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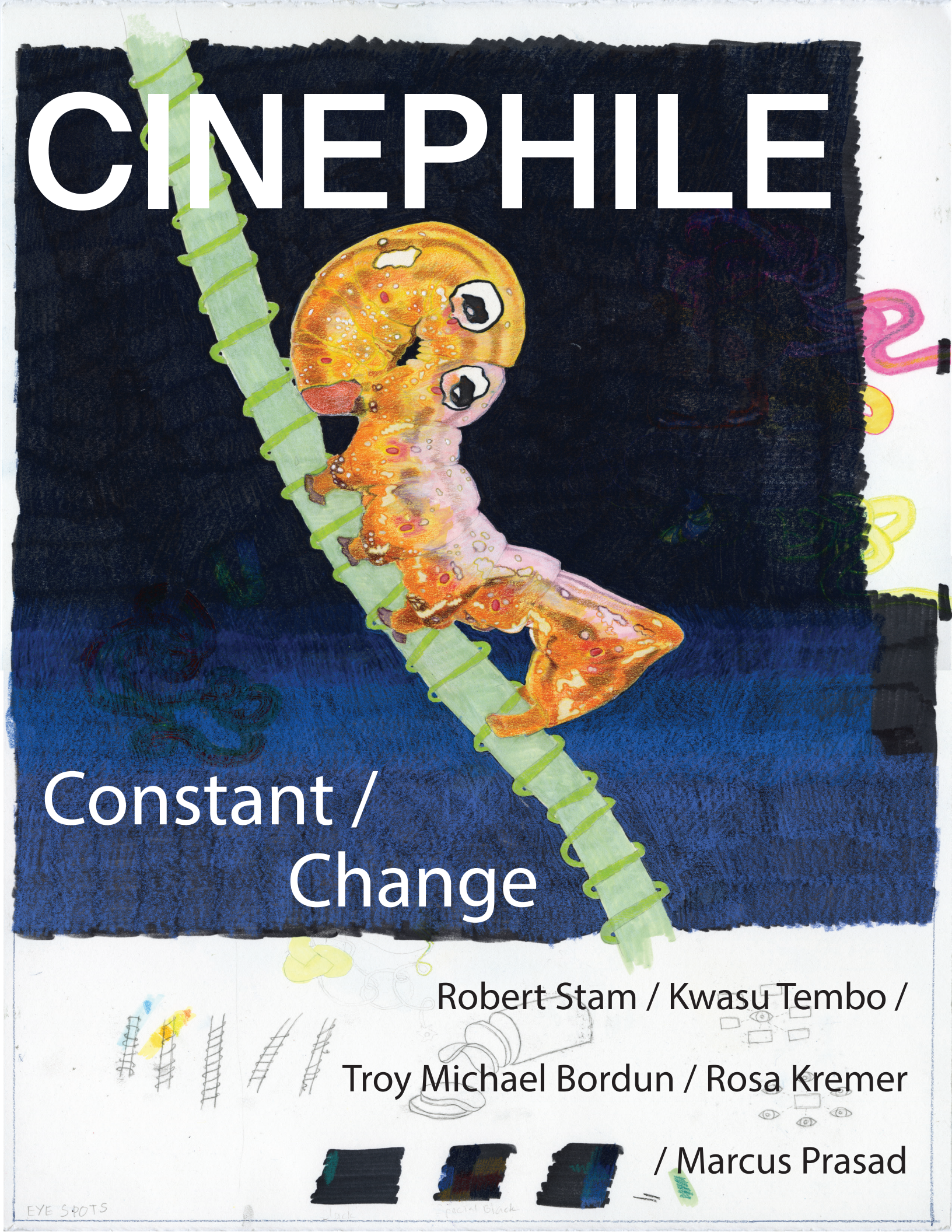

Constant / Change

Robert Stam / Kwasu Tembo /

Troy Michael Bordun / Rosa Kremer

/ Marcus Prasad

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Letter from the Editor

Dear readers,

This issue of Cinephile asks us to think about change and motion. The past few years have made clear that no matter how much things seem to be in flux and motion there are underlying constants which, for whatever reason, seem highly resistant to any forms of change. The essays presented here encourage us to think about why things change or do not as well as why we react the way we do to either option.

Though constants and change have been made visible in all aspects of life and culture, our focus is, naturally, on how these elements manifest in film and the film industry. Media production, consumption, and criticism are all caught up in the flux of culture and constantly under redfinition in the wake of shifting political, economic, social, industrial, and technological changes. The rise and fall of streaming empires during the past few years of pandemic viewing are a recent example but looking further back change and constants can be seen in the advent of sound, colourized film, censorship, the Red Scare, feminist and civil rights movements, television, the multiplex, and the rise of the Internet. In Cinephile 16.1, you will read essays that consider many manifestations of change or lack thereof in a range of settings and conceptual frameworks.

Opening this issue is Robert Stam's preface, an excerpt from his forthcoming book *Indignity and the Decolonizing Gaze: Transnational Imaginaries, Media Aesthetics, and Social Thought*. This preface explores how both representational practices and individual identity can be found in flux through a close reading of a range of films that relate to the notion of the "White Indian" and what this trope and its manifestations reveal about the films and wider industry. Stam explores the ideological contradictions of this story convention and how its meaning shifts along with its context along historical and cultural lines, thereby revealing much about how each context he touches on relates to notions of race and identity. Our first article comes from Kwasu Tembo and asks us to rethink how we imagine streaming video as a practice and industry. Tembo puts forward a variety of clear new terms and ideas that give language to practices, without which we are only able to vaguely talk around, in order to help clearly conceptualize the ever-changing online video industry that has come to structure the majority of media consumption. Next, Troy Bordun explores the changing state of horror as he uses the films *Swallow* (2019) and *Promising Young Woman* (2020) to demonstrate the growing new cycle of the "woman's horror film". This distinct cycle is positioned in relation to historical and cultural changes and is tied to the recent #MeToo movement. Bordun explores how the changes in culture do and do not affect change in the cinema as we see a rise in stories which depict women fighting back against the violence which society is increasingly acknowledging is inflicted upon them at all times. Using the National Theatre's April 2021 adaptation of Romeo & Juliet as a case study, Rosa Kremer looks at how the COVID-19 pandemic allowed for new configurations and modes of art as options opened up to create filmed theatre in new and distinct ways. Kremer explores the push and pull between stage and screen, both big and small, and what it means for our collective cultural memory when the boundaries between these three distinct approaches to representation are blurred into semi-recognition. Lastly, our final essay comes from Marcus Prasad and looks at Rosalía's music video for "Pienso en tu mirá," in order to examine Spanish imagery and cultural references to see how these semantic elements are able to be changed in meaning by combining them in unique ways that invert and expand meaning thereby demonstrating the inherent flux of cultural meaning and understanding.

As with all things Cinephile is itself subject to change and movement and, as such, is shaped by the many hands it passes through as it moves along its development before arriving at this final state. Many people were instrumental in shaping Cinephile 16.1 and to them we owe our deepest thanks. We wish to thank the talented scholars whose fascinating ideas have given life to the following pages. Your thought and research made this issue not just possible but exciting at each stage of development. We thank, as well, the editorial board for their enthusiasm and diligent feedback for helping to develop these ideas and shape the journal. Thank you also to Sunny Nestler for the art that helps to visually define the ideas we have put forward. We wish to thank our faculty supervisor Christine Evans and all of the staff and faculty of UBC's Department of Theatre and Film who have all helped shape the issue with us. Lastly we want to thank the previous editorial teams at Cinephile for laying the groundwork on the journal over the years as well as those reading this issue and exploring the ideas we have presented within. Thank you for sharing in this journal.

Sincerely,

Alec Christensen, Andrew Kirby, and Michael Stringer

Robert Stam

Preface

THE TRANS-NATIONAL "WHITE INDIAN"

An adapted excerpt from Robert Stam's forthcoming book, *Indignity and the Decolonizing Gaze: Transnational Imaginaries, Media Aesthetics, and Social Thought*

Countless films from the Americas (and some from Europe) display the process whereby white characters "go native," even if usually superficially and without benefit to indigenous peoples themselves. In historical terms, this "going native" was not just a fantasy; to some participants, it was a reality. The "real epic of America," Felix Cohen wrote, "is the yet unfinished story of the Americanization [i.e., the Indigenization] of the white man" (180). Already in the 17th century, at the heights of the puritanical regime in New England, the rebellious Thomas Morton, who danced and traded arms with the Indians, argued in *The New English Canaan* that the native way of life was more satisfying and less frantic. "According to humane reason, guided onely by the light of nature, these people leades the more happy and freer life, being voyde of care, which torments the mindes of so many Christians: They are not delighted in baubles, but in useful things" (177). The very title, *New Canaan*, betokens a Canaanite alternative to the "New Israel" grid of the Puritans. Pierre Biard, a Jesuit in "New France" in Canada, pointed out that "Unlike Europeans, [the Indians] are never in a hurry. Quite different from us, who can never do anything without hurry and worry...our desire tyrannizes us and banishes peace from our action" (Tully 76).

In this essay, I would like to talk about the "White Indian," first in Hollywood films, but more significantly, beyond. Hollywood films like *Little Big Man* (1970), *A Man Called Horse* (1970), and *Dances with Wolves* (1990), similarly, give expression to the white desire to "become Indian" through idealized stories of whites who assimilate to native ways. Arthur Penn's *Little Big Man* (1970), based on the Thomas Berger novel, portrays the Cheyenne as the good guys and the U.S. Army soldiers as the villains. The narration contrasts largely symbolic Indigenous style of warfare with the massive violence of western-style warfare, asking the question: where is the courage when one side has all of the weapons? The film stages a paradigmatic recognition scene found in many of the White Indian films, the scene where the indigenized white is at first misrecognized as Indian by fellow whites and then exposed. The film draws subliminal allegorical parallels between the U.S. cavalry invading Indian country with the U.S. military invading Vietnam, an equation made almost explicit in real life through soldierly colloquialisms describing Vietnam as "Injun Country." Just as the Dustin Hoffman character was siding with the Indigenous enemy in the movie theatres, anti-war protestors were chanting "Ho, ho, ho Chi Minh, the NLF is gonna win" in the streets, and hundreds of U.S. towns and cities were signing Peace Treaties with the Vietnamese.

Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves* offers another "White Indian" in the form of U.S. Army Lieutenant John Dunbar, who joins the Lakota in their struggle. He begins by respecting the "enemy" and ends up taking their side. The character becomes Indian, but only in order to rediscover his implicitly white "true self." In the "misrecognition" scene where he is captured by his own people, the military first think he's an Indian, and when they discover he is not, remark: "turned Injun, didn't you ... I don't know whether to salute him or shoot him!" The film's final intertitles inform the spectator of the historical outcome, the closing of the frontier in 1893. The net effect is a past-tense compliment, an

elegy for a vanished civilization. The film also falls into the old Manichean trap of binaristic oppositions, not only the good Dunbar versus the bad whites, but also the good Sioux versus the bad Pawnee. With all its innovations, its positive portrayals and tributes to Indigenous dignity, the film is ultimately all about the white "us," and only secondarily about the Indigenous "them." Dunbar is in some ways, if not better, at least as good as the Indigenous warriors, who are relegated to supporting roles. The racial transformations are asymmetrical: the white men can become Indians and thus ennobled, but Indians cannot become White without losing their dignity and their souls.

The related tropes of "going native," the "White Indian," and "playing Indian" have a constant presence in the cultural history of the Americas. In 1997, Vine Deloria Jr. noted a kind of inversion. Just as Native Americans "were looking increasingly like middle-class Americans," middle-class Americans were trying more and more to look like Indians, "convinced they are Oglala Sioux Pipe carriers and on a holy mission to protect Mother Earth'" (1). In *Playing Indian*, historian Philip J. Deloria suggests that the tropes reflect the anxieties and aspirations of non-Indigenous Americans in relation to an Indian figure both admired and feared. The Boston Tea Party, where American rebels dressed up as Mohawks and protested British rule is for Deloria "a catalytic moment, the first drumbeat in the long cadence of rebellion through which Americans redefined themselves as something other than British colonists" (2). Indian masquerade allowed white Americans to be simultaneously insiders and outsiders, citizens and traitors, rebels and conformists. In this same vein, Deloria refers to a metaphorical "White Indian Treaty" in 1794, a collection of speeches by the heads of the "Six United Nations of *White* Indians" (emphasis mine), linking the American revolution to "the political strategy of actual Indian People" (42).

Deloria gives myriad examples of the constantly morphing identities and identifications of whites "playing Indian:" the white Hobbyists, the pow-wow tourists, the counter-cultural leftists whose headbands evoked both Geronimo and Che Guevara, part of a long tradition of Americans "imagining and claiming an Indianness that was ultimately about being free, white, and male" (146). The American counter-culture of the 1960s fused oppositional politics with Indianness as a latter-day iteration of the redface Mohawks of the Boston Tea Party. "Playing Indian," he writes, "replicated the contradictory tensions established by the Revolution. An interior Indianness that's signified national identity clashed with an exterior Indianness linked with the armed struggle to control the continent" (162). Since the social circles of anti-war activists, the hippie counterculture, and coalitionary racialized resistance (Black Panthers, American Indian Movement, the Young Lords) at times came physically and ideologically close together, including in protest allies with their frequent assemblage of activists of color, it was almost inevitable that indigenous symbolism would enter the discursive and performative arena. These convergences of intensities reached a zenith in "The Gathering of all Tribes for a Human Be-In" in San Francisco in 1967, featuring Allen Ginsburg and LSD guru Timothy Leary.

Modern formulations of "going native," according to Shari Huhndorf (Yup'ik), reveal ambivalence about modernity as well as anxieties about the terrible violence marking the nation's origins, demonstrating the "changing relationship of the dominant, colonizing culture to Native America's and remain connected to more explicit and familiar modes of colonialism" (14). In this highly gendered account, the White Indian films give expression both to a historical reality – many whites did switch sides and joined the Indians or at least sympathized with them – and to a white desire to "become Indian" through idealized stories of white men – always men – adopting to native ways. However, the "White Indian" trope does not only appear in productions of the past. Many critics, and internet parodists and remixers, have noted the parallels between commercial productions like *Dances with Wolves*, *Pocahontas* (1995) and the futuristic space epic *Avatar* (2009).

The *Avatar* story is set in the year 2156 on Pandora, one of the moons of the Polyphemus planet, in a region covered by bio-luminescent foliage and literally "peopled," not unlike the xipari-peopled forests of the Yanomami, with mythologically inflected fauna and flora. In *Avatar*, the avatars of Hindu mythology meet the avatars of "Second Life" meet the "White Indian" heroes of the revisionist western. In its palimpsest of genres – romance, animation, western, bildungsroman, colonial adventure film, anti-colonial film, sci-fi, and internet game – each genre brings its ambiguous ideological and aesthetic baggage in relation to indigenous peoples. In political terms, the film forms a kind of Rorschack screen, on to which diverse spectators project their own ideologies and discourses; indeed, the film has been read in different ways by every possible ideological current. The film instantiates Hollywood populist marketing, premised on appealing to an assemblage of disparate constituencies: a White Messiah figure for ethnocentric conservatives; ecology

for the environmentalists; a critique of the military-industrial-complex for leftists; critical allusions to U.S. imperialist wars for pacifists; cyber technologies for the techno-nerds; multi-chromatic casting for the multiculturalists; and spectacular militaristic violence, simultaneously denounced and fetishized, for the devotees of blockbuster action films.

Critics of *Avatar*, such as Shari Huhndorf, rightly argue that the film "reinforces the racial hierarchies it claims to destabilize, and thus serves another primary function of [the] going native" genre (3). For Slavoj Žižek, "the film enables us to practice a typical ideological division: sympathizing with the idealized aborigines while rejecting their actual struggle" (Žižek). As an ideologically contradictory film, *Avatar* is clearly anti-imperialist on one level, yet the production also incarnates an efficient, hierarchical, and domineering Hollywood production style not unlike that of an industrial army. The film offers a mismatch of production and representation: the anti-ecological Hollywood style of the production is out of synch with the pro-ecological message of the film. The kind of society that *produced* the film – competitive, greedy, arrogant – is nothing like the harmonious and nature-loving Na'vi society portrayed in the film. It is also worth pondering the social implications of such huge budgets: how many thousands of Indigenous or critical films could have been made with those 237 million dollars? The film also promotes new media technologies and an array of products made to the taste of those that Davi Kopenawa calls "the People of Merchandise" (4).

While not an Indigenous film – in fact as a Hollywood cyber-blockbuster it in most ways constitutes Indigenous media's polar opposite – M. Elise Marubbio still links *Avatar* to roughly contemporaneous key victories for indigenous people such as the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (2005–2015), the election of an Indigenous president (Evo Morales) in Bolivia, the United Nations' adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the 2010 Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth. For Marubbio, *Avatar* highlights the "process of global recognition of Indigenous rights, sovereignty, decolonization movements and environmental justice [which] represent centuries of Indigenous resistance to ongoing systems of subjugation, racism and colonialism" (167). Cameron's Pandora reflects real-world struggles by foregrounding Indigenous resistance to genocide and ecocide. Relying on revisionist and neo-Western formulae, Cameron, for Marrubbio, weaves together anti-militarism and anti-imperialism, environmentalism, pro-Nativism and Indigenous sovereignty into an allegorical critique of Manifest Destiny and settler nations' relationships with Indigenous people.

The portrayal of the Na'vi people condenses myriad allusions to mythologies and spiritualities linked to Indigenous peoples. The Na'vi practice customs, beliefs, and traditions that are closely tied to the land as the source of sustenance and inspiration. Among the Indigenous tropes: the typical self-naming of the Na'vi as "the people;" the idea of nature as alive; the concept of Native people as the custodians of the land; the rejection of an instrumental, mechanical, and extractivist approach to nature; the levelling and mixing of the animal and the human in a kind of all-embracing personhood. For Brazilian cultural critic Ivana Bentes, *Avatar* can be read as a conversion of instrumental reason and the body/mind dualism to a "thought of the body", in which the "bodily point of view radically changes our identity and subjectivity," and where "lifestyles are totally subject to the holistic laws of nature" (76). For Bentes, *Avatar* is inspired by the Indigenous cosmologies in the mold of Amerindian perspectivism proposed by Viveiros de Castro (1996), a concept that emerges from Lévi-Straussian-inspired concepts such as "savage thinking" (Lévi-Strauss 353) and has gained another meaning with the "ontological turn" in Anthropology defined as a "way of thinking that rejects dualisms typical of Western-modern thought" (Neto et al. 177). Thus, perspectivism is the conception common to many peoples in the Americas, according to which "the world is inhabited by different kinds of subjects or persons, human and non-human, who apprehend it from different points of view" (de Castro 115).

Avatar proliferates in references to American imperialist wars, first against the Indian then against the neo-Indians like the Vietnamese (raided with "Apache" helicopters) and the Iraqis (targeted with "Tomahawk" Missiles). The film is anti-imperialist in its portrayal of a colonial situation led by racists whose pejorative idioms of "pagan" and "voodoo" betray their retrograde attitudes. The Sully character obviously represents a younger generation's version of the "White Indian" figures from *Little Big Man* and *Dances with Wolves*. Like the other Hollywood "going native" films, *Avatar* pits the hyper-violent American military against an admirably courageous Indigenous society. While the Na'vi have elements of the noble savage, this time they are ecological and trans-human in their capacities. Cameron was quite explicit about the film's anti-colonialist character: "*Avatar* is a science fiction

retelling of the history of North and South America in the early colonial period. *Avatar* very pointedly made reference to the colonial period in the Americas, with all its conflict and bloodshed between the military aggressors from Europe and the indigenous peoples, the native Americans are the Na'vi. It's not meant to be subtle" (Acuna).

Like a shape-shifting anthropologist, Jake spends three months of field research learning the ways of the Na'vi and undergoing the rites of initiation; he learns to ride, hunt, respect and love, and in turn wins their respect. Indian land, meanwhile, becomes the site of redemption for the tired imperial warrior. Like many "White Indians" from philosophy, literature, and cinema, he begins to question his own Western values, learning to "see" and "feel" through the eyes of another culture. Despite all the well-considered critiques of the film as an aggregation of clichés, many indigenous people, especially in South America, have recognized an idealized version of themselves in the Na'vi and a lucid, if hyperbolic, account of the machinations of colonialism and their impact on Indigenous people (see Marubbio). Evo Morales, the first Indigenous president of Bolivia, praised *Avatar* for its "profound show of resistance to capitalism and the struggle for the defense of nature" ("Evo Morales praises Avatar"). Native activists and supporters were less moved by the "White Savior", one suspects, than by the depiction of the high-tech aggressions mobilized against them in the name of such substances as Unobtanium – a shifter-word made to suit any extractable mineral. The scenes of powerful machines tearing up the earth reminds us of Davi Kopenawa's denunciation of the "earth eaters" (263) wrenching minerals out of the earth, thus provoking the fall of the sky.

While *Avatar* exemplifies the outlandish potency of Hollywood in production and distribution, such power can also be resisted, refunctioned, appropriated, and transformed at the point of reception through what Ella Shohat and I, and many others, call "media jiujitsu," (31) i.e. using the power of imagery produced by the dominant but this time against domination, i.e. assuming the strength of the dominant discourse but redeploying that strength in the interests of oppositional praxis. Meanwhile, Henry Jenkins speaks of "Avatar activism," (Jenkins) or the convergence of established media such as Hollywood film with new media activism through the language of participatory culture. After its release, as Emma Mitchell has pointed out, many activists, from Canada to Australia to Palestine to Peru, deployed the imagery of the film as part of their own struggles, donning Na'vi costumes in an effort to attract media attention and enliven their demonstrations (see also Wade). In 2010, Aboriginal rights protestors against uranium mining in South Australia painted themselves blue in honor of the Na'vi. In India, the Non-Government Organization, *Survival*, appealed to Cameron to help the Dongria Kondh tribe in their struggle against the threat of mining. A similar tactic was repeated by a coalition of fifty First Nations and environmentalist groups campaigning against the Alberta oil sands in Canada. The groups placed a punning full-page notice in *Variety*, headlined "Canada's AvaTar Sands," to support *Avatar*'s Best Picture nomination.

Outside of Hollywood, the "going native" character appears in many Latin American films. Cultural crossing over was a common occurrence during the first centuries of conquest: in Mexico, for example, Gonzalo Guerrero, a Spaniard kidnapped by Indians in the Yucatan, became a *cacique* with "face tattooed and ... ears pierced" (141). The Mexican film *Cabeza de Vaca* (1989), in the same vein, tells the story of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, the shipwrecked Spaniard who traveled by foot from Florida to Texas. The film's source text, Alvar Nunez's *Relacion de los Naufragios* (Story of the Shipwrecked), is an early recounting of the Conquest as a story of failure. Inverting the usual roles, Nunez portrays the Spaniards as vulnerable, as losing control, weeping, and supplicating. And while a phantasmatic cannibalism usually serves to justify European exploitation, here it is the Spanish who cannibalize one another and the natives who watch in horror. Although the film portrays the Indians as menacing, even freakish, it does expose the underside of European religious proselytizing, and it dares to suggest that the conquistadors, not the natives, might have been the real cannibals.

The Venezuelan film *Jerico* (Jericho, 1990), meanwhile, treats the case of a European who "goes native." The film concerns a Franciscan priest, Santiago, the lone survivor of a sixteenth-century expedition led by the conquistador Gascuiia in search of the mythic Mar del Sur. Although Santiago hopes to conquer the Indians spiritually, he is in fact spiritually conquered by them: as their captive, he comes to question his European attitudes toward religion, the body, the earth, and social life, and finally renounces his evangelical mission. In the end, he falls back into the hands of Spaniards, who regard his "going native" as a form of madness and heresy. What makes this revisionist captivity narrative so subversive is that it transforms the indigenous culture that official Europe regarded with fear and loathing into a seductive pole of attraction for

Europeans. The real purpose of the Inquisition was not to force the indigenes to become Europeans, but to keep the Europeans from becoming indigenes. The film largely adopts the indigenous perspective and shows extensive knowledge of the languages, histories, and cultural styles of the indigenous groups portrayed. While most Hollywood films have the Indians speak a laughable pidgin English, here the natives laugh at a European's garbled attempt to speak *their* language.

The global appeal of the Hollywood Western has made it fodder for infinite adaptations, remediations, and transmutations. Within this context, many countries seem to have fantasized their own Indian, whether as a kind of imaginary friend, or symbol of a romanticized *ailleurs*, or as fantasy ally. The "Indian" first became a major figure in international cinema, already in the silent period, through adaptations of Indianist literary classics. Multitudinous films adapted the hugely popular 19th century Indianist novelists in various countries – James Fenimore Cooper in the U.S., Jose de Alencar in Brazil, Karl May in Germany, and so forth. In the U.S. alone, the adaptations of *The Last of the Mohicans* go at least as far back as the 1912 silent version by James Cruze, on to a 1920s version, two 1930s versions, one 1940s version (*Last of the Redmen*, 1947), to a 1950s version (*The Iroquois Trail*, 1950), two 1960s versions, on to the 1992 version by Michael Mann starring Daniel Day-Lewis.

Europeans, as Christopher Frayling points out, have had a longstanding love affair with the Western genre. In France, between 1850 and 1870, Novelist Gustave Aimard published some 50 stories for children, with titles like *Les Outlaws du Missouri* and *Les Trappeurs de l'Arkansas*. The stories, revolving around French heroes and their Indian friends, inspired many silent films a few decades later. Some of the earliest American westerns made more money in France than in the home market. European Westerns, (aka Euro-westerns), are as old as filmmaking itself. Just one year after the first public screenings of films in 1895, Gabriel Veyre shot *Repas d'Indien* ("Indian Banquet") for the Lumiere Brothers. In France, Gaston Melies himself filmed a series of French Westerns featuring Indians between 1907 and 1913. In 1918-1919, the Winnebago director James Young Deer made short Westerns for the Pathe Brothers in France.

In Germany, meanwhile, *Der Letzte de Mohikanes* featuring Bela Lugosi as Cooper's Chingachgook, formed the second part of the two-part *Lederstrumpf* film released in 1920. Over four decades later, the 1965 West German/Italian/Spanish co-production *Der Letzte Mohikaner* directed by Harald Reini, set its story in the post American Civil War era. The East German film *Chingachgook die Grosse Schlange* (Chingachgook the Great Serpent, 1967), starring Gojko Mitic as Chingachgook, meanwhile, became popular throughout the Socialist Bloc. Various European countries developed their own competing allegorical Indians. In Italy, for example, well-established stereotypes such as those of the "ecological Indian," the "victim Indian," and the "warrior Indian" surfaced in cultural discourse, remediated and reaccentuated for the purposes of local politics (Mariani "The Red and the Black"). In the 1970s, the *Indiani Metropolitani* (the Urban Indians of Milan) appropriated the Native American for anarchist purposes. Updated avatars of Rousseau's "*sauvages faits pour les villes*," ("city-ready savages") as a laudatory term, their manifestos mingled the savage howls of Allen Ginsberg's poetry with homages to the rebel Indian. In a manifesto entitled "We shall never bury the hatchet again!," the *Indiani* denounced the forked-tongued oppressors of the new Italian "urban Indians." As Giorgio Mariani puts it: "The 1876 Little Big Horn battle came to replace the Paris Commune or the Russian Revolution as an early example of revolutionary struggle, while General Custer was regarded as a prototype of American imperialism" ("Was Anybody More" 585-598).

In Europe, Germans, especially, have claimed a special relationship to the Indian as cultural alter-ego (see Feest 612). Germans have been writing about the natives of the Americas ever since the time of Hans Staden, the German soldier taken captive at the time of France Antartique, whose story formed the basis for the plot of *How Tasty was my Frenchman*. Thanks to their advanced post-Gutenberg publishing networks, the Germans began publishing books on the Brazilian Indian already in the first decades after Columbus, and have never stopped doing so. More typically, however, the German fascination was with the Indians of North America, and especially with the Plains Indians. Many Germans have seen the Indian as a benevolent doppelgänger. Frantz Kafka, for example, famously wrote a one-sentence story on the "Wish to be a Red Indian" (908), published in 1913. The flirtation with the Indian as secret sharer of the German soul reached a paroxysm with the Indianophile novels of Karl May (1842-1912), whose more than 30 novels recounted the adventures of Old Shatterhand and his Apache blood brother chief Winnetou the Warrior. May's Apache hero came to incarnate the German reader's desire to re-enchant the world through a vicarious "Native" experience. Translated into over thirty languages, the May novels have sold hundreds of millions of copies

worldwide. May's sources included the novels of writers like James Fenimore Coper, encyclopedias, and books on Apache culture. Indeed, May based some of Winnetou's traits on the Apache chief Cochise.

May's "Western novels" chronicled the adventures of two paired *Ubermenschen* – Old Shatterhand, the white Teutonic hero, and Winnetou the red Apache chief. Scholars like Frank Usbeck, Susanne Zantop, Colin Calloway, Hartmut Lutz, H. Glenn Penny, Christian Feest and others have stressed the historically layered complexities of this form of cross-cultural identification. Rather than revisit issues already thoroughly examined by these scholars, I would like to place figures like Shatterhand within a broader spectrum of representations. To schematize shamelessly, Anglo-American and German treatments of the Indian tend toward the homosocial and even the homo-erotic, centered around blood-bonding between indigenous and western men.

The Karl May novels, in this sense, offer latter-day iterations of a theme introduced by Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, with its romanticized relationship between Crusoe and Friday, who himself could be seen as a model for Rousseau's "noble savage." We find a similar kind of non-explicit homo-social desire in the relation between Shatterhand and Winnetou. Here is May's presentation of their first encounter:

> His hair was so long and heavy that it cascaded down his back. Certainly many a woman would have envied him this magnificent bluish-black adornment. ... We scrutinized each other with long, searching glances, and then, I believe, I noticed that that his solemn dark gaze with its velvety sheen was briefly illuminated by a friendly light, as if the sun were sending a message to earth through an opening in the clouds (Zantof 1).

And later: "I admired his courage and strength. His face seemed sincere. I thought I could love him" (Zantof 1). Such barely sublimated homo-eroticism fits well into the atmosphere of homo-social institutions like the army, which perhaps also explains Hitler's fascination with Karl May's heroes. The ambiguous cultural fascination with the Indian, in sum, is not exempt from the mysterious workings of Eros (see Bird).

The Indian Hobbyists

Karl May is cited as part of a Nazi parlor game in Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds* (2009), a reference that reminds us of the intriguing case of the "Indian hobbyist clubs" dotting the German landscape, where Germans reenact their conception of an "Indian life style" in teepees on weekends. The "Indian clubs" trace their genesis to the cultural frisson engendered by Karl May's novels as well as by carnivals, Wild West shows, and Hollywood films. The movement excites hundreds of thousands of adherents, continuing today in the form of festivals, museums, pow-wows, plays, rodeos, sweat lodges, and clubs. In this context, Germans can become pretend Indians by impersonating Lakota, Blackfeet, or Pawneee.

In political terms, the shape-shifting German Indian could be enlisted in virtually any cause, nationalist or anti-nationalist, Communist or anti-Communist, pro-American or anti-American. May's novels triggered the affection of an ideologically varied group that included Albert Schweitzer, Herman Hesse, Ernst Bloch, and Adolph Hitler. Sometimes the love for the Indian was accompanied by scorn for other ethnic groups, as when Hans Rudolf Rieder asserted that only the Indian, unlike the Black, had the requisite qualities to merit German friendship (see Feest 459). In the postwar period, the communist East and the capitalist West Germany film industries fabricated distinct images of the Indian. The East German Indian films bypassed the Karl May novels, seen by the Communist regime as symptomatic of a reactionary blood-and-soil romanticism. Films such as *Die Sohne der Grossen Barin* (1966), meanwhile, fused the "Red" of Communism with the "Red" of Native American by having the Indians outwit greedy white settlers.[1] While films from both East and West Germany heroicized the Indians and demonized the Whites, they did so from distinct national/ideological perspectives.[2]

This felt affinity between Germany and their imaginary Indians was a discursive palimpsest combining numerous elements: a common tribal feeling of a nation that became a nation-state relatively late, in 1871; a shared heritage of folklore and legend; the transcendental mystique of Nature; the German love of hiking and the outdoors; the desire of the

1. Information drawn from the VTape publication about the Conference/Festival.

2. In *Playing Indian*, Philip J. Deloria stipulates two types of Hobbyism: "people Hobbyism" and "item Hobbyism." Indian item hobbyism goes back to Montaigne who collected Tupinamba memorabilia, Some "item hobbyists" in other countries occupy the upper strata of the cultural and political sphere; French president Jacques Chirac, for example, was the proud collector of "primitive" indigenous artifacts (see Price).

disillusioned western citizen to revel in a bucolic pre-modern past; the appeal of masculinist notions of military courage; homo-erotic attraction to handsome "Indian men" in films played by handsome white men; a sense of inferiority stemming from military defeat; and a feeling of victimization by other Europeans and therefore identification with putative fellow victims. At the same time, Indian enthusiasm betrays a longing to be a colonizer like the other Europeans, the desire, as Hartmut Lutz put it, to be "both superior tribespeople and superior colonizers" (167). Finally, the narcissistic pleasure and *schadenfreude* of a genocide committed by another country; the idea of a colonizer loved by the colonized; "Indianthusiasm" suggested that Germans would be better and more kinder imperialists than the "Anglo-Saxons," because they genuinely cared about and identified with native culture. (An irony here is that the Angles and the Saxons were originally German tribes).

The documentary *Forget Winnetou! Loving in the Wrong Way* (2017) directed by Red Haircrow, meanwhile, offers Native perspectives on cultural appropriation. The film argues that a philo-indigenist "Wrong-Way Loving" has reinforced the attitude that Europeans and neo-Europeans can unilaterally appropriate whatever and whoever they want for their own solipsistic self-gratification. In the U.S. context, the Elders councils of the many Indigenous groups like the Cheyenne, Hopi, Lakota have denounced New Age misappropriation of their immaterial legacies, rejecting "the expropriation of [their] ceremonial ways by non-Indians" (see Ward 276). Many see the New Age movement as either not fully understanding, or trivializing, or deliberately distorting indigenous ways of life. A parallel critique is addressed to those individuals from within the Indigenous communities who become "white man's shaman," or "plastic shamans," and they who "are prostituting our spiritual ways for their own selfish gain, with no regard for the spiritual well-being of the people as a whole" (see Ward 276).

Although "Winnetou" is a Haudenosonae word for "spirit," May's Winettou is an Apache, as are the characters in the DEFA (Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft) production *Apachen* by Gottfriend Kolditz in 1973. Apaches are featured not only in German films, and in Hollywood films like the 1950 *Broken Arrow*, but they also appear in some surprising places. In the wake of the American film *Fort Apache the Bronx* (1981), Franco-Maghrebian director Nassim Amaouche, in his film *Des Apaches* (The Apaches, 2009) analogizes the Native American group to the racialized and discriminated immigrant inhabitants of the Parisian *banlieue*, neighborhoods roughly equivalent to the U.S. "projects." Significantly, the banlieue rebels and their radical allies in France gave their movement a boomeranged indigenous name "*les Indigenes* de la Republique," thus reverse-engineering the colonialist *code indigene*. Meanwhile, in Brazil, black *Afro-bloco* carnival groups in Salvador, Bahia call themselves "Apaches" and "Comanches," in homage both to the "braves" of Hollywood and the *bravos guerreiros* of Brazil, as well as to the feathered, peace-pipe smoking *caboclos* of the Afro-Brazilian religion *Umbanda*. A difference from other kinds of appropriation here is that black Brazilians are often part indigenous themselves, just as many indigenous people in Brazil, conversely, are partially black, as becomes obvious in the physiognomies of the activists seen in the videos by the present-day Tupinamba.

Conversely, Germans have become characters in Native American novels by writers like Louise Erdrich (herself of German-Indian descent), Emma Lee Warrior, and Tomson Highway. A hallmark of some APTN (Aboriginal Peoples Television Network) productions in Canada, meanwhile, is irreverent humor. An APTN "Threes Company" becomes "Crees Company." Drew Hayden Taylor, as half Ojibwe and half Caucasian, calls himself "Special Occasion." One episode of "Mixed Blessings" lampoons German Indianphiles. A Cree waitress and her Ukranian husband, in a gesture of hospitality, invite a German-accented Indianist to dinner, where he berates his hosts for not having teepees and sweat lodges and not cooking caribou in the culturally correct manner. As the meal becomes a competition in authenticity as imagined by a German wannabee, he finally explodes in disgust: "In Germany, we have names for people like you. We call you 'Coca Cola Indians.'" Locking them into an allochronic prison of his own making, he declares: "You have been corrupted by the 20th and the 21st century. I think, no, I actually know, I am more Indian than all of you!" After he leaves, the whole family reacts to his pretensions with uproarious laughter.[3]

The White Indian meets Indigenous Media

The title of Tiago Torres-Campos' documentary *O Mestre e o Divino* (*The Master and the Divine*, 2013) refers to the two characters whose relationship structures the film – the "Master," an eccentric German-speaking Silesian monk named Adalbert Heide, who has been

3. For more on Karl May and the Hobbyists, see Jace Weaver's *The Red Atlantic* and Philip J. Deloria's *Playing Indian*.

filming the Xavante for decades, and "Divine," a Xavante named "Divino," a former altar-boy with Father Heide, and now a well-known filmmaker. Multiply reflexive, *The Master and the Divine* is not only a film about filmmaking but also a film about the fraught yet friendly dialogue between three filmmakers – Torres-Campos, Divino, and Heide – representing distinct backgrounds and cultures. On one level, the film is a "process film" (Claudia Mesquita) in that much of the film involves negotiations between Torres-Campos, the actual director, together with Divino, consultant and director of some of the clips included in the film; and Adalberto, a prolific maker of films about the Xavante, some of which are included in the film. Reflexive on every level, the film discusses such issues as pre-production, research, negotiations, archival materials, aesthetic choices and so forth. After arriving in Mato Grosso in 1957, Heide spent 60 years filming the daily life of the Xavante, edited into short films where he portrays himself as a modernizing and Christianizing force. The key motive for making the new film was the discovery by Divino and Torres-Campos that Adalberto's numerous films about the Xavante were housed in a Silesian archive in Germany. Just as Divino and Torres-Campos needed access to Adalberto's films which Torres-Campos was willing to bring back to Brazil, Adalberto had needs of his own– 1) that Torres-Campos make digital copies of the films, and 2) that Torres-Campos includes a ten-minute sequence showing Heide hunting with the Xavantes.

The German master is a colonizer who Christianizes the natives and corrects their "pagan" beliefs and unproductive ways. Yet he is not your ordinary colonizer. He is fluent in Xavante, knows Xavante culture, defends some Xavante customs, and is on some levels accepted by them. The name gifted to him by the Xavante (*tsa amri*), means the "white man who became an Indian." Heide is, in short, the *colonisateur sympathique* who adores Indigenous culture, but only in its ideal "primitive" and proselytizable *tabula rasa* form. At the same time, Divino respects Heide as a person and one-time mentor. The relationship is one of affectionate kidding, tinged with colonial resentment and subtle competition. The film also shows a wrestling over access to the archive, one that resonates with indigenous struggles to repatriate sacred objects and even the images made about them. Adalberto's entitled assumption of full rights to his images of the Xavante, as Kathryn Lehman points out, forms part of a colonial "eminent domain" logic that traces back, ultimately, to Conquest and Discovery Doctrine (33).

Commenting on Heide's films, director Torres-Campos notes that Heide "constructs himself as a hero." Heide sees himself as a mini-God, the self-described *factotum* (etymologically, he who "does everything") who schools the Xavante in the love of God and Labor. In his own mind, he embodies a pantheon of western culture heroes – at once Prometheus and Prospero, pastor, pedagogue, and boss. Presented on a German TV program as a white adventurer in the tropics, Heide is a self-declared "white Indian," a European who has "gone native" to the point of sporting war paint and a Xavante head-dress. Heide's relation to the Xavante is strangely ambivalent; he loves them, but mainly as they were in the past. He is disappointed that present-day Xavante have not maintained their customs in a way he would have liked. At the same time, he senses a power shift. As the Xavante are taking over the institutions, he no longer wields the same charismatic power as before.

The dialogue between the Master and Divino stages a battle of two (or more) cultures and two (or more) aesthetics. But rather than a Manichean struggle, the battle reveals a number of paradoxes and ambivalences. Ironically, it is the filmmaker-priest who cultivates a "positive" image of the Xavante – one steeped in primitivist narratives and iconography – while Divino has no qualms about showing negative Xavante behavior such as drunkenness and tribal dissension. While Heide sweetens everything in an epic-romantic style, Divino prefers a self-reflexive critical realism which foregrounds the tensions not only between the Xavante and the whites, but also among the Xavante themselves. While the priest prefers pastoral shots of traditionally attired Indians rowing canoes on pristine creeks, underscored by Andean flutes, the supposedly nature-loving Indian prefers talking heads, especially those of elders like his father who can provide vital information about Xavante history.

In a kind of phantasmatic Indigeneity, the older European filmmaker imagines himself as "protecting" the image of the Xavante, and seems threatened by the indigenous upstart who might end his imagistic and cognitive monopoly. When Heide needles Divino for having forgotten traditional skills such as head-dress making, Divino responds that although he has personally forgotten how to make them, any Xavante can learn how to make them by seeing his films. More high-tech than the "Master," Divino mocks Heide for his slow computer and lack of Final-Cut-Pro. The "Indians" are answering back, giving as good as they get, as they probably always have, even if that backtalk did not usually make its way into the official histories. Divino's father too has a slightly aggressive kidding relationship with Heide, reminding him of the co-construction

of knowledge, saying of the priest that "I taught him everything he knows. I taught him how to speak Xavante." If Divino's desire to make a different kind of film represents an Oedipal break with the colonial father (*padre*), the same Oedipalism does not operate in relation to his own father, to whom Divino pays warm homage. The film does not pit an essential colonizer against an essential colonized, but rather shows a constant process of redefinition and renegotiation of roles. Divino is at ease with indeterminacy, and never decides whether the Christian God exists, nor chooses between Christianity and indigenous spiritism, thus illustrating what the early missionaries lamented as the "inconstancy of the savage soul." At the same time, he disputes Heide's idea that the Xavante worship a Sun God, explaining that the Sun was not a god but rather an embodiment of energy.

Not only does the figure of Heide as a "White Indian" go far back into cultural history, so too does the Divino-Heide relationship. Overdetermined by a complex web of images and tropes, their relationship reincarnates the German Shatterhand's alliance with Winnetou in the Karl May novels (and their film adaptations). At one point Heide even jokingly calls Divino "Winnetou," just as the German film about Heide features the "Winnetou theme" harmonica music from the Karl May films. Their friendship recalls those already discussed cross-race homosocial "bromances" between European and indigenous men that have marked literary and filmic history: Crusoe and Friday in *Robinson Crusoe*, Ishmael and Queequeeg in *Moby Dick*, the Lone Ranger and Tonto in the TV Western. The Winnetou character (a white actor in redface), is decidedly the "good" Indian ready to die for the whites. Indeed, in the Karl May film that Heide projects for the Xavante, the Winnettoo character actually does sacrifice his life for his German blood brother.

The "White Indian" and even the "Blonde Pop Star Indian" have formed part of Brazilian mass-mediated culture. On Brazilian television, even Indians get to "play Indian," as we see in a climactic sequence that shows Divino appearing on Globo TV as a child responding to the siren call of blonde TV star Xuxa – attired in a Sioux warrior headdress – singing, as if in homage to Philip J. Deloria, "Vamos brincar de Indio" (Let's Play Indian). To the accompaniment of putative "Indian war cries," Xuxa leads the children in a happy song featuring fake Indian-speak lyrics:

> Let's play Indian, but without anyone to capture me!
> Come, join my tribe? I'm chief and you're my partner.
> Indian make noise. Indian have pride.
> Come paint your skin so the dance can begin…

In a stagey show of *mauvaise foi*, Xuxa plays the putative "White Indian" defender of Indian rights, like Heide but with even less reason to make the claim. In Hollywood-style Injun-speak, she sings "Indian need land." Ironically, she is better at playing Indians on TV than the Indians themselves; she has to teach them to become themselves. As Xuxa drags the frightened-looking Xavante boys into her photogenic circle of fun, they look stiff and reluctant. With their body paint, they become Hollywood-style "spearchuckers" in a film where she plays the starring role and they play the "extras." The sexualized icon of eternally young white beauty tries to teach them to be good little Indians, but they are not really good at "becoming Indian," and in a kind of sullen opacity, refuse to perform her caricatural image of themselves.[4] At this point in the film, the non-indigenous co-director's voice over informs us that as a child he probably saw that Xuxa show, and that he probably sang along with "Let's Play Indian," blithely unaware of its racist implications, yet now he is a collaborator/ally/friend of Divino, an indigenized Euro-Brazilian culturally transformed by the knowledge of people like Divino.

Transformational Becomings

The "White Indian" trope is haunted by Deleuze and Guatarri's fecund yet problematic concept of "becoming Indian," developed in *What is Philosophy*, that "the philosopher must become Indian." In the tenth plateau of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari reach new heights as the theorists of a multitude of "becomings" – "becoming intense," "becoming animal," "becoming woman," "becoming minor," "becoming Indian," and so forth. As we shall see later, the problem in the Deleuze/Guattari formulations is not the foregrounding of becoming, but rather the insufficient recognition of the *rapports de force* which structure the "becomings." At the same time, Deleuzian thought was influenced by the anthropological corpus concerning Amazonian peoples. Thus Deleuzian concepts are strangely appropriate to Amazonian Indigenous culture, and especially in its love of transformations of all kinds.

4. For an excellent analysis of the Xuxa show, and of the role of the Indian within the Brazilian imaginary generally, see Tracy Devine Guzman's *Native and National in Brazil: Indigeneity after Independence*.

Davi Kopenawa's *The Falling Sky*, for example, is replete with transformative tropes, and expressions like "I became other," or "she became a jaguar." The goal of Kuikuro aesthetics, for Carlos Fausto, "is to depict extraordinary beings: humans who become jaguars, rhythm batons that become spirits, artifacts that speak, words that cure and so on," (15) all serving as exempla of extra-ordinariness as "manifested in the multiplication of identities in continuous transformation" (167). The "generative impulse," for Fausto, "is to imagine the transformational flux characteristic of other-than-human beings" (21).

Trans-species concepts are not at all alien to Native thinkers in North America. In the context of Indigenous erotica, Melissa K. Nelson (Anishinaabe, Cree, Metis [Turtle Mountain Chippewa]) speaks of the propensity of native women to "fall in love with other-than-human beings" ("Getting Dirty" 237) – one is reminded of the lovable sea-monster in del Toro's *The Shape of Water* – and points out that "interspecies and trans-species sex are common occurrences in Native Oral literature" (239). At the same time, it would be a disservice to center this project on Deleuze and Guattari, as the concept of "becoming Indian," while rich in suggestion, is also fraught.

In a broader historical context, the most massively dramatic case of "becoming-other" came in the wake of the "long 1492," as millions of Indigenous people, Africans, Europeans, and Asians in the Americas were variously dispossessed, othered, advantaged, oppressed, and generally transformed by asymmetrical contact with people from elsewhere. These power-laden encounters left manifold traces in cultural life, generating a wide range of terms for the mixing that resulted in diverse etymological, historical, and disciplinary genealogies, whether religious (syncretism), biological (miscegenation), botanical (hybridity), linguistic (creolization), cultural (indigenization), political-cultural (assimilation, transculturation) and even culinary-musical (fusion). Each form of asymmetrical difference offers diverse, intersectional modalities, crudely summarized as top-down, bottom-up, lateral, and the like. These protean "becomings" form part of the afterlives of Conquest, resulting in the millions of natives who "became Indians" because of Columbus' mistaken assignation; the French *truchements* who become Tupinized in Brazil, or Ojibwe-ized in Canada; Indigenous people becoming Christian through forced conversion or coercive indoctrination; kidnapped Europeans adopted by Indians and taking on Indigenous ways; Boston Tea Party rebels masquerading as Mohawks; Hollywood actors donning redface; characters in films like *Dances with Wolves* "becoming Indians" through reverse assimilation; the shapeshifting Brazilian Macunaima ("hero of his people") becoming Indian and Black and White; Woody Allen's Zelig, Black, Indian, and Jewish and thus a "triple threat" to the KKK; French popular singers assuming an Indian identity ("Je suis l'Indien'); Afro-Brazilians in trance possessed by an indigenous "*caboclo*" as part of *candomblé*; black "Apaches" and "Commanches" in Bahia's carnival; the Black Mardi Gras Indians in New Orleans, celebrating their historical alliance with the Seminole.

On rare occasions, Indigenous people have invited their proven allies to become honorary Indians as when radical lawyer William Kunstler, defender of Leonard Peltier and the AIM activists at Wounded Knee, was posthumously drummed into the Lakota tribe as an honorary member.[5] Finally, there are the cases of Indians themselves "becoming Indians," whether in Massachusetts or the Amazon, by coming out officially as self-identified Indians, or as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson puts it: "endlessly creating our indigenous selves" (83). Indeed, Indigenous activists speak about "re-nativization," and the "re-indigenization" of the peoples of the planet (see Nelson *Original Instructions*). Davi Kopenawa's *The Falling Sky*, finally, offers a festival of polymorphous becomings: shamans becoming jaguars, jaguars becoming crocodiles; human beings becoming other under the influence of sacred plants like ayahuasca or yãkoana; Indigenous shamans whose ancestors were humans who became animals and never stopped transforming themselves in a kind of Heraclitan stream, wherein no one can step into the same identity twice.

Individual and collective self-shaping are arguably at the very kernel of world history generally, but especially of the history of the Americas with its relatively recent mix of indigenous peoples and shape-shifting Europeans, Africans, and Asians. After 1492, Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas were obliged to "become White" and "become Christian" and "become slaves" and "become workers." On the other side, some Europeans "went native," married native women, learned Indigenous languages, and partially adopted Indigenous ways. This nativizing trend was often condemned by officials, leading to laws forbidding "Indianizing." As a result of this jagged history, very diverse people, as performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña puts it, fantasize "about

5. William Kunstler's memorial took place at The Cathedral of St. John the Divine on Nov 20, 1995.

wanting to escape their own race and ethnicity... whites wanting to be Black or Latino, Latinos wanting to be blonde or Spanish, blacks wanting to be white, everyone wanting to be Native American. The desire to become Indian is a quintessential American desire... as much as they hate "real" Indians, they'd love to become Indian warriors or shamans" (43).

The becoming-other formulations are appealing because they seem to move away from a paternalistic tolerance toward a warm embrace of the other, to the point of partially becoming the other. The utopian dream is to be whoever one wants to be, as occurs with a carnival *fantasia* or Halloween costume. At the same time, the concept has more than a whiff of the unilateral chameleonism of the privileged, where entitled white, male, straight, middle-class, western individuals play with identity in a way unavailable to their historically otherized counterparts. The question could be summed up as: when does Deleuze's "becoming Indian" turn into Deloria's "playing Indian?" The question is also the reverse side of the coin: what about all the Indians virtually forced to "become white," "become Christian," and "become English speakers?" "Become Americans," or "become Brazilian?" Within the quiet normativities of domination, the empowered enjoy the privilege of "occupying" and "settling into" subaltern identities. The dominant pole is silent but present; the empowered masquerade as the disempowered: whites become Indians, and so forth, in a one-way process that risks reproducing historical hierarchies and the *faits accomplis* of colonial domination. Historically, it is Indigenous people and people of color who had to whiten themselves to become worthy subjects, women who were prodded to internalize the male gaze, and LBGTQ+ people who had to cower in the closet and conform to a threatening hetero-normativity. Hybrid and syncretic becomings, as Deleuze was doubtless aware, are power-laden. Racially-advantaged global elites can easily traverse borders without suffering the usual real-world consequences.

It is no surprise, then, that some feminists have criticized the notion of "becoming woman," while some native and non-native scholars have questioned the notion of "becoming Indian." In her reading of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Sara Ahmed, in the persona of a self-declared "skeptical feminist," interrogates the Deleuze-Guattari text. For her, the "fascination with woman as radically other to masculinity/femininity," and all the dualisms that this carries with it, can be seen as implicated in a long history of fascination with women as a figure of alterity within Western Philosophy, becoming "a phantasy of the very necessity and impossibility of philosophy itself through figuring of its other" (55). She compares the philosophers' "becoming Indian" to the "becoming Indian" of Dunbar in *Dances with Wolves*, noting the double process by which Dunbar distances himself from his own society and unlearns anti-Indian stereotypes and the colonialist perspective. Dunbar's "becoming Indian," she notes, is closely related to his "becoming animal" as manifested in his performative renaming as "dances with wolves." But as the blurb on the video proclaims, in the end he "found himself," and his "discoveries" – he is a Columbus to himself – "allow the reassertion of the agency of the dominant subject" (60).

Analysts like Amy Herzog, meanwhile, remind us that Deleuze/Guattari's purpose is to dismantle binary notions of gender, race, and so forth. For Deleuze, identity is always in a state of flux, always in motion, with a collective dimension of not simply representing pre-existing groups but rather of shaping new subjectivities, solidarities, intensities, affiliations, and identifications. For Deleuze, it is not a question of representation of a pre-constituted group but rather a dynamic process of what Ranciere would call political subjectification. Indigenous media, in this sense, could be seen as a mediatic movement for political subjectification. For Deleuze, "becoming" (*devenir*) is not an imitation or reproduction of a pre-existing group but rather an exit, a line of flight from the dominant, not an arrival but a "movement toward." (An ambiguity in the hyphen in *devenir-minoritaire* creates doubts as to whether it should be translated as "becoming-minoritarian" or "minoritarian becoming;" the first implying one-way role-playing from above while the latter suggests a collective dynamism from below). At the same time, a radical thinker like Deleuze cannot be reduced to a conservative. In a wonderfully evocative phrase, Deleuze speaks (in his *ABCdaire*) of the "assemblage of all the minoritarian becomings," a phrase that intimates a rhizomatically multiple alliance of social becomings in an emancipatory direction. In this sense, one might speak of catalyzing new constituencies and intensities of affiliation and solidarity, reminiscent of Simpson's "constellations of co-resistance" (211).

The idea of "becoming Indian" has been received with a certain reticence by some Indigenous intellectuals. In contemporary academic life Indigenous intellectuals dialogue with, but also talk back to, non-Indigenous intellectuals and even the consecrated *maitres a penser*. Chickasaw scholar Jodi A. Byrd, in *The Transit of Empire* (2011), offers a rigorous, doubly "insider" critique of Deleuze-Guattari notions of "nomadism," "becoming Indian" and "Indians without

ancestry." Inhabiting while questioning Deleuzian language, Byrd argues that within poststructuralist theories "the Indian functions as a dense presence that cannot be disrupted by deconstruction or Deleuzian lines of flight, because the Indian is the ontological prior through which deconstruction functions" (35). The Deleuzian version of a rhizomatic American as a site of constant transformation is not so different, for Byrd, from that posited by Frederick Jackson Turner. "As a philosophical sign," she writes:

> ...the Indian is the transit, the field through which pre-signifying polyvocality is re/introduced into the signifying regime, and signs begin to proliferate through a series of becomings—becoming-animal, becoming-woman, becoming-Indian, becoming-multiplicity – that serves all regimes of signs. And the Indian is a ghost in the system, an errant or virus that disrupts the virtual flows by stopping them, redirecting them, or revealing them to be what they are and will have been all along: colonialist (9).

While Byrd acknowledges the generally progressive drift of the Deleuze/ Guattari concepts, she finds them compromised by the legacy of colonial *realpolitik*. It is as if some "post"-theorists, however progressive and even radical in other respects, have baked colonial power arrangements into the historical and discursive cake, evading the foundational question of indigenous dispossession as profoundly shaping capitalism, modernity, postmodernity, and post-theory.

And what is the desire that speaks in such becomings? Many Indigenous people reluctantly become "white but not quite" as a melancholy necessity and acknowledgement of real power situations. Many Indigenous writers, from Paul Chatt Smith to Davi Kopenawa, insist that they have no desire to become white, although they have no objections to using "white" technologies or theories at their own discretion. And Ailton Krenak, at a conference on Indigenous cosmologies in Brazil when someone used the phrase "becoming Indian," sarcastically pointed out: "OK, I get it. All you whites become Indians. That means, 'Voila: no more Indians.' If everyone is an Indian, no one is an Indian!"[6]

6. Krenak made the remark on a panel on "Indigenous Cosmologies," held June 10-14, 2020, at The International Literary Festival in Parati (FLIP).

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Kwasu Tenbo

Bodies of Water:
Stream-Psych in the Contemporary Digital

I. Introduction - On the Index/Indexicality:

The goal of this article is to theorize what I shall refer to as the Stream in its relation to streaming digital media platform technologies. In particular, it is interested in speculating on said platforms' psycho-emotional affectivity in consumers. By 'Stream', I am referring to the confluence of various tributaries of data in digital late capitalism. These include production, dissemination, storage, access, and consumption. By way of extension and continuity, I consider the contemporary digital Stream as a reach – as in reach-of-a-stream in geographic parlance – of previous manifestations of the Stream in human history: the great Ptolemaic/Alexandrine bibliotechnical ages, or the emergence of the then new Informational Commons precipitated by the invention of the printing press, for example. In digital late capital, the Stream has become a fluid and ubiquitous determinant of user-viewers' understanding of past(s), present(s), and possible future(s). Conveyors of the contemporary Informational Commons like digital media streaming platforms are robust tributaries of a more general digital Stream. Using Netflix as a Ur-example of one of the most powerful current digital media streaming platforms, this article will develop a sketch of the indexical tension between the psycho-emotional costs of data production, storage, and consumption inextricable from contemporary streaming and digital life sublimated within the spectacle of the Stream itself.

There will be numerous moments where this paper plays with language in order to provoke paradox and aporia, loops and specularity, refractions and ricochets. This is an intentional design feature of the author's. The goal of this latently ludic approach is keenly focused on teasing out various relations and obfuscations between/of the psycho-emotional affects of the viewer and contemporary creative digital archives and platforms that (re)induce them, of which they are (a)part.

To do so, this paper will explore the contemporary user of digital streaming platforms like Netflix and their experiences of such phenomena as a paradoxical sense of hyperconnected isolation and the various permutations of the pressure of FOMO. It also provides a theoretical excursus on the relation between contemporary digital streaming platforms and older theoretical exegeses of mass culture while also engaging with and gesturing to the psycho-emotional consequences of contemporary digital streaming platforms. In so doing, it consciously utilizes poetic language to render an everyday concept – streaming – as strange and unfamiliar, forcing the reader-viewer to confront their assumptions about their own media habits. It is the author's hope that the essay's efficacy will inhere as a study of language as much as a speculative theorization of streaming. In the latter way, this piece is about the indexical relationship between what we watch, how we watch what we watch, who we think we are as a result of what we watch, and how this relates to the contemporary digital media platforms from which what we watch emerges. It selects the Stream as one such index – or even 'meta-' or 'mega-index' – and explores what it points at/to, what it turns toward/away from in terms of various related concepts concerned with technology and psycho-emotionality. Let me now briefly provide basic definitions of processor terms - these are sedulous terms - I deploy in this piece, and how I understand them:

The Stream:

The technosocial media assemblage comprising of visual culture; Hyperreality; The Spectacle of visual and popular culture; The telecommunications Stack comprised of indexical links, associations, and co-operations in a platform-network-consumer-user

complex; The Stream is a manifold of various sociopolitical, economic, cultural *and* ecological points, apparatuses, and resources that form a highly rhizometric, mercurial, and inter-indexical Stack within/upon which the topology of life in contemporary late digital capital flows; Despite the transformations of its constituent elements, the existence of the Stream in some form is invariant.

Dreams:

Both serialized and non-serialized audio-visual content provided by the Stream and its platform-network-consumer-user complex. These can (re)manifest through the headless operations of the virtual/pseudo/emulated terminal and insecure shell of the imagination.

Swimming:

The psycho-emotional and material processes and operations of engaging with, that is consuming, the dream-content of The Stream.

Swimmers:

I use the terms "Stream-swimmer", "user-viewer", and "viewer-consumer" interchangeably to refer to individuals, users, and/or viewers who consume digital media via contemporary streaming platforms.

II. Theorizing the Stream: The Saddestfactory - the Culture Industry and The Stream as Mass Deception

One would think that the current sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and ecological situation on Earth – the rise of fascism and populism, the consecutive economic collapses in global markets since 2008, global health crises in the form of viral pandemics, and both the fiery and rimy manifestation of climate change – would have given rise to 'cultural chaos', as Adorno and Horkheimer put it in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[1] Even in the 1940s, Adorno and Horkheimer were right to say that such a conclusion was then and is now consistently refuted by daily experience. In our time, the soporific effect, the psycho-emotionally ameliorative operation, aptitude, and indeed use of the Stream functions indexically as a psycho-emotional analgesic. Mass media culture is a pharmakon from which most of the Streaming-World/World-Stream seeks succor in some form. In this way, it is also both the productive-archive and index of global cultural sameness. Adorno and Horkheimer give a succinct definition of the type of cultural sameness I'm gesturing to: "Culture today is infecting everything with sameness. Film, radio and magazines form a system. Each branch of culture is unanimous within itself and all are unanimous together" (94).

This could be an expedient logline for the Stream. Its tributaries, especially those which function through and by the image, therefore global visual and popular culture, most notably the streaming platform Netflix and its rivals, operate by engendering a type of thematic and experiential hegemony. We Stream in the same way for the same reasons: to learn, to know, to participate, to escape. Be it Hulu or HBO Max, Netflix or iFlix, the seeming 'variety' of streaming platforms "crystallize into homogenous, well-organized complexes", complexes whose experience and operation attest to the palindromic "conspicuous unity of macrocosm and microcosm [which] confronts human beings with a model of their culture: the false identity of universal and particular" (Adorno and Horkheimer 95).

The Stream is able to reproduce spectacular, imagistic, and hyperreal facsimiles of reality that can even go *beyond* reality in a way that entices viewer-consumers to incline toward the ostensibly controlled derealization of the screen over the uncertain decline of developments in reality beyond its virtual plane. Only think of the launch of Google Glass in 2014 and the advance in haptic technologies and wearables that precipitate a more immediate interaction between levels and modes of metamateriality/metareality in increasingly 'polyreal' environs like the Zuckerbergian Metaverse. Such phenomena obviously gesture to more than the immersive film-viewing experience, but also to contemporary technologies like 3D and VR. Sink or swim, we have technoculturally arrived as a point where in reality, virtual and augmented alike, going beyond reality increasingly means, amongst other things, experiencing a Baudrillardian precession of the simulacra of reality that we perceive as of higher fidelity to reality than our unmediated experience thereof. "Thus",

1. There are several studies and investigations into the ecological impact of maintaining the flow of data in late digital global capitalism I need to at least make mention of here. Examples include, but are not limited to: Hayley Richardson's "How Your Netflix Binge is Killing the Planet," Mailonline, March 05, 2020, https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-8079175/amp/How-binging-Netflix-killing-planet-new-documentary-reveals.htmnl; BBC's Reality Check Team's in depth article "Climate Change: Is Your Netflix Habit Bad for the Environment?," BBC, October 12, 2018, https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.com/news/amp/technology-45798523; Jeannette Cwienk's "Is Netflix Bad for the Environment? How Streaming Video Contributes to Climate Change", Deutsche Welle, July 11, 2019; and Sarah Griffiths' "Why Your Internet Habits Are Not As Clean As You Think", BBC, March 06, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200305-why-your-internet-habits-are-not-as-clean-as-you-think

write Adorno and Horkheimer, "the omnipresent and impenetrable world of appearances is set up as the ideal. Ideology is split between the photographing of brute existence and the blatant lie about its meaning" (119).

But this reproduction is incomplete, and its incompletion is precisely in/by/through the intercising screen, ostensibly projecting a total reality, but cutting off the very *crises* of reality: "The more densely and completely its techniques duplicate empirical objects, the more easily it creates the illusion that the world outside is a seamless extension of the one which has been revealed in the cinema [...] thus it trains those exposed to it to identify film directly with reality" (Adorno and Horkheimer 100). In other words, the reflection of self in the Stream, on its surface, is fundamentally *narcissistic*: it is an index of drowning. The Stream tries to not so much determine reality, but to determine its significance in the psycho-emotional registers of the swimmer. Excluded here is a confession of complicity in the dire reality it obfuscates, for which it provides escape from.

The latently obfuscatory facets of the Stream are indexically inextricable from their relationship to entertainment: "Entertainment is the prolongation of work under late capitalism. It is sought by those who want to escape the mechanized labor process so that they can cope with it again" (Adorno and Horkheimer 109). Swimming, therefore, "indicates a release, whether from physical danger or from the grip of logic" (112). In this ironically captivating release, "the culture industry replaces pain, which is present in ecstasy no less than in asceticism, with jovial denial" (112). We may not only like, but in some ways *need*, to swim in the Stream. We relish it as a type of freedom. A freedom, a *luxury*, to drown and disappear. To ripple Keats, I could say that the point of diving into the Stream is not immediately to swim to the shores of reality, but to be in the Stream, to luxuriate in the sensation of its pixel-water. Perhaps this is latently a nihilistic, self-capitulating desire to be ahead of the curve's end. To die, dreaming, in our sleep, as the house and bed catch fire around us. Acknowledging, memeifying, and obfuscating this phenomena is how the Stream "asserts itself more imperiously the more the perfected technology [of its platform] reduces the tension between culture product and everyday existence", the more it stems the flow of crisis into dream, the more it disrupts it own indexicality (101). In the same or similar way that the culture industry "bows to the vote it has itself rigged", the Stream seeks to escape/obfuscate/sublimate a complicity it actively engenders (106).

It also seeks to keep the Stream-swimmer firmly within the sway of its currents. As such, the Stream is bad swimming because it is hard to stay buoyant in those currents: "in face of the slick presentation no one may appear stupid even for a moment; everyone has to keep up, emulating the smartness displayed and propagated by the production. This makes it doubtful whether the culture industry even still fulfills its self-proclaimed function of distraction" (Adorno and Horkheimer 110). While Adorno and Horkheimer argue that "the bloated entertainment apparatus does not make life more worthy of human beings", it certainly does not ensure or safeguard in any meaningful way life's continuation (111). The dream does not foreclose reality. Even corpses float. The Stream, as a tributary of the culture industry, "endlessly cheats its consumers out of what it endlessly promises" (111). A promise that the water is safe, warm, and just the right depth. In reality, it is riddled with teratogens, approaching boiling, and fathomlessly dark. We see a thumbnail offering a documentary of the mysterious beauty of the sea. In that flitting facsimile, we do not see its surface throttled with postponing plastic. Exposure to this reality can be heartbreaking, disheartening in the extreme. It is in moments like these, of reality rupturing through, that the inundating abilities of the Stream take on a high luster for many Stream-swimmers. It is in moments like these that "entertainment fosters the resignation which seeks to forget itself in entertainment" (113). However, it is always-Also impossible for the Stream to wash away its own flow. It can never totally obfuscate its indexicality in that "entertainment makes itself possible only by insulating itself from the totality of the social process [...] Amusement always means putting things out of mind, forgetting suffering, even when it is on display. At its root is powerlessness. It is indeed escape, but not, as it claims, escape from bad reality but from the last thought of resisting that reality" (115-6). This sense of powerlessness can also be thought of as indexical in nature: the Stream is seemingly so well equipped to perform a double operation: to draw our attention toward crisis as a means of simultaneously obfuscating or containing it within itself.

III. Re-Theorizing the Psychology of the Stream: On Stream-Psych

To explore the various modalities between the

Stream and what I will call Stream-psych, this part will be broken into three sub-sections: i) ***Purity***, ii) ***Isolation***, and iii) ***Flow***. The indexical relationship between flow, purity, and isolation are inherently circuitous whereby each is a hyperstitiatory index of each.

i. Purity:

The contemporary Stream is seemingly governed by purer Stream-tides. The new methods of consuming serialized telecinema through digital providers including Netflix are no longer predicated on "basic market strategies of 'push and 'pull', representing new trends of television content [whereby] programme delivery is also shifting from 'over-the-air broadcast' where viewers have content 'pushed' to them; in favor of an expanding online environment where they 'pull' what they want to watch when they want to see it" (Gonzalez 6). The implication here is that online digital media, provided through streaming services, online subscriptions, and VOD services provide consumers vast databases and archives of varied genre media seemingly culled from numerous networks and times. In this sense, the ever updated Netflix catalog functions like Foucault's heterotopia of time, but specifically for telecinema, where cultural texts are archived, dislodged from the sequential temporal imperatives of over-the-air broadcast, allowing consumers to pull content from seemingly any genre and any period. We can watch as many, if not all, the episodes of a show, the oeuvre of a performer, and/or the corpus of an auteur, liberated, now, from the rigor of broadcast scheduling and the topological locatedness of the silver screen cathedral (see Hirsen). We fish content out of the Stream, no longer having to wait, like bears, at the lip of the falls for the fish to leap into our mouths. Here, the content-current is governed by uninterrupted control over the pace and volume of our media consumption. Ostensibly, whether viewed as latently glutenous or not, these alterations seemingly describe a *purified* media consciousness and consumptive experience (see Damratoski, Field, Mizell, & Budden; Schweidel & Moe).

However, this purity has a hard coded pyrite peculiarity. The Stream's presentiformance of contental infinite expanse may succeed because when immersed in a contemporary creative digital archive's platform, it can certainly *feel* like viewer-users can pull content from any genre and any period. However, this is an illusion. The reality of the situation is tantamount to a meme of itself. Streaming services are well known for their highly specific and limited, right-determined selection of older media. Despite this, the Stream *wants* us to think we can watch anything, while denying us access to most things. Despite its heretofore efficacy, what results is a false consciousness of scope and service, content and experience – all of which emerge in and through a far narrower remit than is advertised.

Here, purity necessarily indexes a user-centric, non-technological understanding of Stream-Psych. Inherent to the idea of a self-determined Stream-sluice is the idea of purification, that is private, isolated, uncut entertainment. Jason Jacobs discusses the concept of the 'polluted' text, which is "the idea that there is such a thing as a 'pure' text until it is interrupted or framed by advertising or other supposedly undesired programming. In other words, schedules serve as a means to dilute the 'pure' text." (257). In this sense, the correlation here is between isolation, purity, and flow. The more the content is isolated from undesirable programming/influences, the purer not only said content but its consumption becomes. The more isolated the content, the less impurities, the easier the flow.

However, the Stream cannot annul real life. "Digital television", argues Jacobs, "does not remove everyday life – [...] it seems attuned to a particularly privatized and individualized everyday – but its online, onscreen variations allow users to mitigate or entirely remove the unwanted or surplus marks of the traditional schedule" (259). Whether controlled or mitigated, the perception and experience of everyday reality as 'impure' persists and will always-Also interrupt, intrude, encroach, and dilute the individual media experience in the way indexical opposites do. The ideas of remove and purity subtending 'isolated' content are both illusions, specifically designed and sold in their appellant forms to user/viewers as such. There is no pure text mediated by and (re)produced under the aegis of profit. The Stream seemingly sells you a miracle of both uninterrupted access, but also uninterrupted control, as well as uninterrupted peace in one's enjoyment of one's media content. Isolation-flow-purity are therefore three indexical pillars of the manner in which the Stream is *sold*. No distractions from the outside world, the reality upon which the Stream relies, that reality being perceived as exterior to the soporific dream interiority of the Stream. That exterior reality is seen as impure, cluttered, inefficient, and diminished within the auspices of individual autonomy, the orbits of individual deordination, the remit of one's (re)watch/ability. The illusion being sold and promulgated here is one of an unending

dream into which one can slip and still be lucid enough to control. A somnambuviewer with revenant retinae only returned to the reality of the body by the seemingly banal question projected on the screen: "are you still watching?".

The illusion of viewer control is a powerful one, indeed. "Embedded in a neoliberal capitalist system",

> the self-scheduled nature of [streamed media content] suggests unprecedented levels of control. The control industry maintains, again, indicates the problematic relationship between power and control. If the addiction metaphor can indicate anything in this context, it is an exploitative relationship between those in charge of 'supply' (industry) and 'addicts' (viewers). It implies that viewers may not be fully aware of what they give up in exchange for control over TV. (Jenner 114)

While Jenner argues that this might be to over-interpret the terms in a paranoid fashion, I think contextualizing them or reading them as indexical terms brings into stark relief what they, as indices, point to, specifically in terms of Stream-Psych. This ultimately redounds to the illusion of control-in-escape, versus the reality of the pleasure of being bound to shallow tributaries of content you cannot control in the way you think you already do. In this sense, drowning is also bad swimming and one can drown even in an ever-shrinking puddle.

ii. Isolation:

While preoccupied with autonomy and control, much of the data concerning the development of Netflix point to a design model focused increasingly on distancing. Initially, streaming as an ancillary add-on to U.S Netflix was designed to allow Stream-swimmers instant access to content. Accordingly, this add-on intensified the principle of a monthly subscription fee which allowed Stream-swimmers to buy and consume as much content as they could or wanted to watch, at whatever pace suited them (see Jurgensen; Jenner 110). Latent here is a fundamentally triadic telos of a viewer-consumer experience marked by an isolated (that is self-determined) consumption of uninterrupted (that is flowing) pure (that is without impurities such as commercials) media (Jenner 110). In this sense, what the Netflix subscriber was projected to purchase was not only a subscription, but *distance* from material conditions of one's entertainment, even if only in the seemingly banal form of not having to wait on broadcast sources and their scheduling, or having to deal with other people, store clerks, or other users at all: isolation = autonomy.

The extreme implication of Stream-isolation is that the Stream offers hedonic inundation as a salve-distraction from the various floods of reality. However, the indexical *opposite* is also true: Stream-swimming motivations also index a pronounced desire for *interaction*, *dissemination*, and *sharing*. Here, Stream-Psych has a paradoxical relationship with isolation. It would seem that much of the experience of so-called pure, uninterrupted media consumption indexes a necessarily *isolated personal experience*. However, the Stream provides new and intensified opportunities for fandom predicated on the paradoxical communal isolation of an 'alone-together' ethos (see Derrick, Gabriel, & Hugenberg). On the one hand, Raj Devasagayam notes how Stream-isolation educes the development of one-sided unconscious bonds between viewer-consumers and the characters and narratives they consume. This experience, like Narcissus falling in love with his warbled reflection on the stream surface, is considered one of the main factors influencing the various style-strokes of Stream-swimming. On the other hand, Yu-Kei Tse describes the experience of 'togetherness' as an important motivator for Stream-swimming, especially in teenage viewer-consumers: "by using online platforms, audience achieved a sense of togetherness in two ways: by connecting to others with the same interests in foreign programs and by re-associating with their home when they are abroad by consuming domestic programs" (1547).

In this way, for many viewer-consumers, particularly of younger demographics, Stream-swimming has far less to do with social exile than it does with "enabling and enhancing participation in social conversations and cliques" (Matrix 127). Chuck Tryon and Max Dawson go even further and assert that their research points to a key motivator for Gen Y students to follow their favorite shows being "to secure their positions within social groups defined in large part by their members' shared cultural competencies'" (224). The Stream and the paradoxical triad of the purity of flowing isolation/the isolation of flowing purity are indexical of links between social television, and the emergence of new flows of digital publics enacting new forms of participatory cultural citizenship. This citizenship, like a place, is some kind of (pre)post-apocalyptic Spectacle-biome – a matrix, if you will –, which has become increasingly important since the advent of contemporary mass streaming

culture. Not only students, but many viewers today are more likely to Stream-swim in order to participate in the discourses of the digital commons. The digitization of the Stream through its manifold of tributaries, audiences, channels, and communities of widespread consumption of time-shifted content has not altered – and I propose rather intensified – viewer-consumers' desires and opportunities for participatory cultural citizenship. Stream-swimmers "continue to benefit from opportunities for social belonging and mediated connectedness when they watch TV contemporaneously, often by binging, insofar as it affords them an opportunity to be part of the pop culture conversational flow, as it happens or soon after" (Matrix 128).

This citizenship is precarious. The Netflix effect, as a sociocentripetal one, which ostensibly joins people in their collective experience of mass-media cultural productions whether collocated or virtually connected, is, in no small way based on FOMO. The fear of being the only one who has not viewed *the* episode, completed *the* series, and as a result of this failure, is unable to participate in *the* discourse, forfeiting their place in the community, the conversation, both online and off. This fear is indexical of the import of participation and valuation. An extreme supposition, but perhaps not an entirely inaccurate one is that it may be increasingly more important to belong than it is to act (Matrix 129).

iii. Flow

Stream-swimming is predicated on channelings of flow. Perks describes flow via two inter-indexical terms: *entrance* flow, which I think of as *fall-flow* to describe the rapid flow of content, and *insulated* flow, which I think of as *delta-flow* to describe the slow-flow of content siltation. Entrance flow refers to how Netflix and its recommendation algorithm seek to constantly introduce the viewer-consumer to content that adheres to and reflects said user's tastes. Once achieved, entrance flow ensures/ensnares/inundates the viewer-consumer with serialized programming. A content delta then emerges around the Stream-swimmer whereby the clay of their viewership silts their consumption of the Stream. Here, technological and interface ergonomics (fitting if, as Adorno and Horkheimer argue, that in capitalism, entertainment is labor) like the 'skip intro' feature, serve to establish an uninterrupted and insulated flow from one episode to the next. Netflix's production mandate for in-house productions or licensed IPs serve to establish and maintain flow (Jenner 115). The goal? The maintenance of not just the Stream-Dream, but the isolating/isolated flow of a pure Dream-state. The Stream *wants* you to swim badly, that is, not well enough to escape from the currents of the current Stream-Dream and alight on the shores of reality beyond its platform, but simultaneously well enough to not drown, that is, cease Streaming entirely.

Hongjin Shim and Ki Joon Kim describe flow, in relation to a Stream-swimmer's desire for enjoyment and entertainment, as "the pleasurable feeling of being completely *immersed* in a show's storyline. The results of the *regression* analyses indicate that the enjoyment, efficiency, and fandom motivations are indeed positively associated with binge-watching behavior" (100, emphasis mine). In the same thought-stream, self-determination theorists analyzing enjoyment (see Deci & Ryan; Renaud-Dube, Guay, Talbot, Taylor, & Koestner; Tamborini, Bowman, Eden, Grizzard, & Organ) assert that the Stream-swimmer's derivation of amusement, excitement, and distraction are driven by *serial* and *continuous* exposure to media, enabling said viewer-consumer to fulfill the desire (and indeed enjoyment) for the continuousness and inundation inherent to flow (see Bourdaa).

Stream-Psych both indexes and is indexed by flow which is itself indexed and indexes the co-constitutive nature of a purity-flow-isolation complex. This goes back to Netflix's origins as a mail-order DVD rental store. In 1997, delivering DVDs by mail was a development that allowed renters to retain their media for longer without incurring extensive late fees. This innovation allowed user-viewers to consume more, to retain more, to create their *own* micro-flows from Netflix's extensive library of then tens of thousands of titles, for as long as they pleased for a monthly fee. Here, *flow* meets both isolation *and* purity because "transactions were conducted by mail, customers no longer had to run a special errand, confront long lines or opinionated staff, or deal with the poor selection at their video store" (Jenner 110).

While the reality of the pseudo-infinite reach of the Stream is far more doubtful than it claims to be, the flow-state seemingly permits the viewer to, in essence, engineer, that is consciously influence, their mood positively or negatively (see Raney). Under the flow, the viewer has "imaginatively left their immediate surroundings behind and entered the narrative world. Importantly, being transported into a story has strong cognitive and emotional consequences and leaves a [viewer] susceptible to change from the themes of a story they are experiencing" (Snider 119). At its most extreme, the flow-state of Stream-Psych, describes something akin to lucid dreaming. In this

state, Mar, Oatley, Djikic, and Mullin propose that viewer-consumers may experience meaningful and even transformational emotions, which offer the viewer perceived insights regarding both themselves and society more broadly. While indeed greater insights and appreciations of self and society can occur in the isolation-flow-purity of the Stream, so too can "greater anxiety and fearfulness", as well as "greater interpersonal mistrust" develop (Shrum 149).

It is a strange *pharmakonic* situation in which immersion-through-isolation, meaningful as it may be, somehow engenders insights into society more broadly. As if going inside allows one to see outside (Eyal and Tukachinsky 8). It is a position Alex Pang takes up, stating that what I have referred to as Stream-Psych is really an index of reversal: the salubrious experience of Stream-swimming can only occur when the world-out-there is reterritorialized in the isolation, purity, and uninterrupted *flow* of the dream-in-here. Pang asserts that Stream-swimming gives people something to intensely focus on in protest to the digital ADHD hyperreality in which we live. For Pang, the ameliorative qualities of Stream-swimming are comparable to other restorative activities like dog walking in the park, reading a book, or any experience in which one escapes to recharge. Ironically, however, the very FOMOtivity of the Stream necessarily enfolds into its various tributaries of contemporary telecinematic culture the most enabling aspects of platform addiction. The isolated flow of seemingly pure content controlled and consumed by the viewer-user the Stream seemingly represents is equally undercut by the 'cliffhanger' format of many TV shows which then also necessarily trigger for "ADHD"-like impulses.

IV. Conclusion

Using Streaming, specifically Netflix, and the psycho-emotional aspects of digital life in late capitalism, this piece has attempted to draw together two ideas – the Stream and psychology – in an indexical relationship. In view of the above, there would seem to be an ultimately and indeed inherently self-destructive or antagonistic kernel in this indexical knot. One conclusion to be derived is that within Stream-Psych, some needs' indexing of others need be separated, screened off, forgotten, or overlooked in order to be enjoyed, let alone fulfilled in any meaningful way. In the last instance, however, the Stream is both screen and index. The insistence of the need for entertainment in a world in disarray and decay is indicative of a powerful need to sequester, to intercise the underlying anxious need to address said decay and disarray whether successfully or not. The Stream is therefore an index of a complex of needs that form a self-referential indexical knot of simultaneity that paradoxically refers to itself in the very moment it tries to defer itself from itself.

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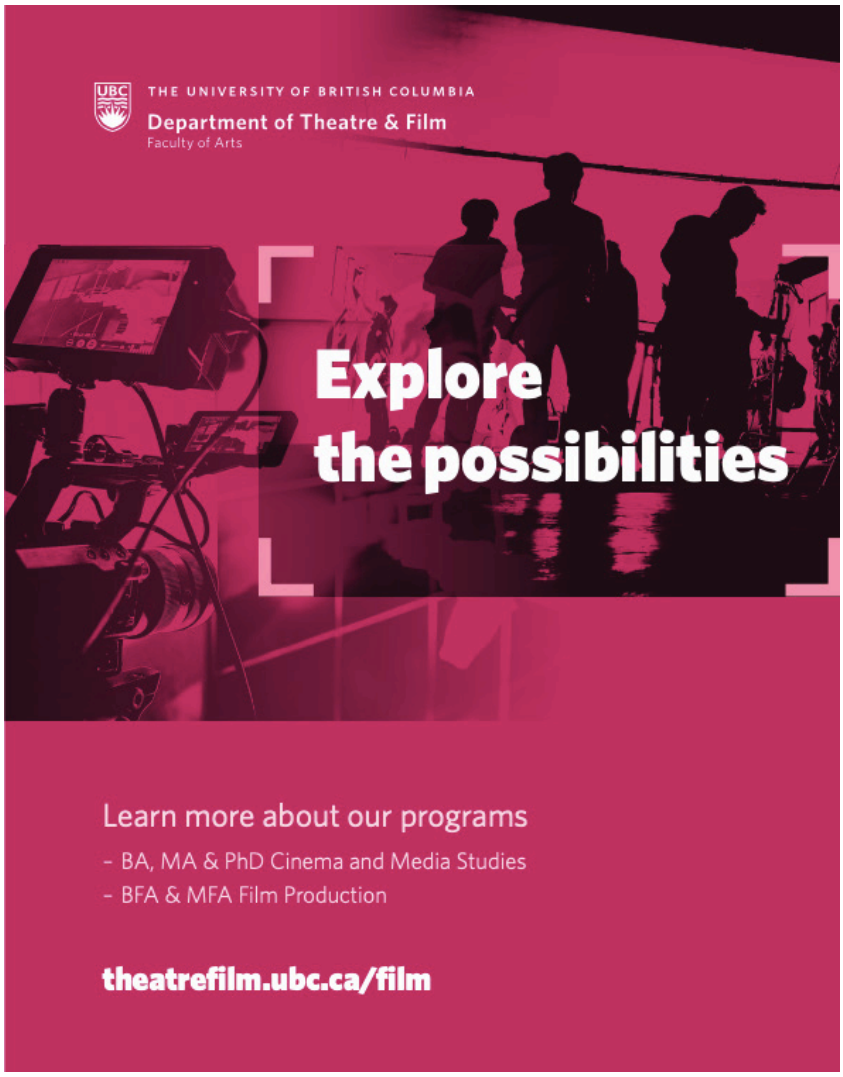

Troy Michael Bordun

The Woman's Horror Film:
Swallow and Promising Young Woman

> I wanted to make a kind of Hitchcock thriller . . . in which people really didn't know what was going to happen next.
>
> – Emerald Fennell qtd. in Adam Rathe, "*Promising Young Woman* Director Emerald Fennell on Making The Year's Smartest Horror Movie," *Town & Country*, 15 Apr. 2021

Since Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), the modern horror genre often crafts stories that address themes related to gender and sexuality. In the post-#MeToo era, it follows that horror filmmakers would set their sights on interrogating gender relations in this new social and political context. In this article, I identify a new horror cycle for the present era. I look to two recent films in independent Anglophone cinema: Carlo Mirabella-Davis's *Swallow* (2019) and Emerald Fennell's *Promising Young Woman* (2020). I make the case that these films fall under the psychological horror and slasher categories but shift the respective sites of the threats. In these two films, the protagonists are not confronted by a singular external threat to evade, escape from, and triumph over, as in early slasher flicks; rather, these films depict female subjectivities existing under the heavy forces of patriarchy, forces that operate from all directions and no one point in particular. I conceptualize the two films as part of a woman's horror film cycle, combining the woman's film and horror genres, respectively.

My identification of this new cycle is not to claim that slashers (e.g., *Halloween Kills,* 2021) and supernatural horrors (e.g., *The Haunting of Hill House*, 2018; *The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It*, 2021; *Things Heard and Seen*, 2021) are no longer of interest to the industry or audiences. Rather, in the spirit of this year's *Cinephile* theme, Constant/Change, I suggest that the horror genre maintains its prominent place among cinephiles because of its ability to adapt to emergent structures of feeling (R. Williams 131-35). Post-#MeToo horror film audiences no longer believe in the extraordinary circumstances of the slasher or supernatural horror and instead desire realistic features that articulate the terrors of ordinary existence under patriarchy. The evidence for this claim about audiences and the genre comes from the proliferation of the twenty-first century art cinema trend known as extreme cinema. Extreme films address pressing social and political concerns using the codes and conventions of the horror genre but are geared towards arthouse cinemas and their audiences (Horeck and Kendall; Bordun, *Genre Trouble*). While not part of this trend, my two selected features are nevertheless influenced by extreme cinema directors' focus on women's oppression and each film has an unrestrained and graphic visual style and a narrative structure informed by the mode of art cinema (Bordwell).

As more women helm independent US films and continue to work behind-the-scenes (Lauzen 14), it should not come as a surprise that these filmmakers are refocusing the themes of horror cinema.[1] Luckily for horror and thriller filmmakers, a defining feature of the horror genre is that it has "no clearly defined boundaries," affording them a level of freedom to experiment and rework conventions (Wells 7). From the perspective of genre studies, the two entries I discuss below share no formal, narrative, or aesthetic similarities, and thus cannot constitute a genre in the sense of demarcating specific semantic and syntactic elements (Altman 128-43). I thus opt for the term cycle, "groups of films made within a specificand limited time-span, and founded, for the most part, on the characteristics of individual

1. Due to the unique circumstances of the pandemic, Martha M. Lauzen advises caution in interpreting the increase in women's employment in the industry in 2020-21.

commercial success" (Neale 9). I choose cycle as opposed to genre because this new brand of horror has only emerged after the revelations espoused in the #MeToo movement(s). Moreover, as Rick Altman notes of early studios who adopted or stole characters and character types from other films or comics (115-16), the new cycle investigated here borrows from the real-life personages who dominate the #MeToo movement: straight, white, young, attractive, middle- and upper-class cis women. *Swallow* and P*romising Young Woman* are not stories about oppression in general, but oppression specifically experienced by straight white women.[2]

To start, the #MeToo movement sparked a slew of film cycles that take women's lives and sexual oppression as the central focus. Filmmakers turned to the genres and styles of drama (*Bombshell,* 2019; *Never Rarely Sometimes Always,* 2020), historical drama (*The Last Duel,* 2021), documentary (*Athlete A*, 2020), and art cinema (*The Assistant*, 2019) to craft feature films for the post-#MeToo era. My focus is on two films in the horror cycle that I term the woman's horror film. There is no originary film in the woman's horror cycle but a concerted response with a women's rights movement that, in practice, melds the codes and conventions of two genres. I adopt the woman's film designation to mark the cycle's family resemblance with the 1940s cycle of woman's films initially noted in the 1970s and 1980s by scholars such as Molly Haskell and Mary Ann Doane (Altman 74-77). Canonical films include *Now Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942), *Mildred Pearce* (Michael Curtiz, 1945), and *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Max Ophüls, 1948). As I summarized in a recent article,

> the woman's film places a woman's desire for familial relationships, romantic/sexual relationships, or financial independence at its center (Greven 36-37). Scholars agree that the core thematic element of the genre is a transgressive female subjectivity [in that t]he lead character's emancipatory project from traditional sites of women's experience, such as the domestic and familial spheres as wife and mother, is "a failure to accept the repressive, subjectivity denying structures of patriarchal femininity" (Pravadelli 102-107; Lang qtd. in Grevin 39-40). (Bordun, "Art, Porn, and Schlock" 18)

The key feature of this 1940s genre, which persists within later iterations such as the "postmodern chick flicks" of the 1990s and 2000s, such as those starring Julia Roberts and Meg Ryan (Garrett 63-65), is that women's subjectivities are seriously considered and not trivialized because they are outside of the public activities of men. Filmmakers adapt the codes and conventions of melodrama and the result of the above-noted emancipatory project leads to characters' and/or spectators' outpouring of emotion, often in the form of tears (L. Williams 603).

What happens when core thematic elements of the woman's film emerge in a different low genre (L. Williams), specifically in a low genre with much current commercial and artistic success?[3] In the woman's horror films under discussion in this article, the structures of patriarchal femininity engage sites and relations of repetitious suffering for the women characters. I understand this power along the lines of Michel Foucault's conceptualization of the term: power is not repressive but uses tactics from all sides to produce a kind of knowledge about how to best discipline bodies (Foucault 94-99). In the case of patriarchy, this manifests as knowledge about how women should act, behave, and think. As Foucault notes, there is also resistance against this power, and the films discussed below are two such instances. In *Swallow* and *Promising Young Woman*, as a result of their everyday social and political life under the systems, institutions, and structures of patriarchy, the protagonists will into existence a crisis in the form of bodily self-harm: an eating disorder and an impossible revenge plot, respectively. I contrast the omnipresent and omnidirectional operations of power in the woman's horror film with horror cinema's conventional threat of unidirectional gendered violence, i.e., a male killer hunts and attempts to kill one or more female protagonists. The films of this new horror cycle shift the terrain of conventional horror battlegrounds and emphasize, in novel ways, gender and oppression in a contemporary context.

2. While I do not want to foreclose the possibility of trans or non-binary characters in this cycle, I have yet to encounter one. Additionally, the limited range of characters here and the short span of this horror cycle do not foreclose the possibility of a new genre of post-#MeToo horror films. As Altman notes, "It is all too easy to forget that most genre labels began life attached to a limited cycle" (120).

3. In her oft-cited article, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, Excess," Linda Williams notes that the low genres (horror, pornography, and melodrama) are also body genres: these genre films emphasize the physicality of the characters which, in turn, produce bodily effects on the films' spectators.

Swallow

Carlo Mirabella-Davis's *Swallow* illuminates the expansive horizon of the new horror cycle.[4] Hunter (Haley Bennett) marries an upper-class man and finds no meaning in her large, luxurious house. Confined to domesticity while the husband is at work, she develops pica. Pica is an eating disorder whereby a person consumes items that are not typically fit for human consumption, have little to no nutritional value, and/or can cause bodily harm. Hunter snacks on marbles, batteries, pushpins, and nails, often with much pain. Later, when she evacuates her bowels, she retrieves the items and adds them to a hidden collection. Hunter takes joy in this process, and her unhealthy and harmful practice is nevertheless an accomplishment, i.e., something done for no other reason than to satisfy the question of whether she can exist for herself. "I'm proud of myself," she tells her husband after she swallows her first marble. "I did something unexpected today."

In the first half of the film, Mirabella-Davis combines one of the conventional characteristics of melodrama, an ill woman who is also in a state of bodily excess (L. Williams 604), with body horror. Early on in the development of her disorder, Hunter sometimes swallows the items with success, while other objects do not immediately go down – in these moments, she grips her throat and spurts up blood and whatever sharp object she tried to ingest. In the second half of the film, after visits to doctors and therapists, Hunter uncovers what triggered her pica, here resembling the generic trait of a past that haunts the melodramatic protagonist. To her therapist, Hunter blurts out that she is a child born of rape. However, unlike the melodrama and its cause-and-effect narrative structure, I read this revelation as an attempt to misdirect viewers, to see how simple it is to fall back on psychoanalysis and the unconscious to explain trauma. This works for spectators too: it would suit our conventional understanding of the ill-woman if her health issue was a matter resolvable by the talking cure.

I posit that the revelation about Hunter's conception is misdirection because the lack of control experienced earlier in Hunter's mother's life (as a teenager, the mother's boyfriend raped her and, following the rape, abortion was not an option) parallels Hunter's married life – both mother and daughter have no control over the terms of their existence. In other words, it is all too easy to point at Hunter's unconscious that needs treatment when, in fact, it is her social situation under patriarchy that needs repair. While Hunter's mother experienced threats from two external sources, her boyfriend and her religious family that would not allow abortion, Hunter faces threats from all sides and within the supposed safety of her home: her husband's friend corners her in the kitchen, demanding "just a hug," her husband has no interest in her except when he wants to be seen with a beautiful woman in public, desires sex, or wants a child, and she is depicted in a long shot vacuuming an already immaculate-looking living room in an homage to Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975). Luce Irigaray suggests that under patriarchy, a woman is an "obliging prop for the excitement of man's fantasies" – he takes her as his object (25). When therapy fails to stop Hunter's pica, the husband and his family confine her to the home and put her under surveillance. She eventually escapes to track down her rapist father.

With the body horror in the first half of the film and the forcible confinement of the second half, Mirabella-Davis ventures into what I have called the woman's horror film – the condition of women's status under patriarchy as a domestic servant, concubine, and reproductive vessel. While the climactic confrontation between Hunter and her father effectively cures her of pica and she takes it upon herself to terminate her pregnancy (the penultimate scene has Hunter in a mall food court, munching on foods fit for humans as well as abortion pills given to her by a doctor), this conclusion does not make a dent in the patriarchal systems of oppression. Presumably, Hunter then leaves her husband and married life, yet when her former husband selects his next promising young woman, there is no guarantee that his new wife will have experiences that differ from Hunter's struggles.

Promising Young Woman

In Emerald Fennell's *Promising Young Woman*, Cassandra/Cassie (Carey Mulligan) crafts a clever plot to strike fear into the hearts of men who are soon-to-be or are repeat sexual offenders. Her plan plays out like a slasher film stood on its head: Cas-

4. I introduced the new cycle of horror films as helmed by women. Mirabella-Davis now identifies as a man. In his young adulthood, he identified as a woman named Emma Goldman. In a recent interview, he said that had terms like gender-fluid been available to him earlier in life, he would have adopted them for his gender expression and identity (Malkin).

sandra acts drunk at bars and clubs, men bring her to their apartments to commit assault and, when the men are about to take advantage of her, she terrorizes the would-be assaulters. For example, at the culmination of the first sequence, Cassie feigns semi-consciousness on a male co-worker's bed – splayed, no less, in a crucified position. As the co-worker pulls off Cassandra's underwear, in an overhead shot, Cassie gazes upwards and transforms her stupor into a conscious grin. Her initial repeated and slurred question, "Wait... what are you doing?" is soberly repeated as the heroine sits up and stares down her potential victimizer. Thus, Cassandra does not terrorize the men with violence; rather, she catches them in an act that they cannot rationalize or defend. By enacting this ploy, Cassandra harms the victimizers' cognitive faculties. Cassie's goal here is straightforward: to force the men to think twice about assaulting women.

Similar to the serial killers in slashers who take victims' body parts as trophies, in a secret journal, Cassandra lists the men she has terrorized by their first name and, in jagged strokes, keeps a tally as well (based on the tallies, I guess that she has enacted the drunk woman ruse upwards of 720 times, which may seem a bit farfetched, even by slasher standards). Moreover, again following slasher conventions, Cassie, who functions as a villain to the men, has a deep, traumatic wound that serves as the cause for her endless quest. However, *Promising Young Woman* reverses tropes of the slasher by switching the gender roles of villain and victim(s): in slashers, punishment comes to "the sexually active 'bad' girls" in exchange for their pleasure (L. Williams 610), while in Fennell's film, Cassie punishes the predatory men for trying to take pleasure at a woman's expense.

Traditionally, in the woman's film, the protagonists are often abandoned by their lovers and this abandonment serves as the emotional core of that respective story (L. Williams 604). In P*romising Young Woman*, Cassandra does not lose a lover or even a man, but her friend, Nina Fisher. While they attended Forrest Medical School, their classmate Al Monroe assaulted Nina. Charges were not laid, the College administration did not investigate, and the suggestion in the film is that Nina then took her own life. Cassandra thus enacts her plot for both her dead friend and the universal rights of women. Following Linda Williams's assessment of the melodrama in that characters always arrive "too late" to secure their happiness, thus producing tears in characters and and spectators (613-15), Cassie missed the chance to save her friend. What remains is for her to terrorize predatory men as well those responsible for Nina's death, such as the College's Dean and Monroe's lawyer. Because Cassie is too late, her namesake from Ancient Greek literature suggests that should she go to the authorities with information about Al's rape, no one would believe her.[5] Additionally, similar to the Trojan priestess Cassandra's prophesy of her own death, Cassie knows what her future holds: eventually, one of her male victims will fight back and even take her life, as Al does in the penultimate sequence.[6]

For her final hunt, Cassandra tracks down Al's bachelor party, located in a common setting for slashers: a cabin in the woods. She feigns not drunkenness for Al's pals but performs as the conventional entertainment for bachelor parties. Cassie arrives in a sexy nurse outfit, drugs the men, and promises a singular experience upstairs for Al. Unfortunately, as she is about to carve Nina's name into Al's abdomen so he never forgets his victim as long as he should live, Al breaks free of the handcuffs and smothers the heroine. Cassie's murder at Al's hands, however, does not end her revenge plot. The villains in slasher films always return (Modleski 622). Before her death, Cassie set in motion a series of revelations about Al's rape of Nina as well as the circumstances of her death. In the film's closing moment, the police arrest Al at his wedding.

Fennell notes that she planned to end the film after Al and his pal Joe burn Cassie's body. Both Cassie and Nina receive no retributive justice. The director's financial backers urged her to film a happier ending, "[b]ut in my heart, I think that's where it would have ended," Fennell says (Aurthur and Donnelly). While we only have the film as it stands as a finished product with Al's arrest at the wedding, Fennell's intentions are in line with how I have observed and assessed the woman's horror film. Against the immeasurable forces of oppression, Cassie knew she never stood a chance. But like Hunter in *Swallow* who who confronts her rapist father and terminates the unwanted pregnancy, Cassandra's actions are nothing

5. In Aeschylus's Agamemnon (458 BC), after the fall of Troy, King Agamemnon returns home with the captured Trojan priestess Cassandra. Cassandra then prophesizes the demise of Agamemnon's house as well as her own death. However, the chorus does not understand her prophesies.

6. In an interview, Carey Mulligan, who plays Cassie, notes that her character is aware of the danger of her revenge plot and the possibility that she may die. For Mulligan's Cassie, "it's worth the immense risk" (Mulligan qtd. in Aurthur and Donnelly).

short of courageous in the face of certain doom. While the villains of slasher movies are always triumphed over by the end, as the horror genre conventions dictate, they return in some form for endless sequels. It may not be Cassie who returns to terrorize more rapists in the future, but copycats of famous serial killers are never far behind.

The Woman's Horror Film

Following these last remarks, I make the distinction between the traumas endured by protagonists of the woman's film as largely emotional and psychological (e.g., Mildred Pierce loses her daughter Kay to illness) whereas horror film protagonists' traumas are more often physical abuses (e.g., in *Halloween* [1978], Laurie fights off Michael Myers's assaults). Melding these two genres and traumas in the post-#MeToo era produces the cycle of woman's horror films. Regarding the films' melodrama lean, both features discussed in this article take place in the present but are just as interested in the protagonists' pasts. While there are no flashbacks typical of melodrama, the past traumas of the two respective protagonists are the catalysts for their present struggles with patriarchy. The emotional trauma of a past event returns as physical trauma in a form of self-harm. The latter facet thus transforms a woman's film into the woman's horror film.

Regarding the generic qualities of horror in the contemporary cycle under investigation, then, I make the distinction between the horror genre as we understand it through the slasher and its now obvious psycho-sexual themes and the woman's horror film as emotional/psychological trauma manifesting in physical trauma (Hayward 214). The key difference here is that slasher and early horror genre theory does not approach the challenges faced by women in everyday life. First, the slasher concerns itself with men's socialization, the result of which leads them down a path of gendered violence. Thus, serial killers often have more history and psychological depth than the "interchangeable" female protagonists (Modleski 622-23). Many horror films focus on what we should do for men because if men were better socialized, women would benefit (i.e., villains would not kill them). This is not the case for *Swallow* and *Promising Young Woman*. Both films show the consequences, for women, of men's poor socialization and centre the protagonists' past, present, and future.

Second, while early horror film scholars such as Robin Wood, Carol Clover, and Linda Williams teased out the latent psycho-sexual themes in the genre, the extraordinary situation of a fantastic serial killer could not give rise to a modern cycle of horror films that engage with the everyday subjectivities of women. On the one hand, the cismen and ciswomen in slasher flicks are more or less equally at risk if a Jason or Michael Myers breaks through their door. On the other hand, the extreme, real-life traumas that parallel the kinds of spectacular violence portrayed in slasher films are relatively uncommon; however, with the raising of women's voices in movements such as #MeToo (Langone), it is now common knowledge that men harass women on the street, coerce their coworkers for sex, and assault their dates at every turn.

The woman's horror film is thus a cycle that functions with ciswomen as the suffering protagonists and foregrounds the unique circumstances of those characters within their ordinary contexts (upper-class housewife and friend who lost her best friend), rather than in an extraordinary setting such as a cabin in the woods, or a small town terrorized by a mysterious external threat at repeat intervals. What is terrifying in the new cycle is not an external, embodied threat; instead, it is in how the characters must navigate patriarchal structures and survive not a cabin vacation gone awry, but an entire lifetime of low to high threats that are unpredictable and attack from all sides, including the women's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. For Hunter, her husband, his friends, and his parents all have clear ideas about how a wife should behave and think. For Cassie, although she has control over her male victims, she unmasks the very real dangers posed by those men – if it were not Cassie but real drunk women, the men would become torturers and the women would become victims. Cassie exposes both individual men's misogynist behaviour as well as the institutions that help facilitate and excuse men's assault and harassment. In short, for both *Swallow* and *Promising Young Woman*, threats are everywhere women turn.

Unlike the traditional slasher, once the woman's horror film establishes the precise structure that threatens the well-being of the protagonist, the characters are not presented with the opportunity or situation to challenge or evade it except by turning to self-harm, discussed above. These films feature women in social situations and settings of everyday life that are inundated with oppression: households and their objects, streets, interpersonal exchanges, and nights out present omnipresent and omnidirec-

tional threats, and there is little hope of an emancipatory project because patriarchy is the ongoing condition of modern life. The two directors explored in this article thus seem well-attuned to women's lives in the post-#MeToo era.

The breakout directors Mirabella-Davis and Fennell, who also served as their respective film's writers, helped to inaugurate a new cycle with more films on the way. However, my use of the term cycle is loose. It is possible to trace the slasher-in-reverse back to a film such as Takeshi Miike's *Audition* (1999), so in this sense, *Promising Young Woman* is not novel. Similarly, the psychological horror of Roman Polanski's *Repulsion* (1965) is an obvious predecessor of *Swallow*. I suggested that *Promising Young Woman* and *Swallow* do not share generic similarities, apart from perhaps their respective uses of colour – both films are very colourful to lend an eerie cheeriness that attempts to mask the reality of the characters' lives under patriarchal structures. More important than the stylistic presentation is the films' shared sensibility that patriarchy and misogyny cannot be concretely located in the figure of a single male tormentor. Other contemporary films, with greater and lesser transparency about the direct impacts of patriarchy, make similar thematic moves: *Saint Maud* (2019) locates psychological horror in Maud's fervent religiosity; the division between reality and fantasy blurs for *Censor*'s (2021) Enid as she must watch video nasties through a conservative lens; the horrifying mating rituals displayed in *Midsommar* (2019) are mirrors for the more routinely practiced mating rituals shown in *Promising Young Woman* (i.e., providing a woman excess alcohol to then take advantage of her vulnerable position); and the ways doctors approach women's health leads Jane down a path of psychological horror in *The Yellow Wallpaper* (2021), set in the nineteenth century. The semantic components, or the generic building blocks of each of the above films, drift too far apart to locate a new genre of women-led horror; however, their respective emphases on women's experiences under patriarchy suggests a new trend or refocusing of thematic elements of the genre rather than forming a new subgenre.

As a brief final example, Kitty Green's *The Assistant* strengthens my claim above that these films may not establish a genre. *The Assistant* shares no generic commonalities with horror, yet, aside from *Swallow*'s scenes of body horror, it is the most disconcerting film of the woman's horror film cycle. This tale of a producer's assistant (we never see the producer's face, only hear his voice and glimpse his form) provides no avenues of escape from patriarchy for its protagonist. The young, white, cis woman Jane (Julia Garner) has accepted her role as producer's assistant and patriarchal authority suffuses every dish washed, every berating phone call from the boss, and every working hour from dawn until dusk. Not unlike Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman*, then, the prolongation of Jane's working conditions creates 87-minutes of sustained dread.

In this article, I have not foregrounded the generic qualities of the woman's horror film but a possible horror continuum in a post-#MeToo cycle. *Promising Young Woman* operates in the mode of a reverse-slasher film whereby the presumed victim of misogyny becomes women's avenger. *Swallow* adopts body horror in the first half of the film then shifts its generic leaning to the somewhat elusive category of woman's film in the second half. Finally, *The Assistant* shuns both horror and woman's film generic markers altogether to nevertheless produce a film with similar results as the previously mentioned features. Without clearly defined generic boundaries, then, filmmakers are free to create works that best addresses the thematic concerns sparked by the #MeToo movement(s). The lack of generic boundaries for horror filmmaking opens up more diverse approaches to storytelling and characters – the cycle would be much improved if it were to feature women from varying classes, ages, and racial backgrounds. The privileging of young, white, attractive cis women in the above-noted films point to a gap in this cycle that is easily remedied.

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Rosa Kremer

In Filmed Corona, Where We Lay Our Scene:

How a Pandemic Production Cultivated a Hybrid Format and Became a Memory Film

In 1915, psychologist Hugo Münsterberg had already realised the importance of the new art of photo-plays and the way it allowed a new approach to beauty, specifically one that differed from the stage: "They give an art which must develop in paths quite separate from those of the stage. It will reach the greater height the more it learns to free itself from the shackles of theatre and to live up to its own forms" (24). The introduction of the photo-plays, nowadays better known as films, caused quite the stir upon their introduction; one of the main critiques was that it was a mere extension, or even a cheap knock-off, of theatre plays. Münsterberg claimed that those who could afford the "true theatre" saw it as below them to "indulge in such a cheap substitute which lacked the glory of the stage of spoken words" (22-23). He was afraid that if the photo-play would stay within the shadow of theatre, it would neither gain freedom from its stylistic banality, nor get a chance to fully develop as its own art form.

This attitude has changed drastically over the last century, and up to this day the stage and the screen seem to find new ways to work together. Whether that is through reinventing acting from stage to screen or by transforming the theatre into a cinema space for a modern-day live broadcasted theatre production. Each medium has their own affordances and their own sets of rules to adhere to, yet there remains a shared understanding between the two that a narrative spectacle works when it is aimed at a collective audience. The liveness of the stage performance lends itself well to most screens, both those in the privacy of one's own home as well as those in the public setting of the cinema (Auslander 5). Such stage-to-screen adaptations have been taking place since the live television broadcasts in the 50's (Boddy 80) and the present time of pandemics and social distancing is no exception to this rule.

One way to look at these theatre-to-film adaptations is through the notion of 'cultural memory', explained by Astrid Erll as "the interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts" (*Cultural Memory Studies* 2). This umbrella term allows a wide-ranging understanding of different phenomena as objects of cultural memory studies. In this case, it means that stage-to-screen adaptations can also be seen as objects that hold cultural memories, especially when there are memorable aspects to a production – such as recent productions that documented the challenges that come with producing a play during a global pandemic in a lockdown. A particularly illuminating example of this is the National Theatre's April 2021 modern-day adaptation of *Romeo & Juliet* directed by Simon Godwin. This made-for-television film acknowledges the challenges it went through by ending on a simple black screen with text reading: "Romeo & Juliet was filmed in an empty theatre, over seventeen days, during a global pandemic" (Godwin). This approach to recording differs from the television plays seen previously, as this play was not quite a live television performance, nor a recording of a live theatre play. This production instead strikes a balance between the two. On the one hand, the intended television audience creates a sense of intimacy, as the

play is broadcasted right into their living room. On the other hand, there are clear elements akin to a live theatre broadcast, as it is still a play performed in a theatre, on and even off stage. Godwin recognised that the hybridity of this format opened up new creative opportunities. For instance, he was able to use flashbacks and flash-forwards, which add to the foreshadowing fates of the play. He disclosed in an interview that he "wanted to celebrate what [a television film] could give us that the theatre cannot. Its hybridity is its greatest strength" (Akbar). This production had to deal with the highs and lows in these uncertain times, and memorably managed to use these hurdles to its advantage. Therefore, Godwin's production of *Romeo & Juliet* illustrates how a new, hybrid format cultivated during a global pandemic can become a memory film.

The Stage vs. The Screen

Throughout the last century, many scholars have pondered about the differences between the stage and the screen. Münsterberg was one of the first, but certainly not the last to put these musings on paper. There are two main differences that stand out in the case of transitioning from stage to screen. The first difference is acting, which became clear when actors transitioned from acting on-stage to acting on-screen with the introduction of the photoplay. The second difference is when and how the performance is experienced by the audience, as the stage and the screen both situate a performance differently.

Not long after Münsterberg saw his first photoplay, other writers began to speculate on what distinguished the theatre actor from the film actor. Film theorist Siegfried Kracauer wondered what made the acting that worked so well on stage come across so wrong on the screen. He found that the theatre actor must *convince* the audience of the character, whereas the film actor must *become* the character. This comes down to the fact that the stage is usually exclusively human, whereas the screen is not. On stage, the action is revealed by and through the actors: what they do and say creates the context. They are the play. Or in Kracauer's words: "On the stage, man is the absolute measure of the universe" (203). On-screen, the actors are often important, but only as long as they are not eclipsed by the surroundings. A film almost always focuses on the sets or the props more than on the characters itself. Kracauer emphasises that "the subject matter of the cinema is not so much the purely human as it is the visible flux of infinite phenomena impinging on the human" (203). This is the main difference between the stage and the screen actor, according to Kracauer. The stage actor carries the entirety of the play on their shoulders, whereas the film actor shares it with the screen.

Apart from the acting, the stage itself has also changed throughout the years. Nowadays plays are not just experienced in a theatre; instead they are seen and broadcast in cinemas all over the world. Live broadcasted theatre, also known as cinemacast, live cinema theatre, or outside broadcasting, is at its core the experience of watching a recorded theatre performance in a cinema setting. These broadcasts are usually consumed as if they are feature films, however the audience is treated as if they are in a theatre. Before the performance begins, the lights remain on and shots of the theatre auditorium are shown, giving the cinema audience the experience of being part of the theatre audience. In her study of live cinema theatre, Lilia Nemchenko iterates how important the theatre experience is, explaining that "while the semantic concepts of performance, the acting techniques and the theatre's mission [undergo] constant change, theatrical pragmatics has remained almost constant" (459). The theatre and its performance have remained consistent, yet how and where these performances are consumed have changed throughout the years. Additionally, Janice Wardle explains how the cinema and theatre experience come together in the space of the cinema, as the "creation of a heightened awareness of the shared, public occasion in these ways made a distinction between [a] live broadcast of a theatrical event and other 'normal' cinematic experiences" (138). Wardle emphasises that a live theatre broadcast is not to be compared to a normal feature film, as they are two distinct experiences pertaining to two different media. The live theatre broadcast is shown in the cinema, yet it is not treated as such.

Hence the acting and the space of consumption play an important part for the audience experience. However, there are new ways emerging to both produce and consume. Especially during the special circumstances that the world now finds itself in during the global pandemic, the stage and the screen showcase their resilience to create new, hybrid productions.

Romeo & Juliet on the Small Screen

An example of the changing nature of (live broadcasted) theatre can be seen in the National

Theatre's production of *Romeo & Juliet,* starring Josh O'Connor as Romeo and Jessie Buckley as Juliet. Originally, this production was scheduled to play at the Lyttelton theatre during the summer of 2020. The production could not continue in the planned format due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and its resulting lockdowns. However, that did not deter Godwin to continue with the play, albeit in a different manner. The production decided to use the theatre during the time that it was officially booked, and shoot a made-for-television film instead. As a result, they had to shorten and adapt the play to make sure

Fig. 1 Still from Godwin, Romeo & Juliet (29:37).

Fig. 2. Still from Godwin, Romeo & Juliet (1:22:11).

it fit within the 90 minute time slot that is usually reserved for television films. Speaking on the experience of making the film, Godwin revealed that there were discussions between the producer who created National Theatre Live and the artistic director of the National Theatre "about transforming the space into a studio and doing something digital in a way that kept the essence of the stage" (Akbar). This is where the idea began to use the entirety of the theatre as the backdrop for the television production.

The two main actors wholeheartedly agreed that it was a unique experience that brought the play to life on the small screen. O'Connor reiterated the hybridity of the production, as "it was a discovery for all of us because it's not like film and it's not like theatre, so we were all relearning" (Akbar). Buckley similarly focused on the unique artistic qualities of the film: "The film itself is trying to capture the journey of performance and what it feels like. You'd be silly to not acknowledge what this was in its own unique way. It was beautiful to see the innards of the theatre behind you. That was part of the tapestry of it" (Akbar). Both of these aspects can clearly be seen in the film, as there is a sense of hybridity and uniqueness that shines through in everything, ranging from the mise-en-scène to the soundtrack. It is a made-for-television film that manages to keep the essence of the stage. Godwin highlights this when he cross-cuts the monologues of Romeo and Juliet from act 3 scene 1 and 2, putting them in dialogue with one another. Juliet is heard speaking the words "when I shall die, take him and cut him out in little stars" (Godwin) over a medium close-up of Romeo's blood covered hands holding the knife that he just killed Tybalt with. The continuation of Juliet's romantic monologue into a voice-over is juxtaposed with the horrific deed Romeo has just committed, the one that is seen on screen. This illustrates not only how Godwin plays with the affordances of the television film to strengthen the imagery of the play itself, but it also highlights just how entangled violence and love are in this play.

The characteristic aspects that are usually found on screen, whether it is the big or the small screen, are harder to find in a theatre production. This specific production played with these characteristics and affordances to create a different atmosphere, while keeping the feeling of the theatre. As Buckley stated, the innards of the theatre are now on display for all the world to see, as most scenes seem to be shot on-stage, out in the wings, in the green room, and possibly in a loading dock of the theatre (see figures 1 and 2). The prologue is uttered on a fully lit stage, with all the actors in a u-shaped formation in their everyday wear, surrounded by different, seemingly random set pieces, costumes, and props (see figure 3). Similarly, Romeo's banishment later in the play leads him to usually unseen parts of the theatre, as he wanders into what seems to be the loading area while a door slowly closes in on him; he is literally closed off from Juliet, who is on-stage (see figure 4). The prologue thereby announces that this play will take place on- and off-stage, and this new hybrid setting is where they lay their scene.

As a whole, none of the play's sets are quite discernible as a specific place, with the exception of

Fig. 3. Still from Godwin, Romeo & Juliet (01:20).

Fig. 4. Still from Godwin, Romeo & Juliet (1:01:58).

the Capulet residence, which could very well be a leftover set from a different production. The majority of the scenes are filmed on a dark set, whether that is on stage, out in the wings, or back in the loading area. To illustrate, the Capulet party only needs a fog machine, some strobe lights, and coloured LEDs to make the partygoers stand out against the dark, under-lit stage (see figure 5). This party is also a turning point, as suddenly the stage is not the stage anymore: it has transformed into a lively club, with the actors' jeans and sweatpants replaced by suits, dresses, and elaborate Venetian masks. These masks further serve as a subtle nod to the current, real-life social circumstances requiring everyone to wear a facemask in public. This Capulet party is filmed on a relatively bare set, and provides a stark contrast to the narrative importance of Romeo and Juliet meeting for the first time. The simplicity of this scene proves that not much is needed to provoke the viewer's imagination and set the story in motion.

Similarly, when Romeo first speaks to Juliet and starts his famous sonnet about his lips being two pilgrims, they are on centre stage lit by LEDs and surrounded by dancing partygoers. The beginning of the conversation is shot through over-the-shoulder close-ups, putting the audience almost uncomfortably close to the couple, before cutting to an extreme close-up of their hands intertwining. The soundtrack also seamlessly transitions from a bass-heavy party track to a softer, ethereal track, with the bass now resembling a heartbeat. The conversation continues, however only the dialogue is heard over the music in a montage of them chasing each other, once again dressed in their jeans and sweatpants. They are now on a fully-lit stage, where the dancing crowd has been replaced with racks of props, costumes, and set pieces (see figure 6). Eventually the scene cross-cuts between the couple being surrounded by the crowd and the pair being alone together in their own world. Godwin thereby uses the different settings of the stage to illustrate the mental state of Romeo and Juliet: they are in their own world from the first time they meet, and it is beautifully illustrated by the production's newfound ability to use the stage to its full capacity.

Fig. 5. Still from Godwin, Romeo & Juliet (05:19).

Another scene that stands out because of the dark, barebones setting – which appears to be shot in the green room – is the wedding scene. This scene sees every flat surface covered in burning candles as far as the (camera)eye can see. The only set piece in the scene is the altar, which consists of two trestles, a plank, some candles, and a few other knick-knacks to cover the makeshift table. A dark room illuminated by candlelight is all that is needed to flesh out the space and create a romantic, intimate atmosphere. Ironically, this scene is mirrored, as the same room seems to be used as Juliet's tomb at the end of the play (see figures 7 and 8). This time the dark room is not filled with lit candles; instead Juliet is laid out on a dais in the middle of the room, surrounded by flowers that provide the only colour in the scene. The stairs that were once alight with flickering candles are now a pale, bare backdrop for the horrors that are to come. This goes to show that a little creativity goes

Fig. 6. Still from Godwin, Romeo & Juliet (19:35).

Fig. 7. Still from Godwin, Romeo & Juliet (34:52).

a long way, and that all the nooks and crannies of a theatre can be used as a possible backdrop capable of inciting meaning. Whether it is to represent Romeo's and Juliet's mental spaces, or to highlight that their marriage was also their death sentence, Godwin uses the theatre and its innards to its full potential.

Mitigating Circumstances

There is no doubt that the production of *Romeo & Juliet* had to overcome a number of hurdles that would not have been present a mere two years ago. The National Theatre has put in an incredible amount of effort to be able to create a television play - or a pandemic production - in times of social distancing. They even managed to use these restrictions to their advantage, by utilising the entirety of the now empty theatre. O'Connor explained that they had to wear masks most of the time and they had to get tested for COVID-19 twice a week. He elaborates that "immediately after we got the results back, Jessie and I had a three-hour window to get intimate" (Akbar). A three-hour window inevitably would have increased the pressure on the actors, as seventeen days to shoot a film is already a tight schedule without the necessity of a medical test to determine when the main actors could be within touching distance. This is just one example of how the circumstances hindered this pandemic production, as a time restriction to get intimate sounds disastrous for a play so well-known for its intimacy. Nonetheless, Godwin and his cast and crew managed to express the play's intimacy and yearning by utilising the theatre and all of its different settings in new, ingenious ways.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing, the production of *Romeo & Juliet* remains hard to access, almost as if the National Theatre is gatekeeping their own production. In a time where streaming services are pushing out traditional broadcasters faster than ever before (Smith and Telang 63), the National Theatre initially chose to only broadcast the production twice. One broadcast was in the UK on Sky and the other in the US on PBS. The only ways to watch the production, according to the National Theatre, are to watch it online in the UK with a NOW TV entertainment pass or Sky subscription, in the USA on the PBS Video app, or in selected cinemas in the UK and Ireland on the 28th of September 2021 ("Romeo & Juliet"). This is neither the most accessible, nor even the most profitable way to offer this production to the public, as it is limited to people in the UK, Ireland, or the US with the right television subscription. Only recently have they added a fourth option to access the production, namely to stream the play online.

These accessibility issues are particularly questionable because the National Theatre rolled out their own streaming service, National Theatre at Home, in December 2020. Nonetheless, it took them six months to release *Romeo & Juliet* on this platform, which finally occurred in October 2021. Why would a theatre company put a disproportionate amount of effort into a unique television play, and then choose not to offer it worldwide on their own streaming service until half a year later? This decision is especially unfortunate because of how this pandemic production functions as an object of cultural memory for its viewing audience, an object that provides a time capsule of what theatres resorted to in a global pandemic during lockdown. This choice to withhold the play from a global audience for an extended period of time reveals that the National Theatre's choices may have deeper, and as-of-yet less obvious, motivations than mere enthusiasm for the arts.

Indeed, this decision-making process contradicts the fact that there is an audience willing to pay the National Theatre directly for their performances

Fig. 8. Still from Godwin, Romeo & Juliet (1:25:23).

through their streaming service. In the summer of 2021, an Instagram post of the National Theatre about *Romeo & Juliet* had accumulated over 11,000 likes and the nearly 200 comments were littered with questions from people all around the globe asking when and where they could watch this production (“"Did my heart love till now?"”). This interest is further highlighted in a later post where the National Theatre announced that they added the production to their streaming platform, as that post amassed almost 7000 likes and nearly 50 comments within 24 hours (“Juliet and Romeo risk everything”). These responses demonstrate that there is an audience for this production, specifically one that had to wait half a year to be able to see it. Leaving only more questions as to why the National Theatre withheld this production from their eager audience.

Nonetheless, this is not a clear-cut case: while this restricted access hindered many people from watching the film when it first aired, it also raised suspense about the production. The more the National Theatre shared snippets and teasers from the production, the more the hype increased and the more people became interested in watching it. The sheer number of people engaging with the National Theatre on Instagram illustrates that keeping this pandemic production behind closed doors for a while increased the anticipation with which it was received. It made it more memorable once people did finally get to watch it, and find out if the suspense was worth it in the end.

Romeo & Juliet as Cultural Memory

The accessibility issues notwithstanding, this production does serve as a prime example of cultural media memory, particularly considering the circumstances in which it was made. Astrid Erll explains that culrual memory is unthinkable without media, specifically the cinema of cultural memory, which is founded on the production and dissemination of memory films. These can either focus on the concepts of memory (e.g. *Memento* (2000)), or disseminate images of the past (e.g. *Schindler's List* (1993)). There are three notable dimensions related to studying these memory films: technological, aesthetic, and social perspectives. First, from a technological standpoint, “one can address different mnemonic qualities of analogue and digital filmmaking or the significance of filmic remediation” (*Memory in Culture* 137). Secondly, there are specific formal and aesthetic strategies which contribute to memory-effects in film. Thirdly, these aesthetic strategies could mark a film as a medium of memory, however “they can only endow it with a *potential* for mnemonic effects. This potential has to be *realized* within situative, social and institutional frameworks” (*Memory in Culture* 137-138 emphasis in original). In other words, for a film to become a memory film, it must be viewed as a memory film. If a film is not watched, it might still provide the most interesting images or perspectives of the past or the working of memory, however, it will not ultimately have any effect on memory culture.

Thus, both the film and its reception play an important part in determining whether or not a film becomes a memory film. The context is crucial for the cinema of cultural memory, according to Erll, especially the context in which films are prepared and received as memory-relevant media (*Memory in Culture* 138). This clearly applies to *Romeo & Juliet,* a film made in an entirely new context that heavily draws on the surrounding social circumstances of its production. On a technical level, the fact that it is a play that works with flashbacks, flash-forwards, and different settings situated throughout the entirety of the Lyttelton theatre sets the film apart from other television plays and live broadcast theatre productions alike. These aspects endow *Romeo & Juliet*’s make-shift aesthetics with the potential to create a mnemonic effect, as it is a memorable production on multiple levels.

While the television film itself can display as many interesting links to film, television, and theatre alike, in the end this production is still inherently linked to a particular space and time. It is a result of the unforeseen circumstances the world found itself in during the pandemic, and the production exudes this from every angle. However, the crux lies in the fact that the audience has to decide that this is that this is indeed a memorable production that serves

as a cultural memory of the circumstances of the pandemic lockdowns. The praising words of the reviews do seem to point towards such a decision: "Audacious and fleet-footed, it is a rare example of an adaptation that turns its limitations to its advantage. Filmed in the empty spaces in the Lyttelton [...] this production has all the verve of a slickly edited movie, yet still exudes an aura of raw theatricality" (Clide). Overall, the reviews praise the hybridity of the production and applaud the final result: "what an accomplished example of pandemic-style drama: a sleek fusion of theatre and film" (Clapp), or they highlight the television and theatre aspects, as "it forges a new hybrid between stage and screen, using all the resources and exploratory power of theatre and the beauty and fluidity of film to create a fleet-footed and thought-provoking 90-minutes" (Crompton). There appears to be a consensus that the production managed to capture something memorable on screen. As a result, this television play is not only a hybrid production, but also a memory-relevant media that remembers the COVID-19 pandemic and the resilience of the people affected by it.

Conclusion

All in all, *Romeo & Juliet* proves to be an intriguing and one-of-a-kind production. The medium not only plays with affordances from different media, but actually combines the entirety of a theatre with the modalities of a made-for-television film. The innards of the Lyttleton theatre literally shine on-screen, and it ties this unusual hybrid production together. Apart from the National Theatre's questionable choices on how and where to distribute the film, this pandemic production managed to create something new out of seemingly insurmountable challenges related to COVID-19. *Romeo & Juliet* is unashamedly a product of its time, and can thereby productively be considered as a memory-relevant medium, documenting how setbacks can be transformed into new opportunities. The arts have shown their resilience through the hurdles of the pandemic, or as renowned theatre actress Dame Hellen Mirren eloquently puts it: "[Maybe the] present insecurity has made [artists, technicians and craftsmen and women] more able to survive this pandemic with wit and courage. Their imagination has already translated itself, in these new circumstances, into inventive, entertaining and moving ways to communicate". (Mirren). The theatre, as well as cinema and television, have managed to stay afloat so long that a worldwide pandemic can be seen as a creative opportunity instead of an artistic devastation. Thus creating new hybrid formats that will go down in both theatrical and cinematic history as cultural memories of a moment in time that no one living today is likely to forget.

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Marcus Prasad

Spanish Iconomachy and the Hybridization of Conetemporary Musical Identity:
Rosalía's "Pienso en Tu Mirá"

An adventurous and experimental methodology disguised by the beauty and effortlessness of her classical training characterizes Spanish singer and songwriter Rosalía's body of work from 2018. Flipping through the booklet of *El Mal Querer*'s vinyl album release, a visual expanse of alchemical symbols with references to Spanish painting and literature imbues the experience of her music with imagery and icons that work to situate her audience in a specifically Spanish context. The accompanying music videos to the songs from this album continue to elucidate such a visual program, but with a twist; they enmesh their myriad references to Spanish history with a distinctly contemporary aesthetic and musical language, captivating viewers around the world through a combination of the familiar with a perhaps lesser-known national history. Looking specifically to Rosalía's music video for "Pienso en tu mirá," this paper examines the expansive repertoire of Spanish imagery and cultural references that inundate and inform her production. Beginning with the politics of flamenco within which she produces her music, I intend to articulate her own reconfiguration of its inherent gendered codes to suggest a new direction for Spanish music that she is actively forging. Further, by looking to the realms of Spanish painting also referred to in this video, I suggest that her ongoing citation of different nodes of Spanish culture elucidates an iconomachy with a wider history of Spanish image-making and representation. I ultimately argue that this iconomachy, defined by Leslie Brubaker as a struggle to reconcile the intended semiotic valence of imagery, symbols, and icons within a given visual context, is foundational to her current production, and constitutes the methodology behind the formation of a unique musical and artistic identity constituted by the synthetic melding of Spanish history and the contemporary globalized music scene.

"Pienso en tu mirá" is the second single released from Rosalía's album *El Mal Querer*, which was released in its entirety in November of 2018. The Catalan artist has been commended for her seamless linking of flamenco melodrama and style with contemporary R&B, creating a new and fresh sound that continues to receive critical acclaim today. Julianne Escobedo Shepherd from *Pitchfork* Magazine attributes such a synthesis of styles to the emergence of an underground internet-based scene called *Global Bass* from the early 2000s. This movement involved and encouraged young music producers to tap into their countries' folk and melodic traditions in order to reinvigorate millennial dancefloor music, using new technologies to collapse pre-established musical boundaries and genres. Shepherd further suggests that this movement continues to provide a kind of antidote to the homogenization of popular music occurring as a result of the industry's increasing proximity and eventual overlap with the internet, as musicians have been orienting themselves to their own cultural singularity and hyper-locality. Within this creative context, Rosalía releases *El Mal Querer* – a testament to the synthetic and hybrid *Global Bass* movement by way of its musical intertwining of historical flamenco and Spanish stylizations with more contemporary sound mixing approaches.

Acting as a pendant piece to "Pienso en tu mirá," "Malamente," her first single and music video from *El Mal Querer*, operates similarly in its visual vernacular, infusing Catalan and Andalusian motifs with a popular "hypebeast" aesthetic, featuring current fashion trends from limited edition sneakers to the latest

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

streetwear from high-end designers. Employing a strong bass line and synthetic tones while foregrounding emphatic claps and stomps, "Malamente" infuses two seemingly disparate genres – flamenco and hip hop through song and dance. A young matador is seen subduing a speeding motorcycle mimicking the act of bullfighting, traditional flamenco dress is replaced by athletic wear, and equally, flamenco dance moves are mixed with hip hop choreography. Experimental and hybrid in its ontology, "Malamente," "Pienso en tu mirá," and their respective music videos demonstrate how *El Mal Querer* uses a Spanish visual language to exhibit a uniquely contemporary identity through an iconomachical contestation of the history of Spanish visual production.

"Pienso en tu mirá" is a contemporary piece that alludes to the pared-down instrumentation of classical flamenco musical stylings, emphasizing the clean sounds of simple guitar, claps, and stomps. Its accompanying music video employs a visual lexicon that most clearly refers to the artist's own Spanish history using motifs and symbols pertaining to flamenco culture, the bullfight, and distinct references to notable Spanish art. Synthesizing and repositioning visual pillars of Spanish cultural production in this way, Rosalía exhibits an act of iconomachy with images that have historically constituted an idea of Spanish identity. By her specific reconsolidation and reconfiguration of these icons, she articulates a new interpretation of this history, carving a new critical space in which a process of hybridization between contemporary, globalized influences such as hip hop and electronic music can begin to constitute Spanish identity in the present. I explore this by reading the music video for "Pienso en tu mirá" as a visual text that foregrounds violence and destruction – male truckers are shot in the chest, Rosalía herself is held at gunpoint, and several objects and spaces are depicted in the process of being destroyed. Using these forms of physical destruction as a point of departure, I will elucidate how this music video takes on an iconoclastic narrative in that the violence positioned against depicted bodies, spaces, and objects points to the wider conceptual iconomachy occurring toward

traditional Spanish culture and imagery that characterizes the album's conceptual arc.

Brubaker defines iconomachy as the *struggle* about images – an idea that will come to identify Rosalía's engagement with and repositioning of Spanish imagery and symbols (Brubaker, 42). Grounding her musical practice in traditional flamenco precedents as well as a broad history of visual representation unique to Spain, the physical and bodily destruction depicted in this video works to metaphorize a form of symbolic destruction within the broader realm of Spanish production. By *struggling* with the images of this unique past and breaking down its codes to be reassembled by her own hand, Rosalía articulates her individuality by melding contemporary stylings with Spanish music and visual representation, presented in a fragmentary and fractured state.

Conflating literal and conceptual decimation as an interlocked synthesis in this way, we encounter the closing scene of the music video with a newfound critical acuity. Rosalía stands on top of a crashed truck, debris and smoke spread throughout the frame – she is indifferent and unfazed, yet dominant (figures 1 and 2). This poignant conclusion, though at the end of the video, creates a conceptual frame to look through the entirety of the piece – one that privileges the destruction of past forms or representations in order to suggest the inauguration of a new synthetic approach between traditional Spanish and contemporary popular music. The reorientation of these motifs is carried out by the literal destruction of objects, spaces, and bodies in this video, rendering historic codifications and symbols of Spanish culture bare and vulnerable to her own reconfiguration. Rising from the ashes is Rosalía, the agential figure that represents an amalgamation of these fragments, piecing together the detritus to form something new. This interpretation will become clear as this paper walks through the length of the music video, highlighting its iconomachical contestation with the history of Spanish image-making.

The video begins by positioning the viewer in a moving truck, centering on a small figurine of a female flamenco dancer dangling from the rear-view mirror. The truck continues speeding down a straight, empty road until it makes crash contact into the wall of a building at its end, synchronized with an abrupt synthesized crash noise that becomes the consistent marker of the song's 3/4 time signature (figure 3). An association of this sonic marker with crashing resonates throughout the video, saturating it with a destructive air, and equally signalling the beginning of the abrupt and physically violent imagery to come. Just as the truck comes into contact with the wall, the camera cuts to a scene of Rosalía who stares directly at the viewer while being adorned with jewelry by multiple hooded figures (figure 4). Her gaze is steady and strong while a sea of hands swarm around her profile, dressing her as she sits immobile, only moving her lips to the lyrics of the song. One of the hooded figures then bites into her neck drawing blood, which is followed by a scene of an unaffected and indifferent male trucker being shot in the chest while standing in front of a truck – the bloodstain on his white shirt grows as the camera approaches the wound (figures 5 and 6). This bodily violence comes to characterize the chorus and title line of the song – "pienso en tu mirá, tu mirá, clavá, es una bala en el pecho" – which translates to: "thinking of your gaze, it nails me like a bullet in the chest."

The interaction of these two scenes between Rosalía and the male trucker begins to establish specific relegations of feminine and masculine space in this video at a larger scale – femininity is defined by the domestic realm, materiality, and vanity, while masculinity is positioned in opposition, identified by large

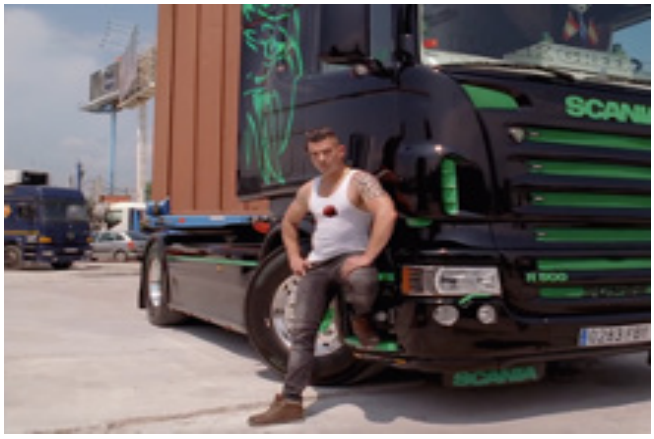

Figure 5

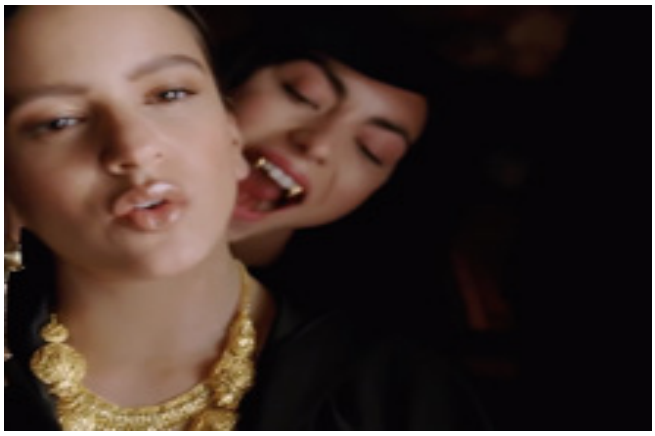

Figure 6

industrial vehicles, their presence in outdoor areas, and an appearance of rigor and machismo. Articulating spatial codifications in this way is the first point at which Rosalía begins her iconomachical contestation with the image of flamenco, whose gendered roles and spaces are baked into its visual references. These gendered codes become confused however, as the specific markers and symbols of masculinity are taken on by Rosalía in following sequences, complicating the exclusivity of her previous feminine affiliation. We are presented with scenes of Rosalía slowly adhering to a masculine identity and challenging the inherently gendered establishment of flamenco as the video progresses – she is seen cocking a gun in men's clothing, and later becomes the focal node of these previously male-oriented outdoor scenes, flanked by the imposing trucks.

Rosalía's play with bodies in this video by inverting gendered roles and prescriptions as such points directly toward an engagement with the politics of flamenco – the first of several specific cultural markers of Spanish history that the artist engages with. William Washabaugh argues that flamenco politics are hidden and "demonstrate the politics of bodies," in which its ideology is promoted physically, as it claims to be a politics that stands outside of thought and consciousness (1). He notes that there is an absence of political content in the flamenco song, but as its style emerged from the poverty and oppression of Andalucía, its political claims are seen as unintentional, yet ultimately undeniable. The body accomplishes its politics rather than the mind (Washabaugh, 4-5). Theorizing the corporeal nature of this cultural practice endows "Pienso en tu mirá" with a particular critical acuity that should be addressed. The choice to depict bodies destroyed – male truckers shot in the chest, and even herself shot in the back – can be interpreted as a direct assault on the history and politics of flamenco. The conceptual effect of this literal destruction of bodies extends to her reconfiguration of male and female spaces and roles in the flamenco world, suggesting that her own creative intervention can manifest only by dissolving its inherent gendered codes.

Flamenco is defined by Washabaugh as a musical style that celebrates distinct moments of sociality, one male-centered, and the other female-centered (1). The male realm is celebrated through public fraternity and male bonding where rhythm, poetry, and passion bind together the "simple folks" in southern Spain. Characterized as dark and musky, this style stands in contrast to the female-centered flamenco experience, which is identified as bright and blaring (Washabaugh, 2). Positioning the two in an antagonizing relationship, the high point of this cultural mode is the bullfight, where the matador stands for the disciplined and cultured man who subdues the wild nature of the bull. Flamenco dance and song imitate this dynamic – women dress in daring clothes and present themselves as hot and "natural" in contrast to the cool, cultured men. Washabaugh further states that this is a time for women to step outside of the suffocating privacy of the household and "take a walk on the wild side" (3).

In these introductory scenes, Rosalía offers a visualization and subsequent registration of the specific roles and spaces designated for men and women in the flamenco realm, but later neutralizes them with her iconoclastic approach. She presents herself as the protagonist in this video who is both the man and woman within the flamenco dynamic – she is simultaneously the woman bound to the domestic sphere, as well as the cool, collected man that tames the woman's furor. We see this most clearly in the scene where Rosalía, in an almost drag-like fashion, cocks a gun while sitting at a kitchen table. Seated with her legs comfortably spread, hair tied up, and wearing a red matador scarf wrapped around her neck, she loads her rifle with bullets while drinking

Figure 7

Figure 8

rum, establishing a masculine persona (figure 7). This second identity is further bolstered by the camera's frame cutting to a bracelet being placed on her wrist with the inscription *varón dandy*, referencing a fragrance for men from Catalonia in 1912 (figure 8). The publicity for this cologne in Spain was based on its character as the only "genuinely manly perfume," and was positioned as a virile fragrance that reinforced the masculinity of Spanish men for many years (Pérez, 189). Perhaps ambiguous at first glance, the male persona is registered only by her represented shift in attitude and the chosen Spanish symbols she associates herself with, including the matador scarf alluding to the male role in the bullfight, and the *varón dandy* bracelet referring to a particular brand of Spanish machismo.

The creation of this male persona is then complicated by the interspersing of scenes presenting Rosalía as a female counterpart to this identity. The sequence establishing her male persona is mixed with shots of her dancing in front of large trucks with her female-presenting backup dancers, as well as with scenes presenting her as a Virgin Mary figure whose aureole is made up of the multiple hands of the anonymous hooded figures from the beginning of the video (figures 9 and 10). Referencing the representation of the Virgin Mary in this way endows her cultivated female persona with a religious history that has had an impact on the formation of Spanish femininity at a larger scale. As a simultaneous figure of identification alongside her male association, Nancy Breuner notes that the Virgin Mary represents an ideal mother, the ultimate paragon, and that she derives her power from the qualities of self-denial and nurturance. She argues that Spanish women may respond to this image because they identify with these attributes, which are consonant with their own experiences in Spanish society (Breuner, 79). Although represented in the established feminine space of the domestic in the music video which could be read as fundamentally linking women to a state of passivity, Timothy Mitchell suggests that Mary's virginity operates not only as a symbol of purity, but of autonomy – she is free of the passions and desires that dominate the human psyche (131). Positioning the figure of Mary in this way, Rosalía extracts the agency of both the Spanish man in the flamenco realm as well as the agency emerging from Mary's virginal autonomy in these scenes. This agency as such endows her own creative practice with an authority that validates and strengthens her contemporary approach to reconstructing cultural identity. Further, both representations of Rosalía as the male and female counterpart to this multivalent character confront us with her consistent and direct gaze, drawing the viewer into an associative construction of meaning. What her strong address to the viewer demarcates, however, is the audience's own preconceived notions of masculine agency and feminine passivity in order to challenge them.

Rosalía's direct address to the viewer is consistent throughout her video, but is particularly poignant and worthy of critical attention in the scene where she physically destroys an object that emblematizes the viewer's gaze. As the camera wanders through the dark spaces of a house and enters a bedroom in which Rosalía is sat facing away, the viewer is identified as a bull. Horns emerge at the sides of the camera's frame, positioning the eyes of the bull as the eyes of the viewer. Approaching her from behind while she sits on the bed, blood begins to stain her back as the camera tightens its proximity to her body (figure 11). She turns to meet our gaze, and at this point of contact, the jump cut of the camera frames the bull as taxidermied and hung up on a wall (figure 12). The viewer's agency is consequently rendered

Figure 9

Figure 10

insignificant and delegitimized by this sequence. A following shot zooms into the bull's dark eye, which then quickly switches to a shot of a black olive held in between Rosalía's teeth, on which she proceeds to bite down and destroy (figures 13 and 14). In a rapid series of object parallels, the olive is equated to the bull's eye, which is immediately equated to the viewer's eye and gaze. This sequence that objectifies and subsequently emaciates the gaze of the viewer by Rosalía herself points to her refusal of pre-established and sedimented visual codes that have come to relegate and distinguish the masculine from the feminine in flamenco culture. Additionally, it powerfully works to build up her agency within the Spanish visual repertoire she engages with, placing her critique and constructed image at the helm.

Figure 11

Figure 12

Such a radical denial and destruction of this establishment is accompanied by sequences of a flamenco dancer performing on raging embers, interspersed among this process of signification that denies the viewer's gaze and their prior assumptions that are tethered to it. Participating in the narrative of this video as an emblem of flamenco culture, the dancer is represented as under strain, his movements seeming to simultaneously stifle an impending blaze sparking from the hot coal (figure 15). As a clear symbolic act, Rosalía uses this figure of the dancer to further express an iconoclastic imperative toward the inherent establishments of this Spanish history. The intermittent presence of this sequence reminds us that this video takes a critical stance toward the specific Spanish context and history within which she is working. It also has the additional function of pointing to the idea of flamenco literally under fire. T. J. Demos argues that the aesthetics of fire carry the meaning of a very physical transformation of material existence which is rapid, final, and nonnegotiable (98). This transformative violence inflicted upon the flamenco dancer suggests a tension with its wider symbolic expanse, a tension that Rosalía emphasizes in order to elucidate her own reconfiguration of the flamenco realm, and at a wider scale, the emblems of a broader Spanish history. The symbols of this culture are actively being destroyed and stripped down to be repurposed, and Rosalía's synthetic and hybrid

Figure 13

Figure 14

Figure 15

approach to contemporary flamenco music is the phoenix that rises out of its ashes.

This notion of hybridity or synthesis as it pertains to iconoclasm and her larger iconomachical relationship to images is taken up by Dario Gamboni and his discussion of Tony Shafrazi's spray painting of Picasso's *Guernica* in 1974. By inscribing the phrase "KILL LIES ALL" across Picasso's monumental piece, Shafrazi claimed that as an artist himself, he was "[bringing] the art absolutely up to date, [retrieving] it from history and giving it life" (124). In response to this event, Stockholm based artist Felix Gmelin suggested that a picture can be seen as a sum of destructions, and that the act of turning a painting into a masterpiece by placing it in the museum locks it in history and renders it "invisible in the present" (Gamboni, 127). By this logic, Gamboni then argues that an avant-garde perspective on iconoclasm can be linked to the desire and necessity to outstrip one's predecessors, in order to avoid becoming locked in history. With Shafrazi's act in particular, he notes that those who damage or "complete" works in order to bring them back from the status of historical monument to that of "iconoclastic" breakthrough, claim to belong to the group who are against "freeze-framing," and are not specifically against images or art (Gamboni, 129).

This perspective can equally be oriented toward an analysis of Rosalía's visual work. Although outside of a museological context, she exists within a specific realm of cultural production, and can be understood to be resisting the freeze-framing of Spanish culture in a historicized time-space. Like Shafrazi, her work aims to bring something up to date, by taking a historical emblem (or emblems) and rendering them relevant for the present. I do not intend to suggest that flamenco or Spanish culture itself is currently in a state of stasis or that it is suffering under the weight of historicizaiton per se. I rather intend to focus on Rosalía's combination of its sedimented codes with contemporary musical and visual stylings and the transformative effect it has for both flamenco and contemporary music. By this understanding, the iconoclastic and iconomachical nature of Rosalía's piece points to a renaissance of specifically Spanish aesthetics and musicality within new streams of popular culture, not with the intention to destroy the historic image of flamenco but to reconfigure it for a new platform of dissemination and reception, as well as to bolster new forms of creative individual expression.

Building upon the flamenco realm in which Rosalía situates herself, we can also examine the ways in which "Pienso en tu mirá" cites other forms of Spanish cultural production and imagery. Although she is identified as an artist that works exclusively with flamenco, this music video exhibits an engagement with Spanish history outside of song and dance, intentionally delving into the realm of painting. One particular scene presents a meticulously organized still-life arrangement – a porcelain figure of a female flamenco dancer is placed on a table surrounded by a selection of fruits, garlic, vases, perfume, cigarettes, and a bottle of *Anis del Mono* liqueur while the ceiling above crumbles onto it (figures 16 and 17). This scene immediately recalls the painted still-life arrangements of Caravaggio, Joachim Beuckelaer, or Francisco de Zurburàn. Situating a miniature statue of a flamenco dancer within this still-life scene, Rosalía positions her visual and musical work within an extensive discourse of Spanish representation by specifically citing the history of still-life painting in Spain.

William B. Jordan suggests that from the end of the sixteenth century, Spanish painters no longer conceived of still life imagery as merely decorative or symbolic, but rather changed its focus to explore a new relationship between the painter's eye, his brush, and his mind. An attention to representations without narrative content as such allowed the endurance of art and the power of the artist to take center stage (1). Spanish painter and teacher of Velàzquez, Francisco Pacheco, had published *Arte de la Pintura* in 1638, which dealt with all aspects of painting, including its theory, practice and iconography. Although hierarchizing its genres and placing still-life as inferior, he praised still-life for its "delight by variety" (Jordan, 9). Writing this book during the period of still-life production in Italy and the Low Countries which saw

Figure 16

Figure 17

the fame of Caravaggio, its popularity in Spain allowed the genre to flourish amongst many artists, including Zurburàn. Some still-life works attempted to achieve realistic monumentality through internal disegno, while others sought to emphasize the intimacy of sensory experience through a microscopic attention to detail (Jordan, 6). The multiple avenues by which the imitation of reality was achieved within this genre gestures toward how the still-life became known for its ability to test the limits of representation as a whole. Jordan further notes that this was an inherently "modern" approach to art, and that cubist painters in the twentieth century, including Pablo Picasso, used the still-life as a vehicle to explore and challenge the boundaries of artistic production (Jordan, 1).

By including a pack of *Rex* cigarettes, a bottle of *Anis del Mono* liqueur, and a small container of perfume into an otherwise traditional still-life scene, Rosalía incorporates distinctly contemporary aspects into its arrangement, but remains grounded within a specifically Spanish context. Rosalía's citation of this genre of painting directly alludes to the way in which it had challenged the status quo of artistic representation in the seventeenth century. As a genre that complicated the perception and ultimate trajectory of art production, its presence in the video suggests that a similar operation is occurring by Rosalía's imperative. She ultimately posits her video as a radical means of expression which, like the Spanish still-life, broadens the contours of what representation can look like and the evolutionary potential it can carry. Setting the still-life in a scene in which its surrounding sapce is crumbling further suggests a move away from this history while still maintaining an integral link to it. Using its revolutionary acumen to confront the ontology of representation allows her to move forward from this past while still adhering to the still-life's inherent challenge to the status quo, effectively translating it into a contemporary context.

By amalgamating these myriad references to Spanish history in order to repackage them and constitute a new Spanish identity, we can view Rosalía's individual creative expression in this video as linked to Laura Rascaroli's notion of the self-portrait film. Differing from an autobiography which creates interpretive coherence through a distinct narrative that the viewer can follow, Rascaroli builds the self-portrait film off of Michel Beaujour's concept of the literary self-portrait. He argues that the self-portrait in literature is a genre that attempts to create coherence through a system of cross-references, anaphoras, superimpositions or correspondences among homologous elements, in such a way as to give the appearance of anachronistic juxtaposition or montage, as opposed to the syntagmatics of narration (Rascaroli, 170-171). It does not matter how scrambled these elements appear to be, since the scrambling of linear narrative always tempts the reader to reconstruct its chronology in some way with the information they are given.

This line of thought relates specifically to Rosalía's work as a complex, disjointed narrative consisting of multiple layers, reconfigurations, and interpretations. Within the music video's difficult, non-chronological, montage-style narrative emerges its status as a self-portrait, allowing the viewer to construct meaning and correspondingly the artist's identity in relation to a redefined constellation of metaphors and symbols. Rascaroli argues that the self-portrait film clings to the analogical, the metaphorical, and the poetic, more than it does to narrative structure and coherence – meaning is not realized linearly, but rather rhizomatically (171). While

the construction of meaning by this framework might apply to music videos generally, its relation to Rosalía's video in particular is poignant given the iconomachy occurring between her chosen emblems of Spanish history. The way in which she destroys and reconfigures icons of tradition to constitute her own contemporary musical and artistic identity illuminate the methodology of the self-portrait film, and its relevance toward the fabrication of an image of the artist and her wider conceptual aims.

By this logic, we encounter Rosalía's music video with a more haphazard and bricolage approach to its interpretation – we read the symbols, codes, metaphors, and analogies in order to construct and conduct an interpretation with some coherence, and to give us a sense of the portrait of herself that is based in the history and culture of Spain. Effectively, Rosalía provides us with a framing of these symbols that enable a rhizomatic construction of meaning, but further reconfigures these codes to point to the dialectic space between Spanish history and contemporary music, the space in which she stakes her musical and artistic identity. Foregrounding the artist herself in the act of interpretation as such allows us to better understand the ways in which her Spanish musical identity is confronted with the homogenizing effects of the contemporary globalized music scene, and the ways in which the two are mediated by the video adhering to a methodology of self-portraiture. As such, the synthesis of these two seemingly disparate realms creates a trajectory along which hyperlocal musical stylings can both acknowledge their rich past and find further meaning in a constantly growing technological era. Rosalía's music video ultimately suggests that by breaking down the well-established emblems of traditional flamenco song and dance, as well as by engaging a Spanish history through the revolutionary nature of still-life painting, these forms can find new and reinvigorated life amidst the uncertain and expanded landscape of the musical present.

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2021 Reviews

Drive My Car

1. Here is an imperative from *Drive My Car*: "Yield yourself and respond to the text." You'll have to trust that the text of *Drive My Car* is here. I can't look at the movie's images or think too long of its plot since my father died, earlier this year. I've seen *Drive My Car* three times though, with Michael, Dominic, and Shayna, respectively. It is not an easily exhausted movie. I saw it at VIFF, in seats close to the screen, then in bed, on a fall afternoon, then again when it was released in theatres. It is a nice movie to share with beloveds.

2. Here's another imperative, as simple and difficult as the last: "I wanted to know her language, so I learned it." On getting to know someone.

3. As Yūsuke (Nishijima Hidetoshi) is driven to and from rehearsals, he listens to a tape of his late wife, Oto (Kirishima Reika), reading Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* aloud. She pauses for Uncle Vanya's lines, which Yūsuke speaks, replying to her. This is how he learns the timing of the text. This is how Oto stays in his life and in the movie after her death. The only thing I'll mention on form is this: once Yūsuke starts talking to his driver, Misaki (Miura Tōko), and starts getting to know his colleagues, his wife's voice is heard less and less often until, suddenly, it slips away, out of the movie, altogether. The text is still there. There is Chekhov's text, Murakami's, and Hamaguchi's. Let me move on from *Drive My Car*. There used to be a restaurant in Toronto on College Street called Windup Bird Cafe that I liked to go to for lunch. I have a Penguin Classics copy of some of Chekhov's plays, including Uncle Vanya, beside my bed, that I found cleaning out my dad's office. When I saw Hamaguchi's Asako I & II at TIFF on a weekday afternoon, Hamaguchi introduced the movie and said something like Thank you for coming but don't you have jobs? He laughed. Late in the movie, I went to the washroom, half-expecting to miss the end. But when I came back, the movie was still playing, going somewhere new. That's one thing I like about Hamaguchi's work. When you think it's over, there's still more. It keeps going.

Review By Harrison Wade

Red Rocket

Sean Baker has made a name for himself by crafting observational, deeply empathetic films, and his latest, *Red Rocket*, is no exception. Simon Rex stars as Mikey, a middle-aged adult film actor seeking a career change after a string of bad luck. He returns to his Texas hometown to reunite with his estranged wife, Lexi (Bree Elrod), but while there, he meets a 17-year old cashier named Strawberry (Suzanna Son), whom he believes could make it big in pornography.

Strawberry's youthful naivete is at once sweet and disarming, and the scenes she shares with Mikey run the gamut from charmingly nostalgic, as Mikey reconnects with his past, more idealistic self, and disturbing, as he skillfully sells the world of porn to an initially hesitant Strawberry. His sales pitch involves attractive promises, but the viewer is reminded of the unlikelihood of their fulfilment every time Lexi appears on-screen, who initially joined the porn world with Mikey and then washed up when she tried to make it big.

As with his past works, Baker represents his characters without passing judgement on them, and this is how he succeeds where other, more sensationalist cinematic depictions of pornography have not: *Red Rocket* authentically depicts the realities of the contemporary digital porn market, where ease of access has made dreams of porn stardom as common as dreams of stardom in Hollywood used to be. As the debate over the ethics of pornography becomes increasingly polarized, *Red Rocket* offers a refreshingly balanced perspective that allows each viewer to draw their own conclusions about the morally ambivalent narrative playing out before them.

Review By Tamar Hanstke

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2021 Reviews

One Second

Though it was undoubtedly produced prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing closures of most movie theatres, *One Second* offers a compelling reminder of the ways in which movies bring people together, without ever being as cliché as the sentiment may seem. Set during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the film follows an escaped fugitive (played by Zhang Yi in one of several recent collaborations with Zhang Yimou), who escapes from a labour camp to track down a newsreel in which his estranged daughter is purported to appear. The fugitive eventually makes it to a nearby town with a cinema, but only after a chaotic series of events which include the film reel being found, stolen, recovered, and then damaged. Just as the fugitive pursues the purported footage of his daughter—which is ultimately little more than a "blink and you'll miss it" frame where she appears in the background—he is constantly pursued by the authorities. His time and freedom are limited. His goal is not to reunite with his daughter, but simply to see her image—to watch and re-watch this single moment over and over again, a virtual reunion being the only possibility.

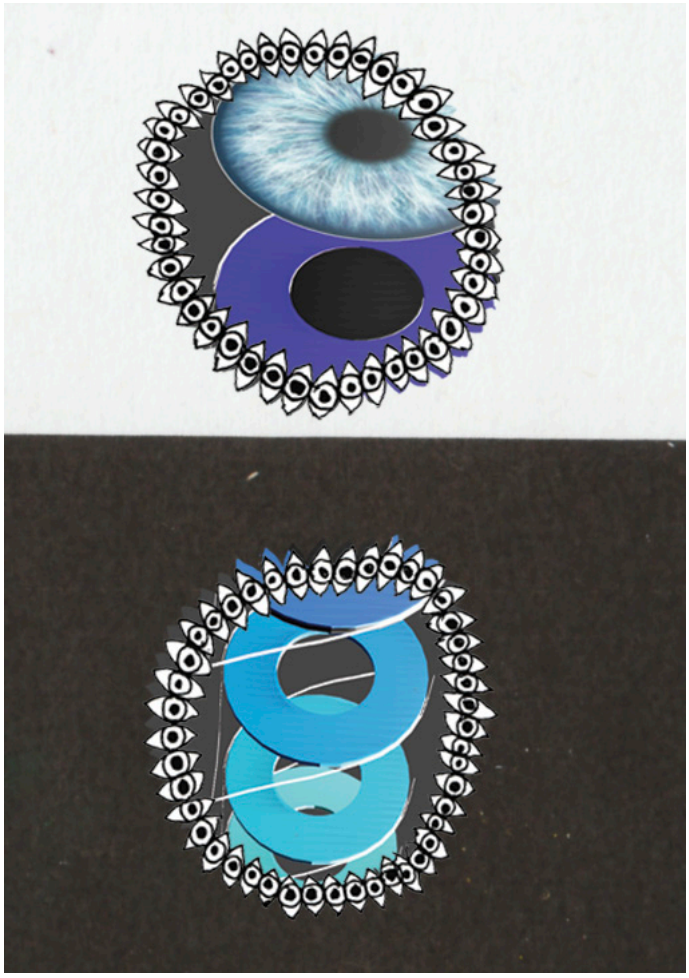
The most memorable sequence in the film is, following the fugitive's pleading, Mr. Movie (Fan Wei)—a theatre operator who acts as sort of community leader—organizes a huge operation to clean and restore the damaged footage. The townspeople believe in this work because they believe in the cinema. The packed theatre becomes like a community hub, made particularly powerful sitting in a fairly crowded theatre myself at a time in which a return to theatre-going still felt quite novel.

Review By Alec Christensen

VIFF Vancouver International Film Festival

2021 Reviews

Night Raiders

Danis Goulet's first feature, *Night Raiders*, filters the history of Canadian colonialism through dystopian science fiction conventions, plugging into a growing trend of Indigenous filmmakers reworking historical issues with the trappings of genre filmmaking. Set in unspecified Cree Territory, *Night Raiders* dramatizes the territory's occupation by the fictional Emerson State. These occupiers kidnap anyone under the age of 18 to train them as soldiers in their Academy. The connections between this dystopian context and residential schools are clear enough, but the film makes them clearer with an opening trigger warning that directly names its historical referent, and it's this kind of direct engagement that holds a lot of it together. About halfway through, there's a poignant scene where our lead, Niska, reconnects with her daughter, Waseese, who has been sent to the Academy for reprograming. A scene of healing, the emotional impact comes from the intimate attention to complex emotions between parents and children trapped in an oppressive system. But the film isn't just a family drama. It's also a science fiction fantasy, and it struggles to find its footing in this register. Establishing its world with impressive narrative economy and visual resourcefulness, the film doesn't quite maintain the scope of this futuristic setting. By the end, pacing problems undercut tension, and character development plateaus. Ultimately, *Night Raiders* isn't *Blade Runner* or *Children of Men*, and it's at its best when it knows this, even embraces it, but some genre trappings are too big to shake off.

Review By Michael Stringer