BBC is reconsidering its funding structure now on-demand viewing is becoming more popular.

- Some online newspapers now require audiences to subscribe to access their content or provide premium content to those who pay for mobile apps.

- Advertisers find it harder to target audiences via traditional media (TV and magazines, for example) and alternative strategies are employed, for instance, using targeted marketing based on social media data-mining (see Nick Lacey's article in this issue), or sponsoring YouTube stars to include their products in their lifestyle blogs.

The Future?

We are still in the early days of the digital age, so this is a very uncertain time for media institutions. An institution's economic success is still dependent on the behaviour and preferences of the audience; but traditional media institutions do not always respond quickly to change. Technology companies such as Amazon, Facebook, Google and Yahoo are, by their very nature, at the forefront of change; they too have become 'media institutions':

- Google now owns YouTube, and has revolutionised the way we access music and moving-image entertainment and information.

- Amazon, Netflix and Yahoo now create, produce and 'broadcast' their own TV shows, such as *Transparent*, *Orange is the New Black* and *Community*.

- Facebook has bought the virtual reality technology Oculus Rift (see *MM*51); one potential benefit for audiences is that it allows users to 'attend' and 'experience' events without leaving their own homes.

Traditional media institutions are having to adapt to survive. It is clear that not all traditional media forms, outlets or institutions will be able to maintain their place in the media marketplace. As audiences reject traditional TV programming, newspapers and cinema exhibition, the only thing we know for sure about the future is that institutions will continue to come up with increasingly sophisticated and creative ways to try to find and attract an audience.

Steph Hendry is a Media lecturer at Runshaw College, and a freelance writer. Follow her on Twitter @albionmill

SOMEBODY'S WATCHING YOU...

Social media and surveillance

We've all read about Facebook surveillance, privacy settings, data mining, and mobile monitoring. Some even argue that it's an acceptable, if unethical, price to pay for the riches of social media. But is it equally acceptable when government surveillance is involved? Nick Lacey issues a thought-provoking warning.

How many times have you told your teachers that you've forgotten to bring in your homework when you actually haven't done it? It seems a safe enough excuse; the teacher can't actually prove that your homework's incomplete. But what if your teacher could spy on you in your bedroom to see if you were telling the truth? (I'll give you a moment to 'gross out' at such a thought.)

Of course such a suggestion is ridiculous – teachers are far too busy marking the homework that was handed in to have to check on miscreants. Or are they?

Five years ago, in Philadelphia, it was discovered that webcams on school-issued laptops were being used to watch pupils. Some of the images downloaded from the webcams included pupils in bed and 'partially dressed'. Of course such outrageous behaviour couldn't happen here, could it...?

I suspect the people of Philadelphia thought that too.

Private Spaces, Converging Life-spheres

How important is your privacy to you? For most young people, who live with their parents, their bedroom is your private space. This is also usually the case at university, where housing is shared. Imagine how you'd feel if your family or friends went peeking around your bedroom, or spied on what you were doing there. Imagine complete strangers doing the same. Most of us want to keep our private space to ourselves, and only share it with someone who is special to us.

Social media can also be thought of as a 'space'. Daniel Trottier compares the digital space of social media to a dwelling that has

increased [the] social proximity of different life spheres' leading to 'social convergence.

By 'life spheres' he means the different contexts in which we live our lives. We all have a number of 'life spheres' including family, friends, school and work.

Psychologist Erving Goffman suggested that we are like actors, because we 'perform' a particular behaviour in order to create the impression we

want to convey about ourselves. This behaviour changes depending on who we are with. For example, we may be more careful with the language we use in the company of our parents, compared to the way we speak to our friends. Similarly, most of us (teachers included!) perform a particular type of behaviour in the classroom; 'troublemakers' are often pupils who don't want, or perhaps are unable, to perform the 'proper' behaviour.

The borders between our different life spheres can become blurred on social media, and some aspects that would once have been kept separate and private are now readily available for all to see. Your security settings will determine who can see your Facebook posts; these should be for 'Friends only' – check by clicking on the Privacy Basics padlock in the top right corner. Many of you will have experienced the discomfort of having your parents as 'Friends': this causes your life spheres to clash, because they can see what you're doing and saying. Of course when you were younger, it was important that your parents monitored your social media to ensure you didn't get into trouble; this is a long-term habit they are probably struggling to give up.

Does this mean that if you have 'Friends only' security settings you know who

is accessing information about you? It probably won't surprise you that the answer to that is 'no'. Social media platforms are businesses that strive to make a profit, and as the default setting for the internet is that content should be free (there are even users who download/steal copyrighted material!), most of them will use advertising to generate revenue.

The Cost Of Data Mining

In the fourth quarter of 2013 Facebook generated $2.61 average revenue per user (ARPU) in Europe. In other words, you were worth (on average, at the exchange rate as I write) £1.73. That seems a small price to pay for the 'uses and gratifications' that Facebook gives us. However, perhaps we should not be so sanguine; targeting adverts at you as an individual requires 'deep, intensive and persistent surveillance' (Naughton, 2014) – in other words, data mining.

Commercial broadcasters work on the same advertising-driven revenue model. However they can only define their audience as broad aggregates, based upon volunteer sample groups. But social media companies really *know* you:

Researchers were able to accurately infer a Facebook user's race, IQ, sexuality, substance use, personality or political views using only a record of the subjects and items they had 'liked' on Facebook – even if users had chosen not to reveal that information.

Halliday, 2013

Of course such data mining is entirely legal; when we tick the 'terms and conditions' box in order to use services (which of course we should always read first!) we are agreeing that our personal information can be used by the company. Most of us probably trust the company to behave in an ethical manner, although this trust might be misplaced. In 2014, research was published about a psychological experiment performed on unknowing Facebook users:

[the experimenters] tweaked the algorithm by which Facebook sweeps posts into members' news feeds, using a program to analyse whether any given textual snippet contained positive or negative words. Some people were fed primarily neutral to happy information

from their friends; others, primarily neutral to sad. Then everyone's subsequent posts were evaluated for affective meanings.

Waldman, 2014

The results found that users' emotional states were affected by what they saw on Facebook.

You might decide, maybe, that even though it is wrong to 'experiment' on users in this way, Facebook couldn't exist if people had to pay for it. Data mining, getting information about users, is essential to business on the internet. Even retailers like Amazon use data to recommend products to us. As internet security expert, Bruch Schneier, stated at an InfoSec (Information Security) conference:

Surveillance is the business model of the Internet ... We build systems that spy on people in exchange for services. Corporations call it marketing.

quoted in Rashid, 2014

Because most of us have smartphones, with apps that use our location (do you always 'allow' that?), our use of the internet can be monitored anywhere and anytime we access it. Think about that.

Despite this, many people accept that companies use and sell information about us in return for services. However this does not mean that we agree to be spied upon by governments.

Government Surveillance

Edward Snowden's revelations, via *The Guardian* (see **http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/the-nsa-files**) and *New York Times*, showed how the American and British government are seeking total surveillance of the internet. This is defended as being about protecting 'freedom' against terrorists. However, this argument is deeply flawed: it involves losing some freedoms, for example the right to privacy, in order to defend other freedoms – surely a pointless exercise. In addition, the surveillance mounted wasn't simply targeting suspected 'terrorists':

Snowden's files reveal the images were harvested in bulk from millions of ordinary Yahoo users who were not suspected of wrongdoing, and were not intelligence targets. In a single six-month period, the agency siphoned webcam images from more than 1.8m global Yahoo user accounts.

Badham, 2014

Such surveillance is going to get worse as radio frequency identification tags (RFID) become ubiquitous:

Your movements are watched, not by the use of crude cameras (which it transpires were rather poor at fighting crime anyway) but by tags embedded in your gadgets or in your clothes or even under your skin. Transmitted wirelessly and instantly they connect with satellite systems that record your digital footprint endlessly. Every thing you buy, every person you meet, every move you make. They could be watching you.

Dodson, Internet and Surveillance: The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media, 2012

Not 'could be': they *are* watching you.

I'd recommend you read David Eggers' brilliant satirical novel *The Circle* on the dangers of social networking.

Nick Lacey teaches Film and Media Studies, is the author of several Film and Media textbooks, and is a freelance writer.

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Video 2.0: Participation
Or Hegemony MM39

Follow It Up

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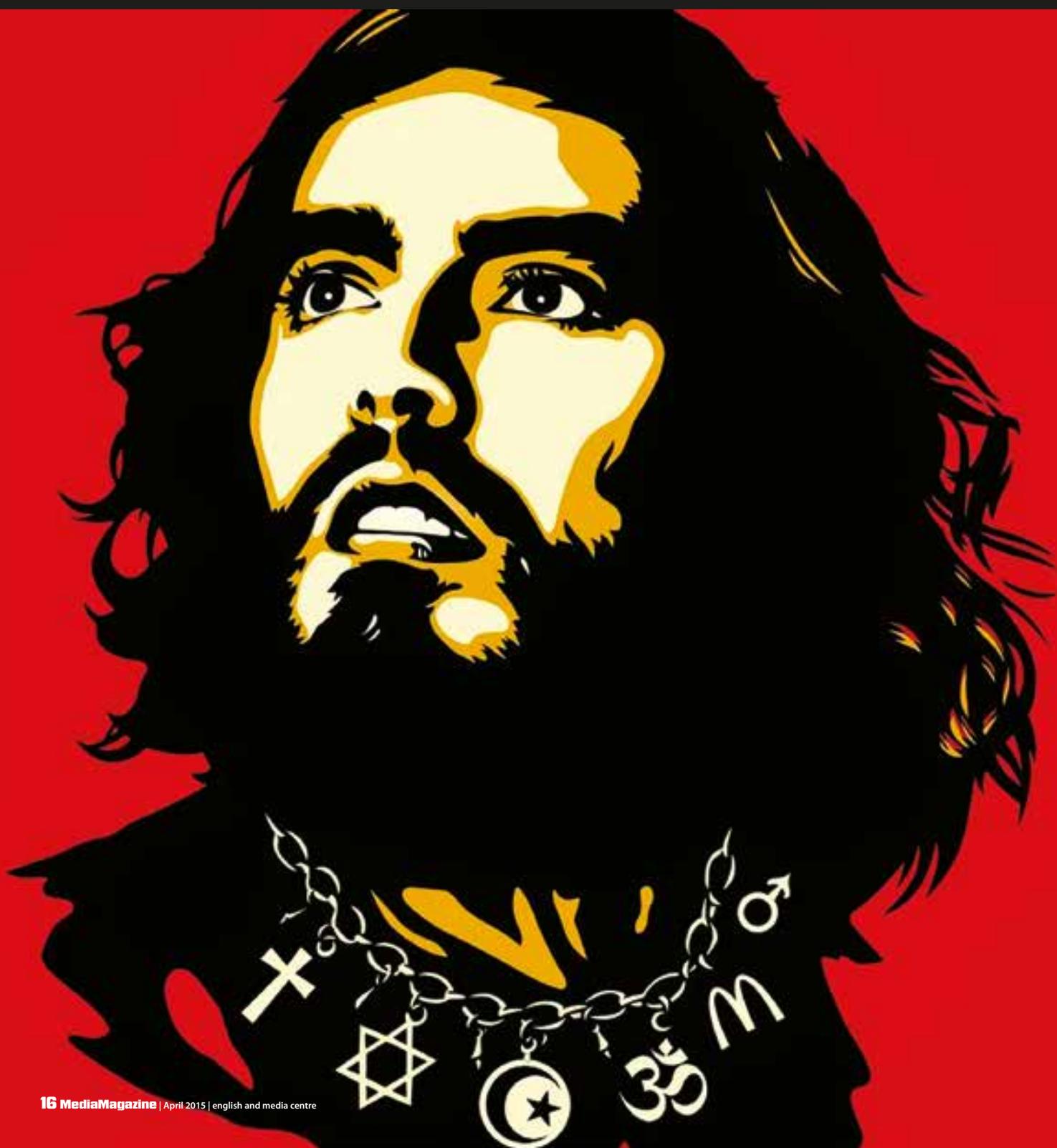http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/mar/11/facebook-users-reveal-intimate-secrets.

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REBRANDED

The (R)Evolution of Russell Brand

Does comedian turned activist Russell Brand really want to overthrow capitalism, or is he just another celebrity begging for attention? Taking aim at the corporate news media in his daily web series *The Trews* while writing a book entitled *Revolution*, Brand has certainly ruffled a few feathers. But is he the Messiah or just a very naughty boy? Pete Turner investigates.

THE RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH IS IMPORTANT BUT IT ISN'T AS IMPORTANT AS: WE'RE ALL HUMAN BEINGS TOGETHER, LET'S FIND SOLUTIONS TOGETHER.

#SHITRUSSELLBRANDSAYS

Russell Brand's appearance can be deceiving. The 'Halloween-haired, Sachsgate-enacting, estuary-whining, glitter-lacquered, priapic berk' (his words) is much more than just a style icon and pretty face. Brand is attempting to get people to look beneath the surface – not just of himself, but between the lines and under the covers of the media. His ongoing battles with Fox News in America and his frequent attacks on *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* in his web series *The Trews* are cases in point. This is a man who has gone from being *Big Brother's* Big Mouth to a particularly sharp thorn in the side of the system, with a ludicrously lucid vocabulary.

Brand might style himself as a comedian first and foremost but recently he has been dedicating a significant amount of his working life to revolutionary activism. Back in 2013 he started by telling people in an article for *The New Statesman*:

I have never voted. Like most people I am utterly disenchanted by politics. Like most people I regard politicians as frauds and liars and the current political system as nothing more than a bureaucratic means for furthering the augmentation and advantages of economic elites.

He then furthered his ambition to make headlines and deliver his message to an even wider audience by saying in an interview with Jeremy Paxman for BBC's *Newsnight*,

Don't bother voting ... why be complicit in this ridiculous illusion?

By the end of the interview, it seemed clear that Brand was not just speaking from a narcissistic desperation for attention, but from a deep-seated passion and resentful anger at the wrongs he sees being done in the name of modern capitalism.

The Birth Of Brand

Brand began his career as an actor in British TV shows like *The Bill* before moving on to presenting work and stand-up comedy at the turn of the millennium. In 2001 he was arrested and charged with criminal damage and indecent exposure after stripping naked while covering the May Day protests for MTV, revealing not only his

nether regions but also a burgeoning interest in politics and protest. His 2002 participatory and performative documentary show *RE: Brand* demonstrates both his flamboyance and the seeds of many of his concerns, tackling the taboo issues of racism, homelessness, his own sexuality and his relationship with his father. While Brand had admitted to being on heroin and frequently drunk during much of the filming of these shows, they also display his emerging empathy for those in desperate need of help, and his righteous anger at right-wing bigots. At times hideously exploitative, and at others extremely touching, Brand treads a fine line between self-obsessed showman and genuinely engaged humanitarian.

Despite occasional columns for *The Guardian*, Brand's revolutionary activism was not evident in his writing on topics such as football and shared snippets of his autobiography. Two series of TV show *Ponderland* gave him the stage to be a stand-up comedian on a number of interesting themes that included class, education and crime.

Then the 2008 Sachsgate scandal immeasurably boosted his public profile; it also made him a prime target for *The Daily Mail* and got him chased out of the country to pursue film roles in Hollywood. Yet this was not his destiny. While he may *possibly* be remembered in later life for his roles in *Forgetting Sarah Marshall,* or *Get Me to the Greek*, or his *Despicable Me* voiceovers, his gigantic ego is rather more memorable when he is actually playing himself.

Cold Turkey With Love And Compassion

In 2013 Brand suddenly returned to the UK, with drugs back on his mind. He was no longer using heroin or crack; but he now wanted to make a difference to the world. He started by taking on a subject he was clearly clued-up about. In his article for *The Guardian*, 'Russell Brand: my life without drugs', he admitted that he envied his former drug addict self because back in his using days, he always had drugs to help take away his pain. The alcohol-induced death of his friend Amy Winehouse appears to have been the catalyst for his sudden surge in media visibility as he promoted an abstinence-based approach to getting addicts off drugs. His 2012 BBC 3 documentary *From Addiction to Recovery* furthered his campaign to raise awareness of what he sees as better forms of treatment than giving addicts methadone. Using his own personal experiences and his warm and empathetic personality, Brand interviews experts on drug policy and research, but also ordinary people in the grip of addiction and those in recovery. Climaxing with his appearance at the Home Affairs select committee in which he began his mantra of dealing with society's problems with 'love and compassion', Brand then moved swiftly on to addressing wider issues.

Abstinence – From Sex, Drugs And Voting

Along with his worldwide *Messiah Complex* stand-up comedy tour, Brand brought his quick wit and increasingly left-wing agenda to more of the mainstream media in 2013. Bashing bankers, advocating abstinence and criticising modern conflicts, Brand sat on a BBC *Question Time* panel alongside the likes of Boris Johnson and Tessa Jowell. Possibly his most controversial appearance then came when he was interrogated by legendary broadcaster Jeremy Paxman and argued against voting in democratic elections. His two appearances on *Newsnight* may have caused a stir in the mainstream media, with countless articles and even celebrities such as The Sex Pistols' John Lydon and *Peep Show's* Robert Webb criticising Brand's potentially dangerous

R[E]VOL[OVE]UTION

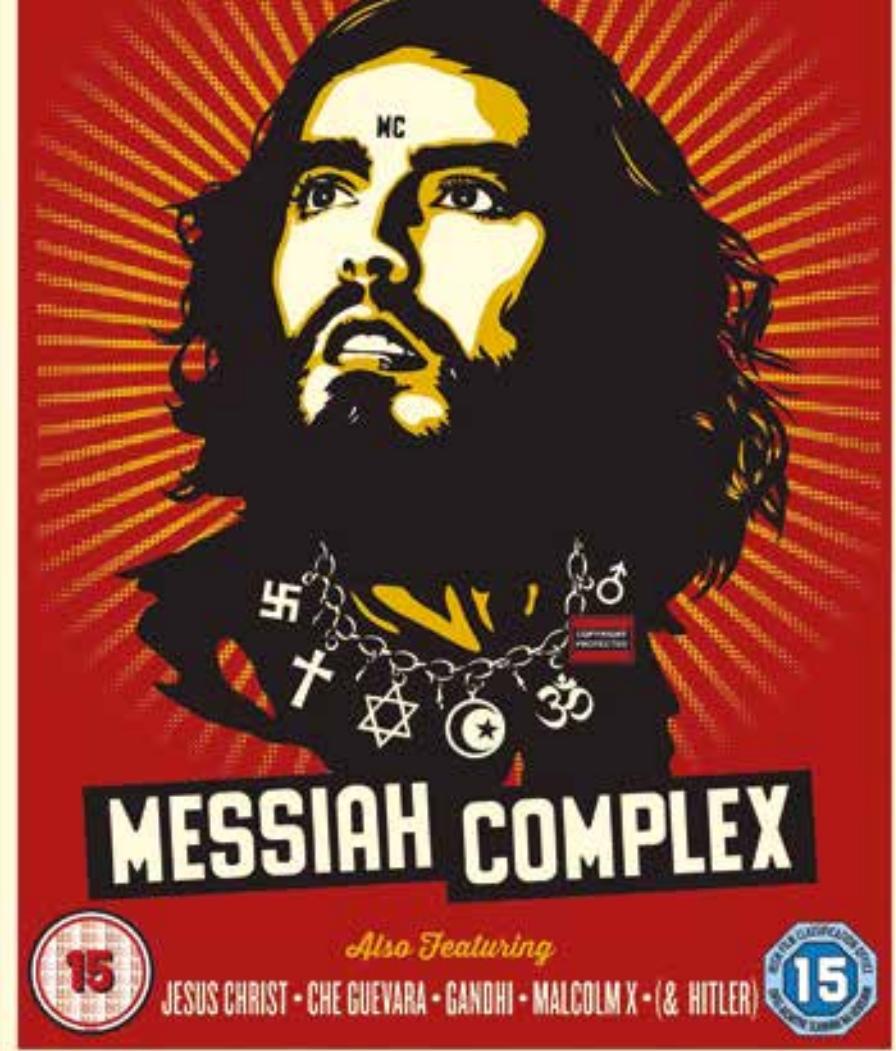videos tearing into traditional forms of media. He took pot-shots at *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun*, criticised the way Westminster debates are televised, and generally deconstructed the corporate news media in a series of short videos. Sitting in his Shoreditch townhouse, Brand spent no money on producing these videos, but instead spent his time and effort taking on the Establishment – and particularly how it recycles narratives to keep its consumers complicit in maintaining the status quo.

His anti-hegemonic discourse picks apart the language and focus of newspaper stories, particularly those in the right-wing media. Moving on from the UK's tabloids, he singled out Fox News in America for a prolonged grilling, attacking the likes of Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity for spouting hatred every day on American television.

It seemed that Brand had almost completely turned his back on his old life and career and decided to eschew traditional forms of media in favour of creating a direct link with his followers through Twitter and YouTube. In the spirit of democratising the arguments, Brand even commits to regular 'comments' editions of *The Trews* in which he responds to people's responses to his videos. Roping in some of his celebrity comedian mates such as Simon Amstell and David Baddiel, as well as discussing the likes of Peaches Geldof and Miley Cyrus (and specifically deconstructing the notion of celebrity, from his insider's perspective), Brand has accrued almost 800,000 subscribers to his channel, and racked up over 55 million views. He argues that:

before long we will dismantle traditional media, the machinery of capitalism and duplicitous pseudo-democracy and realise humankind's true (trew) potential as spiritual beings that manifest our own physical destiny.

Brand declares that 'Fox news is just a negative download of hatred from Rupert Murdoch's anus', and calls for change on a daily basis, allowing him to hear his own voice uninterrupted everyday. While still maintaining his fan base, *The Trews* is arguably doing more than merely fulfilling Brand's narcissistic desire to be the centre of attention. He could be earning big bucks elsewhere;

comments; but this definitely didn't stop Brand from continuing his calls for revolution.

The Trews

In February 2014, Brand was apparently ready to abandon Hollywood and shun the existing communicative channels that govern how ordinary people get their media fix, when he began a web series called *The Trews* in which he used the democratic platform of YouTube, where anyone can become a media producer and distributor, to share

MESSIAH COMPLEX

Also Featuring

JESUS CHRIST · CHE GUEVARA · GANDHI · MALCOLM X · (& HITLER)

think of the man, his analysis of the mainstream media is frequently spot on, and his overwhelming message is hard to dismiss:

I'm calling for change. I'm calling for genuine alternatives.

The Trews is out there.

Pete Turner is a Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University, writes a film blog at http://ilovethatfilm.blogspot.com/ and his book on *The Blair Witch Project* in Auteur's Devil's Advocates series is out now.

Follow It Up

but apparently dedicates time daily to creating unprofitable videos that consistently call for change and criticise the elite.

All of this seemed extremely laudable – until it emerged that he had a book in the works. So is *The Trews* just extended advertising for this more traditionally profitable venture?

Talking 'Bout A Revolution ...

Titled *Revolution*, Brand's latest book is a controversial call for radical solutions to the political, economic and spiritual malaise of the 21st

century. It has been criticised for being naive, rambling and smug; but it made £230,000 in just 11 days of being on sale.

So what will this self-styled anti-capitalist author do with all this profit? On Twitter, Brand says the profits will go towards building the Trews cafe, 'a social enterprise to get recovering addicts into work.' In support of the book, Brand took to countless chat shows and current affairs programmes to promote not only *Revolution* the book, but also the concept of revolution as a means to political and economic change. With a documentary on the economy currently in the works, apparently partly-financed by bankers, it will be interesting to see how long *The Trews* lasts, and if Brand will have the perseverance and fortitude to continue his activism.

Many may call Brand a champagne socialist, and criticise his wealth and ability to attend an anti-capitalist demonstration and a glitzy celebrity party on the same night. But at least he is challenging hegemonic ideology on a daily basis. No matter what you

From the margins to the mainstream?

Disability, Identity and the Media

Both OCR and AQA A Level courses now include the topic of media and identity, and in particular how dominant and marginal identities are represented. Starting with the Paralympic games, Kathy Oborne traces the shifting relationship between the UK media and disabled identities.

In our society, people with disabilities have often been marginalised, and at times deliberately hidden from view. Historically, the representation of disabled people in the media has relied upon a range of negative stereotypes, including those of the pathetic victim, evil villain or superhuman overcoming incredible odds. All these ideas emphasise the differences between those with physical and mental impairments and the able-bodied 'norm'. Disabled people have also been excluded from the mainstream media. In more recent times, however, the representations of people with a disability have started to reflect a more inclusive society.

Meet The Superhumans

Many commentators saw the popularity of the 2012 Paralympic Games as a turning point in the representation of people with disabilities. This was certainly the intention of Channel 4, who won the rights to media coverage

of the games. The marketing campaign they delivered won a range of industry awards including the Film Craft Grand Prix at Cannes. The producers of the campaign at 4creative set out a list of objectives, including:

- To bring about a shift in public attitudes to disability.

- To engage the UK media early and move coverage for Paralympic sport from the margins to the mainstream.

- To reinforce Channel 4's long-standing identity as an innovator prepared to challenge perceptions.

These objectives tie into the remit of the channel as a whole, which aims to represent diversity as well as be commercially successful.

Meet the Superhumans, a 90-second film, was broadcast simultaneously on 78 channels including all of Channel 4's networks, ITV1, Five, Sky One, Eurosport and all of UKTV's channels. Set to 'Harder Than You Think', a track by Public Enemy, the advert opens with lights being switched on in a swimming pool, a deserted, rain-swept race-track, and an empty basketball court. As the soundtrack builds, athletes appear one at a time, then in teams. Their disabilities are visible, but not focused on – instead, the advert emphasises their dedication: for example a figure in silhouette walking towards a dawn training session. Channel 4 have said they wanted to show 'the Herculean effort' that athletes had put into preparation for the games. We later see shots of athletes competing in front of cheering crowds. Slogans challenge the audience to 'Forget everything you thought you knew about humans' and then declare 'It's time to do battle'. To add emotional power, a series of flashbacks placed in the middle of the advert hint at the athlete's back-stories – a bomb exploding, a pregnant woman in hospital, a car crash.

What does the word disability mean?

Language is integral to the construction of identity – the names we call ourselves and the ways others define who we are. This process of identity formation works through inclusion and exclusion, the creation of 'us' and 'them'.

The division between able-bodied and disabled people is an example of how we try to place individuals into fixed categories. In reality, of course, who is or is not disabled is not so clear-cut – for example, recent discussions in the media have focused on whether obesity can be described as a disability.

Some people living with physical or mental impairments reject the term 'disabled' as negative and limiting. There are nuanced differences between being entirely defined by a particular disability, and being a person whose circumstances are affected by a particular disability. Many people adopt a 'people-first' approach, where they are defined as a person with a disability. Others see the term 'disabled' as useful in creating a sense of collective identity, for example within disability rights groups. Some negative terms such as 'cripple' have even been reclaimed by some disability rights groups as a way of challenging existing stereotypes.

Audience Reactions

On many levels, this campaign was hugely successful. Praised across the media as creative and powerful, it won a number of industry awards. 11.8 million people tuned into the opening ceremony, and Channel 4's post-campaign research suggests that the advert had a huge impact on audiences. 69% of viewers said it was the first time that they had watched the Paralympic games, and 68% felt that the campaign had a favourable impact on how they thought about people with disabilities. The Paralympic Games Facebook site had 30,000 users at the opening event, rising to 117,000 by the end of the games. The @paralympic
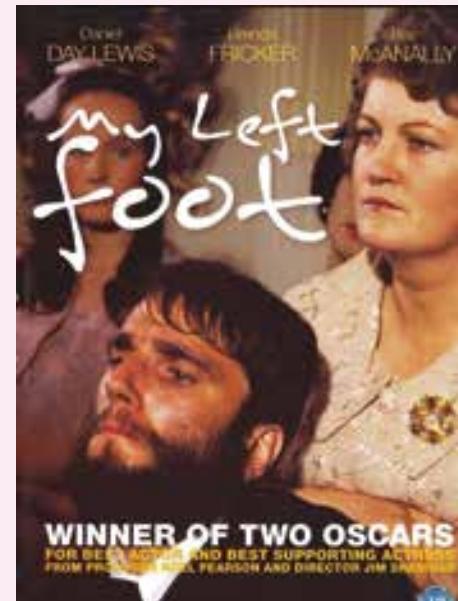
Twitter account also grew to 37,000 followers (**http://www.dandad.org/en/meet-superhumans/**). The following quote from the Prime Minister, himself the father of a disabled child, captures the sense of excitement:

I think it's been an absolute triumph from start to finish ... I think back to Ivan. As every parent, you think about all the things they can't do, but at the Paralympics they are superhuman, you see all the things they can do.

David Cameron, http://theinclusionclub.com/episodes/superhumans

The advert seemed to appeal to both able-bodied and disabled viewers. Scott Jordan Harris, a film critic and wheelchair user, wrote in *The Independent*:

I admit that this is a trailer almost scientifically designed to appeal to me: I am disabled and a wheelchair-user; I am a film critic fond of short films; and I am a sportswriter whose excitement about the Olympics is almost uncontrollable ... it manages to show disabled athletes as they deserve to be seen.

Many online commentators on websites aimed at people with disabilities were thrilled at the interest that the campaign has generated, and how it presented Paralympians as people to be admired, not pitied. However, some were uneasy about the language used:

Like others I am uncomfortable with 'superhumans'... it's that same old tired hero or victim paradigm. Why can't they just be athletes? Talented focused hard-working athletes.

Cari Watrous, Inclusion.com comments board

Afterwards someone said to me they thought it was marvellous to see so many people showing triumph over adversity and they wondered why so many people were claiming benefits.

Sarah Blohm http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20686035)

Moving Forward

While the optimism of the Paralympic campaign might not reflect everyday experience, it did have a positive impact on the media representation. Many Paralympians became household names, and Channel 4's Paralympic comedy spin-off, *The Last Leg* (hosted by two disabled and one able-bodied presenter) is still on air. The show now comments on general news. Star of the show Alex Brooker recently appeared in Scope's 'End the Awkward' campaign, poking fun at able-bodied reactions to people with disabilities. Disabled people continue to become more visible in mainstream media; for example Sainsbury's recently used a model with Down's Syndrome in an advertising campaign.

The BBC has also committed itself to improving the representation of disability on its channels, promising to:

- Quadruple the on-screen representation of disabled people by 2017.

- Champion disabled talent and projects.

- Develop the BBC's existing schemes to recruit and retain disabled staff.

- Open up even more opportunities for disabled people to work for the BBC (http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2014/representation-disabled-people).

Meanwhile, at the Golden Globes and Oscars this year, Eddie Redmayne won Best Actor for his portrayal of Stephen Hawking, the scientist severely physically disabled by Motor Neurone Disease. Redmayne's success follows in a long tradition of actors being praised for playing people with disabilities, a talent that some commentators have compared to 'blacking up' (a white actor using make-up to play a black character). Disabled playwright Christopher Shinn, who has experienced life both before and after a below-the-knee amputation, has suggested that it is more comfortable for the able-bodied to view disability as a metaphor rather than to see disability as something that happens to real people:

Disabled characters are often seen as symbolising the triumph of the human spirit, or the freakishness we all feel inside. That may be a[nother] reason disabled actors are overlooked – they don't allow disability-as-metaphor to flourish as easily.

http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/07/why-disabled-characters-are-never-played-by-disabled-actors/374822/

To be fair, given the biographical nature of the film, which required the audience

to follow Hawking in his younger life prior to the onset of his illness, there was arguably no way the role could have been played convincingly by an actor with Motor Neurone Disease; but it would be valuable to hear responses from people with the condition to the nature and authenticity of Redmayne's performance. And it will certainly be interesting to see a longer-term response to the film on public attitudes to Motor Neurone Disease. In *The Guardian*'s Comment is Free column, Frances Ryan concluded:

Perhaps it is time to think before we next applaud 'cripping up'. Disabled people's lives are more than something for non-disabled actors to play at.

http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/13/eddie-redmayne-golden-globe-stephen-hawking-disabled-actors-characters

Judging by the 2242 responses to the column, this is a debate which will run and run.

Ideas For Further Study

If you are exploring these representations for your own A2 case study in Identity and the Media, you could consider exploring one or more of the following issues:

- British television has more programmes featuring disabled characters, actors, presenters or themes than ever before. What identities are on offer and how might audiences react?

- Social media has empowered disability rights groups across the UK. What influence have these groups had on mainstream media?

- Tabloid newspapers have been criticised for their depiction of disabled benefits claimants. To what extent does print media support the dominant ideologies of those in power?

- Recent films such as *Rust and Bone* and *Untouchable* have been praised for their portrayal of disability. How much has the depiction of disabled identities in cinema really changed?

Wider contexts

In 1995, the Disability Discrimination Act created legislation to protect disabled people's civil rights, following in the tradition of the earlier Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 and the Race Relations Act of 1976.

This legal recognition of disability rights both reflected and helped to promote a shift in attitudes towards the disabled population in a more inclusive society. All three acts were partly a response to the growth in the 1960s and 70s of social protest movements and the rise of identity politics.

- Changes to the benefits system have been criticised by disability rights groups for making it more difficult for disabled people to claim the support they need. During the Paralympics, up to 150 disability rights campaigners protested outside IT firm Atos, a sponsor of the Paralympic games, which carries out 'fit for work' assessments for the government. Campaigners said its tests for people on disability allowances are 'damaging and distressing', and have led to suicides.

- In the year previous to the Paralympics, 2000 disability hate crimes were reported to the police, and tabloid newspapers were frequently criticised for their portrayal of disabled benefits claimants as scroungers or frauds.

- More recently, the Conservative Welfare Minister Lord Freud stated controversially that disabled people were 'not worth the minimum wage'.

- Disabled people are still under-represented in the media industries. 'While a 2003 Labour Market Trends report estimated 19% of the working population to have a DDA-recognised disability, Skillset estimates that within the media industry, disabled people make up only 2.3% of the workforce'.

- In a recent survey, 67% of the British public said they felt uncomfortable talking to disabled people. (See http://metro.co.uk/2014/05/08/two-thirds-of-britons-are-uncomfortable-around-disabled-people-its-time-to-end-the-awkward-4720862/)

Kathy Oborne taught Media Studies at Highgate Wood School, London, and is now a freelance journalist.

MoreMediaMag from the archive

Representing Disability MM10

Skins – Textual Analysis In Action MM28

There's only One England
– isn't there?

Jenny Grahame practises her close reading skills on a TV ad representing England, and discovers that she's not as skilled as she thought.

OK, I'll admit it: I know very little about rugby. In fact I know so little about it that when, in an ITV ad-break during last week's *Broadchurch*, I was confronted with a montage of ravishing images of England choreographed to the lines of 'Jerusalem', I failed to realise that said images were actually targeting fans of the Rugby World Cup, to be held at 13 different venues across England and Wales in September 2015, and featured a roll call of the great and the good from the world of rugby.

I was perplexed. I had always seen myself as an 'expert' reader of texts, particularly advertising ones. Yet on first glance, I had read this ad as representing a 'heritage' version of England which bore little relation to my own experiences: the most glorious aspects of our varied countryside, iconic landmarks, traditional British institutions from English tea to Morris dancing. I had previously been scouting for an A Level text which offered interesting representations of national identity; what I saw here was

an almost clichéd travel guide selling a stereotypical concept of England to international tourists – which, of course, is exactly what it is, at least in part. The final tagline, 'There's only one England', is contradicted by the richly diverse imagery representing many different Englands, and undercut by the final words: 'Discover Yours'.

So how on earth did I fail to link the rousing 'Jerusalem' soundtrack with the very British sport with which it is unofficially associated? Or with the recurrent red and white motifs running through the ad, or the rugged players reading the Blake lines? More importantly, did it matter? I decided to retrace my steps and have a closer look, using a range of different strategies from my Media teacher's repertoire.

On England's pleasant pastures seen?

Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my chariot of fire!

In England's green and pleasant land

And was the holy Lamb of God

And was Jerusalem builded here

Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!

Till we have built Jerusalem

Walk upon England's mountains green?

Shine forth upon our clouded hills?

Bring me my arrows of desire!

Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,

And did those feet in ancient time

And did the Countenance Divine

Bring me my bow of burning gold!

I will not cease from mental fight,

Jerusalem,
from "Milton"
by William Blake (1757 - 1827).

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

Camera And Editing

My first strategy was a frame-by-frame micro-analysis of the camerawork and editing, to explore its technical codes. It looks deceptively simple: an edit for each line of the poem, with each reciting 'character' carefully framed to the right or left third of the screen, using very slow tracking or dolly zoom movements from left to right to maintain a constant sense of gentle but continual movement, sometimes interspersed with a zoom into a centred shot framed by perspective. The effect is of a ranging camera travelling across the length and breadth of England to home in on its heart which appears to be ... Twickenham?

Soundtrack

Meanwhile, the soundtrack undermines the gentle flow of the camera movement. It opens with a simple piano score, which builds up to include strings at the end of the first verse, and line by line picks up drums, woodwind, brass and finally full orchestration towards the end of the poem. But the lines of the poem are formally declaimed, rather than spoken or sung, in a variety of regional accents, and the aural transition from one speaker to the next sounds jerky and contrived. Furthermore, each clip includes diegetic sound – birds in flight, cows mooing behind a tractor, the panting footsteps of a fell-walker, seagulls and so on, which adds to my feeling of artifice and dislocation. Clearly these voices and soundscapes are intended to represent regional difference and diversity. But they seem to me to provide an uncomfortable counterpoint with the commanding 'me', 'my' and 'I' of Blake's vision.

Representational Analysis

So who and what is visually represented in this ad, and what impact is created? My first impression was uncomfortable. Yes, the text as a whole seems to imply that England is a diverse, multigenerational and multicultural society, but on closer inspection, of the 17 individuals reciting the lines, only two are black, and only three are women. There are two bonny children, alone in remote places – are they mascots, symbols of independence, proof of England's safety, or do they symbolise the future of England's youth? Older people are represented by one elderly gent genteelly partaking of afternoon tea and cake in the Yorkshire Dales, and a pair of stylish vintage Mods on scooters on the Brighton seafront. So far, so stereotypical.

Mise-en-Scène

Similarly, what we see of the geography of England features a preponderance of 'green and pleasant' countryside which echoes Blake's lyrical vision, but fails to reflect the largely industrialised contemporary landscape I live in. On closer inspection, though, the mise-en-scène of each image foregrounds not only tourist opportunities, linked to the venues for each game, but also aspects of England's history. We travel from Newcastle across the Tyne (urban industrialisation) towards the sweep of Hadrian's Wall (ancient history, resistance, endurance), to a child on Holy Island (faith and the early church), to green fields and cows (farming, our agricultural heritage, and as I later discover, 'England's sexiest farmer'), and beyond. Each shot is framed to offer another England – an English Rose selling ice-cream under a pier (the traditional British seaside), the Regency terraces of Bath (Austen's England), and that tea-and-cake Yorkshire scenario, featuring a carefully positioned tuba player (colliery brass bands, working-class culture), and so on. The chalk outline of a white horse in the distance, and the Tudor maze setting for a heraldic display of British vegetables are evidence of heritage and history. Some images are even witty: the Brighton mods posed *Quadrophenia*-style on their 'chariots of fire' seem to parody not only the historic 60s Mods and Rockers riots, but also Pete Townsend's 'Hope I die before I get old' (although on second thoughts, maybe those references only work for someone as old as me!)

Institutional Analysis

I decided to take a closer look at what the producers of this ad were aiming to do. The ad's director, Rich Thrift (amazing name!) for agency 5 Creative, which created the ad for VisitEngland (the national tourist agency), claims that:

The ambition was always to showcase England's most beautiful parts as a backdrop to some of its most colourful characters. These mixed in with the likes of former England rugby Captain, Martin Corry MBE, England Rugby Head Coach, Stuart Lancaster, Rugby World Cup 2014 winner Maggie Alphonsi MBE and official anthem singer and English soprano Laura Wright makes for a chest-clutching slice of good old-fashioned patriotism.

http://www.channel5creative.com/wordpress/visit-england-rwc-2015-discover-your-england/

Of course I had realised that the ad is about 'good old-fashioned patriotism', and with the hindsight of knowledge, I now understand that some participants in the ad are 'colourful' representatives of English rugby; but had I not acted on my own unease about what kind of England I was being 'sold', I might not have visited the VisitEngland site and made the connection.

What else do I learn about the context of this ad, then? That the technical specifications of this ad are very high – it was 'Shot predominantly on the Red Epic at 5K with drone footage captured via Panasonic G4 at 4K, ' and thus contains four or five times as many pixels as HD footage, so is particularly vivid and intense. But why is this important?

What's At Stake?

The VisitEngland site tells me that:

The Rugby World Cup 2015 is to be hosted in twelve venues across England!

We are entering into one of the most exciting times for English tourism and Rugby World Cup 2015 will be intrinsic in securing England's place as one of the most dynamic and beautiful destinations in the world.

Sport in this country is an incredibly powerful sales tool that has the power to attract millions of international visitors, and acts as an important catalyst to stimulate domestic visits from our vast home-grown fan-base.

So I now learn that the Rugby World Cup is apparently worth £2.1bn to the

British economy, and is a central plank of Britain's 'decade of sport', which also includes the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, the 2013 Rugby League World Cup, and the 2014 Tour de France. On its scale and nationwide reach:

This geographical spread is a gift for our industry enabling us to showcase our incredible assets as a world class tourist destination as has never been done before in order to boost tourism spend, stimulate the continued growth of the English visitor economy, and create all important jobs for England.

Through VisitEngland, I also discover an international version of this ad, substituting key international players in their national dress from the US and Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia, shot in the same locations as the original ad, and a final caption linking rugby inextricably to Great Britain. Finally I follow a Google trail to *The Telegraph*, where Charles Dance, aka *Game of Thrones'* Twyinn Lannister, gives an epic Shakespearean-style pre-match speech to assorted England heroes and regional players – including this rhetoric, which has echoes for me of Henry V's St Crispin's Day speech:

People from Newcastle, are you ready to show the world what a real Geordie welcome is?

Leeds, Manchester, Brighton, you are the backbone of this country. Ready to stand proud?

Cardiff, Gloucester, Milton Keynes – you are our shoulders, are you ready to carry a legion of fans who have travelled far and wide? – of course you are.

We are going to raise the roof on every stadium from the North East to the South West

This will be the biggest, the finest, most glorious Rugby World Cup ever. It's too big to miss.

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/rugbyunion/international/england/11075279/

So I'm beginning now to realise that this ad serves a broader economic purpose than either attracting random tourists to the British countryside, or rugby fans to the cup matches. It's actually about quite a bit more. This ad is part of a strategic business framework to grow the economy by creating a new 'All England' brand, which will focus on:

a robust understanding and appreciation of what England stands for, which can then be applied with value and consistency across a broad range of domestic and international English tourism stakeholders. The England brand will differentiate the destination from Scotland, Wales and Britain (although part of it) to offer a unique consumer proposition.

Whose England?

This takes me back to where I started – the sense that the ad is attempting to represent 'what England stands for'. This still bothers me; this is certainly not *my* England, although I can certainly appreciate its beauty, history and the skill with which it has been represented. More importantly, by drilling a bit deeper, I find mixed messages – that there's only one England, but there are also lots; that brand England *isn't* Scotland, Wales or Britain – which I already knew, but fragments any sense of a national identity for Great Britain; that rugby may be more economically significant than merely the muddy macho sport I had assumed... But most importantly I'm reminded of the fact that, as always with advertising, there is so much more than meets the eye, and that the vigilance I adopt as a media analyst needs to be with me at all times – even during the ad-breaks in *Broadchurch*.

Watch the ad at http://youtu.be/TqvnQuRTbV4

Jenny Grahame is Editor of *MediaMagazine*.

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Interview With Daniel Kleinman MM24
From Awareness To Action With Cartoon MM9
Phones 4U – Scary Girl MM39

MEMORY, ABSENCE AND LOSS

The meaning of the title sequence of The Missing

Emma Calway explores the significance of a TV title sequence which reveals more with each viewing.

TV credits and title sequences serve two purposes. Not only do they set the scene and introduce the story, they also need to engage and captivate the viewer. In book terms, they are the equivalent of the Preface or the Foreword. Because the same sequence introduces every episode, it needs to be resilient and intriguing, as the last thing the producers want to do is to alienate viewers from the outset. But how do you motivate audiences when the style and subject matter is dense, bleak and uncomfortable? I'm going to explore the media language choices, visual symbolism and editing of the titles for a particularly complex text, *The Missing*, a highly-acclaimed 2014 BBC TV drama which has already been recommissioned for a second series.

These credits are sombre, dark and haunting, in keeping with the series' central storyline about a missing child. The titles add another layer to the complex non-linear narrative. They not only make us want to know more, but also introduce us to the key themes: loss, absence and the end of innocence. And with each new episode, their meanings become clearer. By
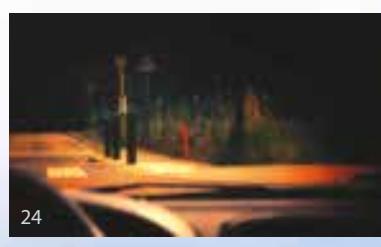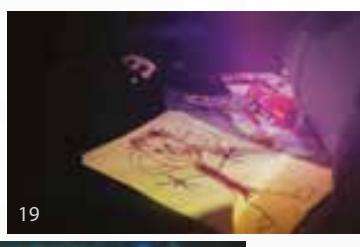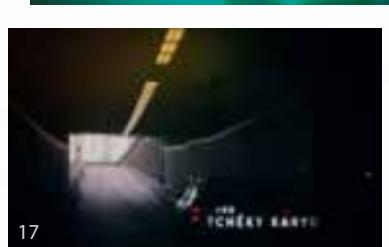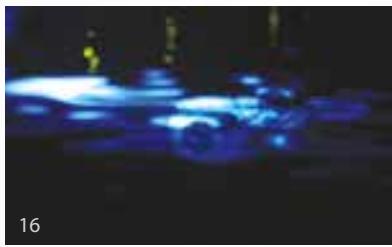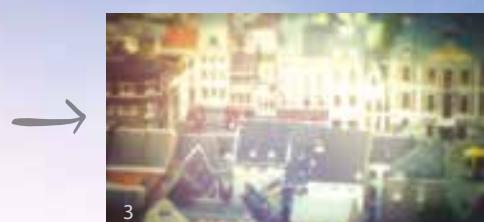
deconstructing the sequence second by second, we can see how this is done.

45 seconds, 31 shots

The 45-second sequence is constructed from 31 separate shots which all play out at disorientatingly differing speeds and angles. Blink and you will miss one. The effect is a fractured sequence that resembles a modern home movie containing clues about a family holiday. These credits urge the viewer to speculate, and to want to know more.

Much of the filming is shot from a child's perspective. This becomes

sinister by the second episode of the series, the point at which we realise the child is not in control.

The establishing shot places us with – or as – the victim: in a car, past a high-rise block, to the strain of an alarming chord like a jolt that knocks us. What we see is unclear; but we know that we are being driven somewhere. But who are we?

The titles begin to roll. It feels as though we are trapped whilst trying to make sense of the imagery we are absorbing. The non-diegetic soundtrack begins: a haunting tune called 'Come

Home', perfomed by Belgian post-rock band Amatorski, with bass notes synchronised to the edits to punctuate the sequence with doom-laden beats. We cut to a back-seat view of lampposts against a very blue sky, then a residential scene that we later learn to be France. Shot from a high angle, the buildings we see resemble dolls' houses. Sepia tones fill the frames as if looking at a photograph. At seven seconds the shot is filled with a flash of light as if the photos have been overexposed (potentially ruining them?).

Memory plays a big part in this story – this is important as the show features regular time shifts, with the plot unfolding simultaneously in the UK and France over two separate time frames.

At 6 seconds in, we cut to a low-angle shot looking up at the sun through

trees, implying vulnerability, then a child's hand sprawled across the camera. The perfect blue sky perhaps recalls happy childhood holidays – until at 8 seconds the shot switches to a bright blue swimming pool in which we are positioned under water, as if we are drowning. We endure a suffocating feeling of helplessness. At 10 seconds we are floating in the pool with half a neon rubber ring. The colours are lurid, with a nightmarish quality that assaults the senses. The camera foregrounds the rubber ring to 13 seconds, and then cuts back to the car.

The scene is greyer now; a blurred mise-en-scène fills the shot with shadows of two figures – one of which may be a child. These shadows possess a larger-than-life ghost-like quality. We then return to the bottom of the pool (signifying that we are out of our depth), then the edits pass almost subliminally so that it's hard to make out individual shots – perhaps the

confused cuts represent a struggle of some kind. The images then become harder-hitting: the shot of a spilt ice-cream melting in the sun is one we have all seen at weekend resorts, but this feels like another thing altogether; darker forces are at play. Another apparent struggle then plays out – which makes the viewer aware from the start that this is not going to be a feel-good series, reinforcing its post-watershed midweek scheduling.

At 13 seconds we cut to a child holding a grown up's hand. We later learn this to be Oliver, the 'missing' subject of the show. At 17 seconds there is drinking (later revealed to be a coping mechanism of his bereaved father, Tony – played by James Nesbitt) – and perhaps dancing. The blurred credits become brighter at 18 seconds to show an outside dining scene, empty – where are the diners, and what has caused them to leave their tables? At 20 seconds we return to the pool-

side, which we later learn becomes the scene of Oliver's abduction. At 21 seconds in we return to the reflection of the gaudy, yellow rubber ring where we float until at 23 seconds a poignant image fills the screen: a pink teddy bear strewn aside on the dashboard of the car, overshadowed by something darker – literally and metaphorically – that fills the bottom of the screen. Bright lights and a dark motorway suggest transportation once again – but where we are going remains unknown.

Warring binaries are at play throughout the credits, as in the series itself. The list is extensive: hope versus pessimism; good versus evil; life versus death. These binaries create energy and fill the hole created by absence.

At 26 seconds we are placed in the driving seat of the car emerging from what appears to be a motorway tunnel into an empty daylight street towards a series of familiar arches – Paris? London? At 27 seconds the image of a bridge through a rainy car window gives the viewer both the feeling of knowledge and also impotence. Once again it's reminiscent of days out in the car when you are a child, coupled with that familiar sense of being trapped.

At 28 seconds from the back seat we cut to a child's drawing of a grinning stick man with big ears strewn alongside a fire engine and a pirate book. This cartoonish drawing becomes a recurrent symbol of both hope and loss in the series' narrative; at this point, it seems out of place without its rightful owner, and the smiling stick man

almost seems to jeer at us. The image then fades into an urban block of flats; again we see the momentary shadow of someone but before we can make it out it dissolves into a close up of a swing in the snow (again empty).

At 31 seconds the camera cuts to a split-second close up of a child's image of two stick men holding hands in the condensation of the car window – condensation dribbles down the image, suggesting it is a recent drawing; raindrops on the window are suggestive of tears. The next, slower shot is piercing sunlight through a fluttering lace curtain – shroud-like, or veiling the truth, perhaps?

The car appears once more and the lurid yellow has turned garish green. The empty street scene is seen through the car windscreen; and in the grey woods there is a notable absence of colour.

This shot is particularly unnerving as the car creeps slowly and we scan the scene. In this shot – for the first time – we feel like the perpetrator.

Absence is one of *The Missing*'s major themes. In the credits absence is made all the more poignant by placing symbolic objects that only make sense when put together with their rightful owner – except that apart from anonymous limbs, there are no identifiable human beings present at all. We long to meet the owner of these items. As we start to watch the show, absence grows between the two main protagonists as they fight to discover what has happened to their only child. By negating the subject's presence entirely from the opening seconds, it is felt all the more strongly.

At 35 seconds we are unexpectedly outside the car, and in menacing grey woods, as a shadowy fox slinks left to right out of shot. At 38 seconds the setting sun dissolves into an aerial view of the pool of a holiday villa. The shot pans up then dissolves into a reaching hand. But whose hand is it? And what is it trying to tell us?

That familiar hand reaches out again (for help?) and at 42 seconds it disappears as the title *The Missing* fills

the screen. The colours turn from blue to white. It feels almost transcendental, suggesting life being extinguished but also peace.

Meanings And Absences

This multi-layered sequence introduces important themes and weaves them into the story. As in a dream, we subconsciously take in these themes and allegories. We try and make sense of them, but things become clearer as the story plays out. The producers of this show have cleverly created credits that do not give the plot away, yet create the mood of the piece, and over repeated viewings gradually make narrative sense. We yearn to know more – just like Oliver's parents. We struggle to make sense of events – just like Oliver. And by positioning us as the perpetrator, the missing child and the desperate parents, we become heavily invested in the fate of them all.

Emma Calway is content writer at My Big Fat Brighton Weekend and Brighton Holiday Homes.

http://www.peterandersonstudio.co.uk/the_html/title_missing

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THE WORLD OF
MOCKINGJAY

Ideology, dystopia and propaganda

Controversial, thought-provoking and hugely successful, *The Hunger Games* trilogy addresses media saturation, reality TV, celebrity culture and ideology. Lydia Kendall thinks the latest film *Mockingjay* takes a step further politically, and argues that media theory and concepts can help unpick the radical politics that lie beneath its surface.

In this article I will analyse the dystopian representation of capitalist society in the latest *Hunger Games* film and the series as whole, drawing attention to elements where media theory can be most usefully applied.

The Context

In the dystopian society of Panem, a post-apocalyptic America, thirteen districts exist purely to serve the capital city of the country, named 'The Capitol'. Every district is poor; people struggle to survive on small amounts of food and minimum wages, while they work to provide coal, technology, food, power and other services to the Capitol. Each year two children between the ages of 11-18 are sent from each district to partake in *The Hunger Games*, an annual event that involves forcing each child to kill one another until only one is remaining. The Games serve to keep the districts under control, as punishment for previous rebellions, and to warn them to stay in line.

Using Marxist theory to assess this representation, we can see that the ruling class keep the poor under control through civic means; armies of 'Peacekeepers' are sent to control each district and to punish anyone who tries to defy the authority, whilst providing them with so little money that many are forced to break the strict laws to find means of keeping their families alive. Punishment stations are set up in the squares for anyone who disobeys a rule, and electric fences surround the woods in one of the districts to cut off any means of gathering or hunting for food. This physical withdrawal of the means to survive, combined with the public abuse of those that step out of line, are 'civic state apparatuses'.

Ideology

But there is also a vital ideological element to the way Panem is run; those in power control ideas, as well as resources. The world is caught under the dictatorship of President Snow, a man who believes more in his own supreme leadership than the people of his country. He invests his creativity into The Games, he smells of blood and roses, and he purposefully aims to obliterate any hopes of rebellion. He believes that hope is the 'only thing stronger than fear', and he deals with rebels by spreading fear among the districts. He mainly does this through propaganda and the media, using constant repeats of previous 'Hunger Games' and airing the current ones live on TV to distract the masses from organising a revolution. As Tim Stanley puts it,

The Games are essentially everything we'd like *I'm a Celebrity* to be.

In *Catching Fire* (the second film in the series), as threats of rebellion rumbled, Katniss Everdeen, the symbol of it all, was shown only in her wedding dress, to identify her as a loyal Capitol citizen and thus destroy any hope in the districts that she might be a force for change, whilst broadcasting executions to embed fear without anybody realising.

On the other hand, the 'Hunger Games' is a highly anticipated event for the Capitol itself. When the main characters, Katniss and Peeta Mellark were sent into the Games, they both survived by posing as 'star-crossed lovers', which the Capitol lapped up very easily, and which proved to be an escape route for both of them.

A Revolution That Most Definitely Will Be Televised?

In the newest film to hit our screens, *Mockingjay* Part 1, described by Mark Kermode as 'a spiky media satire about the making and marketing of a revolution that most definitely will be televised', Katniss has just escaped The Games themselves, and has been brought to District 13, a place she was unaware existed as the Capitol has kept it under wraps.

District 13 has nuclear weapons, a huge threat to the Capitol, and so an agreement was made that as long as they did not touch the capital city of Panem, no one would know they existed. It is now situated underground,

and nothing of the invisible District is mentioned in the media. As The Games fall apart, however, the Capitol takes Peeta there, as their only weapon against Katniss. He is tortured, but his memories are also changed, forcing him to believe that Katniss is his target for murder; in this instance civic and ideological power are combined. Katniss has become the *Mockingjay*, a symbol for the rebellion that has been waiting to regenerate itself for seventy-five years. In the previous film, *Catching Fire*, a conversation takes place in which Katniss sees hidden films of events in different districts whereby peacekeepers were quelling a riot, and says 'the people were fighting back'. As a symbol of resistance, she is encouraging the people in the Districts to stand up, to fight alongside her, to overthrow the Capitol and to beat their oppressors at their own game.

Symbols of Resistance

According to Marxist theory, the people will always find a way to rebel and to resist power, often not through civic means such as voting and campaigning within the political system as it is, but through organising and connecting in other ways, such as citizen journalism, social media and the use of symbols – which is what the story of *Mockingjay* revolves around.

These symbols can be new, or subversions of existing ones; in this case it is a recreation of the Mockingjay pin worn by Katniss during both her visits to The Games. In terms of semiotic theory, it is a signifier of hope, of strength and of togetherness. Mockingjays are birds that copy each other's sounds to pass on messages from one another. This symbol passes on the message of hope, of rebellion, and the remembrance of tributes fallen in all seventy-five annual Hunger Games.

Propaganda

Across the trilogy, each film has so far foregrounded a different theme. *Mockingjay* focuses on the media and the use of propaganda, which makes it the most interesting to study as a media text. Since *Catching Fire*, much has changed in regards to power, society and the media. The lines between the powerful and powerless are more blurred than ever, and although the Capitol still holds most of the power, it is slowly crumbling as people in the Districts begin to stand together and respond to the need to fight against the society that has been set in stone for all these years.

A series of 'propos' – propaganda videos produced by Katniss and her team – inform the districts of the existence of District 13, the need for a rebellion and the current state of each district. For example, a propo hacked from the Capitol system is broadcast live; it shows the bombing of a hospital, which portrays the Capitol in its true light and encourages more people to rebel.

A Satire on Celebrity Culture?

At the beginning of *The Hunger Games* trilogy, Katniss was merely aware of the media surrounding her, but now she is learning how to manipulate them. It takes time, however; she lets her team dress her up and write her lines, and they do not get a true response until she's out in the middle of a real-life attack from the Capitol.

This is a satirical response to another important element of Media Studies – celebrity culture. As Kermode said:

[Katniss] finds herself being fashioned as a poster girl for the uprising styled and manipulated by the underground in the same way that the Capitol once dolled her up for TV dismemberment.

It seems that District 13 is playing The Capitol at its own game and, to quote the film itself, she's 'going to be the best-dressed rebel in history', as the power of her celebrity is subverted. Whereas once she was used to represent the 'false consciousness' of the Games (another Marxist idea), she has now become a symbol of radicalism. This raises questions about whether appearance really matters; but if there's one thing this film teaches

us about manipulating the media, it's that it does. It seems Hunger Games' attire just wasn't enough to inspire the citizens of Panem to rebel, but now that she's become a symbol for rebellion, the people keep fighting back. Meanwhile, The Capitol still uses the captive Peeta as a weapon, forcing him to warn citizens of Panem of the consequences of a rebellion and beg them to back down, whilst emotionally abusing Katniss. In the lead-up to the film's cinema release, a series of Capitol propaganda posters were released, saluting the citizens of each district and thus representing themselves as a caring community; the reality of the situation is that they are in fact ideologically led by the idea that the rich Capitol are the consumers, and the starving districts are their providers.

Reading the Mockingjay

So, what has changed in the newest film of *The Hunger Games* trilogy? The power is spreading, The Capitol is losing control with every airing of District 13

propos, and nationwide the people of Panem are becoming aware of the problems of their dictatorial society. It is no longer invincible, thanks to Katniss Everdeen, a girl from District 12 who refuses to take part in their games, and who has learnt not only the importance of the media for her newly-born rebellion, but also how to manipulate them. Civic means of control are becoming increasingly useless, as the peacekeepers situated in each district are unable to handle the mass of people forcing themselves against them, and the time has passed for new laws. Where the Games themselves were once both a distraction from the problems faced in Panem, and a means of control through fear, the only strategy left for Capitol use is propaganda – and even this is slowly eroded each time District 13 hacks the system. Katniss may be a target, but given the awareness that killing her would result in a rebellion run by a martyr, there is little the Capitol can do except provide the means of terror and distraction. As more and more people become willing to fight, there are fewer and fewer strategies available to destroy the image of the Mockingjay.

More Than 'Just a Film'

To summarise, *Mockingjay* can be enjoyed as a 'just a film' in its own right, or a satirical comment on our own

capitalist society, projected into the future in the classic dystopian tradition. But the latest film in the series takes this to a new level, with its satirical comment on media power, subversion and resistance.

Lydia Kendall is a GCSE Media student at King's Norton Girls School, Birmingham.

Follow It Up

| Mark Kermode review |
| --- |
| http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/nov/23/hunger-games-*Mockingjay*-part-1-one-review |
| Stanley, T (2014) Left or Right: Whose Side is *The Hunger Games* on? T*he Telegraph* 21.11.14 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/film-news/11245074/Left-or-right-whose-side-is-The-Hunger-Games-on.html |

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| Lionsgate – Can Katniss Everdene Save It MM50 |
| --- |
| The Gender Politics Of Survival MM44 |

THE ENCODING/DECODING MODEL
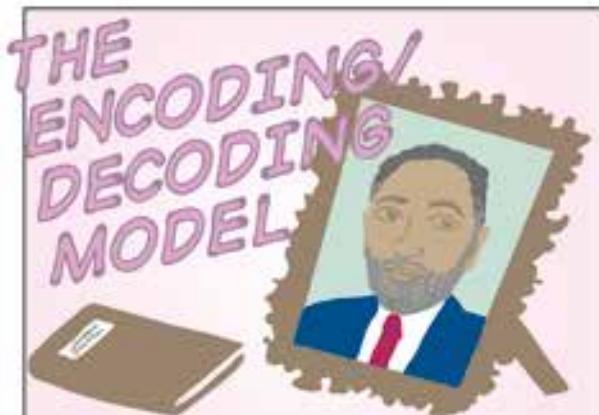
STUART HALL'S INFLUENTIAL ENCODING/DECODING MODEL OF MASS COMMUNICATION (1973) DEVELOPED FROM SEMIOLOGY AND EXISTING MODELS OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION.

HALL'S INNOVATION WAS TO FOCUS ON AN ACTIVE AUDIENCE'S INTERPRETATION OR 'DECODING' OF THE MESSAGES 'ENCODED' BY THE PRODUCERS OF MEDIA TEXTS.
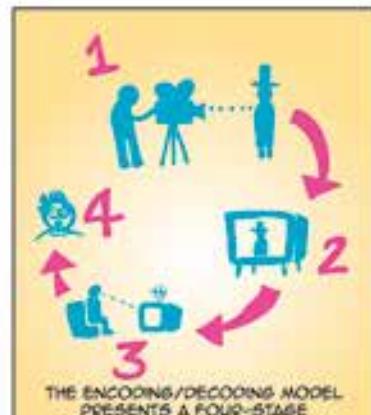
THE ENCODING/DECODING MODEL PRESENTS A FOUR-STAGE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION: PRODUCTION, CIRCULATION, DISTRIBUTION/CONSUMPTION, AND REPRODUCTION.

YOUR NEW REALITY SERES MA'AM...

"INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES OF BROADCASTING ... ORGANIZED RELATIONS AND TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURES ARE REQUIRED" FOR THE PRODUCTION STAGE. FOR HALL, BROADCASTING REPRESENTS AN "IDEOLOGICAL APPARATUS" FORMED OF PROFESSIONALS "LINKED WITH THE DEFINING ELITE," ENCODING DOMINANT VALUES.
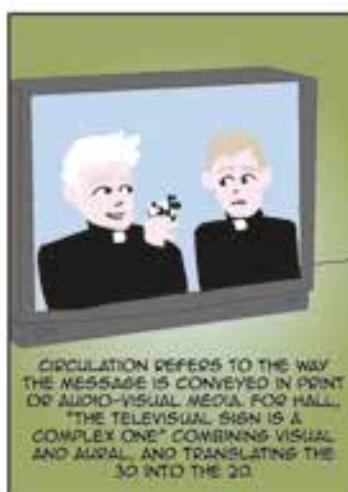
CIRCULATION REFERS TO THE WAY THE MESSAGE IS CONVEYED IN PRINT OR AUDIO-VISUAL MEDIA. FOR HALL, "THE TELEVISUAL SIGN IS A COMPLEX ONE" COMBINING VISUAL AND AURAL, AND TRANSLATING THE 3D INTO THE 2D.

DAIEMGMA CONUNDRUM
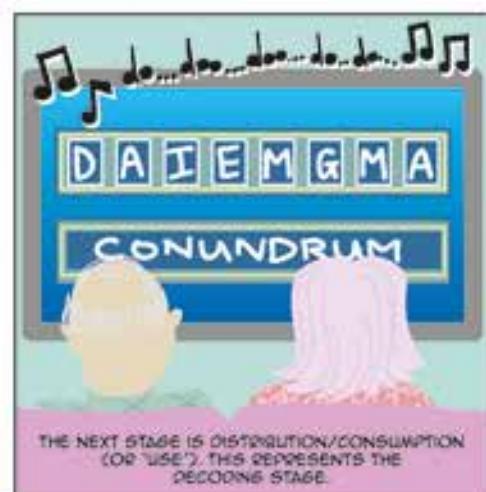
THE NEXT STAGE IS DISTRIBUTION/CONSUMPTION (OR 'USE'). THIS REPRESENTS THE DECODING STAGE.

BAM!

THERE'S NOTHING ON TV!!

FINALLY, REPRODUCTION IS THE ACTION TAKEN BY THE RECEIVER: A TEXT CAN HAVE AN EFFECT, USE, OR FULFIL A NEED. HOWEVER, BEFORE THIS HAPPENS A MESSAGE MUST BE "APPROPRIATED AS A MEANINGFUL DISCOURSE AND BE MEANINGFULLY DECODED."

A UNION FLAG IS DENOTED ... ER, I MEAN A RED CROSS ON A DIAGONAL BLUE CROSS WITH SOME WHITE BITS....
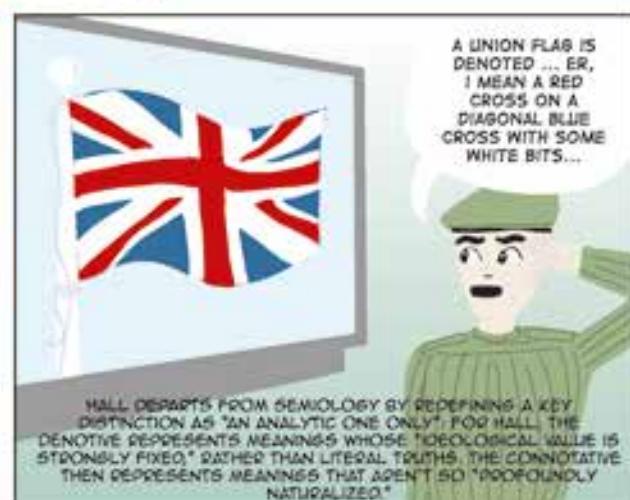
HALL DEPARTS FROM SEMIOLOGY BY REDEFINING A KEY DISTINCTION AS "AN ANALYTIC ONE ONLY": FOR HALL, THE DENOTIVE REPRESENTS MEANINGS WHOSE "IDEOLOGICAL VALUE IS STRONGLY FIXED," RATHER THAN LITERAL TRUTHS. THE CONNOTATIVE THEN REPRESENTS MEANINGS THAT AREN'T SO "PROFOUNDLY NATURALIZED."

HALL IDENTIFIES "THREE HYPOTHETICAL POSITIONS FROM WHICH DECODINGS OF A TELEVISUAL DISCOURSE MAY BE CONSTRUCTED": THE "DOMINANT-HEGEMONIC POSITION", THE "NEGOTIATED CODE OR POSITION", AND THE "OPPOSITIONAL CODE".

CNN E4 ? SKY ? BBC

DOMINANT OR 'PREFERRED' READINGS "HAVE THE INSTITUTIONAL/POLITICAL/ IDEOLOGICAL ORDER IMPRINTED IN THEM." HERE, THE VIEWER BROADLY RECEIVES THE MESSAGE THE TEXT'S PRODUCERS INTENDED.

AGAIN! AGAIN!
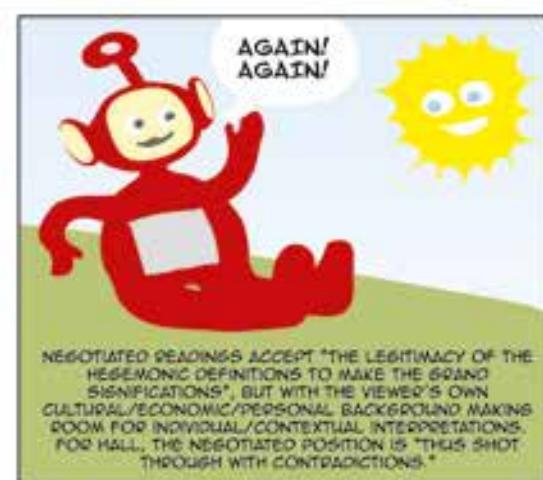
NEGOTIATED READINGS ACCEPT "THE LEGITIMACY OF THE HEGEMONIC DEFINITIONS TO MAKE THE GRAND SIGNIFICATIONS", BUT WITH THE VIEWER'S OWN CULTURAL/ECONOMIC/PERSONAL BACKGROUND MAKING ROOM FOR INDIVIDUAL/CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATIONS. FOR HALL, THE NEGOTIATED POSITION IS "THUS SHOT THROUGH WITH CONTRADICTIONS."

FASCISTS!

HALL'S OPPOSITIONAL READINGS ARE SIMILAR TO UMBERTO ECO'S CONCEPT OF 'ABERRANT DECODING' (1965): HERE THE VIEWER MAY 'UNDERSTAND THE LITERAL AND CONNOTATIVE INFLECTION GIVEN BY A DISCOURSE BUT ... DECODE THE MESSAGE IN A GLOBALLY CONTRARY WAY'.
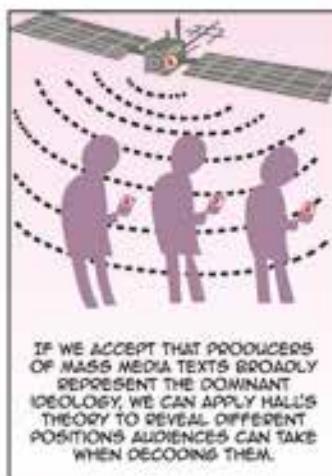
IF WE ACCEPT THAT PRODUCERS OF MASS MEDIA TEXTS BROADLY REPRESENT THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY, WE CAN APPLY HALL'S THEORY TO REVEAL DIFFERENT POSITIONS AUDIENCES CAN TAKE WHEN DECODING THEM.

TED, AM I IN THE WRONG PANEL?

GAME OVER!
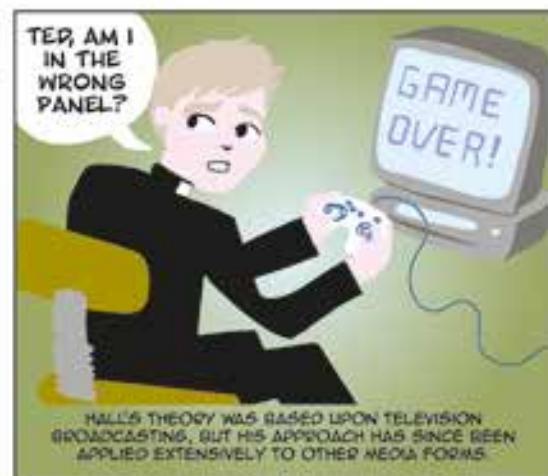
HALL'S THEORY WAS BASED UPON TELEVISION BROADCASTING, BUT HIS APPROACH HAS SINCE BEEN APPLIED EXTENSIVELY TO OTHER MEDIA FORMS

PRIVATE EYE — WOMAN HAS BABY

IN AUGUST 2013, PRIVATE EYE MAGAZINE'S FRONT COVER POKED FUN AT THE NEWS COVERAGE OF THE BIRTH OF PRINCE GEORGE.

LOL!
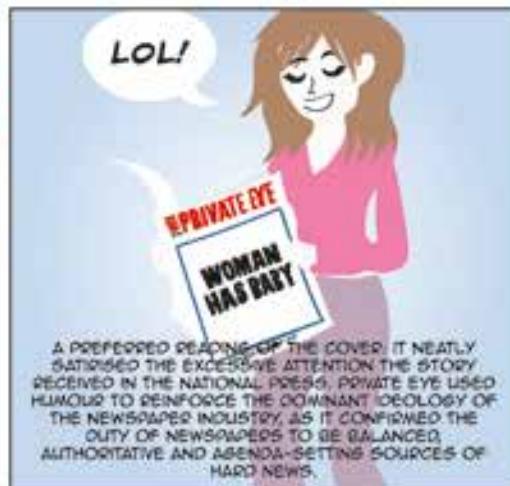
A PREFERRED READING OF THE COVER: IT NEATLY SATIRISED THE EXCESSIVE ATTENTION THE STORY RECEIVED IN THE NATIONAL PRESS. PRIVATE EYE USED HUMOUR TO REINFORCE THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGY OF THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY, AS IT CONFIRMED THE DUTY OF NEWSPAPERS TO BE BALANCED, AUTHORITATIVE AND AGENDA-SETTING SOURCES OF HARD NEWS.

A NEGOTIATED READING: THE FRONT PAGE EFFECTIVELY MOCKS OTHER NEWSPAPERS AND PRESENTS THE EYE AS 'ABOVE' SUCH DISTORTIONS OF THE NEWS AGENDA, BUT IT NEGATIVELY REPRESENTS WOMEN AS IT BELITTLES BOTH THE BIRTH OF A HEALTHY BABY AND THE SACRIFICES MADE BY ITS MOTHER.
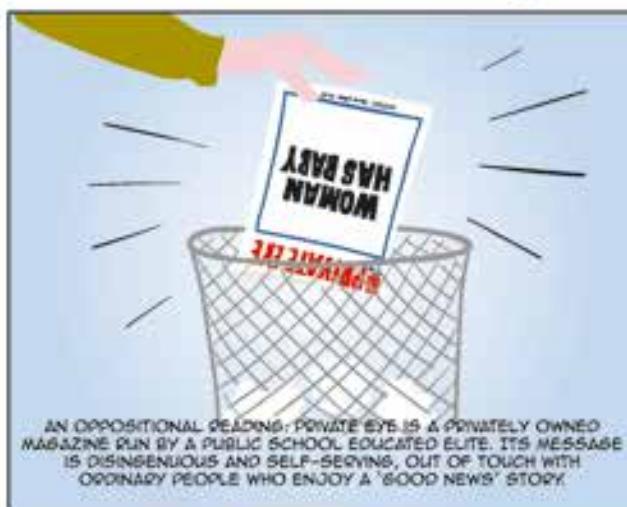
AN OPPOSITIONAL READING: PRIVATE EYE IS A PRIVATELY OWNED MAGAZINE RUN BY A PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATED ELITE. ITS MESSAGE IS DISINGENUOUS AND SELF-SERVING, OUT OF TOUCH WITH ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO ENJOY A 'GOOD NEWS' STORY.

READ ALL ABOUT IT!
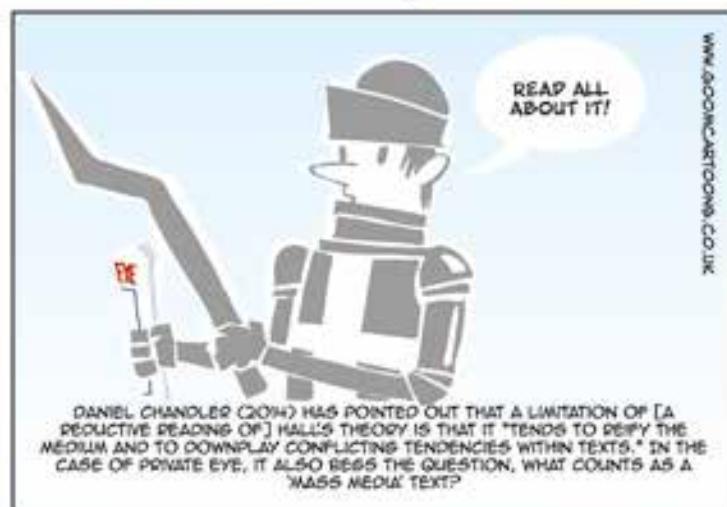
DANIEL CHANDLER (2014) HAS POINTED OUT THAT A LIMITATION OF [A REDUCTIVE READING OF] HALL'S THEORY IS THAT IT "TENDS TO REIFY THE MEDIUM AND TO DOWNPLAY CONFLICTING TENDENCIES WITHIN TEXTS." IN THE CASE OF PRIVATE EYE, IT ALSO BEGS THE QUESTION, WHAT COUNTS AS A 'MASS MEDIA' TEXT?

BBC

YES **NO**

SO THE ENCODING/DECODING MODEL RUNS THE RISK OF PUTTING MEDIA TEXTS ON A PEDESTAL, AND THEREBY POSITIONING READERS AS CONFORMING OR RESISTING.

PREFERRED — OPPOSITIONAL
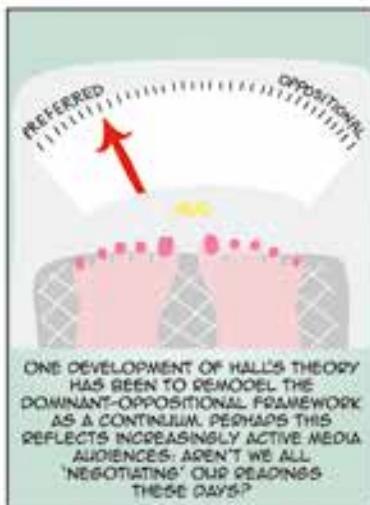
ONE DEVELOPMENT OF HALL'S THEORY HAS BEEN TO REMODEL THE DOMINANT-OPPOSITIONAL FRAMEWORK AS A CONTINUUM. PERHAPS THIS REFLECTS INCREASINGLY ACTIVE MEDIA AUDIENCES: AREN'T WE ALL 'NEGOTIATING' OUR READINGS THESE DAYS?

SO A PREFERRED READING OF GOGGLEBOX WOULD BE...
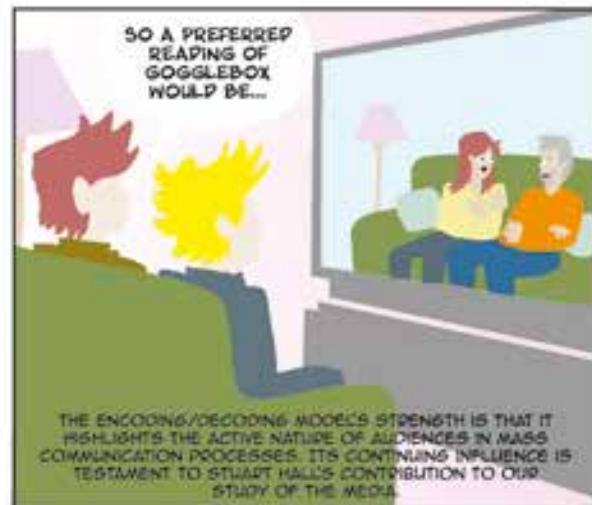
THE ENCODING/DECODING MODEL'S STRENGTH IS THAT IT HIGHLIGHTS THE ACTIVE NATURE OF AUDIENCES IN MASS COMMUNICATION PROCESSES. ITS CONTINUING INFLUENCE IS TESTAMENT TO STUART HALL'S CONTRIBUTION TO OUR STUDY OF THE MEDIA.

NIGHTCRAWLER

A SATIRE ON NEWS VALUES

Nightcrawler is a 2014 American neo-noir satirical crime thriller written and directed by first-timer Dan Gilroy, starring Jake Gyllenhall, Riz Ahmed and Rene Russo. Owen Davey suggests it sheds disturbing light on the coverage of real-life news events like the Charlie Hebdo massacre – and on the cynical values of the US news broadcasters' search for ratings, which increasingly influence our own news coverage.

A few weeks ago I watched a downloaded copy of *Nightcrawler* at home; I wish now I'd seen it on a big screen. A week later I watched as rolling BBC news aired, at great length, the hand-held footage shot from a car within a convoy of journalists who were chasing the French police, who were in turn chasing the Charlie Hebdo murderers around the motorways north of Paris. Having watched *Nightcrawler* the week before, I now viewed these images differently.

That's what a good satire can do to you; it can change the way you see something, forever. Once you've seen a few episodes of Armando Iannucci's BBC series *The Thick Of It*, can you ever again view British party politicians publicly worming their way out of their latest gaffe without imagining the curse-driven omnishambles that led them there, or the bollocking they'll get afterwards?

In January the whole world watched as news crews chased the French police, and all I could think of was: 'The news editors must be *loving* this'. Because a really good satire makes you sceptical, even at times like that; it makes you mistrust those in power, be they politician or journalist.

Nightcrawler is about a young man called Lou Bloom, played with unnerving conviction by Jake Gyllenhaal, superb casting not for his skill alone but also for his innocent, puppydog, sympathetic face, warped by a gauntness that hints at his character's feral desperation. This is a man who, in the opening scene, lies with practised confidence to a

security-guard when caught stealing scrap metal, before rendering him unconscious – or maybe dead – with that same practised confidence the moment he realises that the game is up.

This is a clever and unusual way to introduce a leading man; it's as if the film's writer and director, Dan Gilroy, doesn't care if you know from the start what lengths Bloom will go to. He doesn't care if you want a story arc, a redemption or a downfall, because this film isn't about that. It's about the real world; and in the real world, he suggests, bad men are in the lead, and crime pays and pays and keeps on paying.

But Bloom is charismatic, driven, obviously poor – and you never get a hint of his sob-story. He tries time after time to convince people of his worth, and is always knocked back; a young man shunned from society for lack of money or status, who teaches himself everything from the internet. Soon you're rooting for Bloom; indeed, you

are Bloom. And when he witnesses a local news crew videoing a car-crash, you watch with eagerness as he steals a bike to pay for a camera and a police radio, and begins learning the police-codes to find out where the good newsworthy incidents are.

The best ones – as you find out from Nina, the veteran news editor to whom Bloom sells his first gory tape – are the violent attacks on white people, in the safe, middle-class neighbourhoods of LA. That's what scares people the most, and that's what sells the news. So that's what Bloom gives her.

The film portrays a world that it is systematically racist and sexist, rewarding winners, regardless of a competition's worth. Bloom, although poor, is still a white man, and through determination, confidence and manipulation, he begins to rise. He hires an employee, played by Britain's own Riz Ahmed (no rookie to satire after Chris Morris' *Four Lions*), who he begins to exploit and demean in the same way he once was himself; worse,

in fact. He begins to blackmail veteran news editor Nina, perfectly played by Rene Russo, a woman trapped by the threat of forced early retirement if she doesn't keep the ratings up. The heated arguments between Nina, Bloom and the editorial crew about what's *too far* and the desperation to stay on top of the ratings no matter *how far* are what really stay with you as a viewer.
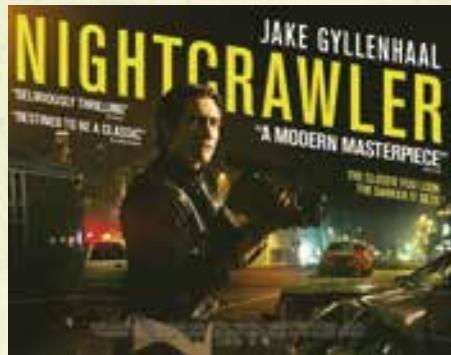
News Ratings: Sensation And Fear

If you've ever watched American news broadcasts (such as Fox News), you'll know how sensationalist they can be; and if you've ever spoken to sensible Americans, you'll know how much they value the calm objective approach

that they associate with the BBC's coverage. However, despite its far stricter regulation, our UK news, now clamouring to feed us 24/7, seems to be heading across the pond in its aesthetic and values. As I watched the BBC journalists chase the French police around the French motorways, I could almost hear the editors shouting in their ears, or the drivers swearing as they tried to get round one road block after the next, overtaking one news van after another, trying to be the first crew onto the grizzly scene.

Good Satire = OTT Caricatures

Nightcrawler is about the American dream, and chasing ambulances is a perfectly grim analogy for what that has become in its modern guise of capitalist competition: a ratings race that one must win, even if its prize is a car wreck. It may sound over-the-top, but that's what good satire is. A good satire pushes what we already know just that bit further. By most accounts, politicians don't really run around constantly swearing at each other, but *The Thick Of It* uses this

caricature to shine a light on how believable that might be. And if, as a smart and media-savvy young viewer, you can completely buy into a caricature such as Malcolm Tucker, or indeed Lou Bloom, then you know that no matter how worrying or absurd, that caricature can't be too far from the truth.

Satire: An American Tradition

Nightcrawler lands like the next stepping-stone along the great cinematic tradition of American satire.

We Brits tend to make two assumptions about Americans: first, that they think they're the best, and secondly, that they have no sense of irony. But that doesn't explain the massive US popularity of the wincingly ironic anti-Korean war (read: anti-Vietnam war) television series *M*A*S*H* during the 1970s, or the even more massive popularity of the smartest cartoon satire ever made, *South Park*.

The fact is that *Nightcrawler* isn't a 'one-off' satire. It inherits much from other American films such as

Being There (1979), a story in which a simpleton butler – heartbreakingly well played by comedy legend Peter Sellers – is mistaken for a man of status and a viable political candidate, eventually hoisted into presidential office by the illuminati (think George W. Bush). Or *Network* (1976), a brilliantly entertaining story of a prime-time American news anchor who has a breakdown on air, and forcibly takes over the news station, his live anti-establishment ravings becoming a huge hit with the ratings, convincing the network to give him his own prime-time show.

These American classics of satire, despite their humour and absurdity, manage still to be blisteringly real and disconcerting. However, despite the obvious comparisons with *Network*, *Nightcrawler* has most in common with the more modern *American Psycho* (2000), a depiction of a banking executive who murders in his spare time. Both films depict men without

humanity, men competing within industries which we are led to believe are the pillars of our society.

Today's generation is wise to the subtleties of the media, and therefore contemporary satires must be subtler, more real and darker than ever. As I write this, *Nightcrawler* has already begun to miss out on the big awards. But it will become a cult classic because it has captured the sense of a particular time and place in the history of our media and our society: a tipping point between being good and being *the best*. But don't worry too much – like all good satires, it's a fun ride down.

Owen Davey is a former A Level Film student, a graduate in Digital Arts, a filmmaker and curator of www.video-strolls.com
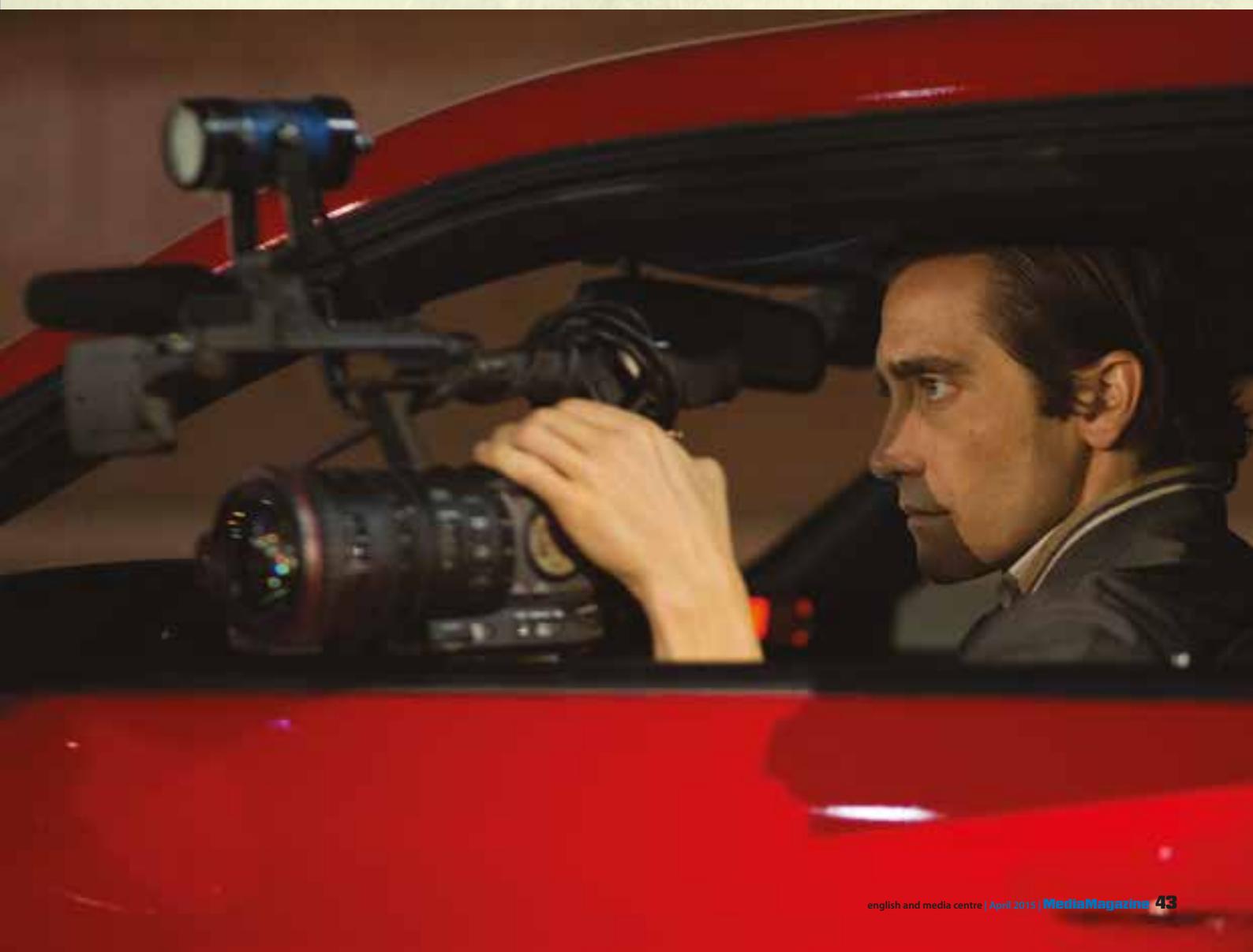
THE LAST OF US

Or the first of a new generation of games?

A PS4 game has been hailed as 'the most riveting, emotionally resonant story-driven epic of this generation' – unusual language for an action-adventure survival horror video game. Darren Meltzer-Harvey suggests that the power of *The Last of Us* lies in its brave and complex approach to gender representation in a genre not known for its sensitivity.

Back in 2011, gamers were treated to a teaser trailer for a video game, developed by Naughty Dog and published by Sony Entertainment that would change the gaming landscape forever. The teaser aired before the Spike Video Game Awards. It depicted a world in the aftermath of a cataclysmic event, and followed the story of two characters; a middle-aged man and a teenage girl. The cinematic feel, the rich 3D environment, and the characters wowed viewers, and immediately set the internet alight with rumours and trailer reviews.

The most interesting aspect of the reveal was the focus on narrative,

character, and the tease of the haunting soundtrack, produced by Gustavo Santaolalla, an Academy Award-winning composer. It all felt very much like a campaign for a blockbuster film. The iconography conjured up images from *28 Days Later*, *I am Legend*, *The Road* and *War of the Worlds*. Naughty Dog had clearly taken a Hollywood genre that was becoming tired, and created something original – a cross-platform hybridisation.

Marketing

Following on from the initial teaser trailer, Naughty Dog launched *The Last of Us* website, created social media pages, and released screenshots that gave gamers an insight into some of the characters and their environments, and teased with enigmas that hinted at the possible narrative. In 2012, at E3 (Electronic Entertainment Expo, the annual video game trade fair at the Los Angeles Convention Centre), a game-play demo was released. Gamers got to see one of the lead characters, Joel, working his way through part of a dilapidated city accompanied by Ellie, a very strong and spunky young female. The focus on both characters and their personalities highlighted that this game's target market was both male and female gamers.

In 2013 the first TV spots were released, shown immediately before AMC's *The Walking Dead*, a show that had massively influenced the game's creators. One of them was a live action trailer with a voiceover from Ellie, featuring a man gradually changing into Joel, whilst Ellie asked direct questions, such as 'Could you do the right thing?'. Involving the audience in this way helps to build a rapport

with the characters before play begins. Gamers are asked questions that test their morals and imply that there will be an element of choice in the game; Joel will be the gamer's avatar in this simulation.

In February of 2014, *The Last of Us: Left Behind*, a DLC (downloadable content) episode was released. The extra content developed Ellie's back story, and shed light on her friendship with Riley. Much like the feature game, the DLC was critically acclaimed for its substance and focus on a very human story of companionship and love.

Challenging Representations

Today's gaming landscape could arguably be described as a highly-gendered minefield of gratuitous female objectification and unrelenting male-centricity. The majority of games to date pride themselves on heroically depicting the events surrounding their fearless and fun male protagonist(s). A female's principal role in these games is to act as the prize, to move the plot forward, and/or to offer gamers some form of visual gratification. We need look no further than the *Grand Theft Auto* games for examples of scantily-clad females who are portrayed as materialist, stupid, and in some cases, sex workers.

The Last of Us has taken complex characters grounded in reality and crafted a world around them. Each character has strengths and weaknesses, and each character makes choices that they believe to be for the best. There is a strong emphasis on survival and looking after 'your own'. One of the strongest representations is that of women.

The gamer's first experience within the game is to wake as a teenage tomboy, in a bedroom adorned with football trophies and science paraphernalia. For the first 10 minutes, gamers play as Sarah, Joel's daughter, the shorthaired girl with the rock band T-shirt. Her fear becomes the gamer's fear as they scramble through the opening sequence, until to the gamer's complete horror Sarah is shot dead in cold blood by the very soldiers who should be protecting citizens. This game is a cynical representation of society facing a catastrophe. In this opening scene alone, gamers have probably spent more time as a female character than they have throughout their whole gaming life.

In the next scene we play as her father, Joel, and are introduced to Tess. Tess defies game lore by appearing, make-up-less, in clothes that are practical and not bursting at the cleavage. Straightaway, she is established as the alpha character by commanding Joel and taking control of the situation – Joel respectfully answers 'yes mam'. Tess's introduction defies her gender stereotype; she is seen to drink neat spirits, and to be both physically and mentally strong and ruthless. To reinforce her strength, it is she who guides the gamer through the first part of Joel's journey. She offers tips, provides background information, and saves the gamer on numerous occasions. Thus, trust and reliance is built around her; her gender has no relevance, she is not sexually objectified, and does not appear to form any romantic attachments. Tess's character defies the notion of a patriarchal society – she is part of a new world based on survival of the fittest. Evidence of this stereotype-smashing character can be seen when Joel describes the mission as her 'crusade'. She then goes on to sacrifice

herself to save Joel and Ellie for the greater good.

The Power of Ellie

Ellie is undoubtedly one of the strongest and most popular characters. Never before in gaming has a character been so well developed; and never before has a developer been brave enough to lean so heavily on a female who is not subjected to the male gaze at any point. Ellie is abrasive, uses expletives frequently, and is physically and mentally strong. More importantly, she is a survivor, and a product of the world around her. She is also the potential saviour for humankind and the narrative would not exist without her. Her impact on the people around her is a very important factor: she gives people hope – not only for humankind, but for the individual. In Joel's case she helps him on a pathway to build meaningful relationships; his life now has meaning beyond just surviving. This too is the case for Tess.

Ellie's appearance, like the other characters, is practical. She wears tattered jeans, a long-sleeved vest and a red t-shirt; her hair is tied back and she carries a backpack. It would be easy to stereotype her as a tomboy, but that again would suggest a gender in a world where the notion of gender is neither present nor relevant.

To further emphasise this, Ellie's friendship with Riley is clearly one of mutual respect and love; they share a tender moment in the final quarter of *The Last of Us: Left Behind*. There is a beauty in this moment, an emphasis on human emotion and friendship; a love is shared, not to visually gratify the player, but instead to highlight that at its core this game is about the mini-narratives: the real human condition, the mistakes we make, the choices that face us, and the love that we share in friendships.

Ellie's strongest moment comes when she outsmarts and brutally kills David, the villainous leader of a group of cannibals. She does not fall into the typical 'damsel in distress' role, despite the narrative teasing at this outcome. She is a self-sufficient survivor who chooses to be with Joel out of want and not need.

Strength in female characters is not restricted to the main characters; it comes from every female the gamer encounters along the journey. The leader of the Resistance, The Fireflies, is a female, the leader of a compound of survivors is a female, and a soldier who attempts to apprehend Joel and Ellie is a female. What is incredibly interesting is that the game has been celebrated for its positive representations and

realism – despite the fact that it rejects the current patriarchal hegemony. Females don't domineer, the game is not a backlash to hundreds of years of male dominance; instead it places females on a completely level playing field with males. It focuses on who is the best leader, rather than gender.

Joel: a Different Look at Masculinity

The positive representation doesn't stop with females; males are also positively represented. For most of the narrative, gamers play as Joel, a tough, seemingly cold individual. The opening sequence of *The Last of Us* is very reminiscent of Spielberg's adaptation of *War of the Worlds*. The focus is on a father, in this case, Joel trying to get his daughter to safety. The narrative follows a conventional path; there is normality that is disrupted, there is a realisation, followed by shock when

Joel's daughter is killed. Joel's love for his daughter and his desperation to keep her safe forces him to leave others in peril – this is not a man on a crusade trying to save the world. Her loss hits the gamer hard as they are reminded that this is not a conventional Hollywood narrative that neatly fits into a genre – and the horror element is introduced.

After a *Dawn of the Dead*-esque title sequence, the gamer is dropped into a world 20 years on from the initial disaster. Humanity has survived, as has Joel. It is at this point the gamer is introduced to the cold and detached Joel – a man with few allegiances and no grand plan beyond surviving. The gamer quickly bonds with this new Joel; they understand his trauma

because they were there with him, indeed, as him – when it happened. After an initial mission, which functions to enable the gamer to acquire the skills needed to continue game-play, Joel meets Ellie. He reluctantly agrees to take her to The Fireflies, initially so that he can retrieve his weapon stash, and then because of his loyalty to Tess.

Joel's character arc is an interesting one; it does not evolve in the conventional sense. His story is more human and easy to relate ro; he is a man who grows in his sensitivity, and an individual who fiercely defends a person he grows to

love. He defies the gender stereotype of the man as the saviour and provider; he needs Ellie as much as she needs him. This is never more evident than when he is injured and Ellie looks after him. She becomes the hunter-gatherer, the carer, and without her help he would die. He attempts to save Ellie from David, but arrives too late, as she has saved herself. Joel chooses to be with Ellie, but his choice seems to be based on need. While he is 'manly' in every physical way, emotionally he is incredibly complex; he is indecisive and scared to love unconditionally again.

The Last of Us has been critically acclaimed for its gameplay, sumptuous 3D environments, motion capture, performances, score, narrative, and representation. It is arguably one of the greatest video games of all time, and its influence can now increasingly be seen in other games, such as *Resident Evil: Revelations 2*, and in TV with shows like *The Walking Dead*, whose current storylines have been heavily influenced by the game. *The Last of Us* bravely demonstrates to video game producers, and media producers more generally, that it really is possible to avoid stereotypes, show objective and accurate representations of sexuality and race, and break out of genre conventions. Consumers want and need more video games with depth that explore the rich tapestry that is humankind.

See http://www.thelastofus. playstation.com/

Darren Meitiner-Harvey is a Media and Film teacher at One College, Ipswich.

Understanding Ideology
THEY LIVE

Sean Richardson introduces a students' guide to ideology, some key theorists, and a brilliant cult movie which illustrates the ways in which we are controlled and manipulated by the ideology of consumption.

In this article I will attempt to unpick one of the most complex and difficult aspects of the Media Studies curriculum: the concept of ideology. I will explore the meaning of the term, and its related concept of hegemony, and look at the work of three key theorists. Finally I will explore the term further through a powerful 1988 film acknowledged to be one of the hidden masterpieces of Hollywood: John Carpenter's *They Live*.

Changing Ideologies

The ideas that make up the dominant ideology in Britain do not remain static – they change as new ideas develop, people discuss them, and they enter the mainstream. Here, for example, are three features that are generally agreed to be part of the dominant ideology in Britain:

- People should put their families first.
- People should work hard for their money.
- Women should behave in feminine ways, and look after their appearance.

You may not entirely agree with all of these ideas, but they are nevertheless part of our dominant ideology. They appear 'natural' and accepted without question or argument.

In 21st-century Britain, a particularly significant aspect of our ideology is that, unlike some other cultures or regimes, it is not forced upon us through violence or coercion by government or the military.
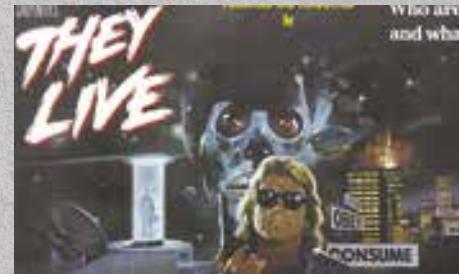
What Is Ideology?

How far do you agree with the following statements?

- Good should overcome evil.
- Law is better than disorder.
- Pleasure is a goal in life.

These ideas are hard to disagree with; they are, arguably, a 'given', an obvious and unspoken set of values and beliefs that we accept and follow. They are at the core of our Western belief system, part of the social system which shapes and forms our identities, and makes us who we are today.

We call ideas about how things should be, and how people should behave and live their lives, **an ideology**. If an ideology is shared by the majority of people in a culture, as are these particular ideas, it is called the dominant ideology. And whether you like it or not, as you read this article, your responses to it will inevitably be influenced by the dominant ideology of your culture and society.

Hegemony: A Definition

Hegemony is the ability of the dominant class to project its own way of seeing the world so that those who are dominated by it (the masses), accept it as 'common sense' and 'natural'.

These views are consensual – in other words we agree to accept the dominant ideology of the state.

Two key theorists who will help you to take these ideas a little further are **Gramsci** and **Althusser**. Check the end of this article to read brief summaries of their work.

Slavoj Zizek

One of the most famous and dazzling current theorists on Ideology is **Slavoj Zizek**. Zizek has been called the 'Elvis of cultural theory' and explores how we now accept our control, yet are completely dominated. A fantastic starting point for a student is his documentary, subversively titled *The Pervert's Guide to Ideology* (2012).

Zizek suggests that pleasure and the self are our only concerns in the 21st century. He argues that we are in a new global era where we cannot see how massively we are dominated by the elite 1%. Gramsci's Hegemony concept is central to Zizek's ideas, as the acceptance of being obedient, consuming, marrying and reproducing, and not questioning authority has become part of the natural order. We submit, and only seek pleasure and self-fulfillment. We are happy, so it would seem, shopping in the Mall, drinking Coca-Cola and seeking pleasure in our false messages. In his view, the most useful definition of ideology would probably be the well-known phrase from Karl Marx's famous book *Das Capital*:

Sie wissen das nicht, aber sie tun es
They do not know it, but they are doing it.

Exploring Ideology Through Film: John Carpenter's *They Live*

Wouldn't it be fantastic to have, say, a pair of magic sunglasses that reveal the false messages and illusions that society and the powers that be are using to control us?

John Carpenter's 1988 cult classic, *They Live*, is a film that shows the media student just that – how we are controlled and manipulated by ideology. This is not ideology in the sense of some fascist or Marxist doctrine that is rammed down our throats like propaganda, but an exploration of the ways the signs and messages surrounding us through the media, in advertising and films/print/web media etc, cleverly control us and manipulate our behaviour. In a world where the dominant ideology is to consume and 'fulfil' ourselves, arguably we want and desire to be controlled. This is a potentially controversial thing to say, but the ideas in this film may help us to understand ideology more clearly.

Nada

In Carpenter's film, the protagonist, George Nada, is literally a 'nothing' (Spanish translation of 'Nada'), a cipher, who represents an everyman lost in the world. He is a drifter in Los Angeles, an out-of-work labourer seeking a job. In the opening scene he gazes up at the skyscrapers of L.A., looking up at corporate America. In this near-future Los Angeles, there is no work, no hope and no meaning. He finds meaning in an abandoned church, in the shape of a cardboard box of black sunglasses. When worn, the sunglasses reveal the true nature of things, the ideology of the world. Nada's discovery unveils the hidden meaning behind corporate messages; it is a startling piece of film-making and worth seeking out on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4WAXQJyxCo.

When Nada puts on the sunglasses, he is shocked to find that an advertisement for computers reveals the encoded word 'OBEY': the real message. A billboard with a bikini-clad woman on a beach captioned 'Come to the Caribbean' is revealed by the glasses to actually say: 'MARRY AND REPRODUCE'.

Nada walks along the city street, where the advertising messages are revealed as, 'BUY', 'WATCH T.V', 'NO THOUGHT',

'SUBMIT' and 'STAY ASLEEP'. This is a visually shocking metaphor: the texts surrounding our everyday lives actually bear a hidden message. The relaxed, non-confrontational billboards are attractive and appealing, as most clever media texts are; yet they are filled with ideological messages that dominate and repress. As Media students, we seek to decode meaning; and the film brilliantly shows how ideological messages are embedded in every text.

They Live represents Nada as surrounded by a population 'happy' in its consumption and in its obedience to the state and the corporations. This is not *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell's dystopian vision of a propaganda-led world where Big Brother is watching you. The propaganda embodied in the film, and arguably, all around us today in the 21st century, is desired, yet invisible. We desire the messages, they speak to our individual fulfilment and pleasures. The film suggests that the pleasures of consumerism are actually the driving ideology of society.

Invisible Order

Without our ideology sunglasses, we may not see the calls to 'BUY', 'WATCH T.V', 'NO THOUGHT', 'SUBMIT' and 'STAY ASLEEP' the sunglasses are, of course, symbolic objects, ideological 'X-Ray specs', so to speak. The invisible order hides the dictatorship in the apparent democracy in the film, where freedom is an illusion. We are shown that ideology works under the radar, never seen, always accepted. The message revealed could be seen as the 'Master Signifier', controlling and keeping us quiet and docile.

Within the film, and arguably in our society today, there are clear ideological accepted beliefs:

- Money = Happiness
- Consumer goods = Fulfilment
- Marriage/Family/Children = Happiness
- Obedience/Work= Fulfilment

This invisible order accepted by society is revealed to us and to Nada when he puts on his ideological shades, but
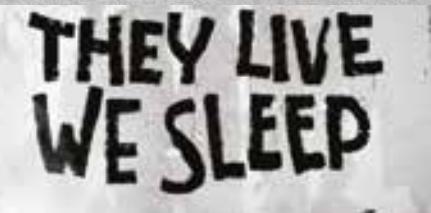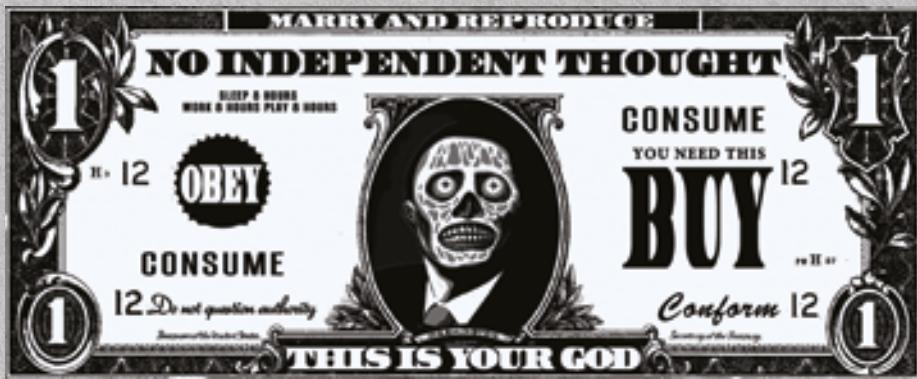
the pleasure that drives us to accept ideological messages is unmistakable. The film controversially argues that we enjoy being controlled by ideology. When Nada sees dollar bills through the sunglasses, the real message under the façade of the green ink and the dead President's logo reads 'THIS IS YOUR GOD'.

Hegemony becomes really important here and it can really help us to understand ideology more. In our Western democracy, the hegemonic view is that money will bring happiness and a fulfilled life. In *They Live*, the film's explicit equation between money and God challenges the hegemony, and breaks the illusion.

The Real Thing?

The film offers a particularly useful way of looking at multinationals such as the Coca-Cola Company, one of the planet's so called 'Billion Dollar Brands'.

We all know the (in)famous Coke corporate messages 'It's the Real Thing' and 'Coke Is It'. The hegemonic view is that Coca-Cola's version of the sugary drink is the authentic taste and all others are inferior. We seek out 'real' experiences, we desire 'real' pleasure, and Coke gives us that. 'Coke Is It', but what is 'It'? Ideologically, 'It' is what we all desire, the thing that is missing from our lives, and acquired only through the consumption

of the product. So, we begin to see that ideology is really important and all around us, unseen, part of 'the invisible order' of things, part of what we accept as 'normal' and 'common sense'. We 'enjoy' Coca-Cola, we enjoy our ideology because it feeds off our desires, our deepest fantasies and beliefs.

In *They Live*, Nada cannot believe what he is seeing. The sunglasses are almost painful to wear, as the world he 'sees' is so shocking. A key sequence sees him try to persuade his friend, Armitage, to put on the glasses. Armitage is an African-American, a kindred spirit with Nada, yet he very violently resists putting on the glasses, in an extended fight sequence that lasts for over ten minutes of the narrative. Armitage finally puts them on to see the painful truth. Crucially, he does not want 'Ideology' revealed. He is happy in the pleasure-seeking illusion of false signs and messages, and enjoys his 'blindness' to the truth. *They Live* plays with the problems of revealing ideological hegemony.

This film is a classic of real importance, and a challenge for Media Studies. I'd argue that Media and Film students learn to 'put on the glasses' by studying and gaining the skills to decode what is 'real' and what is an illusion.

The future's so bright, you gotta put on your shades?

Sean Richardson teaches Media Studies at Penistone Grammar School, Barnsley and moderates for a leading Awarding Body.

1. Gramsci and Hegemony

Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci introduced the concept of hegemony, and its role in social control.

Gransci defined hegemony as an important way in which those in power maintain their control through consent, rather than the use of force. He argued that the power of ideology derives primarily from ideas and structures which support, and thus serve the purpose of, an elite social group which is able to dominate through ideas, rather than militaristic strength or fear.
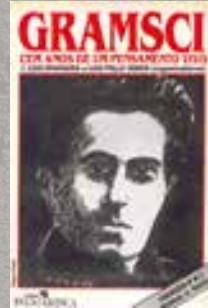
Let's take a simplified example from recent news events, to see Gramsci's concept of hegemony in practice:

The big idea The notion of trust in capitalism, banking, and trust in the economic institutions of this country.
Who does this Idea best serve? The elite class, which controls the economy and major institutions.
Is this a commonsense, accepted Idea in Britain? Yes, but the economic crash of 2008 has challenged the assumptions it was based on.

2. Althusser

The French Marxist theorist Louis Althusser offers a way of understanding how we are controlled through ideology. His view was that ideology is the greatest material power and dominates our day to day lives through two key forms of control:

1: Repressive State Control, also known as 'Repressive State Apparatuses' (RSAs) through the major institutions of society – the Government, Army, Police, Courts, etc. – which are dominated by the ruling elite. These state agencies regulate social behaviour and repress the masses through violence, punitive law, and fear.

2: 'Ideological State Apparatuses' (ISAs), such as the Church, the media, educational institutions, the family unit etc. These looser institutions control and dominate implicitly through 'common sense' acceptance and social norms, rather than through fear. This echoes Gramsci's concept of hegemony, by which ideology's power derives primarily from consent as opposed to the use of force.

To illustrate, consider these familiar ideas: 'Realise your true potential,' 'Be yourself,' 'Lead a satisfying life.' These values, suggesting the importance of the individual, and self-fulfilment, are dominant in the West, and closely linked with the ideology of consumerism, which arguably dominates and drives society.

The big idea We should buy more goods and consume as much as we can. Material wealth will make us happy.

Who does this Idea best serve The elite class, the manufacturers and owners of the means of production, the multinational corporations which benefit from their distribution.

Is it a common sense, accepted idea in Britain? Yes, it pervades all ages, genders and is a dominant global ideology in the 21st-century West, which constantly encourages us to want and to consume through advertising and marketing. Arguably, we are at the mercy of hugely powerful corporate messages, against which we need to be vigilant.

One of the roles for Media Studies in the 21st century is to expose the elite groups which control such ideological messages – to resist the economics of Google or Amazon, and to make them accountable to everyday people, to 'ordinary' citizens like you.

3D PRINTERS

A case study in new and digital media

In the very near future, 3D printers will become affordable for domestic use, and every home might have one. Printing your own toys, clothing, and even your dinner, will soon become a reality. Matt Kaufman suggests that 3D printing can offer an A2 case study which brings together new technology and media theory, and raises a range of interesting ethical and moral issues and debates.

During your Media Studies course you will be introduced to a number of key theories and contemporary debates. One of the critical skills you will need to develop is the ability to take any number of features from these theories and debates, and then apply them to specific examples of events from within the media landscape. As part of the AQA specification, you're specifically required to demonstrate this skill by conducting your own individual case study research into the topic of New and Digital media. But whichever exam board or Media specification you are following, an insight into this subject area, and the subsequent application of theories and debates to a case study, will provide you with useful and relevant knowledge and understanding.

3D printers have been getting considerable coverage recently, and for good reason. If you've not yet witnessed the mind-expanding process of an object being first designed, mapped, and then printed, you should prepare yourself for something special. As you watch layer after layer superimposed on each other, and see your designed object rise upwards from the print area, you begin to realise some of the countless potential uses that this technology implies.

There is an abundance of reports and articles detailing how printing technology has the potential to recreate everything from weapons to watches, cars to cuisine. 3D printers are being developed for use virtually anywhere, from the fields of medicine to Michelin-starred restaurants.

The first wave of TV ads for domestic 3D printers is currently screening, and leading specialists are predicting that within the next five years we may see the majority of households owning

a 3D printer. If that's the case, then these devices have the potential to transform numerous aspects of our society, and their potential impact and development open up a range of discussions for Media students. It is therefore my intention in this article to discuss a number of media theories which specifically exemplify the possible future of these increasingly popular pieces of technology.

'If you take my gun, I will simply print a new one': Moral Panics And 3D Printers

Any A Level Media course will at some point address the issues and debates around moral panics, which tend to develop when a change appears to pose a threat to societal norms and values. Clearly 3D printers have amazing potential; however there are already well-documented

examples of ways in which this new technology is causing concern amongst would-be consumers.

A US conservative Republican website titled 'Buck Ofama' posted a video of a working gun that was made by separately printing the necessary materials then putting them together, complete with demonstrations of the weapon being fired. Since 2013,

a Texan law student named Cody Wilson has boasted online about various guns he has made using 3D printers, the earliest of which he called The Liberator. He later uploaded the blueprints for this weapon onto the internet, at an open-source site encouraging gun enthusiasts to share their own 3D designs, despite the fact that it was not yet possible to 3D-print live ammunition.

Predictably the news of both these examples was greeted with a wave of outrage and concern. The chilling possibilities that both these instances present have been picked up by the mainstream media and as a result a moral panic around 3D printers has emerged.

The people at the centre of this panic are what media sociologist Stanley Cohen termed 'folk devils'; it is these people who are blamed for causing the panic, and are therefore the ones who are vilified as a result. In this example Cody Wilson and like-minded developers could be viewed as folk devils because they are the ones that the mainstream media have represented as the threat to a society. It is often argued that such folk devils act as a form of scapegoat, because they are usually only a small part of a greater problem. In this case, whilst it can certainly be argued that the website and Wilson's actions are morally dubious at the very least, some responsibility must also lie with the manufacturers and distributors of 3D printers for the lack in regulation of their products, and

most significantly, with the US culture in which firearms and the right to bear arms are enshrined in law and in the Constitution.

Moral panics pass through a series of stages during their existence; by their very nature they are volatile, and can be swiftly resolved either because the attention of the mass media has suddenly shifted to another newsworthy event, or because some sort of external resolution takes place in order to bring the panic to a close. In this case, the fact that the American state department intervened to remove the uploaded blueprints of Wilson's weapons from the internet can be seen as a step towards resolving the panic.

A Printout Towards Democracy: Marxism And 3D Printers

A key theme for Media Studies is that of *ownership and control,* which leads to discussions on who owns which businesses, corporations and means of output within the media landscape, and what level of control this therefore exerts on audiences and consumers.

Karl Marx, the German political philosopher, devised a range of perspectives based on observations of 19th-century society, and in particular the functions of capitalism. Marx was interested in how a relatively small faction of powerful people maintained and benefited from their control over the much larger mass of people that made up the rest of society (the proletariat). Nowadays we know that this power balance is maintained in many different ways; from media representations that normalise this situation and promote capitalist values (think of programmes such as *Dragons' Den* and its American counterpart *Shark Tank*), to the lack of empowerment and alienation individuals can feel within a capitalist society.

One of the key factors that Marx identified in the maintenance of this power relationship was the ownership of what he termed 'the means of production' – in other words, the utilities such as factories and premises used to produce the range of goods and products that people wanted, owned by a tiny powerful elite. Marx

observed that the proletariat masses used their labour power in order to first create, and then later acquire, these products, whilst the elite made large amounts of profit from the whole process.

Although this scenario arguably still exists today, we have begun to see how other technological developments have acted as 'game changers,' and have altered the power and dependence in the relationship between the ruling class and everyday people. Think about the music industry and how the advent of the internet, and web 2.0 in particular, allows people to self-promote and share content, meaning there is no longer such a dependency on large record labels and companies in

order to get noticed and gain recording contracts. It could be argued that the advent of 3D printing may bring about a similar shift towards individual liberation, once we are able to access the means of production for ourselves rather than depending on companies and corporations to obtain a range of mass-produced goods and products. Could there come a time when

consumers are no longer restricted to purchasing their desired products via large retail corporations and outlets, but instead can print their own items, ranging anywhere from plastic cups and lunchboxes to garden furniture? There are still enormous questions about the supply of materials needed to do this, but could this be a potential step towards a completely different business model, and therefore a more democratic society?

Print Me A Copy Of A Copy: Postmodernism And 3D Printers

Postmodern theorists highlight the fact that we live in a media-saturated world, where our consumption of media texts is so ubiquitous it's now increasingly hard for us to tell where the mediated world ends and our real world begins. Within this existence, the representations that we consume are themselves arguably based on other representations, and thus the original event or experience we seek may in fact become lost along the way.

When media texts make little attempt to represent reality, but are in fact simply representing other representations, we call this a simulacrum. Jean Baudrillard used this term to describe how as individuals we are losing touch with reality, and the mediated events we engage with appear more real than the original experience. This results in a world full of simulacra and simulation
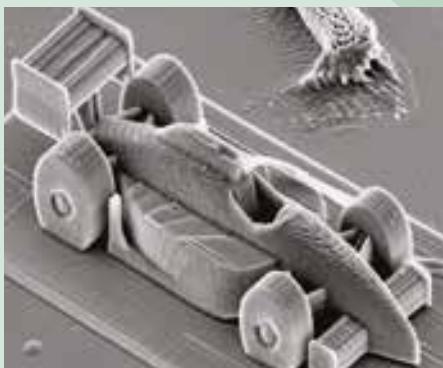
where no event appears to be unmediated. Baudrillard termed this condition hyperreality.

Of all the 3D printers that are getting the most attention, those that are able to print edible foods come high on the agenda. If you've ever seen any *Star Trek* episodes, you'll recall the inclusion of a futuristic piece of machinery called a 'replicator', which creates food and drink on command. Its obvious comparison to the potential of 3D printers has been made time and again in various articles – which in itself is an example of a postmodernist reference. The lines between reality and media reality blur further, because the representation of a fictional tool from a fictional media text is being used to make sense of, and draw comparisons to, equipment and technology that exists within the real world.

Although today's food printers are still quite limited in what they can actually print, they are developing fast. We can therefore imagine a time when our whole eating experience becomes part of the postmodernist condition. The fact that we may potentially sit down at a computer to design and tailor meals to our own preferences takes the engagement with simulation even further. The food that will eventually arrive on our plates will itself have been made from a copy, and therefore have been through a process of mediation – meaning that the quality of the food will become further detached from any actual natural reality.

As with any new technology, only time will tell whether these developments will come to pass. Until then, this may all be speculation and not worth the paper it's printed on. But from the way things are beginning to take shape, and the number of developments reportedly under way, it's clear to see that the writing is on the ... monitor.

Matthew Kaufman is an English and Multimedia lecturer at Heart of Worcestershire College.

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Stanley Cohen: An Introduction MM18

A-Z Of Theorists – B Is For Baudrillard MM9
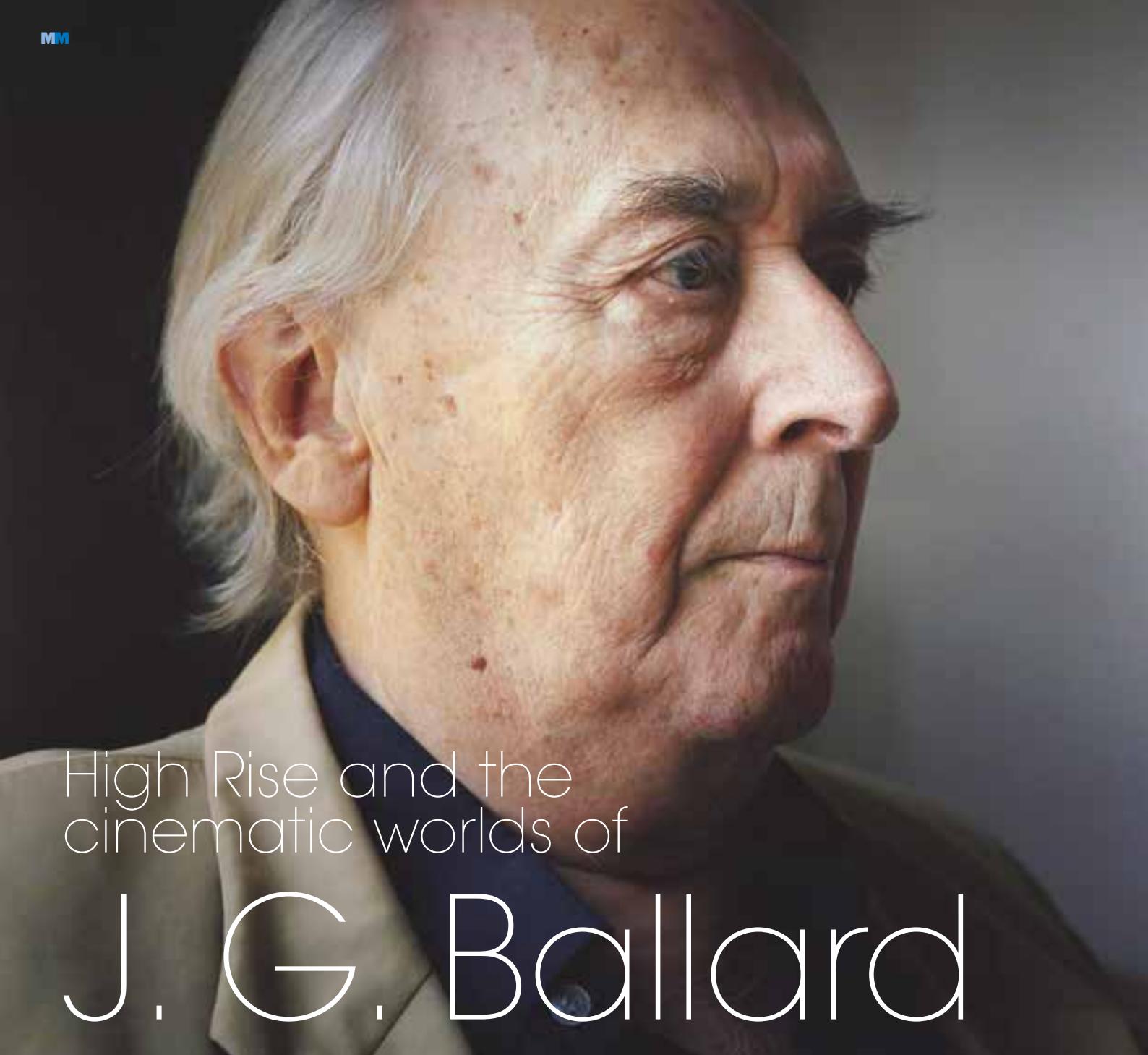
High Rise and the cinematic worlds of
J. G. Ballard

A forthcoming movie by Ben Wheatley will be the latest in a series of adaptations of the work of author J.G. Ballard, whose violent and dystopian fiction in print and on screen has inspired and outraged critics and filmmakers alike. Mark Ramey explores the context and themes of Ballard's controversial career, and its impact and influence.
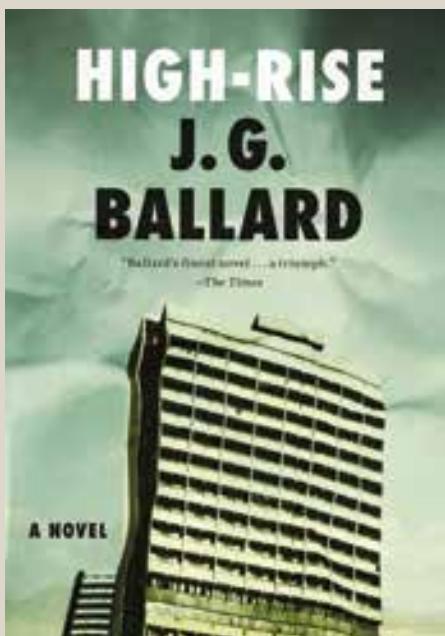
Graphic sex in crashed cars; environmental apocalypse; the psychotic breeding grounds of shopping centres, apartment blocks, motorways and holiday resorts. These are just some of the violent, sexual and yet often strangely liberating ideas and spaces explored by cult British author J. G. Ballard (1930-2009).

A Ballardian Tale

Spanning a 50-year career covering nearly 20 novels and hundreds of short stories and articles, Ballard has become a literary institution, acknowledged in 1984 by his offer of a CBE and membership to the Royal Society of Literature (both of which he rejected)

and more recently by his inclusion in the *Collins English Dictionary* (2005) where the term 'Ballardian' is defined as:

suggestive of the conditions described in Ballard's novels and stories, especially dystopian modernity, bleak man-made landscapes and the psychological effects of technological, social or environmental developments.

Ballard reached the peak of his fame in 1984 with the Booker-nominated *Empire of The Sun*. A publishing success, it led to a film adaptation by Steven Spielberg, which garnered six Oscar nominations. Prior to this mainstream recognition, Ballard was better known as a leading avant-garde writer and thinker, as well as a populariser of a radical type of science fiction called New SF.

A genre-challenging form of speculative literature, New SF was more concerned with 'inner space' than 'outer space': in other words, Ballard was interested in 'the next five minutes' or 'near-futures' and the impact of technology on our psyches, as much as 'far-future' explorations of 'strange new worlds and new civilisations' typical of the more traditional SF narratives such as *Star Trek*.

It is this fascination with contemporary culture and its psychic impact that has made Ballard's work so thought-provoking: he intuits the deeper meanings and motives lurking behind the commonplace aspects of our world. Jeanette Baxter, a leading Ballardian academic, notes that Ballard conjures up:

a series of distinctive images and landscapes which capture the contemporary condition in all of its violence and ambiguity: murdered celebrities... surveillance technologies, media politicians, gated communities... nuclear weapons ranges and testing sites...

J. Baxter (Ed): *J.G Ballard, Contemporary Critical Perspectives*

Coming Soon: High Rise

Aside then from his prescient observations on the impact of technology on our inner lives such as 'Sex and technology = the Future' or, 'Sooner or later everything turns into Television,' Ballard is again a trending topic because a UK film adaptation of *High Rise* is set for release in 2015.

Written in 1975, the novel is about the inhabitants of an exclusive high-rise apartment block and charts their descent into anarchy. Typical of Ballard, we find a technologically inflected near-future utopia generating violent psychoses rather than peaceful social integration.

High Rise is directed by emerging cult auteur Ben Wheatley, and stars Tom Hiddleston, Jeremy Irons and Sienna Miller. Given this heavyweight casting, the film could introduce Ballard to a new generation of fans. What follows are some of the key cinematic contexts surrounding *High Rise*, which will become only the third movie of Ballard's work to be given a successful cinematic release, following *Empire of The Sun* (Spielberg, USA, 1987) and *Crash* (Cronenberg, Canada/UK, 1996).

Empire of the Sun: From Memoir to Movie

The semi-biographical novel, *Empire of The Sun* (1984), was Ballard's attempt to purge childhood memories of his three-year internment in a Japanese-run POW camp in Shanghai, China during

WW2. For many years recurring images of desolation, dislocation and violence had featured heavily in his work and these could now be traced back to his wartime experiences.

The book's critical acclaim made it a bestseller, and attracted the attention of Spielberg who tried to keep faith with Ballard's authentic voice by shooting the film partially in China (a Hollywood first). The film is also noteworthy for the compelling debut of 12-year-old Christian Bale, and as an interesting addition to Spielberg's oeuvre, with its interest in dramatic action, injustice, childhood and broken homes. But aside from that, the film over-sentimentalised the novel, and many fans of Ballard felt his work was not done justice.

Ballard himself was more forgiving, aware of the limitations posed by working in the Hollywood tradition:

I think [Spielberg] produced a very fine film within the constraints of the Hollywood movie... throughout his films [he] is using the global entertainment culture to explore those constants of our everyday lives that we all take for granted: the wonder of existence, the magic of space-time and the miracle of consciousness and childhood.

V. Vale (Ed): *J. G Ballard Quotes*

Clearly Spielberg's own nostalgia for childhood found an unlikely ally in Ballard whose final work in 2008, a straight autobiography, titled *Miracles of Life*, features himself as a smiling child on the front cover and a family portrait of himself and his three children on the back.

Crash: The Prototype Of Psychopathic Cinema?

Nothing dates a film more than the controversy and moral outrage surrounding its release, and *Crash* (1996) is a case in point. The novel's graphically depicted themes of sexual fetishism and car crashes still shocks, as evidenced by a BBFC case study (http://www.bbfc.co.uk/case-studies/crash); but the negative reaction to the film's release now seems massively disproportionate to what was then a $9 million art-house movie. Needless to say the virulently negative press and subsequent banning of *Crash* by some local UK councils benefited the film hugely, as Ballard himself puckishly acknowledged:

the *Evening Standard's* film critic [Alexander Walker]…wrote a piece calling *Crash* the most depraved film ever made. To me this represents a total artistic success.

The film's icy tone and construction perfectly captures Ballard's typically affectless protagonists and their uneasy alliance with sex, violence and technology. Nearly twenty years after its release, the film remains an uncomfortable watch, but despite its problems, it is still the definitive Ballardian film adaptation, as Ballard himself notes:

I consider *Crash* the first film of the 21st century, the prototype of the psychopathic cinema which will liberate film from its reliance on redemptive storylines.

The Problem Of Adaptation

A key problem in adapting Ballard's work (and typified by the films above) lies in the potency of his imagery, and the failure of filmmakers to capture it on screen. Ballard's writing is full of incongruous and affecting similes and metaphors, and these prove virtually impossible to translate into two-dimensional cinema. Some film critics, like Peter Bradshaw of *The Guardian*,
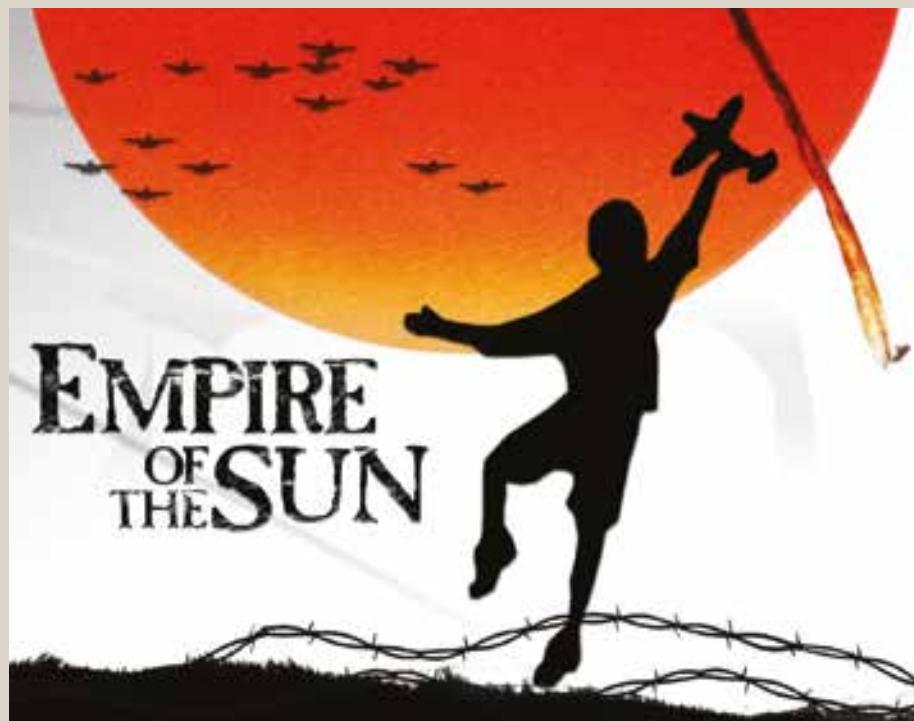
argue that adapting Ballard, or even looking for films he has influenced, is largely impossible, as Ballard's cinematic influence is so elusive. Bradshaw argues we should rather look for Ballard tangentially via:

CCTV footage taken from any shopping-mall security camera, or the *Big Brother* daytime live feed, or one of the direct-impact 9/11 World Trade Centre plane-crash shots.

Bradshaw, P,. How J. G. Ballard cast his shadow right across the arts, *The Guardian*

In the collection of essays *J.G. Ballard: Visions and Revisions*, the editors note that:

Ballard's chilling and uncompromising visions of sex, violence and the invasive presence of modern technology have influenced some of the most controversial directors of the 20th century such as David Lynch, Gus van Sant, Michael Haneke, and of course Cronenberg, but Bradshaw is perhaps right to see Ballard's main cinematic presence in less obvious places.

Surrealism And SF

These 'less obvious places' are signposted in Ballard's view that

Surrealism is the greatest imaginative adventure embarked upon during [the 20th] century…

and SF is

the true literature of the 20th century.

This passion for the strange and uncanny is found structurally in
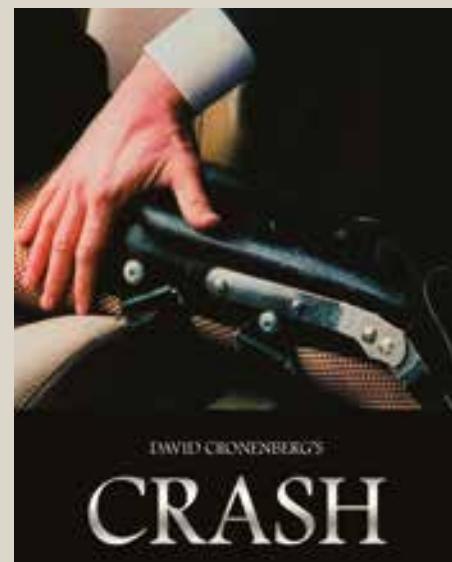
the non-linear narratives of his experimental writing, and thematically in the collision between the normal and abnormal – such as cars and sexual psychosis. Surrealism is about the dream world made manifest, much like science-fiction, which Ballard notes is so potent 'that most of us fail to realise we are living inside a science-fiction novel.'

Unsurprisingly, given Ballard's love of the surreal and the speculative, he writes admiringly in his non-

fiction collection *A Users' Guide to the Millennium* (1996) of the SF films *Alphaville* (Goddard, 1965), *La Jetee* (Marker, 1962) and *Videodrome* (Cronenberg, 1983) – all surreal near-future depictions of technological worlds echoed in his own work. In terms of his fiction, in *Hello America* (1981) images of towering movie stars are literally projected into the clouds over California – John Wayne and Marilyn Monroe striding like Gods over the Rocky Mountains to the Promised Land.

The 'Ballardian' dream world is a submerged psychic realm unleashed by technological and environmental change; unsurprisingly, some of Ballard's most striking imagery comes from his early novel *The Drowned World* (1962). Here tropical lagoons and jungle – products of rapid global warming – float above the submarine remains of London. Less dream and more erotic nightmare, in *Crash* (the novel) we witness the re-staged factual deaths of film stars James Dean and Jayne Mansfield, and the fictional death of Elizabeth Taylor – all in eroticised car crashes. Finally we find the technological and mythic quality of cinema referenced as early as the fourth line of *Empire of The Sun*:

Jim had begun to dream of wars. At night the same silent films seemed to flicker against the wall of his bedroom ...

J. G. Ballard. *Empire of The Sun*

The Seer of Shepperton

Ballard's literary terrain is ambiguous and unstable. This kind of narrative material is not easy to pitch to a film producer, hence another problem of adaptation: funding. The film rights

of *High Rise* have been bought and sold countless times as successive production teams have struggled to get projects bankrolled. Simon Sellars, curator of the excellent website Ballardian.com, echoing Bradshaw, finds more of interest in Ballard's failed film adaptations, such as *Running Wild*, starring Samuel L. Jackson, *The Unlimited Dream Company* featuring Richard Gere, *The Crystal World* with Jean Seberg, and *Crash* with Jack Nicholson. Sellars also sees Ballardian influences in Romero's zombie consumer-satire, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and John Carpenter's advertising satire, *They Live* (1988) – films of Ballard's in spirit, if not name. Other more contemporary examples would include *Drive* (Refn, 2011) and *Her* (Jonze, 2013).

In terms of Ballard's personal film connections, it's interesting that he is sometimes referred to as the 'Seer of Shepperton', as he lived for most of his life close to Shepperton Studios in South West London. Indeed, when Spielberg shot scenes of ex-pat life in Shanghai for *Empire of The Sun*, he chose Shepperton and its suburbs, along with local extras including Ballard himself. Thus Ballard was in the deliciously surreal position of recreating his past in far-off China in Shepperton with his neighbours.

Ballard was also asked to provide a novelisation of the film *Alien* (he declined), and has a writing credit on the Hammer 'caveman' film *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth* (Guest, 1970). Further reflecting Ballard's interest in cinema, his non-fiction collection *A User's Guide to the Millennium* begins with film reviews, one of which famously describes *Star Wars*

(Lucas, 1977) as,

totally unoriginal, feebly plotted, instantly forgettable, and an acoustic nightmare.

It's nice to know that even 'seers' can have a bad day at the office! But there are many other classic 1970s SF films which Ballard also admired and reviewed, such as *Dark Star* (Carpenter, 1974), *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (Roeg, 1976), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Spielberg, 1977) and *Alien* (Scott, 1979). He was also enamoured with *Mad Max 2* (Miller, 1982) – perhaps not so surprising when one considers his own quote:

Earth is the only alien planet.

If it's true that Ballard's fiction cannot be successfully adapted for the cinema, Ben Wheatley's *High Rise* will then join an exclusive club of noble failures. Certainly the experiences of previous doomed adaptations suggests that this may be the case; but I am hopeful that Wheatley's genre-bending realism and quirky humour will somehow capture Ballard's obsessive satire, surreal vision and bleak expectation of the future.

Mark Ramey teaches Film and Media Studies at Richard Collyer's College, Horsham, West Sussex.

Follow It Up

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GETTING INTO CHARACTER

Cosplay in Some Modern Fandoms

Ruth Kenyon is *MediaMag's* regular Sherlock correspondent, a school librarian and fan photo-journalist. Her particular interest is fan theory, and here she introduces you to a particularly intriguing aspect of fandom: cosplay.

Cosplay is the practice of dressing up as a character from a film, book, graphic novel, or video game, especially one from the Japanese genres of manga or anime. Cosplay is a significant aspect of Japanese popular culture; in the West, it is most often linked to fantasy and SF worlds, but also to historical re-enactments and live action role-playing games.

In previous articles for *MediaMagazine* I have described how I became interested in Media Studies because its methods of analysis gave me a way to think about activities I was interested or took part in – as a fan, in other words, in Fandom. It is useful to have a foot in both camps, both as participant and observer. I can link fan theories with actual activities; and if there are some fan behaviours I don't get involved in, I can still understand why my friends do.

In this article I want to talk about **cosplay**, something I've been familiar with for a long time but not immersed in or understood properly until recently. I fondly remember the first time I saw fans involved in cosplay at a convention in Milton Keynes. *Harry Potter* and its sequels, and the *Lord of the Rings Trilogy* were on release in cinemas at the time, and were extremely popular with fans. The shopping centre where the convention took place was also milling with lots of people dressed up as characters from these films. Getting stuck in a queue for the loo with several Harry Potters, a Draco Malfoy and even Hobbits with hairy feet, gave me time to observe another facet of fandom I wasn't familiar with.

My own recent involvement with cosplay hasn't meant dressing up (thank goodness) but instead I've had the fun of becoming a bit of a photojournalist. Invitations to visit fan conventions to record the event for organisers can have advantages; I get in free, and the people I am

photographing are relaxed because they know I understand them. I take better pictures because the cosplayers are happier knowing that another fan is representing them. I have also been involved in guiding costumed friends back to the locations where scenes in the BBC's *Sherlock* were originally filmed and photographing them, which has been most entertaining. We even co-opted a group of passers-by to act as a crowd for us, and much fun was had by all.

So Why Cosplay?

During my activities I've certainly learnt that there is more to cosplay than just fans dressing up for no reason. Nicole Lamerich's article 'Stranger than Fiction: Fan identity in cosplay' in the *Journal of Transformative Works* tells us:

 [the] fan tradition of dressing up has a long history, dating back to American science fiction conventions in the 1960s and 1970s, at which fans wore outfits from series such as *Star Trek* or *Star Wars*. Fan costumes involve four elements, a narrative, a set of clothing, a play or performance and a subject or player... [it] is a form of fan appropriation that transforms, performs and actualises existing story.

I can agree with her when she talks about the importance of costuming. When I asked my friend, known in fandom as Kizzia, to explain how she started cosplaying John Watson, the sidekick character from the BBC's *Sherlock*, she was more than happy to oblige.

I found myself on a train to London to meet other likeminded souls and several people said to me, having looked at my short blond hair,

and being aware of my obvious obsession with John Watson, 'why don't you cosplay him?' Initially I dismissed the idea; I wasn't brave enough to stride around London, dressed up as a recognisable character, was I? Apparently a part of me thought I was though, and so did a few friends. When we were passing a Next store and saw a very 'John' jumper [one] dragged me in and bought it for me. Suddenly I was scouring eBay and other such useful sites and, little by little, an outfit was put together. Its airing was 1 January 2014, at a fan party for the start of Series 3 of *Sherlock*, and the reaction I got from everyone was enough to make me want to do it again.

If you have a cosplaying John Watson, you of course do need a cosplaying Sherlock Holmes. You might expect that in cosplaying, the character comes first and the costuming later. For some fans it goes a little differently
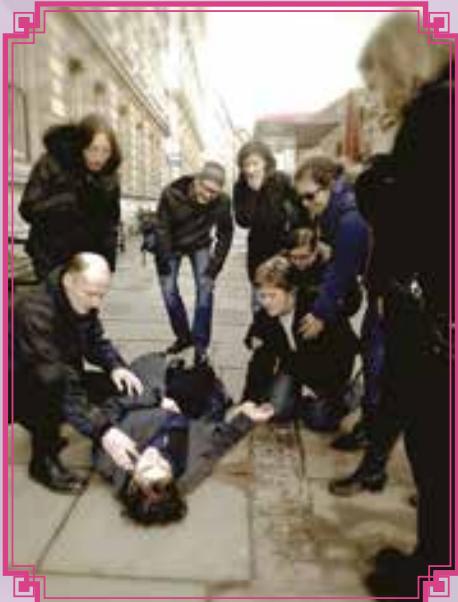
however. Let me introduce you to Anke Eisemann from Germany. She's a gifted professional artist who generously uses her talents in fandom. I'll be interviewing her again for my next *MediaMag* article, but here she can tell us about how she started cosplaying Sherlock:

I've been interested in historical clothing for a long time, and started out making medieval costumes. Part of this was motivated by having authentic-looking gear as reference material for my Tolkien art, [as I] try to depict the characters as looking realistic. For the Sherlock coat, at first I didn't even consider the option of cosplaying with it. I simply needed a new winter coat and none of those in the shops appealed to me like *Sherlock's* Belstaff did. Since the original was ever so slightly out of my price-range, I set out to try and copy the design. My (natural) hair rather looks like his, and [I realised] that it wouldn't be much of a stretch to get together the rest of the outfit and wear it. Previously, I've more often been the person behind the camera, or the one documenting an event by sketching. At first it was strange to get used to being on the other side. Having other cosplayers around helped though, and a good photographer, too.

Mark Duffett comments in his book *Understanding Fandom* that

… fans adopt the garb of fiction characters as a way of extending their participation, exploring their identities and interacting with others.

That is exactly what happened when Kizzia, Anke and some fans from Poland visited *Sherlock* locations in central London, with me in tow. If cosplaying occurred that January morning, a little magic seems to have also happened

too. As our poor 'Sherlock' lay on the cold pavement, a group of German tourists (most of whom were medics) passed Bart's hospital and they knew exactly what was going on. They were extremely happy to be co-opted to join in our activities and to swell our 'crowd' and we swapped emails so they could see how the final products of our day came out.

Digital photography, with maybe a little help from photo manipulation software, is as important as the costumes in modern cosplay. It allows the participants to share their activities with a wider audience via the internet and social media. Online cosplaying can be shown in almost real-time by participants with smart phones. Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr apps are all part of the fun. There are many platforms available to exploit, from forums on the subject to YouTube, where you can upload video.

Later, when I enthused to a Media teacher about our day in London, she suggested the activity might have allowed me, as a fan, to differentiate between fantasy and the real world. I had to disagree totally, saying that the day watching *Sherlock* being filmed and tripping over crew, lighting and

even actors had proved the show clearly wasn't real. Interacting with fans, and our interpretation of our beloved characters, is something different, however. It only makes everything more real to us, and that's why we do it. Nicole Lamerich supports this idea in her article when she says,

Cosplay emphasises that the self not only narrates fiction but is partly fictional as well. It is through interaction with stories that we can imagine and perform ourselves.

Now, while it's fun to wear costumes and go scampering around the City of London there are other reasons fans cosplay. The title of an article from *The Guardian* covering cosplayers at a 2014 convention says:

It is fun to be someone entirely different

and people I've interviewed have agreed.

When I was starting to research this article I talked with several cosplayers at my college who told me how, as young people, they find it a therapeutic activity. A couple of male fans, including Henry Baker who cosplays Spiderman, say they are, of course, involved for the enjoyment and connection with fellow fans. There is, however, a bond with the character they cosplay; the characters are often teenagers going through teenage problems, and the students identify with this.

This helpful connection with characters from fiction is something that, as a librarian, I am very familiar with. I did my degree thesis at library school on the subject of bibliotherapy: the mentally beneficial use of books, stories and poetry. American researchers Randi Shedlosky-Shoemaker, Kristi A. Constable and Robert M. Arkin write about their investigations about this in 'Self expansion through fictional characters' in the peer-reviewed publication *Self and Identity*. Their work studied how

… perceived similarity of fictional characters to one's ideal self, but not actual self, should be related to enhanced perceptions of self-expansion.

The Appeal Of Powerful Characters

Let me now introduce you to someone else I've met and photographed at conventions in East Anglia, and who also, co-incidentally, studies Media at my college. Although Bea Nicholls is too young to have seen *Dr Who* before its re-launch in 2005, it was her family who introduced her to classic *Who*. She particularly loves Sylvester McCoy, who graced our screens from 1987 to 1989. As I was at university during this time, and busy with other things, I have to admit I was only introduced to these

episodes quite a while after they had originally been aired.

McCoy certainly made a great Doctor; but it was his companion Ace (cosplayed by Bea) who was so very different to other females who travelled in the Tardis. There was no screaming when faced with classic *Dr Who* monsters, and when she met a Dalek she did some serious damage with a baseball bat. This is what drew Bea Nicholls to Ace. This Dr Who companion is such a strong Sci-Fi icon that even males cosplay her.

At the convention I described earlier, I got to chat to some other actors from Sci-Fi drama. I was lucky enough to meet Sophie Aldred, the lady who created Ace. Despite my age, I am still capable of 'fan-girling' if I come across someone I admire. Sophie says she's very flattered by cosplayers, and that all of them bring their own personal 'something' to their presentations of the character. She is proud to have been a role model; and hopes fans will take something from all aspects of the character, whether the rough, tough, feisty tomboy or the more feminine attributes she sometimes showed.

Let's finish this discussion of cosplay with a thought from the research by

Randi Shedlosky-Shoemaker et al which rather sums up everything I have found out about cosplay since I started to research it:

... this work suggests that immersion into narrative worlds can create opportunities for growth in which experiences, perspectives and knowledge of fictional characters prompt readers' [and viewers'] own development.

Ruth Kenyon is Learning Resources Manager at Lowestoft Sixth Form Centre, and a fan of *Sherlock*.

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http://ifanboy.com/articles/what-is-cosplay-and-why-do-people-do-it/

@*!

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE

The extremely rude history of swearing on TV

From anarchic members of the public disrupting live phone-ins to risqué comedians pushing the boundaries late at night, swearing can often leave TV programmes in hot water, so what are the rules, and what happens when they're broken? Harry Cunningham investigates the history and issues surrounding swearing on TV.

(It would be impossible to write about swearing without reporting the words that were used, so please be warned that this piece does contain a number of expletives.)

Swearing on TV is a highly contentious issue. Even accidental slip-ups are picked up by the press, and usually lead to an investigation by Ofcom. In their comprehensive 2009 study into public standards and tastes, the BBC found that swearing on TV was ide

ntified as the biggest cause of concern for viewers, placing it above violence and sexual content. It is fascinating that, in a society in which expletives are commonplace, we still expect very high standards of our programming.
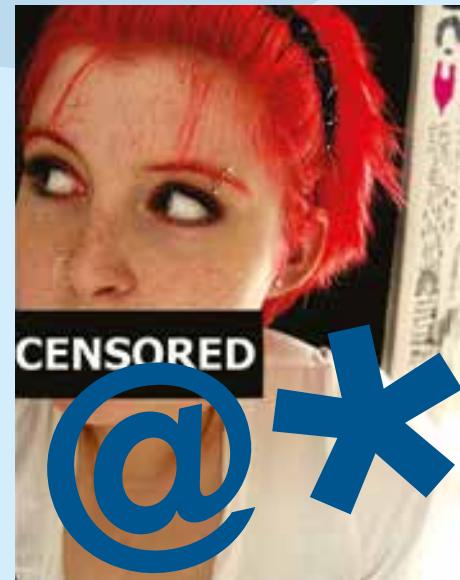
Swearing: A History

The first significant use of the F word on the BBC back in 1965 caused a national scandal: a backlash that we today would find only too familiar. The culprit was the renowned theatre critic Kenneth Tynan, who led a lifetime campaign against censorship in print, theatre and TV. When quizzed about the representation of sex in the theatre on *BBC-3* (a late night satirical programme which replaced the famous *That Was the Week That Was*, and not to be confused with the TV channel), he remarked:

 I doubt if there are any rational people to whom the word 'fuck' would be particularly diabolical, revolting or totally forbidden. I think that anything which can be printed or said can also be seen.

The fallout was monumental. Over one hundred MPs tabled motions in the House of Commons calling for Tynan to be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for using obscene language in public, for him to be sacked as literary manager of the National Theatre and even for the Director-General of the BBC to be sacked if he failed to take appropriate action. The contemporary reaction was described as like an 'incendiary bomb right through the television screen.'

Nearly fifty years on, not much has changed. We now have a watershed where bad language is permissible after 9pm; but the reaction to shows where there is accidental or deliberate swearing before then still tends to be extreme.

Before The Watershed

Theoretically – as Ofcom's guidelines point out –

there is no absolute ban on the use of bad language [but the use of such language] must be defensible in terms of context and scheduling with warnings where appropriate.

So in reality, swearing is still forbidden before the watershed apart from in very specific circumstances. According to Ofcom guidelines, news programmes may show:

material which is stronger than may be expected pre-watershed in other programmes as long as clear information is given in advance.

It is also not the case that all broadcasters see the watershed as a thick red line with swearing not allowed at 8.59pm and F words allowed at exactly 9pm. Indeed following the Russell Brand/Jonathan Ross/Andrew Sachs answer-phone scandal in 2008, the BBC introduced a transition period between 9-10pm, which means that the strongest swear words are now

generally avoided in the 9-10pm slot and almost completely in the first half of programmes after 9pm.

This is not a major problem for programmes which do not air live, because the swearing can be edited. *The Jeremy Kyle Show* is an excellent example of this: DNA tests and lie detectors make already-stressed guests prone to losing their cool, and prolific profanities often ensue. Indeed, on one rare occasion Kyle himself is even heard to tell a guest to 'get fucked' when live

on stage a father announces he wants nothing to do with his daughter. But the editors can simply bleep over this before the show is broadcast. If a show is going out live, however, programme makers have to be far more careful.

In her true outspoken style the late great Joan Rivers fell foul of the rules when she appeared on ITV's lunchtime gossip show *Loose Women*. Thinking that there was a seven-second delay in the broadcasting of the show – as there is in America – and that there would be time for her words to be edited, she declared 'get ready to bleep this,' before jokingly calling Russell Crowe a 'piece of fucking shit'. Though she and the presenters laughed about this when Rivers realised the mistake she'd made – and it undoubtedly was funny – the producers clearly didn't feel the same way. She wasn't allowed to return for the second half of the show. Joking about the incident later in another interview with Richard and Judy, this time pre-recorded, she said they 'dragged me out. My toes are still bleeding [from it],' whilst she remarked of the 48 complaints ITV had received about her appearance on the show, 'I want a re-count!'

Perhaps this unfortunate ignorance should not have been grounds for ejecting Rivers, given that she'd realised her mistake, apologised and was unlikely to do it again. But what about members of the public who deliberately try to breach Ofcom guidelines for their own amusement? It's something that producers and presenters have little control over.

Recently there has been a craze for members of the public to attempt

to swear unexpectedly as a prank during live phone-ins, most notably on Matthew Wright's daytime show *The Wright Stuff*. Wright has been caught out several times. In a show from 2008, during a phone-in entitled 'Can posh people speak street?', a viewer justified his brief use of the word 'shit', stating:

I was asked not to swear but why not, because that's my language?

The deliberate use of bad language is not restricted to celebrity interviews or wind-up phone-ins. Earlier this

year Ofcom launched an investigation into *The Daily Politics* show when a Conservative MP denigrated a former chief of police for calling Theresa May a 'fuckwit' over Twitter. He claimed that he was only repeating what had already been said, to highlight the fact that public officials should not use that kind of language against each other as it brings politics into disrepute. Many would argue, therefore, that it was important that the word was repeated so as to give a flavour of the kind of abuse that is perpetrated even casually on social media.

Recently another Tory MP, Communities Minister Penny Mordaunt MP made the headlines when she owned up to accepting a dare to mention the word cock as frequently as

possible in a speech to the House of Commons. Her pranked speech was duly recorded in Hansard and on video, and gleefully made available to viewers via the *Telegraph*, *Spectator*, YouTube and *Mail on Sunday*, which sanctimoniously pronounced:

There is no harm in making jokes there – we could do with more. But treating Parliament as a joke is something else altogether.

Swearing After the Watershed

'Soft' swearing after 9pm is allowed and the strongest words are permitted after 10pm, but there are still restrictions and guidelines on the amount of times that certain words can be used.

Ofcom itself does not issue guidelines on specific words and phrases and the amount of times that they can be used after the watershed; but broadcasters have their own set of guidelines and procedures. For example, BBC editorial guidelines state that:

[we] do not ban words or phrases. However, it is the responsibility of all content makers to ensure strong language is used only where it is editorially justified.

Consequently it categorises common swear words into three categories with different levels of procedure and referrals: the strongest language, language that can cause moderate offence, and language that can cause mild offence.

Channel 4 has similar guidelines; however, they go further and not only categorise expletives but point to specific words. The 'use of the C-word requires exceptional justification at any

time,' and 'in practice, its inclusion is rarely justifiable before 10pm'. However,

use of the F-word including its liberal use, is less likely to cause widespread offence even in programmes starting right on the watershed, as long as there is strong editorial justification and viewers are properly forewarned.

In short, although Ofcom offers guidance on swearing it is up to different broadcasters to interpret the rules as they will, and this can lead to variations between different channels about what is allowed and what is not. The BBC, as the public broadcaster, funded by the taxpayer, has a reputation for being the most conservative in this matter.

Conclusion: Will There Still Be Guidelines In 50 Years?

Like many media industries, television is on the brink of a revolution because of the internet. Because of catch-up services, people can already timeshift television shows broadcast late at night to the middle of the day, provided they accept a warning about the programme's content. It is possible that well within fifty years, television channels will all but disappear, and viewers will simply be presented with a menu of programmes to watch at their leisure, a bit like Netflix or Amazon Instant Video. Some already argue that the watershed and current Ofcom guidelines are pointless because most children and teenagers can now access anything they want very easily on their computers, phones and tablets, rendering censorship toothless.

We already have smart TVs that can access the internet; but in a future

where the barriers between TV and computer platforms are completely broken down, the debate about censorship on TV will simply merge with the debate about censorship on the internet – and that is a whole different kettle of fish that I will leave for another *MediaMag* contributor to dissect.

Harry Cunningham is an English Student at Loughborough University. He has written freelance for *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Leicester Mercury* and *Writers' Forum Magazine*. Follow him on Twitter: @harrycunningham

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Moran, J. 2013. *Armchair Nation: An Intimate History of Britain in front of the TV*.

'Offensive language' in *Producers Handbook* (Channel 4) on http://www.channel4.com/producers-handbook/ofcom-broadcasting-code/protecting-under-18s-and-harm-and-offence/offensive-language

Ofcom. March 2013. 'The broadcasting code' on http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code/