one to one

Filmmakers Journal

Free

An Introduction to the Issue: 11

11 – its form familiar and predictable, but alien to the work of this magazine's writers: one, one. Its repetition, that of the same without alteration, a recurrence without modulation. Without affirmation: not a Derridean yes, yes but a "yeah, yeah" (whatevs). So predictable – is this a re-run? No invocation of the monstrous outside, no addition of something new through the middle: no conjunction here. Just two parallel lines (of thought, behaviour, creativity) that never intersect, carrying us, swaying, toward some known destination, determined in advance.

Put the eyeball on a dolly though; come around and a little below, and the two bars of 11 look like they intersect (the left one is in fact tilted back at an angle of about 30 degrees and is much longer than it appeared from the front). Better: just shove them together, spin them round so they're perpendicular. The articles assembled in One+One Filmmakers Journal do just this: approaching their subjects askew, turning old ideas around, combining them with new ones.

James Riley's "Capitalist Breakdown: Gumball 3000 and the road movie," opens this issue at breakneck velocity. Combining Marx's theory of the commodity form and Situationist Guy Debord's analysis of the automobile's symbolic function within late capitalism, Riley identifies some salient features of Gumball Rally's development from offbeat interest to phenomenon of the global elite over the course of a short decade. His article is swiftly overtaken by "Excess and Austerity: The Films of Kōji Wakamatsu," in which Ben Noys critically re-assesses the life and work of this obscure, wilfully abrasive Japanese filmmaker. Offering a bold riposte to the reactionary response to early Wakamatsu films like *Violent Virgin* (1969), *Violence without a Cause* (1969) and *Ecstasy of the Angels* (1972), and to attempt to affirm their transgressive frisson, Noys argues that "[Wakamatsu's] films operate in a tense negotiation with the limits of a genre that is already misogynist, and they demonstrate how a filmmakers 'independence' might also stake out a highly ambiguous space." This ambiguity is particularly important for Noys' analysis, which sketches the outlines of Wakamatsu's singular, controversial intermingling of radical politics, sexuality and filmmaking.

Meanwhile, in his "Horror Film Hong Kong Style: Dr. Lamb," Garrett Chaffin-Quiray conducts a compelling and detailed commentary on Danny Lee and Billy Tang's *Dr. Lamb* (1992), regarding it within a context of exuberantly subversive Hong Kong filmmaking. For Chaffin-Quiray, what distinguishes Lee and Tang's film is the mastery with which they toy with this tradition: utilising masterful shifts in tone, their film becomes by turns dramatic, horrific, and absurd. This is followed by professional actor Vito Maraula's piece, "Actors: a work in progress," which contributes a fascinating personal reflection on his work. Maraula illuminates the various demands made upon the actor such that a portrayal will appear transparent and effortless in its verisimilitude, and here asserts the necessity of film theory and criticism that focalises the craft of acting. Relying upon the theories of Phillip B. Zarrilli and Jerzy Grotowski, and considering the work of filmmakers like Wim Wenders, Maraula argues that any consideration of performance should begin with the body, and acting's attempt to negotiate the intersection of corporeal and linguistic codes, of body and text. William Powers' "Infinite Riches in a Little Room: Animation, Puppetry, Manipulation, and the Films of Karel Zeman," however, recasts the admittedly anthropocentric terms of Marula's essay by considering the role of puppetry and animation as it functions in the work of Zeman, a neglected Czech film director, artist and animator. According to Powers' account, "instead of the traditional approach of blending effects to appear as part of reality, or at least to appear as real as possible, Zeman chose instead to alter reality to suit his effects" and films like his *Vynález Zkázy* and *Baron Prásil* thereby constitute a veritable corrosion of the tenets of conservative realism.

Earlier this year, in association with Brighton's favourite new queer film night Eyes Wide Open, One+One Filmmakers Journal presented a screening of Derek Jarman's dazzlingly baroque 1990 film *The Garden*, followed by a Q & A with the film's producer James Mackay. James Marcus Tucker's report on the event offers excerpts from the discussion with Mackay, in which he talks candidly and often movingly about the making of the film, his relationship with Jarman and the latter's truly queer cinema.

Bringing the curtain down on this issue is Bradley Tuck's "Adventures in… Bigotry." A virtuosic piece of criticism, equal parts filmic analysis and politicised commentary, Bradley's essay exposes manifestations of so-called bigotry in contemporary film and confronts the hypocrisy that orbits their intrusion into popular discourse. Considering a range of examples, from Lars Von Trier's divisive post-Dogme films, John Waters' outrageous transgressions, and works by Todd Solondz, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and Quentin Tarantino, and utilising critical insights drawn from writers like Wu Ming, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek and Edmund Husserl, Bradley palpates the structurally bourgeois conservatism, racism and misogyny that courses beneath contemporary film production and its reception. Only by attending to the cracks in a politically correct façade that these artists make visible, Bradley suggests, can we begin to excavate and confront bigotry in its multifarious and mutable forms.

A game of Nim: a taciturn Frenchman in a dinner suit arranges a fistful of matchsticks on a table – more ones now swimming before your eyes – and says "take one…" Fuck em. We say you'll never win their game. We say, if you have to, strike a match and burn the place down.

1+1.

Diarmuid Hester

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Capitalist Breakdown

Gumball 3000 and the Road Movie

James Riley

I

Part way into Steven Green's *Gumball 3000: The Movie*, the late Jackass star Ryan Dunn walks into a casino in Reno. He's just driven from San Francisco as part of the 2003 Gumball Rally and is making a scheduled pit stop en route to Las Vegas. Surprised that so many people turned out to see the 'Gumballers' he tells the camera that the mêlée made him feel like "Burt Reynolds". Later in the film another driver, Keith Privete, says that the "fun" of the annual 6-day event, what makes it "outstanding", is the way that it evokes "*The Cannonball Run*, Gumball Rally movies that you grew up watching." Out of all the asides and vox-pops that Green uses, these two work to close a particular circuit of reference established at the opening of the film. As the cars assemble in central San Francisco for the start of the rally, a voice-over informs us that that Gumball is a "modern day version of the infamous 1970s road trip". The voice-over is that of Burt Reynolds, star of the infamous 1970s road trip, *The Cannonball Run*.[1]

Amongst the wide range of legal and semi-legal car events that take place on public roads, the Gumball Rally is the one that most explicitly draws on other aspects of popular culture – particularly cinema – in its branding, promotion and supporting media. Whilst comparable events such as the charity Scumrun, and the underground Stockholm Getaway use video and television as a mode of secondary documentation, film production

is a primary aspect of Gumball's *modus operandi.*[2] Since 2003 their projects have become progressively more lavish and ambitious. Gumball films have, to date, involved wide-screen formats and orchestral scores, the self-conscious incorporation of 'dated' film stock and a progressive movement away from MTV-style 'compilation' content to feature-length documentaries focused on individual drivers.[3] The resulting Gumball 'product', (company, event and film series), is one that, as Reynolds notes in *Gumball 3000*, involves "grease, glamour and guts in equal measure". This translates to DVDs and associated merchandise that package the rally using a visual language of conspicuous affluence, contemporary youth culture and the Ektachrome ambience of Le Mans-era car chase cinema. If one were to sketch an 'atypical' Gumball image it would be the spectacle of a professional skateboarder or rap-star driving a vintage Lamborghini with extensive modifications to a champagne party in Monaco, Los Angeles or Berlin.

And yet, what is peculiar about the rise of Gumball from cult event to global entertainment company is precisely its conjuration of an 'ambience'. In the ten years between Green's *Gumball 3000* and the upcoming 2013 release *The Spirit of the Gumball* the films have gradually erased their initial reference points. This oscillation, performed as part of a wider process of brand construction, underpins much of Gumball's current success as a Fortune 500 company. It represents a targeted use of cinematic intertextuality within a set of media products that purport to act as documentaries. The Gumball films are strange supplements. In order to understand the strategies involved in their self-conscious play of citations, it is necessary to unpack both the operation of the reference points used and to speculate upon the motivations informing their eventual erasure.

II

The Gumball rally was first held in 1999. Organised by ex-racer Maximillion Cooper it featured 50 cars completing a round trip from London to Rimini in 6 days.[4] This set the time-limit and format of for subsequent events: the Gumball predominantly features luxury cars and supercars, it involves a journey of approximately 3000 miles and takes place over the course of a week. In the wake of the increased media exposure that greeted the 2001 rally (London to Copenhagen via Berlin and Stockholm) Gumball extended to America, Russia and Asia. It costs somewhere in the region of $30,000 to enter and potential participants must apply in advance.[5] At the time of writing, the 15th Gumball is underway taking a 100-car caravan from Copenhagen to Monte Carlo.[6]

The rally is organised by the company Gumball 3000 of which Cooper is the creative director and CEO. As an "aspirational life-style brand", Gumball's status as a global company worth $200 million stems from the use of conspicuous wealth as source of productive expenditure. Its excessive display of high-end sports cars at is used to prime and maintain the sales of supplementary merchandise. As the company literature explains:

"By 2001, the 6-day rally was televised internationally on MTV and the BBC to record audience figures, that gave rise to 'Gumball 3000' reaching the top of the Yahoo search engines, a result of which catapulted sales of Gumball 3000 branded T-shirts and baseball caps from hundreds of dollars to millions almost overnight. The brand was rapidly gaining the recognition Cooper had set out to achieve."[7]

Here, "recognition" is closely linked to profit. In this respect, Gumball trades in cars; not cars understood as devices of travel, but cars as spectacular commodities. In classical Marxism, the commodity is the object of labour that is defined by exchange value rather than its use value. The commodity – and commodity exchange – is the engine that motivates capitalism because it is the severance of an object from its material context of exchange that permits a high yield of profit. For Marx, the commodity is typically bought and sold at a distance from those who produced it, thereby instantiating his class-based critique of capitalism: the working class are alienated from the products of their own labour as they invariably neither use nor own that which they produce. [8]

" Gumball trades in cars; not cars understood as devices of travel, but cars as spectacular commodities "

Fordist principles of standardized mass production amplified the role of commodification in capitalist economics. Henry Ford divided the production of the Model T into a series of repeated tasks and used time and motion studies in order to maximise efficiency. Acting almost literally as cogs in machines, no Ford worker (or 'job') made a totalising contribution to the finished product. When sold, this context was erased by a symbolic register that equated the car not with its mode of production but with a series of virtuous associations such as independence and convenience. This, in Marxist terms, is commodity fetishism: the sublimation of a "definite social relation between men" into a phantasmagorical "relation between things". Labour produces the car, commodification conjures the Model T.[9]

In the film, *Gumball 3000*, this status of the car is signified from the outset. Jordanian businessman Eyhab Jumean is seen driving a Ferrari at excessive speed through San Francisco, whilst telling the camera:

"To some people cars are just a method of transport; to other people they're works of art. Some people drive

because they have to get from A to B, some people drive because it gives them pleasure."

The distinction posited here between art and transport, pleasure and practicality shows the articulation of the car as fetish object rather than practical device. It not presented as an object to be used instrumentally but as an object to be appreciated aesthetically. The correlation with Marx emerges when we see that in the sphere of Gumball, the invisible mediatator in the equation between the automobile, the art object and received pleasure is inflated exchange value.

As the film develops we are told that computer entrepreneur Arthur Chirkinian plans to drive the rally in a $500,000 Koenigsegg CCR, "the fastest production car in the world". This joins the litany of similar names that are seen to slowly file out of various garages onto the public starting grid: Ferrari, Maserati, Morgan, Bentley, Rolls Royce. Whilst the initial appearance is that of a production line, within the exclusive space of the closed road, the signifiers of specific manufacturers become brand names and, by extension, indices of a particular wealth dependent lifestyle. Watching this unfold on DVD with the voice of Burt Reynolds on the soundtrack and the San Franciscan resonance of Peter Yates's *Bullitt* (1968) in the background makes manifest Guy Debord's analysis of the car.[10] In his 'Situationist Theses on Traffic' (1959) he argued that the car is "the most notable material symbol of the notion of happiness that developed capitalism tends to spread throughout the society." It exists as "both as supreme good of an alienated life and as essential product of the capitalist market".[11] In the case of *Gumball 3000*, the car is a material symbol not just of "happiness" but also of 'adventure', 'freedom' and the idea that these experiences are income contingent. For the Gumball consumer rather than the Gumball participant, access to such privilege can only be achieved by proxy. The desire for inclusion in the symbolic economy that the rally promotes motivates the purchase of substitute merchandise. The spectacular car transforms into the t-shirt and the baseball cap as the Ferraris leave the crowd in the dust and capital's horizon recedes.

III

The discourse of 'freedom' upon which Gumball's commodification relies is not just expressed through its use of cinematic antecedents, but is specifically indebted to them. The presence of Burt Reynolds in *Gumball 3000* is part of the highly targeted nature of the film's co-option. It is not the road movie in general that Green works to cite, but the particular tone and attitude of *The Cannonball Run* and the *Gumball Rally*.

"The desire for inclusion in the symbolic economy that the rally promotes motivates the purchase of substitute merchandise"

Both films, along with Roger Corman's *Cannonball* (1976), were based on an illegal cross-country race, The Cannonball Baker Sea-To-Shining-Sea Memorial Trophy Dash. The race ran from 1971-1979 and was the idea of two car journalists, Brock Yates and Steve Smith, who allegedly intended the event to be a "whimsical gesture of defiance of the regimen of contemporary traffic laws"[12] During the 1979 race Yates travelled in a Dodge van with director and stuntman Hal Needham. They later collaborated on *Smokey and the Bandit II* (1980) before developing the first *Cannonball Run* film partly in response to *The Gumball Rally* having first 'exploited' the race and its publicity. Yates originally envisaged the film as a fairly serious road movie with Steve McQueen in the lead, presumably sharing some tonal qualities with *Vanishing Point* (1971) and *Two Lane Blacktop* (1971).[13]

In the event, the film became a celebrity love-in masquerading as a comedy, vaguely stitched together with car sequences. Although this combination of terrible jokes and Wacky Racers-esque infantilism proved commercially successful, it was condemned by critics as a flat-line work of sleepwalk cinema. Roger Ebert was amongst the most vociferous, famously declaring *The Cannonball Run* an "abdication of artistic responsibility."[14]

In *Gumball 3000* it is precisely this sense of 'playground' indulgence that Green approximates. One could easily summarise the film as an invitation to the abdication of personal responsibility. As Reynolds notes in his voice-over, for the participants, "Gumball is a chance to forget everything and indulge their passion for the machine that changed the world." Another vox-pop concurs, adding that the rally is a "Getaway", a means to "leave it all behind, the wives, the girlfriends – and just run across the country."

In practice, Green depicts the execution of this sovereign intentionality via a close mimicry of Needham's repeated tropes. As with the main narrative focus of *The Cannonball Run*, the rally is spoken of and presented as a "cat and mouse game" between the police and the drivers. The police themselves are presented as impediments to 'fun' no moreso than in middle America, a territory which as in Variety's summation of Needham's film is presented as a "redneck never never land."[15] Static shots of rundown gas stations are juxtaposed with the blurred speed of the supercars as if to suggest that the dumfounded local police cannot match their performance and sophistication. At one point we see a police car pulling over Jumean's Ferrari. As he and his scantily clad female companion scurry out, we see the scene unfold from the point of view of a helicopter shot. Here, Green mimes Needham's coverage method of choice and in doing so hauntologically recites the opening sequence of his film that features Tara Buckman, the police and a black Lamborghini Countach.[16] In *Gumball 3000*, as with *The Cannonball Run*, all this is tied to a 'gangshow' mentality of camaraderie connected via inserts of the Cuban Brothers dance troupe (read: Captain Chaos); a veneer of entertainment

that carefully erases reference to both the danger of the event and the immense logistical operation that makes it possible.[17]

Within the road movie canon, Needham's films represent large-scale technical achievements but commercial bowdlerisations of the subgenre's radical potentiality. They lack the satire of Paul Bartel's *Death Race 2000* (1975), the existentialism of Walter Hill's *The Driver* (1978) and the countercultural residue of *Vanishing Point* and *Two Lane Blacktop*. The latter films are, like Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969), classic 'limit' movies. They plot terminal trajectories that result in either the destruction of the vehicle or the visual termination of the journey. In *Vanishing Point* the Dodge Challenger ecstatically collides with a roadblock, whilst film itself burns up at the close of Two Lane Blacktop. If read via Debord's analysis of the car, what is presented is the material and spectacular destruction of the capitalist object. From this perspective, they can be seen as nominally "revolutionary"; broad allegories of the collision that occurs when labour (here, the synthesis of car and driver) moves into friction with the relations of production (the expected practical use and commercial parameters of the car) resulting in an impasse that demands that something different be constructed from the flames and wreckage.[18]

The Cannonball Run and by extension *Gumball 3000* represent the exact opposite of this cinematic critique. If seen from the perspective of a comparable allegorical frame, they highlight capitalism's adoptive fluidity. In each, the cars are seemingly invulnerable. They either move through obstacles unscathed or are subject to instantaneous substitution.[19] In Green's film Arthur Chirkinian's Koenigsegg endlessly breaksdown. What could be taken as a direct metaphor of systemic fragility provides an opportunity for an equally endless expenditure to keep the car operational. We see Chirkinian employing the services of a back-up crew and at one point he buys a brand new Volkswagen simply to get a replacement radiator cap.[20] These phantasies of commodification exemplify Slavoj Žižek's reading of capitalism as inherently transformative. Rather than collapsing at the point of an internal contradiction, Žižek argues that capitalism operates on a dialectical basis in relation to its own internal limit points. It is able to adapt, co-opt and recuperate its own fissures in a drive towards "permanent development."[21] Similarly, despite positing 'challenges' and obstacles in the course of its depicted "adventure", *Gumball 3000* conspicuously lacks conflict and oppositional incident. In a narrative that easily allegorises capital's propulsive ability; the progression of the Gumball cars is virtually fuelled by constant investment. The suggestion of the film is that when presented with a limit point, wealth will find a way through.

It is in this light of adaptability that Gumball's erasure of its reference points can be read. Its most recent press releases identify the name 'Gumball 3000' as a fusion of pop-art thinking and pre-millennial futurism:

"Cooper derived the word 'Gumball' from New York artist Andy Warhol after he used it to describe how the public chew-up and spit out popular culture like chewing gum: and '3000' as a nod to Cooper's fascination with the future, particularly at a time when the world was about to enter the 21st Century."[22]

The rally still promotes itself as an event of personal 'freedom' but this recourse to Warhol is odd.[23] What's being said via this reference to the ephemeral nature of popular culture? Does Gumball see itself as the ultimate purveyor of what the public wants or a repository for the celebrity and reality TV detritus the public no longer wants? Either way, what is at work here is a shift from pastiche to simulacra. Rather than presenting themselves as a "real life version" the Cannonball Run, the Gumball name is instead promoted as a signifier without antecedents.[24] This type of recalibration can be understood as part of a process of brand consolidation. By sublimating their original point of influence Gumball establish themselves as the origin point, thereby becoming an institution to be imitated rather than a project that perpetually imitates. However, it is a strategy that is not without representational consequences. The Gumball concept is not strong enough to carry a film in the absence of the intertextual architecture that informed *Gumball 3000*. What emerges are films that carry even less narrative interest than this first release.

Consider Maximillion Cooper's film *3000 Miles* (2007), an account of the 2006 rally. This took place over 8 days and travelled from London to Los Angeles via Thailand. At one point we see Ryan Dunn and fellow Jackass Bam Margera sitting at a small bar in Bangkok. Their purple Lamborghini lies redundant at the roadside following a breakdown. They drink until skateboarder Tony Hawk turns up to take them away in a luxury SUV.[25] This is neither the carefully constructed homage of Green's film, nor does it justify Gumball's self-description as the "classic road trip". It is simply static. Late capitalism may be svelte in its operation, admitting little in the way of external critique, but it is sometimes courteous enough to foreground its own operations. At this almost Beckettian moment in *3000 Miles*, we see retro-

spectively the phantasmagorical nature of Gumball 3000's seductive commodification. There is no magical object here, just a dead fetish: a few arrogant men sitting around a chunk of inert metal.

1. Stephen Green (Dir.), Gumball 3000: The Movie (2003). Unless stated, all quotes will come from this film. The Cannonball Run (1981) was directed by Hal Needham. The Gumball Rally (1976) was directed by Charles Bail.

2. See http://www.scumrun.com/index.php/ and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzjAepptbQI

3. See 3000 Miles (Maximillion Cooper, 2007); Number 13 (Maximillion Cooper, 2011) and Spirit of the Gumball (Ali Walker and Maximillion Cooper, 2013).

4. Gumball 3000 press release. See http://www.gumball3000.com/press

5. This information is not directly posted on the Gumball 3000 website but is widely circulated elsewhere. See, for example: http://www.topspeed.com/cars/car-news/2012-gumball-3000-kicks-off-on-may-25th-ar129956.html

6. See http://www.gumball3000.com/rally/gumball-tv

7. Press release http://www.gumball3000.com/press

8. Karl Marx, Capital, vol. 1 [1867] trans. Ben Fowkes (Penguin, 1976), p.165.

9. Ibid.

10. Bullitt is mentioned in the Gumball 3000 website pages that detail the 2003 rally. See http://www.gumball3000.com/rally/#/articles/san-francisco-symphony

11. Guy Debord, 'Situationist Theses on Traffic', [1959] in The Situationist International Anthology trans. Ken Knabb (BOP: 2006), p.69. For online text see http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/3.traffic.htm

12. Brad Niemcek, 'Gurney / Yates win first Cannonball', Autoweek, (December 1971).

13. Brock Yates, Cannonball! (Motorbooks, 2003). "While Vanishing Point wasn't released until after the first Cannonball had been run, the Esquire hype surrounding Two-Lane Blacktop was a factor in my conception of the Cannonball." (p.16). Vanishing Point was directed by Richard C. Sarafian and Two Lane Blacktop was directed by Monte Hellman.

14. Roger Ebert, "The Cannonball Run", January 1st 1981. See http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/the-cannonball-run

15. "The Cannonball Run", Variety 30th December, 1980.

16. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ju5F-Y585YQ

17. Captain Chaos was the 'alter-ego' of Victor Prinzim (Dom DeLuise) in The Cannonball Run.

18. This discussion is informed by Fabio Vighi's analysis of Žižek in On Žižek's Dialectics: Surplus, Subtraction, Sublimation (Continuum, 2010), p.20.

19. In The Cannonball Run, Roger Moore appears, playing 'himself' and uses an Aston Martin kitted out with all kinds of James Bond devices. In The Cannonball Run II (Hal Needham, 1984), a Lamborghini changes colour during a car chase to evade the police.

20. For more on Arthur Chirkinian see http://www.ridelust.com/fact-or-folklore-the-infamous-koenigsegg-speeding-ticket/

21. Vighi, p.20. See also Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology (Verso, 1989), p. 52.

22. Press release http://www.gumball3000.com/press

23. In The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (Harcourt, 1975) Warhol doesn't mention 'gumballs', but he does talk at length about 'candy' (p.15). The gumball image is more closely associated with another pop artist, Wayne Thiebaud and his 1963 painting, 'Three Machines'. A recent You Tube video recorded on the 2013 Gumball Rally features one participant describing the event as "10 days of freedom, madness, cars". See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T660OeHsBiU

24. This is Cooper's description of Gumball 3000 on IMDB. See http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0390067/

25. This clip is viewable on You Tube. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5l1698js_2o

All images are stills from Gumball 3000: The Movie

Excess and Austerity:

The Films of Kōji Wakamatsu[1]

Ben Noys

Still from Violent Virgin

Kōji Wakamatsu died on 17 October 2012 from injuries sustained after being hit by a car while crossing the road on 12 October in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo. Director of over one hundred films, he drew critical attention late in his career for his 2008 film *United Red Army*, which showed in graphic detail the descent of the eponymous Japanese Maoist group into self-destruction. The film is memorable for its portrayal of how self-criticism sessions by the group turned into acts of torture and murder. In particular, the scene in which one female member is encouraged to repeatedly punch herself in the face is almost unbearable viewing. In fact, the film seems to connect the excess of Wakamatsu's early 'pink films' ('pinku eiga') from the 1960s with the austerities of his political filmmaking during the 1970s, such as his 1971 documentary work *Red Army / PFLP: Declaration of World War*. Yet it is not possible to divide Wakamatsu the 'soft-core auteur' from Wakamatsu the political filmmaker.

In fact, a discourse of 'growing maturity' is particularly inapposite. Wakamatsu styled himself as a fiercely independent filmmaker, starting his own production company in the mid-60s. This aggressive independence is given comic form in the copyright warning sequence from the recent reissue of Wakamatsu films from 1965 to 1972 in three DVD box sets by the French company Blaq Out.[2] The scene shows someone downloading and about to copy a Wakamatsu film onto a DVD. We see someone enter the frame and start to attack them. The screen goes black and shows the copyright warning while we hear sounds of a violent beating. Wakamatsu's face ap-

Still from Go, Go Second Time Virgin

pears and he announces: 'If you copy my films or put them online … Keep in mind, I have friends everywhere. They'll come to your home … Watch out!'[3]

The perennial bad boy image is perhaps an overly-familiar one. It raises the issue of how we view Wakamatsu's work, especially in the 'pink film' genre. These films are characterized by sexual violence and misogyny. While they constantly transgress the limits of what we might expect as 'soft core pornography', they do so in a way that is acutely disturbing. In the film *Violent Virgin* (1969) a young couple are brutalized as punishment for elopement by a gang they are, presumably, members of. For much of the film the woman is tied naked to a cross, as well as being gang raped. She is eventually shot by her partner with a sniper rifle, set up by the Yakuza observing the punishment. Still tied to the cross, she spends the rest of the film dying. While the film explicitly raises issues of voyeurism, through having the woman observed through binoculars (attached to the rifle) and photographed, the result is uncomfortable viewing. The contrast between the stark landscape around Mount Fuji and the naked and abused bodies of the couple suggests the tension of austerity and excess, but an excess that is heavily misogynist.[4]

We might recall what Herbert Marcuse called 'repressive desublimation', which is the capacity of capitalism to release (desublimate) violent and erotic urges, only to put them at the service of repression.[5] Much of 1970s and early 1980s cinema in particular shows a turn to violent misogyny and nihilism, which it is not hard to track as a reworking of the utopian political energies released in the 1960s. For example, to draw a parallel case to Wakamatsu, Abel Ferrara's *Ms. 45* (1981) is an unstable mixture of feminist parable and perhaps parodic male fantasy of the phallic woman. Similarly, we could suggest that Wakamatsu's work does not so much transgress the boundaries of bourgeois morality, but create a new 'desublimated' sexual violence available for consumption.

In Wakamatsu's work the use of frustrated or virgin male protagonists (indicated in the titles *Violent Virgin* and *Go, Go, Second Time Virgin* (1969)), suggests that the 'release' of sexuality is hardly a Reichian liberation. Instead, sexual frustration results in outbursts of sexual violence, usually rape. Of course, we could argue that Wakamatsu is implicitly criticising his male audience and their expectations. I would add this extends to a contemporary Western audience, which often has quasi-Orientalist expectations of sexual cruelty and gratuity in Japanese cinema. Perhaps the most explicit case of this is the film *Violence without a Cause* (1969), in which the three young male protagonists style their rebellion and frustration through gang rape. Here the incapacities of the men pose a question to an audience consuming their own frustration. So, Wakamatsu doesn't offer a simple model of repression and liberation. Although this is true, his replication of misogyny and sexual violence means that Wakamatsu's films can hardly be exonerated from problematic gender politics. In fact, his films operate in a tense negotiation with the limits of a genre that is already misogynist, and they demonstrate how a filmmakers 'independence' might also stake out a highly-ambiguous space.

I want to concentrate here on perhaps Wakamatsu's most successful fusion of the political, the 'erotic', and nihilism: *The Ecstasy of the Angels* (1972). The film was released in March 1972, a few weeks after the shoot-out between the police and militants at Asama Sansō lodge that Wakamatsu would later film in *United Red Army*. It tells the story of a militant group – the October group – who belong to a wider organisation, 'The Four Seasons'. This structure – from year, to seasons, to months, to days (to name members) – is derived from the conspiratorial Société des Saisons, of which Louis-Auguste Blanqui was a leading member and which staged an armed uprising in 1840. The suggestion is that these are hardly classical Marxist revolutionaries, and the constant debates in the film concerning opportunism, anarchism, and 'personal struggle' (which includes sex), suggest Wakamatsu's outside take on the orthodox-

Still from Ecstasy of the Angels

ies of the time.

The film itself, predominantly in black and white except for a few colour scenes, follows the 'pink film' model. The discussions of revolutionary struggle and acts of violence are interspersed with various scenes of sex. We begin in a night club with the representatives of the 'four seasons' meeting, while the nightclub singer, appropriately, sings a song with the line 'Burn the streets at dawn!' Almost immediately this instance of 'burn, baby, burn' rhetoric is linked to the 'burning' of orgasm, in the sex scene between the woman 'Autumn' and the man 'October'. October's group then seize explosives in a raid on a US military base, during which attack four members are killed and October blinded. The rest of the film is largely dominated by Autumn's betrayal of the October group, and the agonized discussions of the group about how to act.

Again, we have a gang rape scene, as 'Winter's February' try to seize the explosives from the October group couple Monday and Friday. This scene of beating, torture, and finally rape of the woman, anticipates Wakamatsu's *United Red Army*, with its long sequences on internecine violence. It is possible to argue for the woman's 'power', in her capacity to resist torture, and in her final comment to the leader of the other group: 'Fuck off, we'll wipe our own ass'. This 'power' is, however, obviously limited by the violence she suffers under the voyeuristic gaze of the camera. In fact, the austerity of the film lies in its constant use of the closed and claustrophobic space of apartments in which members of the group have sex and engage in what appear, at least from the subtitles, nonsensical exchanges of revolutionary jargon. Although the film had a higher budget than Wakamatsu's previous 'pink films', thanks to support from the Art Theatre Guild Japan, it is still by the material factors which shape the aesthetic. In the end its repetitions turn on the tension of austerity and excess, which comes to seem more like a form of impotence. The blinded October announces 'I can do nothing to change this world.'

Stills from Ecstasy of the Angels

The film is also reflexive about its relation to the world of the 'pink film'. Near the end of the film it is revealed that one of the group members makes his living as a pornographer. He interrupts one of the many anguished discussions in the film by bringing in two prostitutes in sailor outfits and starting to photograph them as they have sex. Explaining his shooting technique to the bemused prostitutes, the photographer announces 'It's avant-garde.' Trying to involve the young student member of the group, seemingly another of Wakamatsu's frustrated 'virgins', we witness an uncomfortable scene as the young man starts to engage in sex before violently rejecting any involvement. He argues with the photographer, accusing him of 'anarchism', while the photographer retorts 'There is no revolution'. Whatever Wakamatsu's intentions, it is hard not to feel discomforted by the acutely strange 'mix', or failed mix, of sex and politics.

As I have suggested the repetitions of the film induce a feeling of boredom and weariness. The film finally proceeds to a moment of decision as the October group decide to act on their own and take their remaining bombs for one suicidal attack. The result is the most impressive sequence of the whole film. In a mass assault on Tokyo the members of the group are filmed taking their bombs to attack multiple targets. This assault had already been signalled by the group's previous decision to blow-up one of their safe houses, killing eleven people. While this did not seem to help them escape the enclosed and claustrophobic world of apartments, now they do. The group members take the remaining explosives and start not so much on a bombing campaign but a frantic 'charge' into what they call the 'battlefront' of Tokyo. To a soundtrack of free jazz played by the Yamashita Trio we have a montage of explosions (rendered in rather poor special effects), and the running members of the group followed by the camera as they place bombs. In some of the most effective moments the jagged 'hand held' camera work becomes blurred into pure abstraction. At the centre of the attack is Autumn, converted from betrayal to a final suicidal act of fidelity. After this sudden frantic sequence we get silence and an image of Autumn sat in a car with some remaining bombs, covered with blood. Announcing that she has 'gotta go to the battlefront!' we have a cut from black and white images of her driving the car towards a government building in suicide attack to a colour sequence of the car blowing-up on a mountain road.

If this were the ending we might recall *Zabriskie Point* (1974), with its final sequence of the exploding house – another seemingly imaginary solution to impasse. Yet, there is another turn of the screw, as we see the blind October leave the apartment with a bag of bombs and follow him wandering through Tokyo as the final credits roll. We are left suspended, between an assumption that October will join his comrades in death or simply carry on walking. The equivocal nature of the film's ending points to the fact that it could easily be considered as a thorough-going critique of left-activism, as much as any endorsement. In fact, rather than this alternative I'd suggest that Wakamatsu's filmmaking is perhaps better taken as an exploration of the attempt to act and the sudden shift within that action into nihilism. As much as any mockery of 'Promethean' revolutionary politics, Wakamatsu's film traces the 'fire' of revolution from politics to sex, to extinction in a final burning conflagration.

It would be unwise, if not impossible, to exonerate Wakamatsu of charges of misogyny, gratuity, and political opportunism. In fact, part of the interest in the filmmaker lies precisely in the instability of his works. It is perfectly possible to regard a film like *The Ecstasy of the Angels* or the later *United Red Army* as critiques or mockery of left-wing utopianism and its violent ends. Of course the very excess of the films, coupled to the austerity, in fact makes them difficult to position. Rather than argue that Wakamatsu be regarded as a 'model' filmmaker, either in his independence or his singular aesthetic, I want to suggest that he is a filmmaker who poses problems.

In particular, he poses a problem to the usual quick and easy reading of him as a 'transgressive' filmmaker. To invoke the 'prophets' of transgression, like Georges Bataille or Sade, after watching Wakamatsu is almost irresistible. While this is not simply false, I'd argue that the interest in Wakamatsu's tension between austerity and excess might fall on the austerity of his work. What's often forgotten in invocations of transgression is a reliance on austerity to generate excess, and the fact that transgression itself is deeply unstable. In the desire of filmmaker or audience to 'be' transgressive we can end up inhabiting the position of those who aren't actually shocked. It is always someone else who finds the work shocking, while we offer 'sophisticated' understandings. At worst, this can even involve a machismo of those who can 'take' watching or reading transgressive material, against those 'weak' enough to be disturbed.

Bataille, in fact, stressed the repetitive and problematic nature of transgression. His friend Pierre Klossowski, another key 'transgressive' writer, wrote in his book on Sade that we finally find in transgression an 'ascesis of apathy.' Repeating acts of transgression results in an apathy, which is not simply that of the jaded. In fact, transgression reaches its own limit, which suggests that we can't simply laud the activity of 'being transgressive'. Therefore, rather than complacent viewing, we could see the austerities of the conditions under which Wakamatsu made films and the austerities of the films as the sign of an apathy or even boredom that viewers of the 'transgressive' might find more disturbing to confront.

1. I would like to thank Alberto Toscano for allowing me to read his essay 'Walls of Flesh: The Films of Koji Wakamatsu (1965-1972)', forthcoming in Film Quarterly.

2. http://www.blaqout.com/site2/home.php. These films are available with English subtitles.

3. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYJ3QlkyHBw

4. For a critique of Wakamatsu's gender politics see Isolde Standish, Politics, Porn and Protest: Japanese Avant-Garde Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s, New York, 2011, pp.103-107.

5. Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, London, 1964, p.72

6. For a useful discussion of the context of the films' production, see Hirasawa Gô, 'The Ecstasy of the Angels', http://www.japansociety.org/resources/content/3/0/1/4/documents/Tenshi%20no%20kokotsu%20Hirasawa.pdf

7. Pierre Klossowski, Sade My Neighbour, trans. and intro. Alphonso Lingis, London, 1992, p.29.

Horror Film Hong Kong Style: Dr. Lamb

Garrett Chaffin-Quiray

Serial killers murder for personal gratification followed by intervals of tranquility, and they leave behind a great many victims. Efforts to dramatize the type include Robert Louis Stevenson's novella "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" (1886), Fritz Lang's movie *M* (1931), Bret Easton Ellis's novel *American Psycho* (1991), TV's *Dexter* (2006-2013), and songs like Church of Misery's "Master of Brutality (John Wayne Gacy)" (2011). Yet the nature of serial killing cleaves to the essence of movies because both experiences often wallow in visually striking crimes.

Running a brief but memorable 89 minutes, Danny Lee and Billy Tang's Gao yang yi sheng, or *Dr. Lamb* (1992), displays wild tonal shift and frames several sequences of truly bad taste while exploring the crimes and motives of a serial killer. *Dr. Lamb* is also a cult phenomenon that delights in the cruelty that earned a Category III rating, roughly equivalent to an American NC-17, without resorting to heroic bloodshed, as in other Hong Kong movies of the time like John Woo's *Hard-Boiled* (1992). Instead *Dr. Lamb* trades on realism and stylized grotesquerie to fascinate audiences while reveling in the singular performance of Simon Yam as the eponymous star.

Lee and Tang may also use the hunt for a serial killer as an objective correlative of serial killer form, or an uneasy, semi-cathartic, guilt-ridden concentration on violence that alternates with equally uneasy quiet while leaving behind a great many victims.

Reality

Based on the true-life crimes of convicted Hong Kong serial killer Lam

Kor-wan, *Dr. Lamb* is a murder mystery told out of order with its solution revealed in the first act. By ignoring the linear whodunit pattern, *Dr. Lamb* heightens interest about what's already been revealed. Namely, that Lam Gor-Yu (Yam) is a serial killer otherwise living a banal life in Hong Kong. Knowing this does little to blunt the picture's impact, however, because the real fascination of *Dr. Lamb* rests in its second and third act that details Gor-Yu's capture while giving us glimpses into the mayhem he's left strewn in his wake through a mix of flashbacks and flash forwards.

The movie opens with a film lab developing a roll of pictures featuring women who appear oddly posed and possibly dead. The police are asked to investigate. Led by Inspector Lee (Lee) the police determine that the pictures are real and they set out to find the killer. They quickly find the Lam family, including Gor-Yu (Yam), a stoic loner.

Unable to fully determine Gor-Yu's guilt or innocence after a police interview-turned-beating, Lee focuses on the rest of the family instead. Lee shows Gor-Yu's sister the naked pictures Gor-Yu has taken of her young daughter and in this way unhinges her. An ugly confrontation ensues and Gor-Yu is forced to face the charges brought against him in light of the many photographs he's taken. He then confesses to a series of rape-murders. From that point the film explores his lifetime of violent impulses to illustrate Gor-Yu's troubled childhood up through the present where he works as a taxi driver with a mission straight from God to clean up the streets, raping and killing prostitutes if necessary.

While *Dr. Lamb* begins as a typical police procedural, it evolves into a horror of personality that often shamelessly leers at exploitive elements in its latter half. It's also an ad hoc mix of realist technique and purposeful stylization used to express the psychological state of a madman, all scored by a synth-pop soundtrack that maintains an indifferent, mechanical rhythm.

Perhaps owing to artistic inspiration, or reflective of a small budget, *Dr. Lamb's* visual style is at first quite gritty. Opening sequences employ no unusual angles, intrusive direction, jarring cuts, or much camera movement. The mystery of dead women captured on rolls of film is presented within a real world context. Long takes with a static camera enclose conversations. Panning shots through claustrophobic rooms increase the pressure of looking for evil while investigators seek clues. Scenes cut on static glimpses of dead women's body parts. Point-of-view shots are kept to a minimum.

In this nuts-and-bolts world Inspector Lee stands out. With a fitted suit and quiet authority, his presence orders the investigation in the first half of the movie. Once Gor-Yu is apprehended, though, Yam's presence becomes the center of the film.

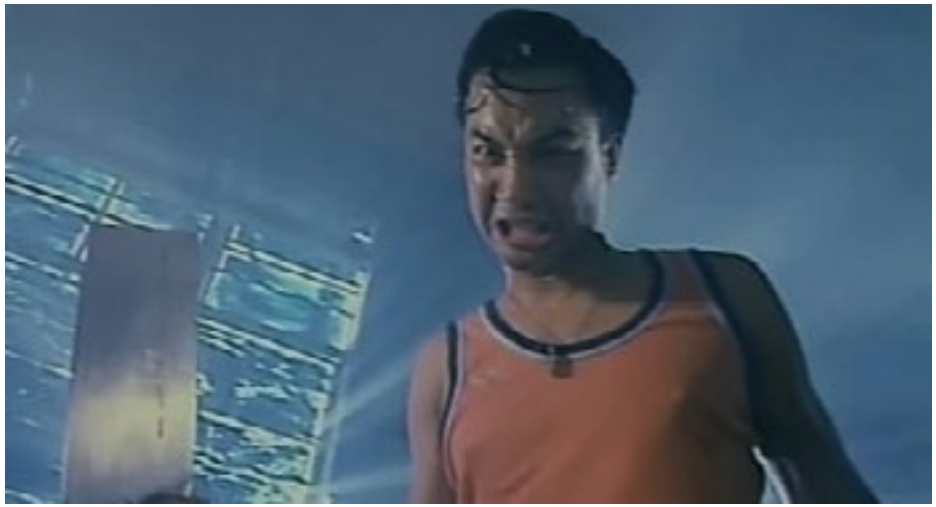
Hyberbole

Since exaggeration and visual excess are key traits of Hong Kong cinema from the mid-1980s onwards, *Dr. Lamb* benefits from stock characters sent to extremes. Except for Gor-Yu, a serial killer whose nature is predicated on excess, every other person in *Dr. Lamb* resembles caricature. Ciphers all, each performer behaves wildly and in this way many sequences have a deliciously surreal flavor, which serves to make the violence at the heart of the tale less shocking.

“ the point of the scene is to make violent action signal character transformation through an extreme clash of wills”

One striking example is the sequence where Lee's investigators beat Gor-Yu to earn his confession. Obviously dissonant for some viewers accustomed to restraint in stories of police activity, the point of the scene is to make violent action signal character transformation through an extreme clash of wills. Gor-Yu's interview begins with verbal harassment and quickly escalates through slaps and punches to canings, chokeholds, threats, and, finally, confession under the watchful eye of Inspector Lee.

Afterwards focused on recounting key moments in Gor-Yu's criminal career, the film's largely realist aesthetic switch to occupy the serial killer's fantasy state. Close-ups of Gor-Yu in his cab, typically in a rainstorm and backlit blue and gray, replace establishing shots among Hong



Kong landmarks. Separate from his city the taxicab is Gor-Yu's cell to travel through space, letting him observe the underside of his environment where his appetites can emerge in seclusion.

In this nod to Travis Bickle the difference turns on the question of motive. Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1976) shows how Travis, a war veteran, is unable to re-integrate into society, although he desperately wants to. Gor-Yu's perversity, beginning with his treatment as unwanted stepchild, is hard-wired evil. He's not interested in social acceptance, only on celebrating a standard of feminine purity and beauty no individual can possibly sustain, and so he kills women.

Gor-Yu's dream states are therefore hysterical and frightening. Yam's handsome features twist into angry mania and his every friendly gesture turns ugly. Amplified through camera movements, lighting, and mise-en-scene that typically avoid the establishing shot, close-up, reverse-shot sequence, Gor-Yu's madness is treated through visual hyperbole, literally extruding out of the "real world" inhabited by Lee's investigators, while underscoring the sexual perversity of Gor-Yu's life. In fact, once the film's technique veers away from realism, Gor-Yu's gleeful attacks on women become nearly comical.

This is partly because Gor-Yu is marked by an awkwardness that suggests deep shame, possibly keeping him from making friends. Instead he sublimates the social urges for companionship, along with all sexual feelings, through a divine prerogative to clean up the streets and so he ends up killing would-be "dates" when he can't seduce or befriend them. Then he photographs the naked corpses in erotically charged ways.

In some of these sequences Gor-Yu is perfectly calm, suggesting an utter lack of conscience, which ultimately betrays him when he fixates on an innocent schoolgirl. The sequence begins calmly. But when the girl senses danger she flees Gor-Yu's taxi during a rainstorm scarred by lightening. He mistakes her kindness for coquetry and her withdrawal as incitement to kill. All this happens in a few seconds but the totality of the emotional switchback is all the more jarring once he does finally kill her.

He undresses and bathes the girl's body in preparation of videotaping himself making love to her corpse, but then becomes so excited he ejaculates prematurely, his sexual inadequacy transformed into an irresolvable crack in character for which women die. Every aspect of Gor-Yu's search for friendship and love is either an excess of virility or impotence.

"Every aspect of Gor-Yu's search for friendship and love is either an excess of virility or impotence"

Absurdity and Grotesquery

Gor-Yu is interpretable as a response to Hong Kong's re-unification with China; his depravity may stem from the filmmakers worry over the condition of society after 1997. But *Dr. Lamb's* overall style is a vehicle for black humor and physical comedy.

One source for this kind of shift is a strain of Hong Kong cinema that relies on martial artists literally flirting with physical disaster. Whether comic or tragic, the stakes for many martial artists in Hong Kong cinema remain the same since so many situations, be they knife fights, bouts of mistaken identity, alley chases, or even the reunion of star-crossed lovers, depend on physical action.

The other industry source for this style is the predilection of exploitation filmmakers to "hook" audiences with lowest common denominator material. To wit, bodies can always be subjected to more punishment, obsessions can be ever more gothic, and pure evil can exist inside a simple taxi driver.

In *Dr. Lamb* the Hong Kongese tendency towards absurdity reaches its

apotheosis in Gor-Yu's confession. Not only is he fixated on prostitutes as the signal of a decadent culture, he's equally enamored, like Ed Gein, of keeping parts of his victims. Herein, the fascination of a serial killer's trophy case, of a body parts archive, is eclipsed by the more disturbing, and grotesque, quality of that archive. Yet the way Lee and Tang's movie discovers Gor-Yu's trophy case slides easily between slapstick and horror.

Witness the scene when Lee's team visit the Lam home and uncover Gor-Yu's videotape collection and cabinet of body parts. Opening a jar containing a hacked off breast, the scene's macabre aspect lifts away when that same severed breast becomes the centerpiece of a gag as it slips from one detective and lands on the back of the lone female in Lee's crew. She screams, answered by innuendo-filled comments about her bosom, but the conceit of uncovering proof of a mad man's crimes in his trophy case of body parts quickly resolves into a routine joke that pits man against woman, male heterosexual fetish against a woman lacking the fetish object. *Dr. Lamb's* realist impulse thusly collides with the absurd and grotesque fantasy of Gor-Yu's delusions as a victim's breast slips from a clumsy investigator to augment the body of another woman. In no time the woman detective vomits.

While it may be true that situational humor may know no bound, *Dr. Lamb* tests the limit. Throughout Gor-Yu's other flashbacks, never mind Lee's investigation into Gor-Yu's crimes and the lives of his victims, violence and necrophilia crop up over and over, mocking the values of conventional police movies, even of the typical horror film. Subjected to the grind house demands of Hong Kong cinema, though, these taboo subjects flower and become the new floor of expectation for other comparable works at the multi-plex.

Dr. Lamb dares us to recognize the logic of a sickening story. Of course a serial killer covets trophies culled from his victims. Of course he's erotically charged by this pursuit. Of course he has sex with the dead. Of course we watch it all happen; he's the serial killer after all.

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Responding to the epochal change of 1997, conditioned by a well-established domestic and diasporic international movie marketplace, and built around stars Danny Lee and Simon Yam, *Dr. Lamb* is a keynote Hong Kong exploitation vehicle aptly demonstrating the island's cinematic fascination with tonal shift, one of two traits often cited as the legacy of Hong Kong cinema. Opening as a police procedural, the picture quickly veers into psychological horror to explore dream sequences that illuminate a serial killer's fascination with virginal sexuality and sudden violence.

Quickly stepping from realist technique through hyperbolized characterization and ending with a Grand Guignol of absurdity and grotesquery, the film pushes good taste to the limit. Having spawned a cycle of similarly brutal "true crime" pictures, *Dr. Lamb* helped form a new standard, both for its misogynistic violence and normalization of that violence in Yam's eerie performance. Seen through the myopia of 1997, reversion to China might be the metaphorical evil motivating Gor-Yu's actions.

While makeup and other special effects technologies have certainly raised the realist potential of movie carnage since *Dr. Lamb's* release, its gross out humor continues to win fans, making the film a roller coaster of sensations, not all of them pleasant. In short, *Dr. Lamb* is an exploitation masterwork, so purposefully out-of-synch with mainstream tendencies as to suggest an entirely new paradigm for on-screen terror, one equally attuned to the necessity of hyperbolized, even absurd, evisceration along with the oddly delicate, even romantic, qualities of necrophilia.

That this exploitive element stems from a true-to-life story means Gor-Yu's actions are that much more nauseating. Departing from crime photos, on-the-spot reportage, and the kind of urban terror so prevalent in a millennial city like Hong Kong, the shadow of *Dr. Lamb* is no less than civilizing assimilation, first to a polite mercantile island society, second to China. Gor-Yu's crimes are therefore an affront to good taste for those viewers objecting to its subject, imagery, and technique.

More fundamentally, Gor-Yu undermines the conventional order, wherein innocence is protected, evil subdued, order maintained. Issuing such a threat to society, *Dr. Lamb's* villain, as in real-life, is finally captured and destroyed. So goes the sexually motivated serial killer in this 1992 primer on Hong Kong horror.

ACTORS:
a work in progress

Vito Maraula

Image of Vito Maraula by Dan Childs - danchilds.blogspot.co.uk

Understanding the work of an actor before attempting to make a film is a notion that many people probably believe to be a misuse of time. But, on discovering midway through a project that understanding the work of an actor was the most important aspect of the film, and the hardest to get right, would be a little too late. What we understand to be the 'actor' in the modern sense covers a very wide range, not merely the professional or trained performer, but also includes the amateur or 'non-actor'. By 'non-actor' we mean without formal training. What we are covering is the whole gamut of performance work in the human form in the clearest and most truthful possible way in film, which also includes performance art films and physical theatre films; and finding a way of getting the best out of them. If there are people on screen, we must bring into consideration that we are covering an actor's work and the situation must be approached in that way. Modern society has evolved in such a way that all people behave in a self-conscious manner when a camera is placed in front of them, we can not fool ourselves any longer about this! And when this happens the 'actor' happens. By possessing the experience and practice of human reactions, as an actor does, we can loosen the constraints and tensions that do not allow for real and honest expression.

This piece of writing offers an historical and traditional foundation used for and by actors and concerns how an actor makes use of his body. If it strikes you as obvious that the history of the acting craft and its systems of training makes use of the body as a central theme, then it will surprise you to discover how some filmmakers today have a working practice that seems to look upon the body as an inconvenience. A not uncommon request, sometimes singularly, sometimes all at the same, as follows: to hit a mark bending to avoid a light; bent over a table so that an actress can be seen; with a tilted head for nice shadow; arm behind his back to avoid blocking; and crying on cue for good measure. It is understandable that a certain amount of 'cheating' is involved to make a great scene and it would be an error to the spirit of this essay to point to any particular examples of what could be seen as 'bad practice'. What I am highlighting in the preceding examples is the habit of portraying tension. An audience responds to unnatural tension in a performance with discomfort. It deadens a performance and gives us an 'actor' in a scene when what we want is life; for the actor to disappear and the character or idea to emerge. It is important to focus on positive approaches and that which has proven to liberate the performer, rather than deaden him. It is also important to note that it can become inundating and abstract to anyone with little experience in the practical application of an actor's training. It's not easy, but then again, everybody has struggled with it. So, it is for each of us individually to discover the ideas that best work for us. What with the ocean of great acting tradition taking as its basis the same fundamentals, namely of the body, and though these traditions are taking place in different corners of the world and sometimes separated by centuries, they share universally accepted ideas. It lurks in our midst, and I think it valuable to set our sails upon it.

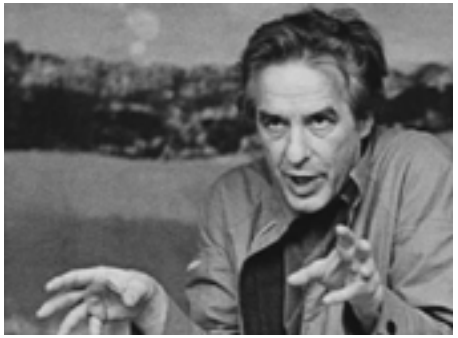
Jerzy Grotowski

I will refer a great deal to a book called *Acting (Re)Considered* by Phillip B. Zarrilli. For those who feel challenged to reconsider their own filmmaking practice by looking at the actor's body during their own projects, I recommend you read this book immediately. I can also recommend Jerzy Grotowski, a Polish theatre practitioner, who is spoken of. And the work and philosophy of Peter Brook, in a book called *The Empty Space*. As these books are mainly concerned with the art of theatre and its practices I believe it a not too heinous crime to substitute the words 'theatre art' for 'film art' when reading through these books to make it more relevant to our practice of making films. The small tokens of influence that these practitioners have had is immeasurable, people take different parts for their own practice and forget its original source. In a similar way I will go into detail about certain points that these writers bring up, but from a different perspective.

Beginning with a different perspective it appears that a review of acting is not

just a central task for the person in front of the camera, it can be a valuable tool for developing a whole film idea. From the experience of undertaking different projects in succession it is evident actually how far the performance of an actor can be extended for better dramatic effect, how this can have an effect on the initial script work and also how it can affect the dramatic quality of the whole cinematography. Writing a script, by its very nature, is a wordy process. That is, it is written for the page. Transferring the material from the page to planning the photography is also in a way theoretical. No live action in relation to circumstance has been tested. To what is the most important element of an actor's miscellany, namely his body, is regarded last of all when making a film. Only when the script is complete and camera set ups worked out is the actor drafted in to begin his work. The liveness is removed and he may simply be asked to hit a mark and act around it, perhaps with gestures, with his face or with words. He does not even need to come to a full understanding of what he is doing. The consequence of this means that the action, once it is in the process of being filmed, is in danger of being dismembered from reality. The plot is separated from the nervous and emotional system of the body. The actor, director, writer or in fact the rest of the creative team are not as free to be spontaneous or original. What this means for the actor, commonly, is that they will use responses that they have learnt and used a hundred times before and know them to be effective for any given emotion. An actor has many stock responses that they have learnt and can use them at their disposal for whatever emotion is being expressed. What this means for the non-actor in this case is general unease and awkwardness and the kind of thing that makes anyone watching the film want to melt into their armchair. Unfortunately this covers most low-budget filmmaking. Much of filmmaking today is content at this level of creativity, and it is true to say that successful films get on just fine with a limited depth of understanding of their subject matter. For others that see filmmaking as being endlessly exploratory and expressive of an evolving form, it is possible to investigate further.

The book *Acting (Re)Considered* by Zarrilli is separated into chapters dedicated to the work of various practitioners who share their insight into the art of performing. And they all, without exception, and by their own singular investigations, write of engaging, studying and utilizing the body as a whole. The body is a tool for informing a piece of work as fully as possible and as Zarrilli puts it a "hyperawareness and sensibility which is a total psycho physiological engagement of the body, mind/spirit in the activity."[1] In a way, what we must do is aim to harmonise the parts that go about creating a film in order to make the most of our creative ideas, which in its preliminary phases include writing, directing and acting. And this can only by precipitated, managed and maintained in the highest degree by engaging the body in its entirety and in all areas. In a similar way, if actors are to succeed in engaging with the words that they speak, then they can only accomplish it successfully by the concordance of their parts, that is, of their own bodies. What is under consideration here is a matter of connectivity with creative ideas, motives and feelings and the level or depth that somebody is willing to enter into as part of a filmmaking journey. There are some filmmakers we can name who have striven successfully by practices of their own, such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder, John Cassavetes and Alejandro Jodorowsky, that have continued to influence film language through to modern times. Cassavetes and Fassbinder, both alike as actors embarking on their own films, each set aside long hours to spend time with their actors, sometimes writing scenes with them in the state of play. Importantly, a scene would only happen when the right circumstances were prepared for the actor playing the character and a scene would then play out that way. If a piece of action or the words being said out of an improvisation were not in the script but were relevant and justified, they stayed in the final cut. The script always remained a sort of backdrop for many of the films that these two filmmakers made. For only the truth of the character responses was pivotal to the action, because Truth mattered above all else. Jodorowsky used the body in the mystical and symbolic sense to convey the meaning of his ideas, and especially in *The Holy Mountain* we see many of the styles and techniques used from various spiritual and religious rites and practices. There are also speculative accounts of how the actors and non-actors went through various unorthodox methods of getting into character, and by this method he found a way of developing his film ideas.



Top: John Cassavetes, Middle: Rainer Werner Fassbinder
Above: Alejandro Jodorowsky

As well as how a character may be developed, we are also concerned with how the work of an actor may come to influence the actual body of a piece of work as well. What the practice of actor training demonstrates at its best is the communication with the whole interconnected biological and chemical framework that constitutes a human being. And what can come out of the experience of consideration of the body is always going to be something very personal, subjective and idiosyncratic. Being created in very diverse ways every human being will have a different response to any given situation and sensitive to different things in a creative space. It is also a very deepening process and therefore fragile. The body is composed of matter, which is both human and compassionate but also animal and primal. It craves expression that is true to its nature and a will to give it meaning and urgency. And above all it demands respect, not just a minor screen role. For millennia we have contributed to the spring of imagination stories, folklore and plays in performances borne out of expression through the body, and forever will it continue. As a filmmaker these are the possibilities, and this is the depth through which a person is exploring one's self as an actor/writer/director.

The methods that go into the training of an actor's body can incorporate many interesting themes, and sometimes the

findings can even end up in the final work in front of an audience. I am surprised and shocked almost weekly when I hear of the approaches of different groups and schools. Some prescribe to traditional yogic practices to build up an awareness of the body; other exercises I have heard of include an intense weekly meditation and the mimicry of simple and mundane objects simply through the body. I have heard of exercises for expanding the imagination by using the body to mimic a bouncing ball; an elastic band; a house that has left a window and door open during a storm; a gorilla; a chicken; a pencil writing a letter. Clearly, these are just exercises and combine with other exercises that are less silly. But what gives this sort of exercise its value, in my opinion, to someone engaging with it sincerely, is putting the mind into something which it has never gone before and would never think of going. By not taking oneself too seriously and experimenting as widely as possible these exercises are always found to be full of that old hearty humour and ease. It would not be true to say that many films today express these sorts of qualities. We find ourselves speaking a different language when talking about the motivations, feelings and experiences of actor/body training, which is precisely its value for filmmaking. For filmmaking has become such a technological pursuit, or something to do to satisfy an ambition for applause, that a more human interaction would certainly satisfy those with a more artistic and exploratory purpose.

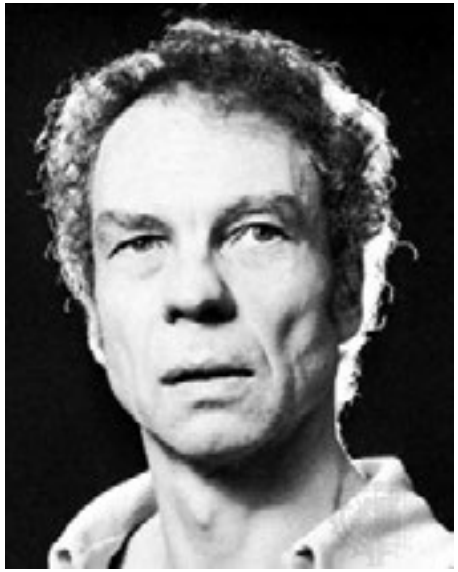
As I previously described, films get made by the use of different but specific methods through its creation period including writing, directing and acting. Some people approach filmmaking as a cerebral exercise to express themselves, finding combinations of themes for their films by writing the body of the text. Others find the process of filmmaking a technical endeavour and consider it best to give strict attention to the camera and the detail of the image. There are many more besides that find other meaningful and successful ways of communicating their ideas while mainly trying as best as they can to avoid anything going wrong. On the other hand, what developing a film through the work of the body concerns itself with is trying to diminish or eliminate the possibility of creative ideas being expressed falsely or badly; of creating merely the image of something rather than the substance; and of pretending to express an understanding of a subject. It strives with complete confidence and knowledge. It avoids making a decision under compulsion, but makes its choices based on freedom because it extends across the whole expanse of the human psyche. Vitally, it is diverging against what is commonly referred to as being ‘safe’ or simply boring. For example going over the same scene with a group of actors or non-actors and exploring it in different ways is very useful for finding something fresh within a piece of work. Pushing the emotional level of actors in different ways in a scene is beneficial for actors, directors and writers. Actors are always eager to act, and enjoy surprises. But I think it is fair to say that we have all been involved in far too many projects that go about doing exactly what was planned, that when somebody suggests a day of improvisation or something new, there is panic!

“ The body is composed of matter, which is both human and compassionate but also animal and primal. It craves expression that is true to its nature ”

Acting does not in every circumstance aim to be simply ‘real’ or even theatrical. It would only be true to say that in all circumstances acting strives to be united and faithful to the idea. It is the idea or essence of a work that a person acting seeks to absorb themselves into, losing the identity of the ‘actor’ and becoming the character, so to speak. If somebody is ‘acting’ it is understood that they are pretending, in the act of mimicry or in the representation of something else and only make believe. But it is clear for those who have embarked on their own films, and for those who have had a go at it themselves, an actor does not always act. The authenticity of a performance sometimes makes it unclear as to whether what is happening is real or not. Suffice it to say that a great deal of observation, training and above all patience is required of him/her. And after great detail towards a method, control and extent of an actor’s milieu will this effect on their performance happen. It is no small matter that the experience of being in the situation separates the actor from anybody else trying to understand the mechanics of a given situation. In this case the closeness of the actor to the situation gives him a greater understanding of it, with all its variegated colours of emotion and mood. Because an actor can place themselves into the situation and respond to it, given that they are allowed anything that they need to make an effective response and that they are encouraged to do so with the body in its entirety and not restricted merely by words, it is apparent from standpoint alone that the position of an actor is very well suited for making creative decisions.

Furthermore, it is not wildly presumptuous to say that when writing a script one writes as an actor, that is, within the role of the actor. Clearly the writer puts himself in the circumstance and into his characters to be able to write as best he can. The writer becomes the actor from where he makes his choices and creates his vision. Just as the director becomes an actor to gain perspective and to best manage and communicate his vision. He does this in order to maintain the perceptive and expressive quality of humanity. It is the only way the director can engage with his material, to become an actor himself or, in reality, to imagine himself as the actors that he is going to use. This is not some kind of metaphysical or mystical occurrence that men and women specific to the filmmaking world enjoy. The way in which the relationship works is symbiotic and mutual and must be completely responsive to the needs of each another. For acting is an extensive and embracing way in which we can explore the world of action and motive. To recognize this relationship means to be able to act freely within it, and experiment with different

Top: Pina Bausch, Above: Still from Pina



Merce Cunningham

ideas that may produce something exciting and original. Sometimes, it does take an outsider, somebody to act out a scene or say the words, to expose the weaknesses and strengths of a script. I have always believed that a reading of a script idea out loud and in front of a group is a very healthy way of entering into the ideas of a script more fully.

What best characterises a person are his actions and what he does when confronted by his desires, needs and hopes, and what his motivations are for acting on them. The language of cinema is most effective when what transpires in the world of action is complimented by the use of language, and for greater subtlety and atmosphere the service of the close up is used. Overuse or indulgence of the close-up in film language is a dangerous way of making it less powerful, and that is precisely the danger we are involved with today. The close up now is merely an aesthetic choice rather than a moment of intensity. Unfortunately, it is more common for films to use a wide angled cinematic style when they are made about dance or old silent films. Nevertheless, a good example of an approach to filmmaking using the actors body can be seen in the film by Wim Wenders for Pina Bausch, which is very similar to the video work of Merce Cunningham. Wenders' approach to a body of work that he obviously admires greatly, is concerned with environment as much as with the movement, and the camera captures the whole with as much grace. But as with Cunningham, in the video work that has spanned from the 1960s to the present day, there is a respect in regards to the movement and a harmony in the perspective that he chooses that does not leave anything out of place. The film *The Collaborators* has all the reminiscences of Fellini without the drama. What we see taking place in both of these examples is much to do with involving the location, as it is the action. I hasten to add that it would not demand a large shift to take the examples of camera style in films about dance, and using them for narrative cinema.

Truly, we have only to look at silent film for the wonderful art and harmony between body, environment and plot. And for discovering an effective way of marrying all these elements in the most engaging way we can look to the work of F. W. Murnau and Rene Clair. Who, because of the constraints of filming without sound, make use of the camera and perspective to heighten the dramatic moments of each scene. The close ups appear so movingly precisely because they have been used sparingly and only for dramatic effect.

It is restrictive to establish a single system of film language, declaring how it ought to work with directives about when and where something should be used. But that is commonly happening in filmmaking culture. Viewed from this angle we can see how modern cinema merely reproduces film language and imitates what is taught at its institutions, which does not demand originality. It could do better to add a little danger and innovation. The preliminary stages of filmmaking, which include writing and directing, are in a position of deep sensitivity when the freedom of the body is incorporated in the creative process, instead of enforcing a block of that creative current by the common practice of close filming and over-indulgence of the close up. It leaves no alternative for the actor than to use his trusted stock responses if he is not encouraged to raise his emotional response with his whole body. If we have filmmaking culture making films that are reproduced in the fashion of older films, and actors performing emotional responses that he has used before then we haven't really got new films?

Common filmmaking practice puts the attention on the dialogue as a guide to the plot and utilizes to the full the image of the face for close ups. It would be useful to reveal one of the causes that gave rise to the fashion of close up camera use. Such as the over the shoulder dialogue shot, which is so rooted in film language that nobody can bring themselves to use an alternative. One motive for having the action take place in close quarters and the close up is to epitomize the 'star'. Hollywood sells many of its moving pictures on the back of the star of the movie, so it demands brooding close ups and great dialogue in order for the public to identify with them and to publicize the actor's image. It is a little of the large inheritance that big budget filmmaking has given us: superficial branding through the image by close proximity filming. And we have seen where that got us.

Generally speaking, a filmmaker would look at how other films are made or in the way they have been taught at their schools, and make their films accordingly. It is rare for anybody to establish a way for themselves by trial and error and through their own extensive research. Or primarily guided by what he/she deems interesting for him/herself. And rarer still, that someone could reach the understanding that a film idea and the best execution of those ideas are inseparable from the perceptive, reactive and emotional faculties of the body. This re-consideration is not aimed at or restricted to the labour of the actor; it is a practical matter of placing oneself in the shoes of an actor when undertaking any sort of investigation into filmmaking because it means one can experience the ideas, that were originally only a result of the mind, in reality and for themselves. What I have in mind when I say that an actor is the most important part in the process of filmmaking is the role of the actor, and the advantage actors have of being present in the situation, as it is the surest way of absorbing the possible ideas of a creative work.

As ever with experimental work, any mention of a specific practice is not to prove a superior one, it is simply reaching for other alternatives and possibilities, which can profoundly affect the whole basis of becoming an artist. An interesting example from Zarrilli made this idea very pertinent. It was a retelling of an experience by performance artist Rachel Rosenthal relating a time when she was learning the history of art and spoke about the program of study considering only the work of male artists. But when she attended a conference of female artists at the California Institute of the Arts she had a 'shifting of identification', from there she saw for the first time in her life that she could be an artist and be a woman. And the direction of her work changed forever.

1. Acting Re-Considered, Zarrilli, P.B., Routledge, 2002, P. 93

Infinite Riches in a Little Room

Animation, Puppetry, Manipulation, and the Films of Karel Zeman

William Powers

Still from The Fabulous Baron Munchausen (1961)

In the history of cinema there is a long tradition of filmmakers making a transition from animation to live-action filmmaking. Some more famous examples are Tim Burton, Peter Jackson, the great science fiction film producer George Pal, Terry Gilliam, the Quay brothers, and Jean-Pierre Jeunet. Karel Zeman is a less well-known example but typifies the characteristics of an ex-animation director: a particularly strong focus on production design and an often highly stylised approach, along with an expressive and often witty use of special effects. In his films such as V*ynález Zkázy* (variously known in the west as *The Deadly Invention*, *The Fabulous Worlds of Jules Verne*, *The Invention of Destruction*, *The Diabolic Invention* and *Weapons of Destruction*), *Baron Prásil (Baron Munchausen)*, *Bláznova kronika (The Jester's Tale)*, and *Urrandeá vzducholod (The Stolen Airship)*, Zeman perfected a technique of making his films appear to be engravings, taking his inspiration from the original illustrations to Jules Verne's novels, from which he also took many of his plots. The actors' costumes were created with black lines running across the fabric, and the sets were hand painted with similar high contrast black and white lines: a bold stylistic device that Zeman followed through with dedication. Even shots of the sea had distorted black lines superimposed upon them to create the appearance of an engraving in motion. The result was that it became far easier for Zeman to incorporate any of his special effects: stop-motion animation, mattes, models, forced perspective, and any other trick you can think of, with his live action imagery. Almost every shot in *Vynález Zkázy* and *Baron Prásil* involves some kind of effect, but instead of the traditional approach of blending effects to appear as part of reality, or at least to appear as real as possible, Zeman chose instead to alter reality to suit his effects. However, the result of his approach is not strange but instead delightful.

Still from A Deadly Invention (1958)

> **“ instead of the traditional approach, Zeman chose to alter reality to suit his effects ”**

V y n á l e z Zkázy tells the story of a professor's assistant, dedicated to helping him develop 'heavy water', in order to aid humankind in noble scientific advancement. Perhaps inevitably the professor is kidnapped, along with his assistant, and tricked into continuing his experiments in order to develop a weapon for the evil Count Artigas and his band of pirates. Before the film's 83 minutes are out we have seen and been on steam ships, zeppelins, submarines, trains, castle laboratories, pirate

ships, hot-air balloons, and secret volcano hideouts. Zeman's approach allowed him to go and do anything he desired, almost entirely within the confines of his small studio in Gottwaldov, and on minimal budgets. It is one of Zeman's most purely joyful and inventive films. The type that one watches as an adult wishing that it had come into your life when you were still a child. Needless to say I heartily recommend that everyone hunt down this film, readily available on DVD as *The Fabulous World of Jules Verne*.

Unsurprisingly, before animation the young Zeman had an interest in marionettes. Puppetry and animation have, of course, much in common. Miniature sets and props must be built to fit the size of your 'human' characters, assuming humans are even involved in the story, who themselves must be fabricated. It is an area, unlike live-action filmmaking, in which a young amateur can take complete control of both his performers and their performing space and thus in animation and puppetry there is an equality between every object, regardless of its importance. Everything is made of the same stuff, there are no barriers between what is alive or dead, or what is natural and what is manmade, the objects and landscapes have as much right to movement and characterisation as any piece of clay or wood formed into the shape of a human being. It is also a naturally stylised medium. In her overview of the form, *Puppetry and Puppets: An Illustrated World Survey*, Eileen Blumenthal explains that 'towards the end of [the nineteenth] century, the advent of realism changed the rules for all theatre… Realism is one theatrical ground where puppets cannot compete on equal footing with live actors… Ill-suited for the style that most theatre had embraced, some puppet artists focused more on what they could do that live-actor theatres could not.' Zeman carried these quirks of the medium over into his live-action work. He maintained control of every object by creating almost all of them from scratch, and he retained the stylisation, but applied it to his actor's costumes and his sets. In return he was able to perform tricks that other directors in his circumstances could not have begun to realise. However, one might argue that if his live-action films are so close to animation, then why didn't he make purely animated films? The great film critic Andre Bazin provides an answer in his article from 1946, "The Life and Death of Superimposition": 'What in fact appeals to the audience about fantastic cinema is its realism… the contradiction between the irrefutable objectivity of the photographic image and the unbelievable nature of the events that it depicts.' It is the very invasion of realism in the form of his actors that makes the rest of Zeman's worlds so fantastical.

Still from The Fabulous Baron Munchausen (1961)

Still from The Fabulous Baron Munchausen (1961)

> **" the contradiction between the irrefutable objectivity of the photographic image and the unbelievable nature of the events that it depicts "**

We can find a similar approach in the work of many contemporary directors

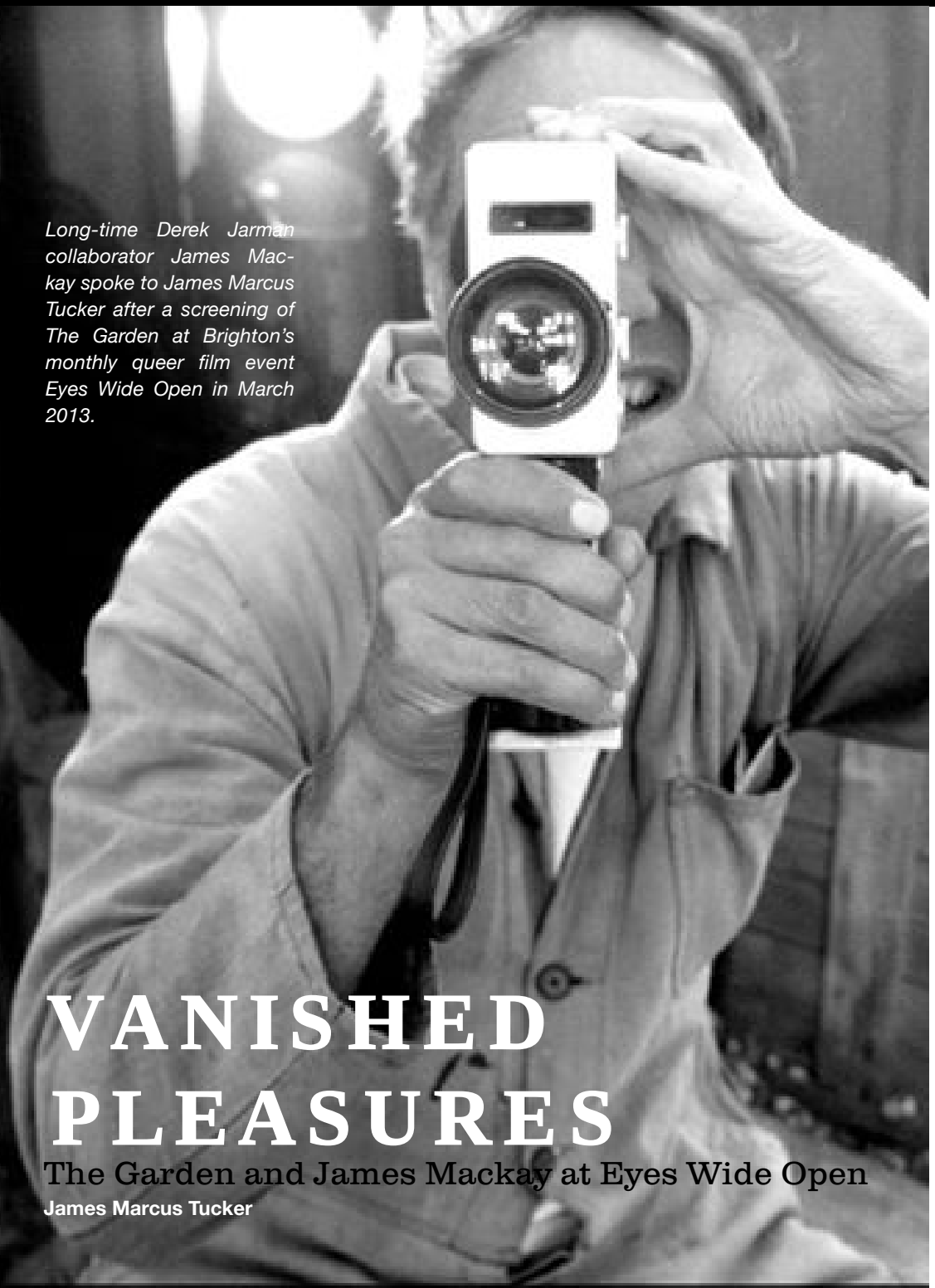
Still from A Deadly Invention (1958)

Still from The Fabulous Baron Munchausen (1961)

such as Jeunet, Burton, and Gilliam, but of course the filmmaker that Zeman was compared to most in his own lifetime was Georges Méliès. In his most famous films he, much like Zeman, worked in confined spaces and with painted sets. Writings on Méliès' work can sound interchangeable with those on Zeman. In his study of the director's work, *Marvellous Méliès*, Paul Hammond suggests that 'Méliès, like de Chirico and Uccello, was aware that distortions in linear perspective can suggest malaise and mystery… [adding] a further metaphysical dimension to the image'.

This brings to mind another director who embraces the constraints of studio shooting, Roy Andersson, the great Swedish auteur who provocatively uses forced perspective sets in films like *Songs from the Second Floor*, and *You, the Living*. Many directors have a graphic or painterly approach to their work, a notable example being Wes Anderson, but few push their films quite so far into artificiality, into the realms of animation and puppetry, manipulation and stylisation (Anderson himself went so far as to abandon live-action for *The Fantastic Mr. Fox*). The inherent qualities of this approach are best summarised by Peter Shumann of The Bread and Puppet Theatre in his pamphlet *The Radicality of the Puppet Theatre*: 'Puppet theatre, the employment and dance of dolls, effigies and puppets, is… by definition of its most persuasive characteristics, an anarchic art, subversive, and untameable by nature, an art which… prefers its own secret and demeaning stature in society, representing, more or less, the demons of that society and definitely not its institutions.' Perhaps to claim this description for filmmakers like Zeman is a step too far, but nevertheless one can still perceive these anarchic qualities in his work, even in his most innocuous fantasy films, perhaps because he always operates on a small scale, and only ever superficially conceals his trickery, meaning that personality and individuality are always present.

Arguably the strength of Méliès and Zeman is that they bring poetry to what is often seen as a technical requirement, so it seems fitting that it was the poet Apollinaire who perhaps most perceptively summarised their charm: 'M. Méliès and I are in the same business. We lend enchantment to vulgar material'. It is this that remains the essence of my own fascination with both Méliès and Zeman. In the world of independent filmmaking it has always been far simpler to make 'kitchen sink' dramas, using one's immediate surroundings, than to attempt high fantasy. Even though computer technology is invaluable and now highly accessible to an independent filmmaker who does want to go down this route, it is not necessary to abandon a more tactile approach, embracing one's limitations rather than being embarrassed by them. The work of Karel Zeman, to me, offers an alternative to modern-day fantasy cinema, an approach to filmmaking that has more use for cardboard and papier-mâché than CGI. The result is filmmaking in which a viewer can feel the intimate work of an individual. To say that this is a sensation that computers invariably fail at may sound humbuggish, but I strongly believe it is also true. There is still room today for Zeman's artisanal and individual approach, and by its very nature it is an approach open to anyone.



Long-time Derek Jarman collaborator James Mackay spoke to James Marcus Tucker after a screening of The Garden at Brighton's monthly queer film event Eyes Wide Open in March 2013.

VANISHED PLEASURES

The Garden and James Mackay at Eyes Wide Open

James Marcus Tucker

James Marcus Tucker: Could you tell us a little bit about your role as producer on *The Garden*? Everyone is aware of what a director does, but maybe many will not know exactly what a producer's role is. Especially in your case when working with Derek was known to be unconventional.

James Mackay: Technically the producer finds the money that makes the film possible. Working on these films with Derek was slightly different because we didn't really have any money. It started with Derek's Super 8 films from the 1970's, which I had seen at London Filmmakers Co-Op screenings. Through the process of looking at ways to conserve those films and make them available to a wider public, we stumbled into making new films, and began with very short films in the early 80s. At that time, Super 8 film was quite cheap, and video was just coming in. A lot of people, Derek included, were working on a hybrid of Super 8 and VHS films that were largely self funded. His ambition was to make films for the cinema though, so we looked for ways to transfer the Super 8 and video hybrid onto 35mm and aimed to make feature length films but keeping the same freeform way of working. Normally to fund a film you need a script, tout it around and people give you money. But because the cost of shooting was low, we were able to shoot them and cover the costs ourselves. We did a rough edit and used that to raise the money to complete it.

The Garden is quite an exceptional film to me - *The Angelic Conversation* was a love story and *The Last of England* was very political, both very cohesive, *The Garden* has been about Derek coming to terms with his own mortality. It's a deeply personal film; it's a film about God, and based on the New Testament. He worked with those themes at a time when he was very very ill. He had bouts of illness during the 16 days of filming, but when we were in the edit, he nearly died on us. He went to hospital with TB for about 6-8 weeks. So it's a very fractured film. There are things in it which are only partly formed. But the film is about dying so that is part of it. The difference between producing this, or, say, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, is that we are selling or explaining something to TV people that is partially made, which is hard to describe on paper. It was the most difficult of the films I made with Derek. It was also fun, because we had already made so much and knew a lot of the people we were working with very well.

JMT: I found a quote in Derek's journal *Modern Nature* where he says "I find strength in flowers, boys and childhood memories". All these elements are very present in *The Garden* so I thought there was something perhaps therapeutic in making this film.

JM: Derek once said to me, not long before he died that essentially all the films he made were about himself. *Caravaggio* is a film about a painter, but really is a film about Derek. *Sebastiane* is a film about a centurion but is really a film about Derek. What's interesting is you can look across his whole output and there are recurring motifs, characters, objects and passages. I can't think of any other filmmaker who works quite in the same way.

JMT: Whilst the structure is freeform and created in the editing, how much was planned in preproduction in terms of content, with what was going to be in the scenes themselves? Was it simply what came to hand, or...

JM: No, it is very much planned. Each of the scenes are planned before hand, but it isn't broken down into a shooting script. So once the scene is up and running, it's very

much an improvisation. The actual content - actors, costumes, props, that is very planned. The sequence in the sea, in the bed, that is very much prepared, taking into account positioning and the light.

JMT: I am interesting in the technical process of this film.

James Mackay: We shot it all on 16mm and Super 8 and transferred everything to analogue video. We couldn't afford fully digital at that time - the first digital D1 machines were horrifically expensive. Because we had done some pretty high level pop promos, we were given access to the first Grass Valley digital vision mixer that had come into the UK and were able to go from analogue betacam onto digital that way. We were able then to keep as close to the original quality as possible and not keep going down generations when we edited. We were still working on a square 4:3 video screen, not 16:9 like it is now - what we saw tonight is a cropped square which is why it looks quite coarse.

JMT: This event, Eyes Wide Open calls itself an "exploration of queer cinema". There seems to be a resurgence of this term "queer cinema" now. To me, Derek wasn't simply a gay filmmaker, "queer" seems to apply quite well in his case.

JM: I'd say that Derek's queer in the way that Pasolini is queer. It's part of their makeup and part of their interest in life, but it isn't an end in itself. Whereas I would say a lot of gay cinema is an end in itself. I don't quite get the term "queer cinema". Although there is a lot of strong films around, a lot of them are just basically gay fictions, and that means it's just a genre, and Derek's films don't really fit into a genre.

JMT: For me it's about the process. That community spirit of the filmmaking.

JM: Yes, it comes out of the whole avant-guard underground film movement. There are still many examples of that, such as Emir Kusturica.

Audience Member: What did Derek think of the film?

JM: Derek used to say he couldn't watch his films for the first ten years because he couldn't be objective. I think he liked all the films he made. He did like his work. He didn't do things just because there was an opportunity. When you look at all films from the inside you see all the blemishes. I remember when I first met Derek he had just completed *The Tempest* and the lab had just damaged part of the stock - I hadn't noticed it, but when Derek pointed it out, I can see it now every time where the repairs are. With *The Last of England*, there must have been some problem with one of the pixels in the transfer process as there is a very tiny red spot at one point on the screen. Once you know where that spot is, you can never not see it, your eye always goes straight to it. But most people would never see it. It's hard to know what filmmakers think of their own work. Derek did say that when he died he wanted to vanish and take all his work with him. But he took it very seriously.

JMT: Tell me about your personal relationship with Derek. Did you ever argue about anything? Were their artistic conflicts?

JM: Obviously. I worked with him from 1979 until he died. That's inevitable, but then filmmaking is a very emotive process. There was a distributor around at the time - Michael Myers - and he called his company Miracle Films, because he said every film is a miracle. And if you are involved in feature filmmaking, that is true. It takes a lot out of you. We never resulted to fisticuffs. But there were often tears.

JMT: If Derek were still alive, what do you think he would be doing? How would he embrace new digital technology?

JM: His father and grandfather were both keen filmmakers, but he didn't start filmmaking until quite late on. At that point, he made one film in 16mm, but he didn't like the process. He didn't like working with crews that were around - he found it a very heterosexual world and found it quite uncomfortable I think. So when he got his hands on a Super 8 camera, he made some very complex films. In the period of 5 years he made something like 40 films and his technical ability developed very quickly and he ended up making films which consisted of layers and layers of superimpositions. Which sounds easy but it's actually quite difficult, especially on a medium sized Super 8. He wasn't a snob about format. He basically made work on a format that was available. He would see what it would do, and build his ideas to fit that quality rather than using it for a substitute for something bigger which he couldn't get his hands on. Derek was a technophobe only insomuch as if you showed him it would work, he would embrace it. He was reluctant to use something just to try it out and see if it would work. Once you demonstrated it worked, he would run with it. So yes, he would have done a lot more interesting things, and I think the reason he made so many films was because he was open to technology. They weren't that keen on him making films in the "conventional" British cinema world anyway. He wasn't hugely encouraged.

JMT: As a producer, did the name and reputation

of Derek Jarman make it more difficult for you to get funding?

JM: He had great difficulty getting funding. *The Tempest* was a modestly budgeted film. It took him another 10 years to get the money to make *Caravaggio*. We only made *The Angelic Conversation* because it was self funded, and *The Last of England* was mostly funded from Germany and Japan.

JMT: Derek was very popular in other countries such as Japan and Italy.

JM: Yes, a lot of filmmakers are more popular abroad than in their own countries. Fassbinder was very popular in Britain, but not very popular in Germany at the beginning. Fellini was looked down on in Italy but very popular here. Maybe the press and the public are less prejudiced abroad and see things more openly.

Audience Member: What films did Derek admire?

JM: Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante*, Jean Cocteau's *Le testament d'Orphée*, Bruce Baillie's *Mass for the Dakota Sioux*. He liked Tarkovsky, and Pasolini a lot; especially *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*. And as a child, *The Wizard of Oz*. But surprisingly he never went to the cinema very much. As he was constantly in pre-production he just never saw anybody else's films.

JMT: Simon Fisher Turner's score; was this edited to the pictures, or were the pictures ever edited to fit the music? Is he on set taking sounds?

JM: We film everything silent, but we did sometimes play music on set to create a mood, but that isn't recorded. Simon picks up sounds here and there on location and then brings in musicians afterwards. Once the picture edit is locked, a soundbed is laid down - giving it a landscape, a geography - and the composer then records various pieces of music to the locked picture.

JMT: Was Derek happier working on more free-form work like *The Garden* than, say, a cumbersome 35mm production like *Caravaggio*.

JM: As he realised when he worked on Ken Russell's *The Devils*, he didn't like all the setting up. Derek liked to wander around in front the camera, which is hard if you are making a very formal film. He was comfortable filming things himself. In this film, he filmed a lot less himself as he wasn't as strong, but certainly beforehand, he filmed a lot himself, which is true of a lot of artist-filmmakers.

JMT: Well he was a painter, so Super 8 was an extension of that kind of practice for him.

JM: Yes, all his films are. There are no reverse shots in Derek's films until *Edward II*. He saw films not as filmed plays, but as sequences of images, so all of his films are made out of a number of assembled sequences. Generally there are about 32 sequences. Even *Caravaggio* is made in that way. *Edward II* became more conventional because during part of the shooting he was absent, and so his assistant Ken filmed it - and he had been to film school so introduced the idea of the "reverse shot." Derek approached a film scene like a painter approaches a canvass - head on.

All images are stills from The Garden

Adventures in...
Bigotry

Bradley Tuck

Still from Female Trouble

"Every iconoclasm eventually generates new iconophilia, against which new iconoclasts will rage. The cycle will be endless if we don't understand the way these narratives work. The trouble with myth is not their intrinsic falsehood, truth... or 'truthiness'. The trouble with myths is that they sclerotize easily if we take them for granted. The flow of tales must be kept fresh and lively; we have to tell stories by ever-changing means, angles and points of view, give our tales constant exercise so they don't harden and darken and clog our brains."[1]

- Wu Ming

The fight against racism, sexism, heterosexism, and so forth, once took up the mantel of revolutionary progress in the West. Now it finds itself entrenched in the caverns of myth. One cannot find a business or county council that does not use this "political correctness" to justify the bigotry, budget cuts or exploitation they produce. Political correctness has become the handmaiden of evil; a pretty garnish to an otherwise despicable system. The so-called "P.C. Brigade" have found themselves caught in the codes and signs that once used to unveil the bigot, but now conceal him. The bigot, they say, uses words like "fag", "bitch", "nigger" and "Paki", they laugh at black-

Still from The Idiots

face, want to ban burkas and blame it all on Jewish bankers. This "P.C. Brigade" fight the outward manifestations of racism, but fail to attend to its inner interconnections. They no longer attend to racism itself, but only what their codebook tells them is "racism". They suffer from continual stagnation and the more "politically correct" the bigoted become, the less they are able to identify them. The more anti-PC the progressive become, the more they're scapegoated.

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In the 60's Malcolm X taught us that revolution had a material base in land, in national struggles (against the colonisation of land) and class struggle (Of the propertyless against the property owner). He told us that:

"Revolution is never based on begging somebody for an integrated cup of coffee. Revolutions are never fought by turning the other cheek. Revolutions are never based upon Love-your-enemy and pray-for-those-who-spitefully-use-you. And revolutions are never waged singing "We Shall Overcome." Revolutions are based upon bloodshed. Revolutions are never compromising. Revolutions are never based upon negotiations. Revolutions are never based upon any kind of tokenism whatsoever. Revolutions are never even based upon that which is begging a corrupt society or a corrupt system to accept us into it. Revolutions overturn systems."[2]

Today our fluffy idealists tell us something different. Revolution, for them, is not based on land, but language. If only we would stop using the N-word, they say, then everything would be okay. They become masters of demythologisation, only to re-enchant themselves with myth. They believe that if they change the language then reality will shrivel up and disappear. But au contraire, they conceal reality in a bouquet of words. "Revolution," today's idealists would tell us, "is a lovely diversity parade, whilst sharing cups of coffee from across the world. Revolutions are based on tolerance, turning the other cheek and accepting people's differences. Revolutions are based on love-your-enemy and pray-for-those-who-spitefully-use-you. And revolution is about listening to music from minority groups and liking it. Revolution is never based on bloodshed (unless it is a dictator in the Middle East and it would profit the government to go to war). Revolution is based on compromises between differing interest groups within a liberal democratic setting. Revolution is about negotiation. Revolution is diversity in the work place. The revolution makes the system more ethical through fair trade and progressive policies." The idealists continue to proclaim the future and I begin to weep. If there is no alternative to this political correctness then Malcolm X is dead and buried.

" The idealists continue to proclaim the future and I begin to weep. If there is no alternative to this political correctness then Malcolm X is dead and buried. "

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In contrast, Lars von Trier's *The Idiots* works as a critique of political incorrectness itself. In *The Idiots* a group of adults pretend to have learning disabilities, live in a commune and pull pranks on members of the public who do not realise they are "faking it". Whilst their actions appear bigoted, there is no real intention to mock or attack those with learning disabilities. In this respect they are not bigoted at all, just displaying the external signs associated with bigotry. This does not prevent their actions being disturbing and unsettling. The attempt to imitate the disabled is more about avoiding life, responsibility and social expectations. The imitation of "idiocy" functions as a mask to protect them from the world. Maybe at the heart of much "non-bigoted" political incorrectness is an attempt to avoid facing responsibility and play act a kind of world of fun and freedom. If today's progressive politics has been hijacked by pathetic woolly idealists, the nihilists that stoke the opposite flames are pathetic to the core. They display their intimidation through their perceived "rebellion" in using words like "Coon" for shits and giggles. They have nothing to say, except express their freedom in a simulacrum of hate.

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In this respect they are not unlike their cousin, the reactionary, who believe and defend their bigotry as truth. They disguise their bigotry as "honesty" and "fact". For them a gay rapist is always a *gay rapist,* while a straight rapist is simply a *rapist*; a black criminal is always a *black criminal*, while a white criminal is simply *a criminal*. They despise all universalism and all humanism, and wish to return to the tribalism of family, race and nation. In this sense, they are primitive to the core.

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To fight racism we must root out its sociogenetic origin as a mechanism of social control. Theodore W. Allen's book,

The Invention of the White Race does precisely this. It attempts to demonstrate that American racism had its origins in ruling class politics as a response to Bacon's rebellion of 1676. According to Allen, between the arrival of the first African's to Virginia in 1619, and for another 60 years, there were no "white" people in America. They were "English" or "European", the term "white" was to emerge later. Bacon's Rebellion of 1676 had seen formerly indentured labour (i.e. poor "whites") and African slaves uniting against the ruling class. The ruling class's response was the classic divide and conquer technique and both the rigid racial caste of slavery and the category of the white race was invented. As Allen tells us:

"Since the poor European-Americans were or, after a term of servitude, would be free, and since they typically had already lost upward social mobility, they were promoted to the "white race" and endowed with unprecedented civil and social privileges vis-a-vis the African-American, privileges that, furthermore, were made to appear to be conditional on keeping "non-whites" down and out."[3]

Many Europeans woke to find themselves part of a new identity; they were white! Even the Irish, who were considered an inferior race in England, had been elevated in standing and given racial "privileges".[4] Yet, while this appeared to offer the propertyless "whites" new recognition, this was, however, "not only ruinous to the interests of the African-American, but "disastrous" for the propertyless "whites" as well."[5] The propertyless "whites" unable to unite with their "black" brothers, and often encouraged to fight against each other, were deprived of the unity that would help overthrow the ruling class and the bourgeoisie.

" Many Europeans woke to find themselves part of a new identity; they were white! "

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The civil rights movements and counter-culture of the 1960s and 70s was to challenge this long held divide and many other forms of bigotry with it. A new rebellion was emerging that would cut across boundaries and, like Bacon's rebellion of 1676, would create ricochets across many social divides. For many the aim was not to accommodate themselves with the system, but tear it down.

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In John Waters' films of the 70s we encounter a diverse cast of transgender icons, homos, queers, crackers and freaks, but these queers didn't want accommodation within the system, they were not petitioning for gay marriage and acceptance. These freaks didn't want to assimilate. They wanted to shock you out of your hetero-warped mindset. Bring on lobster rape, dog-shit eating, flashing transsexuals, chicken fucking and gender benders galore. What made 70's counter-culture unique was its willingness to boldly and fearlessly speak without the need for a stamp of a approval from above. People were willing to say it and say it boldly. It is hard to imagine songs like Frank Zappa's *What's The Ugliest Part Of Your Body?* or Patti Smith's *Rock and Roll Nigger* being written in the 2000's. Whilst neither song is racist or sexist, there appears less of a fear of being perceived so. Zappa's track emerges as an attack on the negative socially constructed roles of women ("All your children are poor unfortunate victims lies you believe, a plague upon your ignorance that keep the young from the truth they deserve.") and Patti Smith's track is a celebration of social outcasts and underdogs ("Jimi Hendrix was a nigger. Jesus Christ and Grandma, too. Jackson Pollock was a nigger"). Neither are afraid to use incendiary language to explore controversial topics. Geoff Martin notes a similar attitude in The Clash's Joe Strummer:

"At a show on the White Riot tour in 1977 Joe Strummer introduced a cover of Toots and the Maytals' *Pressure Drop* with the words "This song was written by a wog, so all you people who don't like wogs, you know where the door is?"

You can recoil at the brutal and challenging choice of language, but remember this was a time when an advancing national front was recruiting in the same pool of predominantly white youths that was also the core of Clash audiences.

It was a time of fine lines, where you has to make your mind up which side you were on. Sharpest messages had to be blunt and to the point. Without Strummer, The Clash and others in the trenches of the times, plenty could easily have ended up on the wrong side. That was all you could ask for from a rock and roll band."[6]

The language that underpinned culture from psychedelia to punk and the social movements that went along with them was a language of anger, frustration and revolutionary zeal. The apparent political incorrectness of their speech was not so much a sign of their bigotry, but the opposite: Their militancy!

Top: Still from Mondo Trasho
Above: Still from Hairspray

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Whereas early films by John Waters (from *Mondo Trasho* (1969) to *Polyester* (1981)) worked by shocking and disturbing their audience and appeared to want no accommodation within the system, *Hairspray* (1988) set up a different path. *Hairspray*, followed by *Crybaby* in 1990, retained a spiritual connection with the underdogs, but this time removed much of what was shocking, disturbing and trashy about his early films. They became more accessible and more easily accommodated within the system of American cinema.

Over the coming decades a similar process would emerge within gay culture itself, which would see a move from the radicalism of Stonewall and Act up! (whose response to the AIDS epidemic was "healthcare is a human right") to the libertarian impulses of the 'pink pound'. In a similar vain to much of today's ethical capitalism, the guardians of the pink pound encouraged a culture that would spend its way to equality.

The emphasis on gay marriage, especially in America, further suggested a right wing dimension to gay liberation. Rather than addressing concerns of gay rights and inequality, gay marriage has served as perfect distraction. The defenders of gay marriage wish to accommodate the homosexual within the system rather than changing the broader rights of gay people themselves. In our most cynical mode, we may suspect a culturally conservative agenda, an attempt to normalise and monogamise homosexual life.

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The counter-culture, civil rights and radicalism of the 1960s and 70s may be our equivalent of Bacon's rebellion in 1676. But unlike Bacon's rebellion, the reactions to the rebellions of the 60s and 70s did not emerge in the form of racialised slavery and so called "white privileges", but they did usher a new mode of social control. The ruling and economic elite learnt to imitate the counter-culture they had earlier been threatened by. They appropriated punk and sold it back to the teenagers in a pacified and commodified form (think Blink 186 and Green Day) and did the same with the civil rights movements. What goes by the name of political correctness today is the same divide and conquer technique, but with a twist. Now we are taught to celebrate diverse identities, because by celebrating identities we focus on what differentiates us, not what unites us. In essence, what happened was a process of the depoliticisation of race, gender and sexuality. Angela Davis tells us:

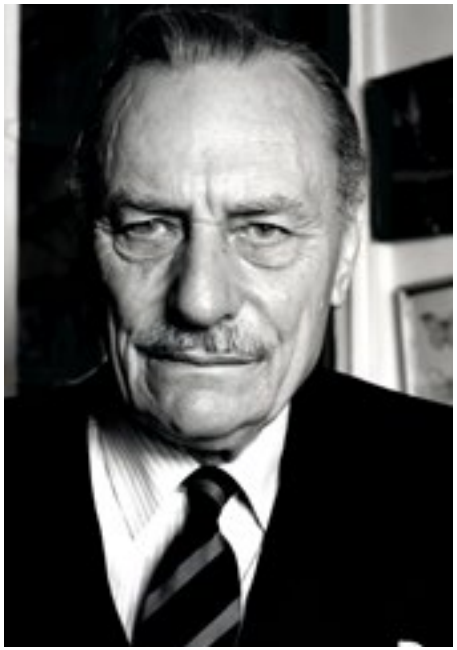
"Because the masses of white people harbour racist attitudes, our people tend to see them as the villains and not the institutionalized form of racism, which, though definitely reinforced by prejudiced attitudes, serve, fundamentally, only the interests of the rulers. When white people are indiscriminately viewed as the enemy, it is virtually impossible to develop a political solution. […] It has been clear to me for a long time that in order to achieve its goals, the Black Liberation struggle would have to become a part of a revolutionary movement, embracing all working people."[7]

Focusing on identities, however well meaning, distracts from the political concerns and problems that it would be necessary to address in order to overcome racism. By focusing merely on identity we are able to decontextualise them from their broader structural problem. In this sense, the elite have learned that even celebrations of difference and diversity can often be as divisive as stirring up trouble. As Walter Benn Michaels writes:

"Redistributing wealth is one thing; making sure women of the upper class are paid just as well as the men of the upper class is another.

[...] Compare the mistreated bond saleswoman with the woman of Wal-Mart. The average hourly salary of a full-time Wal-Mart employee (according to the CEO of Wal-Mart) is about ten dollars. So if you work a forty-hour week, you make $400 a week, almost $21,000 a year. The women who are victims of discrimination are making a little less, the men a little more; the difference between them, according to Richard Drogin, the Statistician who ran the numbers for the discrimination suit, is (for hourly workers) $1,100 a year. So let's say the Wal-Mart women are making about $20,500. It would take them sixty years to make what the Wall Street woman –also a victim of discrimination –makes in one year. Of course, the Wal-Mart men –the beneficiaries of that discrimination, they're making $21,600- do better; it would only take them about fifty-seven years to catch up with Wall Street. At Wal-Mart, in other words, you've got women struggling for a fair slice of a pie so small that it won't feed them even if they get it. It's ludicrous to think of them as standing shoulder to shoulder with their sisters at Morgan Stanley and at Harvard. It's ludicrous to think of their problem as a problem about gender. The men can't live on their salaries either! Laws against discrimination by gender are what you go for when you've given up on –or turned against- the idea of a strong labor movement. Feminism is what you appeal to when you want to make it sound as if the women of Wall Street and the women of Wal-Mart are both victims of sexism. Which is to say, when you want to disguise the fact that the women of Wall Street are not victims at all."[8]

The new political correctness celebrates every identity that it can pacify. This new political correctness has undermined equality. It has dispensed with class politics and enabled a conservative co-option. In this respect, political correctness is not so much the preserve of the left, but of the right.



Enoch Powell

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Today's political correctness may have a right-wing origin. Enoch Powell was one of the early figures involved in the political correcting of racism. Powell rejected the imperialist narrative of biological white supremacy and recast the debate where whites were the victims, threaten by alien cultures. The new politically correct racist had to learn a new language, which gradually began to filter into the far-right in the late 1980s. Britain's Official National Front was one of the first to take the lead. They not only adopted Powell's emphasis on whites as victims, but even used ideological references to black nationalists. Using slogans such as "Black is Beauti-

Nick Griffin

ful" and "Fight Racism" and publishing figures such as Gaddafi, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and the US black separatist Louis Farrakhan on the front of their party newspaper, the party adopted the ideology of separatism.[9] They weren't against blacks, they just wanted cultures to be separate and segregated. They might have wanted blacks out of the country, but this didn't mean that they didn't admire other races abroad.

It was through one of the Official National Front's key members, Nick Griffin, that the Far Right took its next steps towards "political correctness". Borrowing from the modernizing image of Tony Blair and appropriating his emphasis on new language and spin, Nick Griffin attempted to politically correct the language of his British National Party, shaking off the connotation of racism. As Daniel Trilling notes "the intention was to create a 'dual discourse': a respectable language for public consumption, laden with enough hints to signal to the inner circle of activists that the party still held to its underlying fascist doctrine."[10] Couching their ideas in the language of freedom, security, democracy and identity the BNP attempted to expand their base. As Nick Griffin himself says:

"Emotive words, however justified they may be, must be avoided. Truth hurts, so words like 'alien', 'vermin', 'gang' instead of 'group', and such like must be avoided. A white rapist may be described as a 'beast' or an 'animal', but a black one must merely be a 'criminal'... we can get away with criticising Zionists, but any criticism of Jews is likely to be legal and political suicide."[11]

In this respect, politically correct language, rather than revealing racism, became a new means of disguising it.

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The emergence of far-right groups should not be seen as a reason to flee into the arms of their liberal centrist opponents. In fact, the emergence of the far right may have its origin in the neoliberal policies of both left and right democratic parties. From the 1970s onwards Margaret Thatcher's creation of a "flexible" labour market and her dismantling of the welfare state hampered social mobility and created a society of increasing insecurity. Adding to this, Tony Blair and New Labour sought to continue Thatcher's neoliberal agenda by "modernising" Britain's healthcare, education and so forth. Increasingly working class people found themselves unable to receive the basic welfare support that they had received in the past and the perfect scapegoat for this was the immigrant.

This is exemplified in the case of the "Right to Buy" scheme introduced by Thatcher, which offered tenants the right to buy their own council house. Yet while social housing was being bought and sold, neither the conservatives, nor New Labour, built or bought enough social housing to replace them. The consequence was that social housing became harder to come by and the assumption was that this was largely due to councils giving preferences to immigrants and not to the dismantling of the welfare state. New Labour did very little to counter these misconceptions. It was in their interest to keep quiet and let immigrants take the blame for the disintegrating welfare state. New Labour's policy appeared to be a kind of "If you can't beat them, join them" attitude. As Daniel Trilling points out:

"Gould, an architect of New Labour, advised triangulation, the strategy which had helped his party defeat the conservatives by occupying the political space normally held by the right, pushing them further away from the centre. […] This time, Gould advised, the party should embrace voter's concerns on immigration and asylum."[12]

New Labour, true to their "all-too-democratic" approach, adopted the ideology of the people they apparently opposed. In light of this David Blunkett accused asylum-seekers' children of "swamping' British schools"[13] and Gordon Brown declared "British jobs for British Workers."[14] But this only appeared to add to far right narratives.

In light of this, we should oppose the caricature of New Labour as a party obsessed with multiculturalism. If Labour supported immigration it was not so much because they were multiculturalists, but because they were neoliberals, driving down wages and increasing competition via cheap labour abroad. As Slavoj Žižek tells us:

"One should be attentive here to how even those elements which appear as pure rightist racism are in fact a displaced version of working-class protests: of course there is a form of racism in demanding an end to the immigration of foreign workers who pose a threat to employment; however, one should bear in mind the simple fact that the influx of immigrant workers from the post-Communist countries is not the consequence of multiculturalist tolerance —it is indeed

part of the strategy of capital to hold in check workers' demands —this is why, in the US, Bush did more for the legalization of the status of Mexican illegal immigrants than did the Democrats caught up by labor-union pressures. So, ironically, rightist racist populism is today the best argument that the "class struggle," far from being "obsolete," goes on — the lesson the Left should learn from it is that one should not commit the error symmetrical to that of the populist racist mystification/displacement of hatred onto foreigners, and to "throw the baby out with the bath water," that is, to merely oppose populist anti-immigrant racism with multiculturalist openness, obliterating its displaced class content —benevolent as it wants to be, the simple insistence on tolerance is the most perfidious form of antiproletarian class struggle . . ."[15]

Žižek's answer is to find the misplaced class struggle within the right wing populist movements. In this respect, right-wing movements have been right to criticise immigration, but wrong in their diagnosis. Immigration has been used by the economic and ruling elite to suppress workers descent and, via the power of cheap labour, undermine the potential to strike. The answer can therefore not come from the call for politically-correct tolerance. Tolerance fails to address the inherent structural problems motivating the descent. The point for Žižek is to revive the class struggle that underpins this problem.

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Ironically, maybe, the corruption of liberal mythology can be potentially overcome by turning to Lars Von Trier. In 2011 during the Cannes Film Festival Trier made a speech that shocked and upset his audience.

"I really wanted to be a Jew and then I found out that I was really a Nazi, you know because my family was German. Which also gave me some pleasure. So what can I say I understand Hitler. But I think he did some wrong things. Yes absolutely… but I can see him sitting in his bunker in the end….. No I am just saying I think I understand the man. He is not what you would call a good guy, but I understand a lot about him and I sympathise a little bit, but come on, I am not for the Second World War. And I am not against Jews. I am very much for Jews, well not too much because Israel is a pain in the ass. But still... how can I get out of this sentence?…. I just want to say, Speer I liked very much, Albert Speer, he wasn't also one of God's best children, but he had some talents that was possible to use during… um…Okay I am a Nazi. Yeah that's the problem, we Nazis tend to try to do things on a greater scale. Yeah maybe you could persuade me into a final solution… with journalists."

Trier's awkward and politically incorrect ramblings were presumably meant as a parody of liberal tolerance, rather than a genuine statement of anti-Semitism, but the statement was enough to strike fear into the heart of Cannes, who banned him from the festival. The common response has been to write his statement off as either a bad taste publicity stunt or proclaim Trier as a genuine bigot, but maybe beneath the awkward ramblings there lies a deeper insight. Far from being a mere showman, prankster or genuine bigot Trier follows a radical provocative tradition of cinema as critique. The cinema of Jean Luc Godard, Reiner Werner Fassbinder, Ralph Bakshi and Michael Haneke (amongst others) has often tread a thin line and if their work can be accused of bigotry it is because to conquer bigotry you have to fully grasp it. To grasp and understand the horrors of Nazi Germany, to understand how such things came to be, you need to be able to understand Hitler. To understand Nazism we must understand how "ordinary" and "less than ordinary" people got swept up with it. As Badiou points out:

Lars Von Trier at Cannes 2011

"By refusing to think through what the Nazis themselves thought also prevents us from thinking through what they did, and consequently forbids the formulation of any real politics that would prohibit the return of their actions. As long as Nazi thinking is not itself thought through it will continue to dwell among us, unthought and therefore indestructible."[16]

For the "PC brigade" we must never understand Hitler. He must remain a monster; an unthinkable evil. Far from exposing the bigots, the "political correct" censor may actually prevent us from thinking through the very meaning of fascism, prejudice and bigotry. The censors have suppressed bigotry rather than addressing it and this may be their central downfall. If progressive politics is restricted to giving positive stereotypes, empowering minority groups and celebrating diversity then it is limited in its ability to identify and attack the subtle power relations of discrimination and bigotry. It is one thing to empower, it is another to critique. While critique is concerned with diagnosing reality, its problems and tensions, empowerment is concerned with creating a new one. Whilst both are important, we should not deny the ugly dark side of reality that binds its stifling web around us. It is in light of this that we must peer deeply into the unsettling psychology of Nazism, fascism and bigotry.

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Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* is a films whose narrativisation may prevent

Top: Still from Schindler's List
Above: Still from Inglorious Basterds

us thinking through the horrors of Auschwitz. In *Schindler's List* we are protected from exposure to the horrors of the holocaust via the narrative elegance of Hollywood storytelling. The film is awash with individual heroism, sentimentality and the all important happy ending. As Terry Gilliam points out:

"That is not what the holocaust was about, it was about complete failure of civilisation to allow six million people to die."[17]

In *Schindler's List* the holocaust is reduced to a Hollywood myth which simultaneously declares the evil of the holocaust, whilst depriving it of any real content. This is a story of ethical capitalism, of charity, of changing society from within. When watching this film we need not worry about our complicity in evil, we are simply told that evil exists and that we must do our bit to avert it. The structural relations between the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich are virtually ignored. This is a story of individuals and we are not encouraged to think about fascism and its roots in the bourgeois order. In fact, only the bourgeoisie (i.e. Schindler) can save us, it would seem. We are protected from the horrors of Nazi Germany, because, as history, it appears as dead sediments of a bygone era. A relic of the past never to return. The narrative must protect us from truly seeing what that evil really is. Everything must be upheld: the desperate struggle, the emotional tear jerking moment, the individual heroism, the all-important happy ending.

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Like *Schindler's List*, Quentin Tarentino's *Inglorious Basterds* also shields us from facing the horrors of Nazi Germany. *Inglorious Basterds* seeks to create a nazisploition film which avoids some of the moral problematics of other nazispoitation films (e.g. *The Gastapo's Last Orgy*). The problem with past nazisploitation films is their attempt to entertain their audience via appeal to unjustified gratuitous sexual violence. This often has the adverse effect, alienating their audience who seem unable to sympathise with the Nazi exploitation of women. Quentin Tarentino attempts to overcome this by setting it squarely within the revenge genre. In *Inglorious Bastards* we are relieved of the guilt of taking pleasure in violence, because we feel that those on the receiving end (the Nazis) deserve it. But by attempting to provide guilt-free violence we only seem to displace the issue and the film ends up appearing to endorse the Bush "with us or against us" rhetoric. In fact, rather than seeing the film as being about the Second World War, we should contemplate the film as a potential ode to Bush's War on Terror. The film appears to justify total violence in the name of revenge at the hands of American heroism. Like *Schindler's List*, *Inglorious Basterds* all too easily depoliticises the history it presents and keeps it at a safe distance.

Jade Goody and Shilpa Shetty on Celebrity Big Brother

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All to readily, liberal approaches to fascism offered by, for example, Tarentino and Spielberg reduce the evils of Nazi Germany to an all too simple narrative of "good guys" and "bad guys". Sara Ahmed accurately explores the liberal identification of the bad guys in her discussion of the case of Jade Goody's appearance on *Celebrity Big Brother.*

"What was at stake was the desire to locate racism in the body of Jade Goody, who comes to stand for the ignorance of the white working classes, as a way of showing that "we" (Channel 4 and its well-meaning liberal viewers) are not racist like that. When anti-racism becomes an ego ideal you know you are in trouble.

The prohibition of racist speech should not be taken literally: rather, it is a way of imagining "us" as beyond racism. As being good multicultural subjects who are not like that. By saying racism is over there - "Look, there it is! In the located body of the racist" - other forms of racism remain unnamed, what we could call civil racism. We might even say that the desire for racism is an articulation of a

wider unnamed racism that accumulates force by not being named, or by operating under the sign of civility."[18]

The identification of the "bad guy," or the bigot, may be the perfect way to defer blame from yourself and the system.

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Cannes' reaction to Trier too can be seen as deflecting deeper structural issues too. As Guy Lodge has acknowledged, there was a little hypocrisy in Cannes' response "when Mel Gibson was given the red-carpet treatment only a few days ago."[19] If Mel Gibson, who said "Fucking Jews... the Jews are responsible for all the wars in the world,"[20] can still walk the red carpet, why can't Trier say that he sympathises with Hitler?

Of course, Cannes is not really opposed to anti-Semitism (at least not to the extent that they would ban Mel Gibson). The point is rather to appear opposed to anti-Semitism. Thus it doesn't matter if Gibson or Trier really are anti-Semites. What is more important is that they don't appear as anti-Semites. As long as Mel Gibson can walk down a red carpet without shouting tirades against Jews then we are all happy.

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Todd Solondz' brave and fantastically insightful *Storytelling* addresses many of the issues and problems of political correctness and its' liberal misuse. What is brilliant about the first story in *Storytelling* is that it addresses many of the difficulties and tensions of politically correct literary interpretation, whilst simultaneously demonstrating, in typical Solondzian fashion, that liberal politics is not a safe haven from coldness, shallowness,

Stills from Storytelling

hypocrisy and self-delusion. The story focuses on Vi, a young naive student in a creative writing class, she is dating another student called Marcus, who has cerebral palsy. He receives negative response on a story that Vi had previously told him was good. Believing her to be patronising him because of his disability, he dumps her.

That night, Vi expresses her frustration. "Fucking Cripple! Why do I waste my time with undergrads? They are so juvenile. I just thought Marcus would be different, I mean, he's got CP."

Deciding to drown her sorrows she goes out on the town, where she meets their cold, sullen and rather arrogant tutor, Mr Scott, an African-American writer and Pulitzer prize winner. He takes Vi back to his flat. Vi appears to be suffering from a kind of politically correct anxiety and, whilst in the bathroom, mutters to herself "Don't be racist! Don't be racist..." But Mr Scott has other things in mind. After she comes out of the bathroom he tells her to undress, turn around and bend over. As he moves to fuck her from behind he says to her "Say 'Nigger fuck me". She replies that she cannot do that, but he perseveres and she complies.

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In her next creative writing class Vi, now united with Marcus reads the description of the events as part of her fiction, changing her name to Jane. She ends saying, "She entered collage with hope, with dignity, but she would graduate a whore." Her classmates begin to critique:

"Why do people have to be so ugly... right? ... about so ugly characters? It is perverted. I know you all think I am being prissy, but I don't care. I was brought up in a certain way and this is mean spirited."

"Yeah. It did seem a little affected, I mean by using taboo language you were trying to shock us about the hollowness of your characters."

"I think it was a little bit racist."

"It was completely racist and beyond that I felt deeply offended as a woman as if women could only operate from experiences of objectification."

"Totally phallocentric"

"and weirdly misogynistic. I mean why does Jane go through with this? Is she stupid?

"Wasn't this a rape? or did I miss something? I am confused, because if this was a rape then, why would she be a whore?"

"It was confessional, but dishonest, Jane pretends to be horrified by the sexuality that she in fact fetishises. She subsumes herself to the myth of black male sexual potency, but then doesn't follow through. She thinks she respects afro-Americans and thinks they are cool and exotic. But of course it all comes down to mandingo cliché and he calls her on it. In the classic racist tradition she demonises and runs for cover. But then how could she behave otherwise? She is just a spoilt suburban white girl with a Benetton rainbow complex. It is just my opinion and what do I know, but I think its a callow piece of writing."

" The film focuses on the hypocrisy that underlies liberal tolerance and hypersensitive identity politics "

Mr Scott adds "Callow, coy, Jane wants more, but isn't honest enough to admit it. In the end she returns to her crippled, translation, sexually impotent boyfriend."

Marcus stands up disgusted "This is bullshit, her story was the truth."

"It is unbelievable!" adds another student

"It's cliché!"

"It's disgusting!"

"But it happened!" Exclaims Vi.

"I don't know what happened Vi," Respond Mr. Scott "because as soon as you start writing it all becomes fiction. But still it is certainly an improvement over your last story. There is now at least a beginning a middle and an end."

Still from Storytelling

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The film focuses on the subtle interplay of bigotry, hate and hypocrisy that underlies liberal tolerance and hypersensitive identity politics. Vi is so concerned about not being bigoted that bigotry underpins her every move. Jim Goad explains this condition:

"I remember a teacher in high school saying that if someone told you not to think about a banana tree over the next ten seconds, banana trees would be stuck in your brain. The vast legions of media floodlights and high-powered telescopes and ear-slitting megaphones probably make it harder than ever for Americans to imagine a world without racism. When every TV and radio station sounds a flatulent rusty tuba for yet another show on the horrors of prejudice, it almost seems like a cumulative attempt to keep everyone FIXED on race. The solution would seem simple: If you want to get over racism, QUIT TALKING ABOUT IT. If you wish to transcend black and white, stop phrasing everything in those terms. Bombarding everyone with endless racial images is itself a form of racism. It effects a sort of mental segregation. Silence doesn't make a problem go away, but loudness isn't working, either. NO RACISM! NO RACISM! NO RACISM! Anything else on your mind?"[21]

Vi expresses symptoms of this Goadian mental segregation. Her repetition of the phrase "Don't be racist!" enforces this divide, pushing race to the forefront of her mind. The dangers of her attitude can be revealed in her statement "Fucking Cripple! Why do I waste my time with undergrads? They are so juvenile. I just thought Marcus would be different, I mean, he's got CP." She curses the "cripple", whilst simultaneously expecting him to be better than any other student because of his disability. The sentences accurately articulates the subtle interplay between the fetishised love and fetishised hate.

Her peers seem to be suffering from a subtle variation of the same condition. Obsessed with fighting misogyny and phallocentrism, they almost seem to overlook the rape issue and only seem to engage with the story through their predecided lens. Increasingly our preordained dogmatic narratives may block us from truly being able to fight the bigotry in front of us. It is in light of this that we should not adopt the all-too-easy approach and write this film off as bigoted. *Storytelling* asks us to reflect upon our bigoted assumptions and inconsistencies, in this respect it may be a perfect weapon against politically-corrected bigotry.

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Jim Goad takes this idea even further:

"I think TV should be chockablock full of the most horrid racism. Let's get it out of our system. You shouldn't make racism into Satan – turn it into Bozo the Clown. Make it a laughingstock rather than a bogeyman. In the early 1970s, Mel Brooks and Richard Pryor were doing work which would bring anti-defamation lawsuits today. Therefore, I'd suggest it be mandatory that schoolteachers tell racist jokes. Bringing back blackface may be the best way to heal our racial wounds. When America can handle a sitcom about the Klan (Ku Klux Kooks?), I'll know we've made progress. Having everyone get in touch with their inner racism may be a way to ensure world peace."[22]

There is an element of truth here. A truly ethical and responsible filmmaker does not allow us to suppress our bigotry. Responsible filmmakers bring it out into the open and cause us to think. Unfortunately Goad's suggestions may not have the same desired effect. Bringing back blackface would only be able to heal our racial wounds if it really did make us confront our inner racist. Unfortunately, if comedies such as *Friends*, *Everyone Loves Raymond* or *The Big Bang Theory* were to genuinely address the KKK then in all likelihood they would end up reinforcing the bigotry they mock. The distinction is an important one and whilst it is important to make people face their inner bigot that doesn't mean that anything goes.

In fact, increasingly we witness the rise of the *anti-PC* brigade, who react to a perceived "liberal thought police" by creating a thought police of their own: The thought police in the service of free speech! They not only believe that freedom of speech entitles them to bullying and bigotry, but also exception from critique. Even their most moderate retorts (such as "maybe that isn't a nice thing to say") are accused of policing thought through over-sensitive liberal hot air. The *anti-PC* brigade respond to criticisms with personal offence, hate slurs and accusations of infringing their rights to speech. In effect they enact a bowdlerisation of their own: They remove any anti-bigoted remark that offends their delicate bigoted ears. The only free speech they support is the free speech of bigots like themselves and they would like to live in a world where any trace of empathy and compassion has been eliminat-

Still from Shock Corridor

Still from Imitation of Life

ed. The *anti-PC* brigade are not, as they would like to believe, defenders of free speech, but, quite the contrary, a reactionary attempt to close it down. Just as the so-called "PC brigade" tend to offer a mere simulacrum of progress, the *anti-PC* brigade tend offer a mere simulacrum of free speech. It is for this reason that neither all-too-liberal political correctness, nor an uncompromising embrace of political incorrectness can provide the answer.

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Samual Fuller's 1963 film *Shock Corridor* would be a perfect film for a liberal politically correct critique. It is hard to watch it without feeling that you are watching a relic from the past. The films seems to continually trespass across social taboos with very little sensitivity or self awareness. Johnny Barrett, a journalist, pretends to be insane and has himself submitted to a mental institution in order to solve a murder. In the process he encounters over-theatrical schizophrenics, stumbles into the nympho wing, and befriends Robert Trent, an African-American patient on the ward, who has internalised the racist abuse he has suffered, walks around clutching a sign saying "Integration and Democracy don't mix. Go home Nigger", cuts holes in his white pillow cases and starts Ku Klux Klan riots in the hallways.

Maybe we should avoid the all-too-arrogant attitude that looks back with disgust while patting ourselves on the back. What is interesting about *Shock Corridor* is that the very sources of mental illness appear to emerge from ideological conflicts within America itself. *Shock Corridor* reveals mental psychosis to have social-political causes. Three patients: Stuart, caught between American patriotism and communism acts out the role of Confederate States of America General J.E.B. Stuart; Trent, an African-American who has internalised American racism and believes himself to be a member of the KKK; Boden, a nuclear scientist, infantilised after work on nuclear warheads. In *Shock Corridor*, mental illness emerges out of the pathologies of society itself. Whilst certainly unPC, *Shock Corridor* avoids the danger of embodying the mental illness in the individual. In this respect we should read Trent's psychosis in Fanonian lines.

"What is South Africa? A boiler into which thirteen million blacks are clubbed and penned in by two and a half million whites. If poor whites hate Negroes, it is not […] because 'racism is the work of petty officials, small traders, and colonials who have toiled much without great success.' No; it is because the structure of South Africa is a racist structure."[23]

Thus, just as we should avoid *Big Brother's* identification of Jade Goody with Racism or Cannes' identification of Lars Von Trier with anti-Semitism, we must avoid treating Trent as a mere mad man, his pathologies reflect the structure of society itself.

*

The character of Annie Johnson in Douglas Sirk's *Imitation of Life* raises similar issues to that of Robert Trent in *Shock Corridor*. The film tells the story of two women, Lora Meredith and Annie Johnson and their daughters. Where the white widower and aspiring actor, Lora Meredith, pursues the American dream of stardom, Annie, an African-American divorcee, aspires only to have a magnificent funeral. Whilst the two are primarily friends and thus equals, Lora and Annie's relationship increasingly mirrors the racial divides of society. Lora, increasingly

plays out the role of wealthy high society woman; the actress, whilst Annie plays the role of the maid. Both perform the roles expected of them.

Lora's life is a persistent imitation, a failure to do anything in her daily life except act. She may aim to be true to herself, but in her search she become a mere performance; an actress on a stage. Annie, by contrast, has internalised her own inferiority. Her life is designed to support and care for those around her. While the other characters in the film search for themselves, they end up serving only imitation. Annie, in contrast, has no self to search for. Or more to the point, she seems content in herself, only because she has accepted her servitude. She accepts her role. When she is rejected by her own mixed race daughter due to the colour of her skin, she accepts it, even apologising for her selfishness of wanting to see her daughter. Whilst legally they appear equals, Lora and Annie are not. They accept and perform the role society expects from them.

When attacking racism, it is easy to treat it as a product of a few bad individuals. But racism exists, not only in those bad people, but the oppressed themselves. Annie Johnson and Robert Trent speak the same racism that enslaves them. In both films, racism doesn't exist as the product of a few bad people (people who should be sacked for saying the N word), but in the underlying prejudices and structural problems of the society as a whole. The mental institution in *Shock Corridor* is not simply the place where those crazy people go. No! Instead these "crazies" reflect the society they come from. America is itself insane, the asylum is simply an extreme product of that. In this respect, the extreme racists are already a product of the society they come from. It is easy to scapegoat the extremist, whilst celebrating the oppressed. But this itself may be a way of hiding from the real problem. Scapegoating the extremists helps distract us from the subtle ruse of power that is played out in front of us, whilst celebrating the oppressed fails to acknowledge that being oppressed doesn't necessarily make you a great person –in fact, it often hinders your ability to become one. There is a fine line between celebrating the culture of the oppressed and celebrating oppression. As Walter Benn Michaels puts it:

" America is itself insane, the asylum is simply an extreme product of that "

"Blaming the victim (treating the poor people as if they were responsible for their poverty) may be bad, but it's hard to see how congratulating the victim (I love what you've done with your shack!) is better."[24]

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Lars Von Trier's *Antichrist* tells the story of a couple, who's baby son dies by falling out the window, while they are having sex. As the two travel to Eden, a ungodly, indiscriminate nature caught between abjection and pestilence, we bare witness as their grief and guilt escalates into scenes of graphic genital mutilation (including clitoridectomy). The film explores issues of misogyny primarily via the main protagonist, played by Charlotte Gainsburg, who before losing her baby had been doing research into gynocide

Still from Antichrist

(the killing of women). Her grief and depression grips and tortures her with escalating force and she begins to internalise the roles of her research. Whilst being subjected to her husband's pathetic and patronising therapy she reveals her own state of mind.

> Her: If human nature is evil that goes too for the nature of…
> Him: …of women, female nature?
> Her: The nature of all the sisters. Women do not control their own bodies, nature does. I have it in writing in my books.
> Him: The literature that you used in your research was about evil things committed against women, but you read it as proof of the evil of women.

This conclusion runs counter to our politically correct liberal tolerant view of women. Whatever sexism still exists in society, it is rare that such violent misogynistic tones are used. The relating of women with evil is taboo, and hearing it is likely to send ricochets of shock through the audience. But this does not imply the misogyny of the film itself. The producer, Meta Louise Foltager, provides us with a feminist interpretation of the film.

"You can interpret this thesis that she is working on and her being evil as her having read all this material, taking all this in as we as women have for thousands and thousands of years, and somehow it seems to me, I am a chauvinist 80 or 90%. You are, Everybody is."[25]

In this respect, the film reveals how the woman internalises the logic of her own oppression. She is both a victim and a perpetrator of the ideas that ensnare her. In the "age of empowerment" it is easy to think that all we need to do is just give a positive portrayal and everything will be fine. But even the "positive portrait" may feed in the same negative ideas. (It is hard to see how a woman, ruled by her biological nature to do good, saintly or motherly things fairs much better. Both

Rainer Werner Fassbinder

would appear to reinforce the same traditionalist gender roles.) Maybe we should say that the "positive portrait" of reactionary gender roles is worse than the negative portrayal of them. Where the former is there to unsettle us, forcing us to confront out own attitudes, contradictions and dissonances, the latter is easily passively incorporated into our viewpoint without us even noticing. It is in this respect that *Antichrist* confronts us with a mirror reflecting our repressed bigotry back to us.

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Rainer Werner Fassbinder's infamous play *Garbage, The City and Death*[26], dramatises the lives of outcasts of the bourgeois order; prostitutes, homosexuals and anti-Semites. The play was accused of anti-Semitism for its villain "the rich Jew", who becomes a source of anti-Semitic hatred for the characters of the play. Fassbinder had a tendency to upset oppressed groups and similar things could be said of homosexuals in *Fox and his Friends*, women in *Martha* and Africans in *Whity*. But Fassbinder's intentions were not to incite bigotry, but to critique it.

"If you present the exotic side, the glamour, then of course they don't treat these things as taboo, only if you show the societal context. That's the case with all minorities. Earlier, when I was still making films where the representations of the minorities were good and the others were bad, society really lapped up my films. But when I came up with the much truer idea of showing the minorities the way society has made them, with all the twisted behaviour, then suddenly people didn't like my films any more."[27]

The more we focus merely upon on empowerment, the more we disguise the true consequences of social oppression. Oppression does not create the emancipated heroes we desire to see. The risk with the empowered hero is that they present the world as if the social problems and oppression has disappeared. It is not always progressive to show positive images of oppressed groups, the risk is always that you disguise the oppression itself. For Fassbinder, people can be fundamentally good, but not in a unjust society like this.[28] Fassbinder's aim is to

Top: still from Martha
Middle: still from Whity
Above: still from Fox and His Friends

confront us with the ugliness of the society in which we live. In a statement that could have been spoken by Lars von Trier himself, Fassbinder tells us:

"This is where I think the misogynist business comes from: I take women far more serious than most directors do. To me women aren't just there to get men going; they don't have that role as object. In general, that's an attitude in the movies that I despise. And I simply show that women are forced more than men to use some pretty revolting methods to escape from this role as object."[29]

Mainstream cinema is so inherently misogynist that it becomes naturalised and normalised: the one-dimensional woman, the love interest, the sex object, the mother etc. It is only when we are confronted by the images of womanhood in Fassbinder and Trier that we are forced to confront the idea of women's real oppression and even their own potential self-oppression. Fassbinder claimed that he never made movies for reactionaries,[30] and in this light we should read his films as a critique of liberals and their implicit prejudices and contradictions. These films offer a kind of political therapy for liberal film goers to cleanse or challenge themselves of their implicit reactionary assumptions. Rather than turn to positive imagery and repress our dark bigoted side, Fassbinder makes us focus on it.

"And clinging to this taboo, in my opinion, isn't a way of defending the Jews but a further form of discrimination. It stands to reason that when you create a taboo you get a backlash. If you're not allowed to talk about them, that simply means that someday they'll be the scapegoats again."[31]

In order to fight bigotry we need to be able to understand it, in the words of Lars von Trier, we need to "understand Hitler," because, as Fassbinder tells us, "if German history gets repressed once more, something'll start to stir in the depths again."[32] In this sense, Fassbinder suggests that *The City, Garbage and Death* should be read as an attack on philosemitism. As Fassbinder says, quoting Robert Neumann, "Philosemites are anti-Semites who love Jews."[33] Within the dia-

lectics of love and hate, a fetishism of the Other has emerged, and where we may have hoped for brotherhood and humanity we are offered merely a taxonomy of racialised parts. Racial identity, either for glorification or degradation, betrays its subjects. As Fanon tells us:

"To us, the man who adores the Negro is as "sick" as the man who abominates him. […] In the absolute, the black is no more to be loved than the Czech, and truly what is to be done is to set man free."[34]

*

The call to set all man free must be the rallying cry against bigotry. Yet under the guise of "political correctness" it too has become subsumed in the whirls of iconophilia. Bigotry has been sedimented within the very opposition to bigotry itself. We would like to pull it back and rescue it from its totemism and tokenism, but instead it seems to harden, darken and clog our brains. The fight against bigotry has morphed into shows of divisive identitarianism, scapegoating, suppression of class struggles, repression and fetishised love.

We must learn to become storytellers again, to re-invent myth so as to avoid our complicity with evil. The methods and narratives we use to expose bigotry have become its source and its cloak. We want to unveil the evil genie, but he is quick on his toes and ready to use our rhetoric against us. The evil genie is the ideological veil of the structures of power and exploitation and he calls upon us to combat bigotry by disregarding class struggles, ignoring intersectionality and accommodating ourselves within his system. The storyteller must reach out once more and renew his iconography. He looks back to the militants of yesterday and the critics of today. Here he finds a vibrant narrative. In the militancy of yesterday he discovers old projects and paths, forgotten, waiting to be renewed. He cleaves out a new materialist dialectic based on land, need and human struggle. He finds within his literary idealism the material ground of human satisfaction.

It is, for this reason, that in the struggle against idealistic romantic delusions, the storyteller turns to the critic of today. Uncomfortable as their critiques may be to bare, the re-inventor of myth must pull back his eyelids and stare into the minefield, because only through criticism can we truly begin to extricate ourselves from the bygone codebook of political correctness. It is in this respect that we may bare a passing similarity to the bigots we oppose. To truly understand our myths and continually reinvent them you have to remain critical of their sclerotisation.

" To truly understand our myths and continually reinvent them you have to remain critical of their sclerotisation "

The phenomenologist Edmund Husserl once claimed that he, the supposed reactionary, was far more radical and far more revolutionary then those who in their words proclaim themselves so radical today.[35] For him radicalism meant taking things to their roots. And taking things to their roots meant learning to perceive things as they appear without uncritically applying the garb of codes and narratives we expect to see. Husserlian radicalism calls upon us to look at things afresh.

Something similar might be found in filmmakers such as Lars von Trier, Todd Solondz or Rainer Werner Fassbinder. By attending to our deformed myths and distorted codes they often emerge like reactionaries, full of bigotry and self-loathing. But maybe the opposite is the case. Far from spreading bigotry, maybe they reveal it by focusing on the dark side that other directors want to suppress. If anti-bigotry often transforms into bigotry by taking its codes and narratives for granted and suppressing its darker element, then true anti-bigotry must learn to see with fresh eyes, always on guard in case they harden or cloud over.

Edmund Husserl

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23. Frantz Fanon. Black Skin, White Mask. Pluto Books. 2008. (p. 64)

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26. This fascinating section of the play gives a feel for its tensions and issues. In this scene, Hans Von Gluck expresses his despair of life and his hatred of the rich Jew. "He's sucking us dry, the Jew. Drinking our blood and blaming everything on us because he's a Jew and we're guilty. I rack my brains and I brood. I tear at my nerves. I'm going under. I wake up nights, my throat like it's in a noose, death stalking me in person. My reason tells me they're just images, myths from the pre-history of our fathers. I feel a sharp pain on my left side. My heart, I ask myself? Or the gallbladder? And it's the Jew's fault. Just being there he makes us guilty. If he stayed where he came from or if they gassed him I'd be able to sleep better. They forgot to gas him. This is no joking matter. And I rub my hands together again and I moan and rub and I say "I'm Rumpelstiltskin: ah how fine that no one knows this name is mine." He's always one step ahead and all he leaves us is charity. Garbage, worthless objects. Something in me whispers, your hour is up," and for the hundredth time I clutch my heart and curse this system that bleeds me. Which makes me sick, right here where it finds me. Is it possible to run for it with a suitcase full of real estate? You get tempted by the Siren song – the house, the property – and you are back so you can be tortured again and bleeding. And someone exists who is laughing up his sleeve all the while, and he's bought you out before you've thought of selling. He has the banks and city hall on his side. You give up, and in the next minute you're tightening your grip on the same property which is causing you the pain. The doctors lie to your face, they're all bedfellows. They keep you alive until you've suffered enough, and 'til the gods, whoever they are, have been able to jerk off while watching you suffer. The gods hate you, and they need to satisfy their perverse desires. They're nothing but witches and fairies, the stuff of children's nightmares, invented to prepare you for life – which is death. The Jew knows his business well, fear's a stranger to him, he's not frightened by death, him. He doesn't have a life to live. I know my time's up. I've had the honorarium transferred to your account. My heartfelt thanks." Reiner Werner Fassbinder "Garbage, The City and Death" in Plays. PAJ Publications. The John Hopkins Press. 1985 (pp.180-181)

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32. Reiner Werner Fassbinder "'Why these problems with Franz Biberkopf?' A discussion with Klaus Eder about the Reactions to Berlin Alexanderplatz and about Film Treatments of the Third Reich." In Michael Töteberg and Leo A. Lensing (ed.) The Anarchy of Imagination. The John Hopkins Press. 1992 (p. 66)

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