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contents editorial

Issue 50, Winter 2011/12

- 2 Editorial
- 3 On Audience & Fandom
- 8 Notes on Contributors
- 9 'Poverty Porn' and *The Scheme*
- 13 Video Games and Education
- 17 Narrative vs. Gameplay
- 21 *Heat* – an Appraisal
- 28 Disciplining the Curriculum for Excellence
- 39 Reviews
 - The Media Teacher's Book*
 - After the Media*
 - Battlestar Galactica*
 - The Emerging Toddlers*
 - Understanding Horror*
 - Faber Book of French Cinema*
 - Studying German Cinema*
 - Cinema Italiano*
 - The Cinema of India*
 - The Art of Film*
 - More Bad News from Israel*

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Editorial address: 24 Burnett Place
Aberdeen AB24 4QD
email: <desmurphy47@gmail.com>
<www.mediaedscotland.org.uk>

Editor: Des Murphy

Editorial group: Des Murphy and Liz Roberts

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In this edition of *The Media Education Journal* we sought a balance between old and the new media. Wendy Elrick's experiences as a hardcore convention-going fan combined with her knowledge and skill as a media studies teacher gives rise to an insightful look at the key aspect of Audience, refreshed and invigorated by the concept of fandom which is becoming increasingly important in audience studies.

Alex Law and Gerry Mooney analyse BBC Scotland's phenomenally popular, BAFTA Scotland-winning documentary, *The Scheme*, taking on the popular classification of "poverty porn" where the "more disciplined" classes derive pleasure from observing the unruly behavior and "even worse taste of those big, bad Others penned up in council housing schemes" but conclude that "any pleasure taken from impoverished bodies of *The Scheme* can only be of a different sort [from real pornography]: the mundane spectacle of class dispossession".

Also dealing with a traditional medium is Deryck Swann on Michael Mann's 1995 crime thriller, *Heat*. Swann sees the film as being one of the most skilled examples in 1990s American cinema of a group of films which express the idea of a "fin de siècle dissatisfaction with our lives".

New media is given attention in two articles on games, a medium which is becoming more prominent in the lives of young people as well as being economically important, with the UK video games sector having estimated global sales of £2 billion, larger, it is claimed, than either its film or music industries. For an older generation of media studies teachers whose

idea of computer games doesn't go far beyond Phroggy and Chucky Egg, Iain Donald's article usefully contextualises the role of video games in education in the coming period.

And while computing studies may seem the natural home in schools and colleges for the study of games, media studies approaches are also valid, even if it means a thorough revision of some of the key aspects, not the least of which is Narrative. Danya Galloway describes the perceived conflict between Narrative and Ludology (or Gameplay) but feels that the core components and limitations of each form can become the "catalyst for the design and development of new experiences." These two articles from Abertay University are only a taster for what we hope will be a substantial contribution to the issue of *The MEJ* which is due to appear in about a year's time.

Finally, Rick Instrell argues, in 'Disciplining the Curriculum', that many teachers, while supporting the progressive goals of 'A Curriculum for Excellence', feel that it is "vague, anti-intellectual and ignorant of subject disciplines". He argues that these flaws could be repaired if curriculum designers were influenced more by linguistics, in particular multimodal social semiotics. He applies this critique to English but contends that that these approaches are equally valid to other disciplines, including mathematics, the social and the physical sciences.

In the next issue we hope to feature a number of articles on the theme of Ireland as well as articles on *Pans Labyrinth* and a 'Close-up and Personal' analysis of a scene from *Singing in the Rain*. The deadline for *MEJ 51* is the end of April 2012.



Association for Media Education in Scotland

AMES is the subject association for media studies, media education and related disciplines. Its objectives are to promote media literacy, to support media teachers and to raise the status of media education.

AMES is a grassroots organisation set up by classroom teachers to promote media education on a national level while also providing support and advice to media teachers themselves.

AMES is active in lobbying and negotiating with education planners at all levels in Scotland. Membership of AMES will enable you to have a say in the future direction of media education in Scotland. To join, contact Des Murphy at the address on Page 2. Members of AMES receive free copies of the bi-yearly *Media Education Journal* and the AMES newsletter.

AMES is a non-profit organisation and registered charity and is funded through membership subscriptions and subscriptions to the *Media Education Journal*. It holds a yearly conference in May/June at which the AGM takes place. As a charity, AMES is overseen by OSCR and examined by an Independent Examiner.

On Audience and Fandom

Wendy Elrick

Media studies teachers often seem to divide audiences into neat boxes, whether by gender, age or social class. In the past, media producers and distributors have often chosen to regard audiences in a similar way. It is clear, however, that the development of new technologies is vastly changing the way audiences consume media product and is breaking down these neat definitions. There is a segment of the audience, on the other hand, that is using these new technologies to bolster their consumption of old, traditional media, particularly film and television. But they too have never fitted into the neat boxes, never been the traditional passive consumer beloved of advertisers and institutions. They had a more subversive, active role in reacting to their texts. I'm talking about fans.

Fandom has become a subject of study for many academics interested in media. The way that this group of people reacts to and with "their" text has gone from being seen as deeply strange and shifted into something that is of interest, not only to academics, but to the institutions behind media as well. These fans are a guaranteed audience in many ways, something rare in the shifting sands of media consumption, a niche audience in the world of dying broadcasting. This article aims to give an insight into academic thinking about fandom, a more subjective insider perspective, and will hopefully help provoke a discussion of how fan behaviour relates to the changing notion of audience with which media producers and distributors are trying to come to terms.

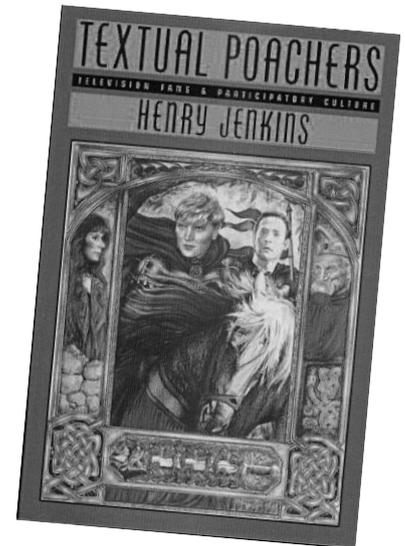
In the course of this piece of writing, I will be referring to many television programmes that you may not have heard of. If I tried to give you a synopsis of everything I refer to, we'd need a few dozen issues of the *MEJ*, so I'm going to refer you to Google. I'm also going to use the words nerd and geek here,

reclaiming these pejorative terms. There is no negativity associated here. Indeed, forget Generation X and Y, it is the time of Generation Geek.

Of course, now I've mentioned pejorative terms, I guess this is the place to discuss the bad reputation that fans have. Whenever newspapers or television programmes address fans, they always pick on the crazies. The people who give us all a bad name. The people we are afraid to be in the same room with too. There's an element of obsession in fannish behaviour but there is also an element of sanity: these people seem to have replaced one with the other. They are what fans now refer to as 'stans' after the central character in the rapper Eminem's song 'Stan' from *The Marshall Mathers LP* of 2001. These are the type of people who can't seem to control their urge to only talk about their fan life, who spend all their time involved in fan activities and don't seem to be able to do anything else. These are the people that are defined as deviants, seen as other, and these are the people who always seem to be used to represent fandom.

The academic viewpoint, or why Stan is not all there is

Serious academic studies of fandom tend to try and show that these negative stereotypes are not representative of most fans. There is discussion of the pathological fan, the delusional 'Stan', but it tends to reflect music and celebrity obsession, particularly in the case of Mark Chapman. Most modern academic fan writing tries to rehabilitate fans to some extent. The idea that fans are interested in pop culture because they are "brainless consumers" who attach inappropriate importance to devalued culture and are infantile, immature social misfits unable to separate fantasy from reality dominated early fan analysis. Modern writers react against this idea.



Henry Jenkins remains one of the primary writers on the fan experience. He discusses how most fans are male, white, middle class, college educated and early adopters of technology. He chooses to take a very positive view of fans and their behaviour, admitting that he tends to discount the negative sides of any human interaction in order to portray the fan as someone worthy of study, an adventurer on the seas of media, sometimes pirate, sometimes freedom fighter. His major text *Textual Poachers* (1992) is held as a bible for describing and analysing the ways take texts, read them and rework them through fan art, videos, fiction and filk (song).

The other major study from 1992, the collection of essays called *The Adoring Audience* edited by Lisa Lewis also contains some of Jenkins' preliminary work as well as examining fans from a range of other areas, including music and celebrity culture. These two books summarised theorists' attempts to describe fandom and kick-started a new academic interest in fans from psychologists and ethnographers. They examine the way television executives take notice of fans and introduce the notion that fans can affect how shows are produced as well as fan activities and attempt to describe the fan experience mainly through observational case study.



Many texts deal with the ideas and concepts within these two books, including Matt Hills in 2002 with his publication *Fan Cultures*. Hills is very critical of the work that had been carried out in the past decade, problematising Jenkins' approach as well as that of the other theorists. He accurately points out that these writers were often excluding areas of fandom (and, indeed, misrepresenting them) in order to fit fans into the neat preconceived boxes. The questions he raises about the romanticisation of the fan experience in order to treat it sympathetically and the inherent consumer/anti-consumer ethics of fandom led a new generation of cultural studies writers to re-evaluate their approaches. This can be seen in a second collection of articles published in 2007, titled *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World* and edited by J Gray, C Sandvoss and C Lee Harrington. This text starts to conceptualise the changes in the media world brought about by the spread of the Internet and new viewing technologies, a topic Henry Jenkins explores extensively in his 2008 book *Convergence Culture*. These are the main texts to study, a claim handily backed up by a survey of academic fans published by Matt Hills exploring *Media Academics as Media Audiences* (2007) where he suggests there is a hierarchy among fan academics.

Whether using case studies, statistical analysis or even auto-ethnographic biographies, it is clear from the writing that fandom is still something of a problematic area. For one thing, all the writers struggle in some way or another to define what they mean by fandom. There is an attempt by some writers to claim that fans are merely misnamed experts, aficionados cruelly stigmatised by the fact

they direct their attention to pop culture artefacts rather than high culture. There is a certain embarrassment in describing the strong emotional engagement (and the fact elements of sexuality are often bound in) that fans have with the objects of their fascination. As many of the activities fans stereotypically participate in are judged negatively by the wider media, fandom is simultaneously reluctant to allow outsiders an insight into their world and keen to portray itself as "good". Therefore the observer runs the risk of gathering strictly edited information or becoming an insider in order to observe truth, becoming less objective. Even when academic writers use their own experiences, issues of critical distance creep in.

Not only is there a problem in defining the boundaries of fandom but there is also a difficulty in defining the boundaries of what constitutes a fan activity and fan artefact. Some writers think that only television programmes that fit neatly into a genre background should be included but this narrow definition also does not take into account the fact that even fans struggle to define the 'canon' of their interest. A television show is no longer just a TV show, but incorporates tie-in material in the forms of novels and comics; interviews, both in print or on film with stars, producers and critics; toys and games and even online websites. Jenkins tries to define this as the paratext, the show itself, and the extratext, the additional material that may or may not be included as acceptable.

One thing all the academic writers seem to agree on is the fact that media fandom is permanent. The two driving forces behind the internet are semi-seriously pointed out as being fandom and porn, at least initially. Jenkins (2008) goes so far as to suggest that the model of participatory culture that fandom has created may be transferred to other areas of modern life and used to reinvigorate participation in politics and current affairs, pointing to the 2004 US Presidential election as a starting point. I would suggest that Glow is perhaps trying to do the same in Scottish educational circles.

As a fan, it is nice to not be described as a raving lunatic. I do find the idea of being an anti-consumer, taking ownership of a text and moulding it to fit my ideology and experience to be very attractive. It's quite flattering. The problem is that I don't think that, as ever, any theory fully encapsulates my experience, for all I recognise myself

in many of the descriptions. The fan world is always debating and modifying its definition of 'fan' and 'fandom' too and much as the way in which we consume media is constantly fluctuating, so the notion of fannish behaviour will also shift.

The subjective perspective, also known as 'this is just me'

I've always been subject to fan behaviour, way back to even pre-internet days (remember those?). I suppose the first television show that I was properly fannish about was the BBC's *Chronicles of Narnia* adaptations. I pestered my parents until they bought the videos (remember those?) and spent a lot of time discussing the differences between source and adaptation, illustrating missing scenes and generally being a little bit obsessed. And that's the first key component of a fan: obsession. This is not the casual viewer you are dealing with. This is someone who feels like the text belongs to them, feels protective of it when others criticise it and even objects to the very fact there might be developments they don't like on 'my' show.

What else? There was (roughly chronologically) *Star Trek*, *X-Files*, *Babylon 5*, *Buffy* (and *Angel*), *Farscape*, a little bit of *Lord of the Rings*, *Stargate SG-1*, *Alias*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Terminator: Sarah Connor Chronicles*, *Chuck* and *Supernatural*. You may notice the tele-fantasy bias of these choices. I'm pretty much a geek. It is also very American-television based. There are enormous *Harry Potter* and *Doctor Who* fandoms out there but I must admit to having pretty much sidestepped these. The new BBC *Sherlock* adaptation seems to have spawned quite a following too. Though if you look hard enough, there's a fandom about just about anything: books, comics, pop bands, newscasters . . . The thing all these fandoms have in common is the behaviour of the fans.

So why is a fan different from a viewer? There is definitely a cult element (much as I hate the term. There are other terms I detest – 'sci fi', for example. It's SF or science fiction. But I digress) but cult doesn't always mean a limited audience. *Heroes* and *Lost* are two examples of shows that had enormous audiences and a lot of mainstream interest (at least to start with) and also had enormous fannish interest. Water cooler television, as the US marketing executives would term it, where ordinary office workers would discuss the show during their coffee or water breaks.

The reason water cooler television is desirable? Look at the age group – office workers tend to fall into the 18-49 (or the even more desirable 18-30) demographic. Prime advertising meat.

And that's the number one reason why fans are good and vocal, dedicated fans are better. Fans give a programme a dedicated hardcore audience. An audience gets you advertisers. Advertisers get you profit and, bang, success. Even non-commercial channels like the BBC are eager for a success. *Doctor Who* pulled in an average of 7 million viewers rising to a peak of 12 million during its last season. Numbers that more than compete with reality shows like *The X Factor* and *Strictly Come Dancing*. And that's just the domestic television market. There are also the DVD sales (which are substantial) and the overseas sales. *Doctor Who* is shown in around 50 countries around the world and the BBC profits. As Mitch Benn repeats in his somewhat anthemic song, it's one of the reasons to be Proud of the BBC.

Viewers of first-run programmes are only part of the picture. Technology has changed the manner in which television is consumed. Videos enabled repeat viewings, a more detailed interrogation of the text. The latest DVR and digital viewing platforms mean that all texts are available, no matter when (and also, more illegally, where) you are in the world. Fans were among the first to colonise these technologies both past and present.

The disparity of timing is starting to cause problems with the "magic wings of the internet" being readily available. There are the legal download sites such as iTunes and Hulu that allow near same day downloading of television shows. More controversially there are other methods of acquiring programmes through file-sharing or streaming websites. Here the international viewer, whether she be in Germany or the US or Thailand, can acquire the programme within a day of it being shown. The BBC moved up its scheduled showing of *Mad Men* Season 4 because it wanted to stop illegal downloading of the US episodes and keep a larger audience share. Admittedly, I wait for *Mad Men* to show on normal TV because I want to see it in full glorious HD as it deserves to be seen.

A list was recently published of the most pirated television shows and, to my entire lack of surprise, cult shows made up the majority of the top twenty with *Chuck*

at number one. So while the show may lack viewers in the measurable Nielsen rating way, it is definitely acquiring them online. File sharing has made copyright breaking easier, but back in the olden days, videos made their way across the Atlantic on a fairly regular basis. I remember the excitement when we got a hold of 'Unification' (the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode where Spock returns) or new episodes of *Babylon 5* Season 4 (after the incredible cliff-hanger at the end of Season 3). My university SF&F society would gather around a tiny television and consume avidly. Good times.

In the dusty sub-basements of the history of fandom, tomes tell of days before the internet where fan clubs and fanzines ruled the world. These were often quite limited organisations, advertised in the back of specialist magazines. They tended to be limited geographically. The internet changed all that. Since the internet was created by nerds, for nerds, it is no surprise that nerds prone to fan behaviour found their way onto the internet. Computers and nerds have always had a relationship. I was the first person in my school to have a fully word processed Standard Grade folio. I was one of the first people to have home internet. Easier access to programmes came later. First there were discussions – Usenet groups, mailing lists, bulletin boards and forums. Social networking continues to change the way the conversation takes place but the conversation itself remains very similar, if not in fact the same.

Blogs were the first shift away from the mailing list/bulletin boards of the past for me. Although these still remain, most fan discussion takes place on blogs nowadays. And sites such as Livejournal and Dreamwidth, Insane Journal, Journalfen all helped people set up communities and personal blogs with the minimum of hardship. These sites are starting to give way to Twitter and Tumblr now. Twitter has definitely changed the way I interact with fandom. Limiting your conversations (so word length is something I have an issue with) to 140 characters is very tough, but the way that I can link to producers, writers, actors and other fans makes the experience fascinating. It really skews your awareness of the world, in the way that you receive news so quickly and the way people use it to motivate people to support their show. Jeff Eastin, the producer of *White Collar*, promises behind-the-scenes pictures or script glimpses if he attains a certain number of followers, thus



BBC1's *Sherlock* has developed a fan following for a UK-based show.

promoting himself as well as his show. Fans often have a role in promoting the shows they love. I frequently recommend shows and lend DVDs to others in order to encourage them to watch. But there are other ways I show my support for my show.

The most stereotypical view of fan activity is attendance at conventions. Conventions are something that my now husband strong-armed me into attending but I find myself enjoying independently now. I like "cons" for a number of reasons. They are a chance to find out more about the show I adore (although I could probably do without finding out whether any more actors wear boxers or briefs). They offer me a chance to meet likeminded people in a face to face setting, which can mediate some of the unpleasantness that the anonymity of a computer screen can lead to. I do quite like meeting the actors, although I really would prefer to meet more writers and producers regularly and here their take on shows.

So what happens at a con? Most of the time I meet up with friends, meet new people I already have something in common with, talk a lot, drink more, listen to some actors answer questions about the show. Drink more. Dance. Get some autographs signed. And spend more time in the bar. One of my friends met a hotel manager who discussed why he loved having a convention booked into his hotel: "You lot drink like rugby players but fight like chess players". It isn't just 'Curriculum for Excellence' that's responsible for the sorry state of my liver. More frequently, however, signing events are starting to take over from the more usual convention where all you go for is the autographs. I

have yet to be sold on these because there is no chance to really blather to other people, despite the size of the star guests.

My best con story comes from a *Chuck* convention. *Chuck* is buried somewhere on an obscure satellite channel in the UK but is on NBC on a Monday night in the US. It has been pretty much constantly under threat of cancellation since its first season. The third season wasn't confirmed as a go until the very last minute and even then had its budget cut and a half season order put in place. *Chuck* has always had a very strong group of organised fans supported by the executive producer, Josh Schwartz (who created *The OC* and is also responsible for *Gossip Girl* – not much of a crossover audience) and the cast of the show. Anyway, I like *Chuck*. My badge lanyard is a *Chuck* "Nerd Herd" one.

Chuck was in danger of not being picked up (yet again) and this time the fans got smart. They realised that writing to the network, sending cute gimmicky things or just voting in every single online poll possible (E!'s *Save Our Show* being a favourite) might not work here. So they targeted the advertisers. Subway had a history of successful product placement on *Chuck*, with many of the characters consuming subs on a regular basis. The plan was for fans to buy a sub, pop a comment card in the box in Subway that they were doing it to support *Chuck* and then watch the show. I don't know how well it paid off, but (the point, finally) Zachary Levi (*Chuck* himself) was at this con and decided to throw his support behind the show. He marched the convention crowd to the nearest Subway branch and got behind the counter to make us all subs. All four hundred of us. It took a fair while.

The campaign built the all-important buzz about the show. It got gossip sites talking and media sites uploaded pictures, video and wrote articles on alternative marketing and fan campaigns. Whether it was responsible for the show's renewal or not, it succeeded in selling a hell of a lot of subs in Birmingham (and across the world) that day. NBC's president, Ben Silverman, definitely credited fan with the show's renewal order.

Fan campaigns have a long history, going back to the original *Star Trek*, the grand-daddy of all fandoms. The letter writing campaigns that secured a third season are a little passé nowadays mind. One of my personal favourites was the campaign to

send bottles of Tabasco sauce to help get *Roswell* a second season. I didn't like the show but you have got to wonder what WB executives did with over 6000 bottles. *Firefly* had a very vocal fan presence, who called themselves Browncoats. Once their show was cancelled, a campaign entitled "Don't Stop the Signal" started and promoted the show after its initial television run. The success of the campaign was seen in the DVD sales of the show (which were huge) and the fact that Universal invested a huge amount of money in *Serenity*, a feature film sequel to the series. My husband's irrational hatred of all things Joss Whedon (I don't know either) meant he never watched the show but he happily came to see the film with me and enjoyed it without any foreknowledge. Success all round.

This type of fan activity seems a little more respected nowadays. One element of fan behaviour that seems to be one of the most popular yet also one of the most reviled is fanfiction. It is one of the main ways in which many fans interact with their shows and also with each other, through the network of online services such as fanfiction.net and Archive of Our Own which were established purely for the sharing of these "transformative works". Fanfiction seems to have existed for as long as fandom has, with many of the "fanzines" that were shared at early conventions containing a lot of writing.

Fanfiction is where a writer takes the show as their starting point and spins their own tales around the characters, setting or events. Sometimes these take the forms of vignettes to episodes, filling in missing scenes or adding scenes that support a fan's decoding of a character's relationships. Sometimes these are the starting point for entirely new episodes in the lives of the characters. The characters can be transposed to any setting, to any occupation, in a sub-genre known as alternative universes. In fact, the way that these characters are "used" is as varied and unbounded by only the limits of the writer's imagination. The problem is that these characters "belong" to the creators of the show, the networks and producers. There's even a sub-set of fiction based on the real people who inhabit the roles of favourite characters. And this is where the problems start. The issue of intellectual property ownership and what constitutes "fair use" is a tangled and controversial issue.

Most producers seem to ignore fanfiction, in that they are aware of its existence but really do not want to discuss it. Some companies and producers send out "cease and desist" letters demanding removal of anything they perceive as contravening their copyright – *Star Wars* was particularly known for this. A rare few producers acknowledge its existence but the manner in which *Supernatural's* creative team have engaged with their fanbase and incorporated fanfiction, including references to slash fiction, as well as the idea of conventions and online fan communities into their show is quite unique and suggests a new way of engaging with their fanbase. However, the question remains whether the casual or uninvolved viewer would react to the story elements in the same way has yet to be appropriately addressed.

One of the things I find most interesting about the fanfiction community is that it is mainly made up of women. The fact that the vast number of producers and consumers of fanfiction are female is surprising when one considers the stereotypical audience of many genre shows is seen to be male. There is a great deal of academic study into why this is but one theory I am fond of is that women do not see representations of themselves in these male dominated shows and therefore use fanfiction to create these representations. This may account for the fact that fanfiction frequently deals with emotional fallout not seen in the show or by placing male characters into relationships, frequently with other male characters. This phenomenon is often traced back to early *Star Trek* fandom where Kirk and Spock were placed in a romantic relationship, denoted by a forward slash between their names, as in Kirk/Spock. This gave rise to the term "slash" denoting a homosexual relationship between characters. More recently, portmanteau terms have gained in popularity but I admit to finding them slightly ridiculous. Equally, they are not limited to slash pairings: Spuffy for Spike and Buffy, Spork (or the slightly ruder Kock) as an update for Kirk and Spock, Destiel for Dean and Castiel, which to my mind sounds like some kind of *My Little Pony*.

This is supposed to be a subjective "tell all" but the unease with which producers and some fans view fanfiction leaves me uneasy about admitting my own involvement. Fanfiction was something I was writing way back for book series

before I even knew what it was. It was my way of interacting with the text. I think Mercedes Lackey's recent post on the NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) says it best. Lots of writers learn how to write using fanfiction. We all try to write by copying our favourite writers to start with (and actively encourage our pupils to ape good examples) so in some ways I think I like the idea that it is a way of starting to learn how to write. The first generation of web writers are now starting to make a real splash in "real" SF & F circles – Naomi Novik and Cassandra Clare being two I definitely know of. Stephanie Meyer is rumoured to also belong to this group but that may be malicious gossip.

Fanfiction, particularly the sharing of it online, allows me to share my ideas about characters and expand the worlds I am actively engaged with. It lets me make characters from different shows meet each other. And, yes, it lets me design my idealised male characters who are open with their emotions and, apparently, very fluid with their sexuality – a feminist rewriting of the text, if you'll allow me; a very particular type of differential decoding, referred to sometimes as the wearing of "slash goggles".

I mentioned how *Supernatural's* producers incorporating references to fandom in their show and this acknowledgement of fan activity is becoming increasingly common, especially taking into consideration the equality that the internet provides. The term for this is fan service, where gratuitous references are made to "fanon". *Glee* did this. In the episode 'Furt', Finn makes a speech where he mentions the tradition of portmanteau nicknames for relationships: Finchel (for Finn and Rachel) and Puckelberry (for Puck and Rachel Berry). Some fans dislike it ("I don't like the idea that they are aware of what we are doing" attitude that seems ridiculous when you post these ideas in a public forum). Even actors sometimes like to give shout-outs to their old shows. Nathan Fillion, Mal Reynolds in *Firefly* is now the lead on *Castle*, a crime series set in New York. He dressed as a 'space pirate' during their Hallowe'en episode – essentially wearing his old *Firefly* costume – and spoke Chinese, another reference to the show.

It isn't just shows that I like that do this. The classic example, in many ways, of fan service going wrong was the Bruce Willis/Cybill Shepherd classic *Moonlighting*, where the producers apparently gave into fan pressure to have the characters "get together". The magic is then regarded as having vanished. But how is fan service different to what shows try to do which is to keep their audience happy? Joss Whedon famously said "you don't keep an audience by giving them what they want but giving them what they need".

I own a T-shirt that says "Joss Whedon is my Master now" which is a reference to an old *Star Wars* shirt that said "George Lucas is my Master". I own quite a few

sell me products (both through advertising and the show itself), I don't think being a fan is going to go away any time soon. The fandom world replicates the structures of any community – there are the meeting places, the outspoken leaders, the wallflowers and the vast in-between. I have never found fandom to be the utopia that Jenkins would like it to be, with everyone harmoniously working together. But it still promises me a greater degree of social acceptability than certain portions of the outside world. I don't have to rely on looks or wealth to gain social prestige, for example. Instead talent and participation are key. And since I don't really have talent . . .



'Pulptrek' by 'rabittooth' – fanfiction artwork.

t-shirts. I've got a Merlotte's Bar and Grill one, a Sunnydale High one, a Viper squadron one. I even have a few less subtle ones. Merchandising is another part of being a fan. Where would I be without my *Supernatural* mug, my posters, my t-shirts, my tie-in books, my magazines . . . I must admit that I don't consider myself to be that much of a collector. I know people who are much worse (as I do with all these fan behaviours). I draw comfort from that fact. But it's another revenue stream for the show I love. In some twisted way I believe I am supporting my show like this, as well as providing free advertising.

So why am I still a fan after all these years? It could be my personality type (seems likely) but it could also be tied to the idea of social acceptability. The best thing about being a fan is the sense of community. If it wasn't for being a fan, I would never have met half my friends (or indeed my husband, but that is a puke inducing story for another time). Even though I know I am being manipulated by multinational corporations determined to

Conclusions

Media fandom can be an important part of audience studies. It is clear that academics within the fields of cultural and media studies recognise this and producers are starting to engage with the idea of an audience with more of a stake in the product, as a guaranteed audience and a solid source of advertising revenue. It is quite likely that pupils in the classroom have run across some kind of fan behaviour in their own forays into social networking, from following their favourite celeb

on Twitter or joining Facebook groups to perhaps entering the world of online discussion and buying merchandise. Hopefully an understanding of these types of activities will aid discussion of audience pleasures and decoding in the classroom. Or, who knows, maybe I have been brainwashed by 'cult'.

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Contributors to this issue

Miriyam Aouragh conducted PhD research (2001–2007) regarding the social impact of the Internet among Palestinians under occupation and in forced exile. After her PhD she was awarded the Rubicon (NWO) Postdoc grant. Since 2009 she has been a postdoc fellow at the Oxford Internet Institute where she studies the implementation of Web 2.0 in political activist organising in Palestine and Lebanon. She is also studying the relevance of the internet on complex political dynamics in the Arab world and current revolutions and lectures in Cyber Politics and Mass Media at the Middle East Centre of Oxford University.

Cary Bazalgette worked at the British Film Institute from 1979 to 2007, having previously been a teacher of English and filmmaking in London secondary schools. She has written and edited a number of classroom resources for media education and has published and spoken widely on this topic in the UK and around the world. She was Head of BFI Education from 1999–2006, has been a member of the European Commission's Media Literacy Experts' Group and was Chair of the Media Education Association from 2009–2011. She is currently undertaking doctoral research on how pre-school children develop an understanding of texts, and skills in textual interpretation, from their early encounters with films and TV.

Jon Davies tutors in French Film Studies at Morley College in London. After graduating in History at UCL he packed his mother's shopping trolley with film books and headed off to Paris. He was a volunteer at the Cinémathèque française in the 1970s and became a film editor and director in British television. Has recently taken up the post of CEO, Wikipedia UK. <http://www.frenchcinema.info>

Iain Donald is a graduate in History and International Relations from the University of Aberdeen, where he also gained his doctorate in the field of History. He undertook an MSc in Information Systems from Robert Gordon University, before a career in IT and Game Development brought him back to teaching. Iain joined the Institute of Arts, Media and Computer Games in 2010 where he is a lecturer and programme tutor for the B.Sc. (Hons) Computer Games Application Development degree.

Wendy Elrick currently teaches English and Media Studies at Aboyne Academy in Aberdeenshire. She spends a large proportion of her life consuming dubious television in the name of research and also because she is a lifelong fangirl, always ready for the next hit. She also spends entirely too much time online and may be contacted at wendyelrick@googlemail.com.

Dayna Galloway is a lecturer based in the Institute of Arts, Media and Computer Games at the University of Abertay Dundee. He currently leads the BA (Hons) Game Design and Production Management degree, with his teaching focusing on narrative theory, pre-

visualisation, interaction design and game production. Dayna has capitalised on his life-long passion for videogames, undertaking practice-based and theoretical research concerned with narrative design in interactive entertainment, emergent interactive forms and collaborative practices.

Rick Instrell is a freelance CPD provider and a bfi associate tutor. He is a former convener of AMES Management Committee and is currently researching the multimodal aspects of mathematical communication.

Alex Law is Professor of Sociology at Abertay University, Dundee. Amongst other things he is currently working on a book on common sense and social theory, the relationship of state and society in Scotland, and collective memory in former coalmining communities of Fife. His most recent book is *Key Concepts in Classical Social Theory* (Sage, 2011).

Alicia McGivern worked for Aer Lingus before going to University College Dublin where she studied English, German and Philosophy. She taught English in London, Middlesex, the Czech Republic, Kerry, Dublin and Belfast before taking up a post with the Irish Film Institute (IFI) for which she has written several film study guides, in particular on German Cinema. She is currently Head of Education at the IFI.

Gerry Mooney is Senior Lecturer in Social Policy and Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences, The Open University. He has written widely on issues relating to social policy, urban studies, Scottish devolution and crime and society. He is co-editor of *Social Justice and Social Policy in Scotland*, Policy Press forthcoming 2012.

Liz Roberts taught Media Studies at Aberdeen College where she was Team Leader and Curriculum Manager, teaching SCOTVEC Media modules, HND and NQ Media Studies. She is a setter for the Reading the Media Paper for Advanced Higher English and a member of AMES Management Committee.

Deryck Swan is an English and Media Studies teacher at Gracemount High School in Edinburgh. After studying for an MA in English and Film Studies at Aberdeen University under the expert tutelage of the late Mark Brownrigg, Deryck moved to Edinburgh to ply his trade in the heady worlds of secondary teaching and film journalism. Some 9 years on, both professions remain frustratingly opaque and wonderfully alluring to him. Any job that pays you to teach about or write about films like *Heat* must be worth something.

Keith Withall is a freelance writer and lecturer based in Leeds. He edits the Silent and Early Film blog at <http://cinetext.wordpress.com/> and the 'Talking Pictures' blog at <http://cinepages.wordpress.com>

'Poverty Porn' and *The Scheme*: Questioning Documentary Realism

Alex Law & Gerry Mooney

The shock of *The Scheme*

Perhaps no television programme made in Scotland in recent years has had the shock value of BBC Scotland's five part documentary series *The Scheme*. First broadcast in May 2010, *The Scheme* depicted the daily lives of six different families from the Onthank and Knockinlaw council house schemes in Kilmarnock. A cast of characters are seen to battle against a series of material, personal and social disadvantages: drug dependency, petty crime, casual violence, dog soiled carpets, ASBOs, teenage pregnancy and abortion, single parenting, foul language, imprisonment, ill health and bereavement.

Although the degraded conditions of everyday existence in Onthank commanded headlines, a glimpse was also given of local activists led by the indomitable Cree family fighting to keep open a community centre. The series acquired further notoriety when it was postponed after only two episodes while a participant was charged with assault. It was eventually broadcast in full a year later, promoted by week-long coverage in the *Daily Record*. Another wave of hostility descended on the programme when it was nominated for a Scottish BAFTA in October 2011 after being described by the Chairman of the BBC Trust Lord Patten as "the highest quality documentary making". A BBC Scotland spokesperson highlighted the renewed public interest in important social problems aroused by the programme: "This was a significant piece of work that gave rise to an unprecedented level of comment and debate around important social issues in contemporary Scotland. It is understandable that it has been shortlisted for a prestigious industry award".[1]

Originally promoted by BBC Scotland as "a snapshot of life in modern day Scotland", the cast of characters and location is hardly representative of Scottish society. The most that a BBC Scotland spokeswoman could claim was that "it is representative of the six families who took part".[2] Onthank was filmed for purely pragmatic reasons rather than any aspiration for wider social accuracy. The producers Friel Kean Films were fortunate to 'find' six families in a



suitable area who agreed to be filmed over a period of time. So the first thing to say about how *The Scheme* is promoted as somehow emblematic of 'important social problems' among the most deprived groups is that, on the contrary, it can lay no claim to representing the typical characteristics of even the bottom decile of Scottish society.

As a de-contextualised piece of televisual theatre, commentators and politicians waded into the fray in attempts to divine the social import of the programme. Some used the term 'poverty porn' to deplore its prurient and gratuitous nature. After the programme aired in May 2010 Pat Kane penned a scathing critique of *The Scheme* as 'poverty porn' in *The Herald*. [3]

By 'poverty porn' he means a new genre of television premised on a 'horrified bourgeois gazing at the undisciplined classes'. In programmes such as *Wife Swap* and *Supernanny*, viewers are invited to adopt an affronted bourgeois gaze in order to arrive at a moral judgement of social inferiority, cultural ignorance and domestic incompetence, and, in the process, claim for themselves the binary qualities of superiority, taste and competence.

But in what sense is 'porn' a useful or accurate label to describe programmes like *The Scheme*? "The thing about porn is that it's easy to watch, you know what you're getting, and the payoff is instantly satisfying. Poverty porn is no different", Pat Kane argues. Pleasure may be safely taken from watching at a mediated distance bad behaviour and even worse taste of those big, bad Others penned up in council housing schemes. Yet while the term may contain its own shock value, porn conventionally refers to a specific form of objectified and sexualised bodies.

Any pleasure taken from the impoverished bodies of *The Scheme* can only be of a different sort: the mundane spectacle of class dispossession. To nominate this as 'poverty porn' embraces the journalistic temptation of sensationalising the banal and monotonous reality of class-based dispossession that critics of the programme seek to reject. Once the discourse of poverty porn began to circulate among journalists, politicians, commentators, and bloggers the possibilities for rational debate, political significance and sociological analyses of *The Scheme* were submerged by a media-centred sideshow.

Consent and Infamy

As for pornography, the question of participant consent always looms large in the politics of documentary representation. Kane's initial response to the first two shows as poverty porn led to a sharp exchange on BBC2's *Newsnight Scotland* with Stuart Cosgrove, Head of Nations and Regions at Channel 4, followed up later on the blogosphere with other media cognoscenti. Cosgrove argued that as a pop star Kane was double-dealing, denying his own five minutes of fame to ordinary working class people who were after all adults that knowingly gave legal consent to be filmed. Against facile claims that *The Scheme* is a catalyst for cultural democracy, Kane argued that pop star fame rests on public recognition of the special competence of a charismatic personality. In contrast many figures represented in *The Scheme* were depicted in excruciating images as personally, socially, culturally, and morally incompetent. Crucially, Kane raises questions about who exercises control over the final form that the images take when they are pieced together as 'reality' television. The legal rights, not to mention moral duty, of lower class participants are surrendered to the creative and ideological control of middle class media professionals. From the point of view of television managers like Cosgrove the exercise of unequal social power to represent the lives of others simply reflects the nature of the beast. Get over it.

Participants themselves appeared divided over consenting to how they were portrayed. Leading community activist Ann Cree was reported as having no regrets about taking part since public attention might help the area, while her niece Mel was quoted as saying: "After I saw the first episode I asked my man if we could get married so I didn't have to admit my last name was Cree and people wouldn't know I live here".[4] And while some participants became minor celebrities, they exercised little or no control over how they were represented. Neither did they appear to understand that as minor celebrities, largely confined to localities disparaged before the world with their collusion, they would attract unwanted abuse, including violence, and complained of police harassment. Two of the show's 'stars', Marvin Baird and Chris Cunningham, felt betrayed by how they were depicted as utterly ridiculous and contemptuous figures. As Marvin said, "The BBC were

only interested in showing me make a fool of myself. They wanted a circus and we were the clowns"[5]. In one episode, when Marvin finally knuckles down to cleaning the floor with a mop, the whole sorry scene is accompanied by music from *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, in ironic mocking reference to the Disney animation *Fantasia*. As Pat Kane noted at the time, 'Look at the Mickey Mouse junkie in his domestic *Fantasia*!'

A document of reality?

If *The Scheme* does not purport to be socially representative then perhaps the value of the programme lies in its realism. Well, this all depends on what we take 'realism' to mean of course. Realism is a



Marvin King, with his 'happy-as-Larry' catchphrase, 'star' of *The Scheme*.

term often bandied about in discourses about literature, art and media but is notoriously difficult to pin down. It is often confused with naturalism, the idea that what counts as 'real' is defined in terms of the physical surfaces of reality. Documentary naturalism commands a validity beyond the conventions of fictionalised narratives since it purports to be a transparent window on the indisputable truth of the social world. What naturalism supposedly lacks in artifice it makes up for in sincerity, deploying its own conventions of letting the camera show the unvarnished truth against which other narratives can be validated or refuted.

By emphasising that it is merely a 'snapshot' captured by means of 'observed documentary' conventions, *The Scheme* positions the camera as a mere instrument, on hand to neutrally record a slice of 'life' as it is lived in the natural habitat of a deprived working class housing scheme. It suggests that a record has been made of the purely contingent and accidental events that happen to disrupt the coherence and stability of damaged lives and spaces. Conversely, other decisions and actions equally might have occurred, but

didn't. A different narrative would have been constructed had the subjects behaved otherwise. Naturalism is reinforced by narratives that define reality in terms of psychological attitudes, decisions and personality traits.

Part of the construction of documentary reality also depends on the use of mood music throughout the programme to elicit the preferred emotional response, just in case the editing of degraded scenes proves too subtle for viewers. Such heavy-handed manipulation is a reminder, were any needed, that documentary naturalism always involves decision-making about how to represent what is depicted. It is never simply a 'snapshot of life' as the programme-makers claim when they appeal to the naturalistic immediacy of the image.

A naturalistic defence of *The Scheme* proves disingenuous since the indexical quality of documentary naturalism always risks putting the resemblance of brute physical presence in the way of understanding the location of social suffering. More critical approaches to realism include as social reality things and processes that are ordinarily unseen or invisible to the spectator's eye. Bertolt Brecht, for instance, argued for such a critical realism:

Realistic means: discovering the causal complexes of society/
unmasking the prevailing view of things as the view of those who are in power/writing from the standpoint of the class which offers the broadest solutions for the pressing difficulties in which human society is caught up/emphasising the element of development/making possible the concrete, and making possible abstraction from it.[6]

On these grounds at least *The Scheme* is not at all 'realistic'. It fails to uncover the causal roots of social suffering and, we argue, contributes to, rather than confronts, pejorative representations of the dispossessed. Grasped this way, the appearance of 'pressing difficulties' in *The Scheme* reveals little about underlying social relations or historical context.

In this *The Scheme* came from an older tradition of documenting poor areas in urban Scotland. In 1977 BBC Scotland produced *Lilybank: The Fourth World*, a documentary made by reporter Magnus

Magnusson and director Michael Tosh about a housing scheme in the east of Glasgow. It focused on bored teenagers, gang fights, casual violence, glue sniffing and vandalism, as well as fractious neighbours and a tempestuous public meeting. Some compared the stigmatisation effect that *The Scheme* had on Onthank with that of *The Fourth World's* Lilybank in the 1970s.[7] But the earlier documentary was a more earnest exercise in serious social documentary analysis, centred around the participant observation of social policy academic and activist Kay Carmichael's harrowing attempt to adjust to "the hostile and ugly" world during a three month stay in Lilybank.

Some critics thought Carmichael naïve to say the least about the social conditions of working class Glasgow, with the Marxist sociologist Sean Damer vehemently denouncing the series as "the most prurient and matronising attack on the working class of Glasgow that I have ever seen in the media".[8] In the series itself, Carmichael recounts feeling self-consciously middle class in the presence of children marked from the age of three with what she called "the stigmata of deprivation". A comparison is instructive between the difference approaches. Carmichael's academic authority lends *The Fourth World* a sense of political mission and social analysis, however limited, that is entirely missing from *The Scheme*, a symptom of the lost appetite of broadcast media for visual socio-analysis.

The politics of representation

Many see the value of documentary as a transparent form of enlightenment through its ability to naturalistically piece together unadulterated facts about the empirical world that need urgent attention. Among its earliest proponents, John Grierson saw documentary film as applying a medical type solution to social problems. Documentary makers were 'doctors in cinema' who would exercise public influence by making "drama from our daily events and poetry from our problems".[9]

From Grierson's perspective documentary advanced an enlightened form of social reformism on the premise that once social suffering is put before the sensibilities of an audience demands for political action to alleviate social distress will surely follow. For Grierson the illuminating function of documentary lay in making a persuasive case through expository argument not

neutral narrative. In contrast, *The Scheme* flatters a morbid fascination for abject social suffering, even as it continues to aspire to document an objective reality that some intellectuals like to doubt even exists.

Until quite recently, it was fashionable to revel in the supposed lack of distance between image and reality, a view promoted with typically exaggerated abandon by the philosopher wild card Jean Baudrillard. As we become lost in the callous pleasure of disconnected spectacles, Baudrillard asserted that the image was no longer encumbered by any extrinsic moral, political or aesthetic criteria. Even so, the damaged lives of *The Scheme* are no simulation or hyper-reality but the



Breaking the dococumentary convention

degraded construction of actually-existing social reality, the same ground on which even the most obtuse post-modern games are played out to self-applause.

For better or worse, television programmes form part of the struggle to define, interpret and understand social reality. It was already recognised in the 1920s by Dzigo Vertov that documentary filmmaking plays an active part in the construction of social reality. Documentary is productive of meaning, even where *The Scheme* eschews an overtly didactic standpoint. But, whereas Vertov experimented with montage as part of a self-consciously dialectical act of image construction, *The Scheme* imposes a narrative argument that feigns direct knowledge that it is a construction at all rather than a series of accidental incidents, mere reflections of reality that just happened to be captured by the presence of the film crew. Clearly, the presence of the camera crew affects the space where the images are contained, even where documentary attempts to make the apparatus of image production disappear.

Pat Kane thought that the series was rescued, just about, when the camera was forced out of the shadows into the action after a euphoric drug user smeared the lens with a watery kiss. "In one blissful act of boundary-less excess, breaking every 'documentary' or fly-on-the-wall convention, he reminded us that this is only one narrative construction of poverty in Scotland, among many possible others".[10] This reading is a bit too sanguine. In an age saturated with visual styles, this apparent moment of disruption to documentary naturalism is now routine and familiar to viewers from a thousand and one 'to camera' documentaries. True, it (briefly) enlivens *The Scheme* and appears to break down the invisible camera boundary separating the viewer from the action.

But this rare disruptive moment fails to correct the mounting horror induced by the weight of naturalistic subterfuge.

From Angry Young Men to Barbarous Beasts

The upshot of our argument is that truth, history and political responsibility is evacuated from the index of camera-ready reality. Little sense is provided by *The Scheme* of the wider forces of neoliberal political economy that have over the past thirty years restructured the socio-economic conditions of life for ex-industrial working class communities in Britain, not least in Kilmarnock and Ayrshire. And this is the nub of the matter.

The Scheme also needs to be situated within significant changes to media representations of working class people in Britain since the 1990s. From the late 1950s until fairly recently it is at least arguable that the working class was represented in diverse, if not always flattering ways, reflecting a range of characters, situations, practices and attitudes. It might be an exaggeration to say that the working class wrestled self-representation away from the middle class in British cinema for a time. But at least the social realism films and documentary tradition showed an understanding of some of the predicaments confronting working class lives and their active responses. For instance, in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Reisz, 1960), a lathe operator in a Nottingham factory, Arthur Seaton, bristles at the limits of male working class existence and categorisation by class position, famously quipping, "whatever they say I am, that's what I'm not" (title of the 2006 debut album by Sheffield pop

group, Arctic Monkeys). Of course, the social realist tradition represented class often in clunky ways, sometimes mixed with gender and race messages.

Clearly, *The Scheme* does not belong to this lost world of working class resistance and resilience. Instead, it fits a more recent pattern of ideological venom about the working class as a cultural marker of personal failure. Working class is no longer a badge of authenticity, solidity and respectability but something base, superficial, backward and ridiculous. Lacking middle class aspirations, a discourse of class hatred helps justify record levels of social inequality in Britain today. From Harry Enfield's creation of Wayne and Waynetta Slob in 1990 to *Little Britain's* Vicky Pollard and Catherine Tate's Lauren Cooper, a new breed of loathsome, inarticulate, lazy 'chav' stereotypes abound. Special malice is reserved for young working class women.^[11] A supporting cast of real-life damaged caricatures appear on a raft of reality television programmes like *Big Brother* and *Jeremy Kyle*. In Scotland the content is different but the class spite is much the same. Here bad taste is wedded to bestial gangs, knife crime and territorial violence in disdainful discourses about neds and urban working class areas.¹²

Documentaries like *The Scheme* fail to give political expression to social conscience. Instead a more insidious stance is adopted: a standpoint of moral and political indifference, one that domesticates social suffering as individualised psycho-drama. In its portrayal of de-contextualised suspect subjects, *The Scheme* stands closer to wildlife documentaries where animals in trouble are observed with studied detachment from a distance. As 'flawed consumers' lacking cultural taste, *The Scheme's* camera fixes on yet more disreputable objects of consumption (plasma TVs, alcohol, tobacco, etc.). Wildlife consumers are framed by *The Scheme* in terms of personality defects and deviance from behavioural standards implicitly subscribed to by 'us' the ideal cultural and moral arbiters. Much contemporary discourse similarly reduces the poor to animalistic imagery, wallowing in deprived conditions and governed by biological instincts, consuming and procreating for immediate gratification without social responsibility or cultural elevation. This is

exemplified by recent fears and fascination about 'feral' youth out of control, with all the worst nightmares coming to life on the streets of London to riot in August 2011.

Part of the problem with classical documentary was always the suggestion that it could provide ready-made knowledge about and solutions for social suffering. By appealing to the objectifying gaze of naïve realism *The Scheme* side-steps the problem of the relationship between social classes and the image. Naïve realism adopts a reflectionist or correspondence view of knowledge, one which discovers, rather constructs arguments about, the palpable facts of an immutable world. As such *The Scheme* claims an alibi for moral and political indifference because it purports not to be an argument but a mere copy of reality, a slice of life, a 'snapshot' accurately reflecting surface appearances.



"... the mundane spectacle of class dispossession"

Here the sociology of documentary asks questions about the social preconditions of image-making and argumentative technique – in what sense does *The Scheme* correspond to a reality that the documentary makers themselves articulate and define and, furthermore, how are the unequal social positions of representation allocated?

Documentary makers inhabit a social world where the language and technique of image construction is filled with cultural meaning and market opportunities. This interpretive universe comprises commissions, locations, camera technology, post-production, voice-overs, marketing campaigns and so on. Despite claims about the self-knowing performative culture of today's media-saturated society, where everybody instinctively knows how to perform in front of a camera, the social world of documentary professionals is

completely alien to the one occupied by the subjects of *The Scheme*.

If *The Scheme* uses documentary to represent reality it must first be part of that reality and, therefore, it helps to construct, not 'discover', that reality. What any visual image signifies depends not only on the text itself but also its context. The necessary context for understanding *The Scheme* includes both the direct commentaries about the content and style of the programme and the wider politics of representations of poverty and class.

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9. John Grierson, 'Preface', Paul Rotha, *Documentary Film* (London, 1936, p. 5).
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11. Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonisation of the Working Class* (London, 2011) is essential reading about the rising fury of middle class hatred of the English working class in the period of the defeat of organised labour since the 1980s.
12. Alex Law, 'It noh funny': 'Ned' Humour on the Web', *Media Education Journal*, (2006, 39) pp. 18–21; Gerry Mooney and Neil Gray 'Glasgow's New Urban Frontier: 'Civilising' the Population of 'Glasgow East'', *City*, (2011, 15.1) pp. 4–24.

The Next Generation: An Overview of Video Games and Education in 2011

Iain Donald

The computer and video games industry has been described as the 'jewel in the crown of the UK's creative industries'.^[1] In 2009, the UK was the largest games market in Europe, the Middle East and Africa and third in the world after the United States and Japan.^[2] However the industry has struggled of late and in the past year this has resulted in a number of reviews and initiatives that potentially place the industry at the forefront of economic and educational policy. In July 2010, the UK Government commissioned a skills review for the UK's video games and visual effects industries. In February 2011 the report *Next Gen* was published with wide ranging recommendations for industry practitioners, school teachers and university lecturers. This article provides an overview of the *Next Gen* report, highlights the current trends in the computer and video games industry and discusses the evolving role that games can play in education, highlighting some of the initiatives undertaken at the University of Abertay Dundee.

Next Gen – The Livingstone-Hope Review

In July 2010, Ed Vaizey, the Minister for Culture, Communications and the Creative Industries asked industry luminaries, Ian Livingstone and Alex Hope, to undertake a review of the skills needs of the UK's video games and visual effects industries and to make practical recommendations for how these needs can be met. The review was undertaken as it appeared that the UK was losing our cutting edge, having slipped from third to sixth in the in the global development rankings in two

years.^[3] Additionally companies were citing the need to source talent from overseas because of shortages of skilled UK workers. The report took six months to research and compile, undertaking seven different surveys with young people, parents, educators and industry along the way (Fig. A).

The review was formally published by NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) in February 2011

as *Next Gen: Transforming the UK into the world's leading talent hub for the video games and visual effects industries*.^[4] The review highlighted the need to address the skills gaps across the highly specialised programming, art and other digital technology that drive the video games and visual effects industries. The report concluded that the education system was not meeting the needs of either industry. With the video games industry alone worth an estimated \$74 billion in 2011

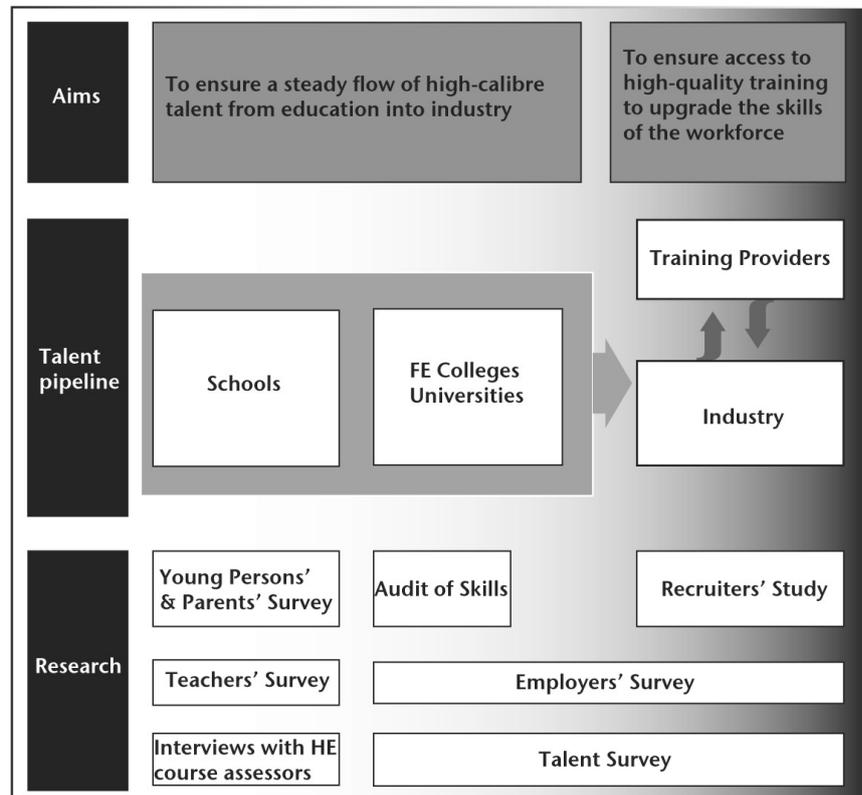


Fig A: Livingstone-Hope Review of Skills for the Video Games and Visual Effects Industries: Aims, talent pipeline and research programme

and estimated to grow to \$112 billion by 2015, the UK has traditionally done well in meeting the demands for this growing market.[5] Significantly the UK video games sector with estimated global sales of £2 billion is larger than either its film or music industries.[6]

The *Next Gen* report produced twenty recommendations for schools, universities and industry with the aim of ensuring the UK retains its position in the high-tech creative and digital industries. At its core the report identified the urgent need to provide more rigorous teaching of computing in schools and to encourage changes in the education system that are needed to support the fusion of art and technology skills. The report acknowledged that the government and industry have a shared responsibility for supporting university courses that teach industry-essential skills, but which would struggle in a completely free market. The report did not highlight potential costs of the recommendations or reflect upon the other far-reaching changes that are occurring as a result of the economic crisis across education at all levels in the UK. Within the context of the report, it is clear that there are large numbers of the UK population that are simply unaware of the significant role that both industries have had on the global stage. For example only 3% of young people surveyed knew that the games *Grand Theft Auto*, *Singstar* and *Lego Star Wars* were made in the UK, and only 12% of parents were aware of this. Similarly less than 10% of those surveyed knew that the visual effects for Hollywood blockbusters, *Inception*, *Batman Begins* and *Harry Potter* were created in the UK.[7] In terms of skills only 3% of young people and 7% of parents considered Maths and Physics as essential skills to enter the video game industry and only 15% of teachers believe those subjects were required for a career in Technology and the Digital Arts.[8]

One of the main recommendations was to use video games and visual effects to draw in greater numbers of young people to computer science and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM).[9] As identified by that recommendation, there was a need not just to ensure a robust infrastructure for the provision of computer science at schools but to redress prejudices against computing science, which some perceive to be less attractive and 'geeky'. Similarly it was recommended that art-tech crossover and work-based

learning should be encouraged through school clubs.

While the *Next Gen* report focuses largely upon the need to help encourage study of STEM subjects, the use of computer games as a tool to enhance the learning experience across multiple and diverse subjects is also generally promoted. The establishment of an online repository and community site for teachers for video games and visual effects educational resources were also suggested. These ideas are not necessarily new, but they are welcome for fostering game use in education. One issue the report did not deal with was the difficulty in understanding the breadth and depth of the industry.

Games Industry 2011

The modern computer and video games industry will turn forty next year and as the industry has matured it has increased in both popularity and cultural acceptance. In the past five years the industry has significantly changed, broadened and diversified. A recent report published by the independent market research firm Newzoo demonstrates that over half the UK population are now classed as active gamers.[10] This represents a rise from the figures provided in the latest report from the Interactive Software Federation of Europe (ISFE) which showed that almost a third of over-16s in the UK considered themselves gamers.[11] It is important to point out that almost every survey indicates an almost equal breakdown of males and females playing games and recent research indicates that almost a quarter of over-50s are playing games.[12]

Mass market appeal and acceptance has no doubt contributed to increasing cultural acceptance. BAFTA put Video Games on an equal footing with Film and Television by giving them their own award night in 2006, and games had been previously been recognized and awarded in various forms and categories since 1998. The industry today is complex and diverse. Just as recent innovations in controllers and platforms have helped to open up games to new audiences, new terms and categories have become common fare. There are no longer just games but multiple categories and genres. This brief overview highlights the main categories of games: Triple A, Casual, Social Network, Mobile and the advent of Cloud gaming.

Triple A Games are the games industry equivalent of the Hollywood blockbuster. These titles generally have the largest budgets and strive for the highest quality. Their releases can not only rival those of Hollywood productions, but their sales revenues can outstrip Hollywood.[13] The revenues of games like *Grand Theft Auto IV* and *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* led both to gain the title of the largest entertainment releases of all time. While such successes attract huge budgets and potentially huge sales, they are also associated with the greatest risk, requiring large development teams and lengthy development periods. They tend to be focused on the console owners and hardcore gamers.

Casual Games are now a massive market. This is perhaps unsurprising. As the market has diversified and broadened, many developers have sought to move away from the large-budget and high-risk titles. The broadening of the market is a direct result of the increase in internet users and today a casual video game is considered to be any targeted or used by a mass audience. Initially these were on platforms that were considered more accessible than consoles, such as a web browser, social media platform or mobile devices. Successful games include *Bejewelled* and *Peggle* and are generally characterised by their simplicity. However the success of the Nintendo Wii and its motion controller has ensured that the other main console manufacturers have moved into the market with their own particular brand of motion controller. Sony have produced the Move and Microsoft have removed the need for a handheld controller entirely by developing the Kinect. The result has been an increasing dominance of casual games in the console market with titles such as *Wii Sports*, *Kinect Adventures* and *Zumba Fitness*.

Social Network Games are online games distributed through social media networks, such as Facebook. Given the nature of social media these games understandably aim to utilise the connectivity of the platforms to drive both gameplay and revenue. The use of micro-transactions (small payments that enable players to get a temporary advantage through purchasing additional features or items) is a common model. The popularity of Facebook and the simple nature of the games have ensured that games like *Farmville* and *Cityville* have become phenomenally successful with tens of millions of players.

Mobile Games are generally held to be games played on a mobile phone, PDA, smartphone, handheld computer or portable media player. It is notable that games made specifically for handheld consoles such as the Nintendo 3DS, DS or PlayStation Portable are generally excluded from this category. Although mobile games started in the mid-1990s it is the advent of the smartphone, and specifically Apple's iOS and Google's Android-enabled devices that have helped the recent boom.

Cloud Gaming is the most recent development following the advent of the cloud to digitally distribute and stream content to the players' computers, televisions or consoles directly. As the majority of the code processing and video rendering are undertaken on the server-side as opposed to the client-side, this should allow the consumer to play any game on any system.

With games available in the home, at school or work and on the move, technology and game design techniques have started to be adopted by a wide range of other industries. This has resulted in the term 'gamification' where game mechanics are used and adapted to help companies engage with wider audiences and solve a range of problems such as when user engagement is difficult. It is an area that continues to see growth and further engagement from non-traditional games companies. Increasingly we are likely to see the convergence of these markets and users will be able to play the same game with the same save points across multiple devices, delivered digitally on demand. It is the breadth and depth of the market that has resulted in the digital, ICT and creative industries being placed together as the platform for growth and competitiveness for the UK in the 21st Century.[14] Indeed the mass market appeal has increased the challenge for educators by making it more difficult to locate appropriate resources.

The Challenges For Games And Education

What do these reports and trends mean for games and education? As the *Next Gen* report highlighted we are seeing the use of games as an innovative teaching tool in schools as well as further and higher education. However these tend to be the exception rather than the rule. Educators still face considerable barriers in using games, due to the fast-moving nature of the industry. Finding suitable hardware and software is a significant challenge. Where educators can locate it they may face compatibility issues with games developed for a specific platform or one which may no longer be accessible. Understanding the copyright and licensing issues and whether educators even have the right to use these games in an educational context, is another complication. If all these difficulties are overcome there remains the difficulty in finding suitable teaching materials, a fact recognised by the *Next Gen* report's recommendation to create an online repository. Technologically it is the advent of cloud gaming that might assist educators in overcoming the resource problems that typically hinder the use of games in education. However if we are going to successfully encourage the use of games for teaching we need a coordinated and coherent approach to overcome these barriers and this is likely to require a commitment at an industry and governmental level that has not previously happened.

For example, even with the recognition of skill gaps and the economic attraction of an expanding market, for games to be used significantly in education at a national level is a huge undertaking. It is worth noting that research projects such as TEEM (Teachers Evaluating Educational Multimedia) outlined the benefits that computer games could provide in a report on the educational use of games almost a decade ago.[15] The report highlighted that resource management and simulation

games such as *Sim City* and *Rollercoaster Tycoon* helped children's strategic thinking and planning skills. During the study parents reported improvements in mathematics, spelling and reading. Furthermore the children themselves identified that working in a team was beneficial to the overall experience.[16] Professor Angela McFarlane, the TEEM project director stated at the time the potential for specifically designed content:

"For example, you could use an historical event like the *Battle of Hastings* and – knowing the facts are accurate – get pupils to put themselves in the place of one of the soldiers or generals." [17]

This was a vision that was finally realised when Channel 4 commissioned the creative studio, Preloaded, to produce an online game to go with a two part documentary on the Battle of Hastings. The game, *1066*, was critically well-received both by the gaming press and community. *1066* remains a great example of how educational games can be both factual and entertaining.[18] Indeed Channel 4's decision to direct its educational budget to digital media content rather than television programming has produced several other games that have gained critical acclaim, such as *The Curfew* and *303 Squadron*. However as these games are not a commercial offering, in that they are publicly funded, challenges remains in identifying and determining whether such games would be a success if they had required an alternative more commercially oriented payment model. How does education get the best out of commercial games rather than relying on enlightened organisations such as the Channel 4 and the BBC to demonstrate a commitment to games as an educational medium?

The Institute of Arts Media and Computer Games at University of Abertay has implemented a range of initiatives



Abertay University's White Spaces, 'a unique knowledge environment'

relating to recommendations of the *Next Gen* review. These initiatives, and some of the materials and technologies and experiences that have been developed to support their delivery, represent a useful starting point for the development of a full response to the recommendations. Three main initiatives have been aimed at promoting computer games development in young people of predominantly secondary school age (12–16 years) and have been delivered in partnership with external agencies in order to reach this group:

- Dare Schools Challenge
- Video Games Studio/BAFTA Young Games Designer
- Games Unpacked[19]

The Dare Schools Challenge project involves secondary school pupils studying Standard Grade or Higher Grade art and design or computing subjects, as well as teachers in these subject areas from all Dundee Schools. The participants spend a week working in mixed discipline groups designing and developing a 2D flash game.

Video Games Studio/BAFTA Young Games Designer is similar but places students in teams of 5 to create a game using Microsoft's XNA framework. In both of these events the students are supported by University of Abertay staff and students and receive industry mentoring.

Games Unpacked uses a programme called Unity, which is used by professional game developers and creates a toolkit for creating games and applications. A game can be created from a set of 'resources' such as 3D models (electronic drawings of objects, game worlds and characters, audio tracks etc.) and lines of programming code. The objectives of these initiatives include:

- Provide an overview of the skills required for a career in the Creative/Digital Media industries
- Design and communicate game concepts and ideas
- Deliver practical experience in teamwork and co-operation
- Use traditional and digital art tools to produce game assets and animations
- Provide an experience of an enterprising/entrepreneurial nature

These events have been developed and influenced by the workplace simulation models and interdisciplinary approach that are characteristic of the teaching at both

undergraduate and postgraduate level. The approach is also a cornerstone of the Abertay response to the recommendations directed at Higher Education. For example the importance of team working as highlighted in the *Next Gen* report, with employers citing that the ability to work as part of a team as the second most important quality that they looked for in prospective employees. Teamwork and soft skill development are key reasons that we approach our teaching in an interdisciplinary manner.[20] The evolution of our teaching will no doubt be influenced by the *Next Gen* report and it is within that framework we need to consider how we can encourage the development of games in all levels of education.

Conclusion

The *Next Gen* report provides an accurate snapshot of the state of the skills shortages within the UK's creative industries. As the video games industry continues to develop and grow, it is increasingly important that we encourage the use of video games as an additional tool to assist student learning and development. Games should not just be seen as a means to encourage study of STEM subjects but when rightly placed in the appropriate context can assist in our teaching of a range of subjects and improve upon the soft skills, such as teamwork, that industry demands.

i.donald@abertay.ac.uk

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Narrative vs Gameplay: A Catalyst for Creativity

Dayna Galloway

This article explores the perceived conflict between narrative and gameplay – highlighting how the core components and limitations of each form can become the catalyst for the design and development of new experiences. Through analysis of current debate and the deconstruction of specific videogame titles, it is proposed that this conflict is both necessary and productive towards interactive entertainment continuing to define itself as a valid and creative cultural form.

Narratology and Ludology

We have used story and narrative as a tool to communicate our ideas, feelings and desires since pre-history, and through time we have developed specific story templates to represent and relate to a range of situations and human emotions. Throughout the 20th century film and television evolved through constant creative and scientific innovation to become culturally and critically accepted as both an art form and as the chief apparatus for mass-communication. Conversely, the current developmental stage of the videogame sector has been described by industry pioneers such as David Braben as being equivalent to the period in cinema when 'talkies' were established.[1] In support of the validity of this comparison, it is apparent videogames are at a decisive moment in their development, having emerged from a period of concerted effort defining and developing the actual technology, the formation of gameplay mechanics, specific themes and genres, and the crucial task of attracting and sustaining a commercial audience.

Throughout this period of evolution, games have continued to be defined and re-defined both by their creators and

scholars associated with the form. In *Rules of Play*, Salen and Zimmerman present a hybrid definition of 'a game' which is constructed from what they perceive to be the most relevant parts of eight other definitions previously proposed by a range of historians, sociologists, designers and philosophers. Their definition suggests that "a game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome." [2] Whilst this definition was intended to be narrow, it is arguable that despite being broadly accurate, there are emergent forms and activities within the realm of videogames that may challenge such a notion. Ultimately, videogames empower the user to interact, alter and control the experience, thus presenting vast challenges and opportunities for constructing meaningful and rewarding experiences. The uncertainty that this interaction presents us with also provides a rich source of material for critics, scholars and industry representatives to passionately debate.

Jesper Juul, the renowned 'Ludologist' declares that we should forego attempts to shoehorn games into modes of analysis and critique used by other cultural forms, and instead the study of games should be driven by the elements that make them a unique medium. In 'Games Telling Stories?' Juul presents a very balanced overview

of the ongoing debate regarding games and storytelling, successfully managing to argue in places the case for games being both a narrative and non-narrative medium.[3] Juul identifies the conflict between player interaction and intended meaning – that games require to be structured to ensure how and when messages are received by the player. The concept of player agency is inextricably linked to this conflict – whereby the player is encouraged to act freely in a world that responds 'intelligently' with meaningful and justifiable outcomes to their interactions. Clint Hocking, Creative Director at LucasArts, views agency as a primary and defining aspect of the videogame:

There is no other medium of human expression that literally validates the expression of the audience. Agency, therefore, is not just a feature of games, it is the very foundation of what games are and how they mean. It is not simply that your expression and its validation matters, it's that your expression and its validation are all that matters." [4] So, this raises the question of where and how can developer intended story-telling and player controlled story-telling co-exist?



L.A. Noire – an impressive design pedigree

In a recent publication, Tadhg Kelly argues that games are not a storytelling medium, there has never been a good game story, and due to the "fundamental constraints borne of the psychology of play" a shining example of game story-telling will never emerge.[5] Kelly initiates his argument with an excellent dissection and critique of *LA Noire* – a third-person action-adventure, where you play as a detective in 1940s Los Angeles. This title is a prime example of a developer-authored story being overly marketed as an innovation in interactive storytelling. What Kelly fails to communicate is that the games he does cite as having a great 'story sense', would not exist if the developers were not trying to innovate and tackle the challenge and perceived limitation of interactive storytelling. To reject the possibility of games ever becoming a storytelling medium, is anathema to the spirit of development, whereby an innovative approach to solving a problem can spawn an entire genre. It is hard not to hear faint echoes of Harry Warner, one of the founders of the Warner Bros studio, who also had a momentary lapse in vision when he famously rejected the notion of synchronised sound, questioning: "Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?"

The false notion that gameplay and narrative are irreconcilable only further impedes the development and acceptance of innovative interactive entertainment. Nevertheless, it is clear that the process of designing an experience that can co-exist with the urges, desires and whimsical behaviour of autonomous users is a massive artistic and technical challenge. This issue is further compounded when we consider the lack of common vocabulary that exists to define and deconstruct fundamental components of the form. In 'Narrative Discourse', Genette states the ambiguity of the term 'narrative' and how its misappropriation or limited use can lead to difficulties in the study of narrative. Across the games industry this issue often occurs whereby 'narrative' is used as a descriptive alternative for 'story'. Genette presents a definition of narrative that comprises three main components: Discourse, Story and Narration.

Discourse refers to the artefact or text itself, **Story** represents what is being told – the summary of events and action, and **Narration** relates to the processes, devices and structure of communication.[6] Utilising this we can therefore eschew the misunderstanding regarding story and behold narrative as a multi-faceted form of communication, hence narrative plays a crucial role, whereby every element of interaction, presentation, sound and performance – no matter how insignificant – is conveying something to the audience. Working with this definition, we are presented with the question of who is responsible for the continuity and specifics of communication during the development of a videogame? Ideally, this should be a straightforward answer, but the inherent dynamic nature of games development has resulted in there being no definitive role that can be clearly identified across the industry. Only recently, the role of Narrative Designer has become more prevalent in both job listings and game credits. Perhaps this could be the missing link that supports the consolidation of the disciplines of writing and game design.

Writing and Design

Writer Rhianna Pratchett has frequently communicated her frustration with the current state of game writing and the last-minute approach to its inclusion in the development cycle, whereby the implementation of the narrative has been secondary to the construction of gameplay. As previously discussed, some ludologists may wish to see this production hierarchy preserved, however Pratchett suggests a more collective, and arguably common-sense approach focusing on "finding the common ground and thinking about story early enough so that it can properly fit together with the gameplay and not just lie on top of it like a kind of narrative custard".[7]

Rather than take sides on the story and gameplay conflict, a small number of development studios have taken a more considered, philosophical approach to the writing, design and development of their interactive experiences. Jenova Chen, co-founder and creative director of thatgamecompany, raises the issue of the narrow emotional spectrum of games.

Chen argues that entertainment exists to satisfy our desire to experience feelings – this works well with cinema, wherein one might make an informed decision to choose a particular genre or a specific film to alter one's mood and state of mind. However, within the realm of videogames it is harder to make such a comprehensible decision as they have rarely been classified or expressed in terms of the feelings that they evoke. Chen identifies that this issue can be illustrated clearly by examining our collective vocabulary for describing the type of experience – "The words people [use to] describe films are emotive; they describe films as 'passionate' or 'magical'. But when people talk about games they're technical, as if they were describing a car. 'The graphics are good. This car has four seats'.[8] Through this intellectual process, thatgamecompany have achieved critical and commercial success through three player-centric titles which have each tackled different fundamental issues in game design.

flOw, *Flower* and *Journey* (Fig.A) have all been crafted in conceptual response to an intrinsic problem or conflict. *flOw*, concerned the issue of difficulty and player progression, and was informed by the principles, explored by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, which argued that our most favourable experience through a task is one that balances level of difficulty against our developing skills over time, ensuring the optimal levels of motivation and reward. *flOw* therefore intends to provide a calm and engaging experience that avoids failure and punishment, yet still manages to reward skill and presence in the game world.

The pastoral, dream-like world presented in the follow-up title *Flower* shares similar traits in accessibility and player engagement, but attempts to infer more of a narrative, presenting a theme that explores the conflict between rural and urban environments. Throughout development the team were faced with the challenge of providing the player with a tranquil, yet progressive experience that found a balance between the freeform play and expression of the user and the need of the game to somehow convey structure, goals and direction. Through a process of prototyping, user-testing and feedback, accepted ludic devices such as scores and timers were rejected and replaced with visual and aural feedback that provides the player with positive feedback which functions subtly to encourage further action and exploration.



Fig.A – © thatgamecompany

In contrast to the idyllic, lush landscapes of *Flower*, thatgamecompany's most recent title casts players as a mysterious character in a seemingly barren desert. Although yet to be released, *Journey* aims to address some of the issues raised by online play and co-operation between strangers. To achieve this there is no online lobby (the virtual waiting room where players gather prior to the beginning of a period of play), no voice-chat (players are able to communicate using a limited amount of on-screen emotes and actions), and no communication of goals or objectives (which encourages players to undertake the journey and co-operatively discover its secrets). This brave approach to development, whereby standard and lauded constructs of videogame practice are dropped due to their irrelevance and negative impact on the communication aim of the developer and the overall experience of the user, should be praised.

New Gaming Forms And Experiences

Clearly, conflict and problem solving in response to a challenge or need can excel as a methodology for game concept development. New videogames frequently have to re-establish the procedures for experience as they cope with the latest hardware and new methods of interacting. Yet, it is hard to imagine a film studio having to re-invent the processes involved in watching cinema, alongside the production and filming of their latest blockbuster. In an ever-changing world of commercial opportunities and limitations, a number of smaller studios are leading the way through innovation.

Mojang AB are the studio behind the ongoing commercial success of *Minecraft* – a construction based game that tasks players to roam a massive procedural world made from blocks and survive by 'crafting' items and materials from a range of natural resources. Whilst the actual gameplay, art style and mechanics can be argued to be derivative of existing titles, Mojang's founder Markus Persson can only be praised for his open approach to developing an innovative and sustainable business model. Today, the vast majority of games are developed in secrecy, with the public only receiving specific pieces of information about the title as part of a carefully planned marketing schedule. Where *Minecraft* differed, is that it welcomed players into the development process by allowing them early access to playable prototypes. This open approach enabled Persson to quickly gain a large



Screenshot from *Minecraft*

following of loyal fans who were then given the opportunity to pay a small fee to participate in the Beta version of *Minecraft*.

Rather than lock down the specifics of game structure, pacing and mechanics, *Minecraft* is in a process of constant iteration as the developers implement and test features alongside a paying community of over three-million users.^[9] Additionally, it is not just the business model that is worthy of praise, the actual 'game' itself successfully manages to present an emergent world full of storytelling potential, that bridges any perceived divide between narrative and gameplay. The players finds themselves in a unique landscape and receive no direction or guidance as to the objectives or rules of the game. Through exploration and experimentation the players soon realises that they have the ability to mine the landscape, make materials and craft basic tools. As the in-game sun slowly sets on the horizon, *Minecraft* populates the once peaceful landscape with enemy characters that can kill the player. This conflict greatly enhances and drives the player's narrative experience in a number of ways. It provides meaning to the player's interactions, as it suddenly becomes a story of survival as they attempt to forage and barricade themselves in safely for the night. On a temporal level it provides structure to the experience whereby the player is motivated to gather and explore during the day and plan their future activities and objectives at night. The ability of enemy characters to destroy what you have made also adds to making a more meaningful experience as this leads to motivated play, thoughtful decision making and a sense of ownership

and pride in finished constructions. In essence these fundamental components are all that is required to facilitate engaging, emergent storytelling presenting players with satisfying and believable consequences to their interactions.

This innovative and alternative way of approaching development can also be found in Scotland. Glasgow's Tern Digital are putting the finishing touches to *The 39 Steps*, the first title in their Digital Adaptations format, which promise to allow the user to experience classic stories in a completely new way. Executive Producer Simon Meek has been eager to stress that this new form is not a videogame as such, and that it partly exists to challenge the limitations of e-books which merely deliver an exact representation of the printed word, therefore failing to capitalise on the audio-visual and interactive nature of the platform they exist upon. Rather than follow the traditional model of adapting a book to a game, whereby the player would usually take on the role of a character within the game world, Digital Adaptations instead utilise gaming platforms and technology to allow player's to navigate the story and the world in which it takes place. Evidently, there are obvious issues when gifting the user the ability to explore and interact within the rigidity and familiarity of a classic story. However, the team at Tern Digital have instead treated this conflict as a design problem, and developed an innovative solution which finds a successful balance between user autonomy and authorial intentions, through the considered use of specific forms of interaction. Tern Digital cleverly avoid the use of the term 'gameplay' and



Red Dead Redemption revives interest in the western

have instead defined these components as 'story mechanics'. For example, 'Control' presents the user with the ability to momentarily view the world through the eyes of a character, deepening the sense of presence the user feels within the world of the story. Interestingly, the team have stated that future Digital Adaptations may utilise custom-built 'story mechanics' that demonstrate a symbiotic relationship to the specific genre of each original text.[10]

Through agreements with *The Scotsman*, *The Times* and The British Film Institute, Tern are able to utilise real-world, historical artefacts such as newspaper clippings, archive footage and photographs to deepen the sense of time and place presented within the experience. Arguably this could be seen as providing a new level of documentary value to the adaptation itself as it presents a historically accurate insight to the period and setting of the original body of literature. Conversely there has been some debate as to whether Digital Adaptations may have a negative impact on the intellectual process of reading literature. Meek is quick to reassure that Tern are "not looking at digital adaptation as a way to replace the book, but certainly offer another way to consume the stories that are contained within books . . . It would be great if they inspired people to read the original text, or explore other texts by these authors . . . the real shame with the notion of people not reading books is that the stories held within them may become lost – this approach opens up the story to a wider audience and potentially new audience."

[11] *Minecraft* and Digital Adaptations are two positive and creative approaches to bridging the structural, cultural and diverse challenges that exist within the boundaries of interactive entertainment.

Conclusion

Videogames are an exciting and constantly evolving hybrid art form; therefore, to try to contain them in a specific structure or definitive methodology at this stage in their development only denies the potential of the medium. However, as we have discussed, utilising limitations and constraints as part of the conceptual and developmental process can generate new ways of looking at the interactive form. The conflict that arises from the unhappy marriage of competing design elements can be utilised as a successful methodology for inspiring creativity, innovation and commercial opportunity. Clearly, issues regarding gameplay and narrative will continue to be discussed, but the true future of the form lies with creators and visionaries, responding to this debate with practical experimentation that explores innovative systems of interaction, the formation of new business models and the emergent phenomena that occur within these virtual spaces. Interactive entertainment is potentially the most powerful communication medium of our time. With the existence of a global and continually growing audience in terms of demographics and volume, perhaps the only questions remaining are what messages, themes and stories will future audiences be told, and perhaps more

importantly, will these audiences ever be empowered to truly tell their own?

d.galloway@abertay.ac.uk

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GTA – developed in Dundee

Heat – an Appraisal

Deryck Swan

This essay on *Heat* offers an analysis of the film and its effects on the writer. It provides an overview of the film and its ambitions and then situates it, perhaps quite contentiously, within a small group of select films that emerged from Hollywood between 1995 and 1999. The discussion of the film itself centres on key sequences from the narrative that exemplify the role of its two main characters, with regards to the work's overall function as a critique of Western culture.

Heat is now 16 years old and is, in some respects, beginning to show its age. Very much a film of its time and place, *Heat* distilled numerous Western societal concerns that, as we now know from the privileged position of retrospective analysis, were assuming greater and greater prevalence as the 1990s came to a close. This was a time prior to the new millennial clarion call of 9/11 where the West, and specifically America, luxuriated in its relative wealth and perceived excellence. Clinton was in office and economic opportunities appeared to be everywhere, for the broker and bank robber alike.

There was however a consequent vacuousness to the times, a spiritual and philosophical ennui that arose from the picket-fenced perfection. In the few years that followed *Heat*, films like *The Matrix*, *Fight Club* and *American Beauty*, all from 1999, were released, taking the polemic hinted at in Mann's film and energising it to the point of near absurdity. What these later films pummelled into bloody submission, and *Heat* quietly but eruditely discussed, was our emerging anxiety with our jobs, our relentless pursuit of material goods, our unquestioned nesting instincts and our largely unchallenged assumptions about love, gender roles and social conformity.

The films all presented, in various manifestations, a niggling suspicion that beneath this facile surface veneer, this patina of plenty, lay an alternate reality that would provide emancipation from the lie of our lives. Contemporary Western culture was nothing more than an artificial construct of our own (or in the case of *The Matrix*, the machines') making that had by now – the mid to late 90s – become so entrenched that it was blinding us from the truth. In the words of *The Matrix*:

Neo: "What truth?"

Morpheus: "That you are a slave, Neo. Like everyone else, you were born into bondage, born into a prison that you cannot smell or taste or touch . . . a prison for your mind."

While these were not new philosophical ideas by any stretch, cinematically or otherwise, there was something very peculiar and significant about the sheer confluence of films dealing with them thematically at the dawn of the 21st Century.

The first of many

It is in *Heat* that this notion of a *fin de siècle* existentialist dissatisfaction with our lives found one its most skilled expressions in 1990s American cinema. Through its exploration of two individuals who eschew conventional careers, reject the materialistic lifestyle obsession, make minimal use of the domestic arena, and spectacularly dismiss social conformity, intimacy and gender mediation (the notion that the man can be tempered and integrated into domesticity),

Heat anticipated and attended to the intense sense of social malaise that entered into Western cinema as the 90s drew to a close.

Within the narrative construct of the film, the lives of Neil McCauley and Vincent Hanna constituted one possible response to this gnawing and seemingly American sensation that there must be something more to our lives. The American Dream, something of an unassailable national ethos by the early 90s, was, within the fiction of *Heat*'s drama, viewed less as the yardstick of civilisation and more as an empty vessel, a failed project for the creation of social and economic prosperity. In its place *Heat* posited the uniquely self-determined lives of its characters, people who were autodidactic and elected to exist out with the fold of societal normalcy, both through their career choices and their philosophies.

The backdrop to this revolutionary project was of course Los Angeles, America's most modern metropolis and a place unencumbered by any significant history or expectation. At that time, in this film, L.A. represented the future, a place where the possibility for a new kind of life experience could be pursued. It was a city that fostered a fresh brand of moral relativism, where the kind of extreme activities that both Vincent and Neil engaged in were permitted. In *Heat* the city has a sense of uniformity and purpose (that would have all but disappeared by the time of Mann's *Heat* in 2004, replaced by an interest in traversing the different ethnic domains that fragment L.A.), a distinct homogeneity, like one "mass alien landing", as was noted in *Premiere* magazine's 1996 review of the film.[1]

Under the aegis of cinematographer Dante Spinotti, the city had lost its familiar, anaemic yellow hue, its Vaseline soft focus and its beach culture inflection and assumed an altogether different persona. In the pre-millennial mid 1990s, the Los Angeles of *Heat* offered a post-millennial



McCauley (Robert de Niro) "as if he is being lowered straight down a metal tube.

incarnation of this well-worn town, a techno-industrial confection of limitless majesty and crystalline skies. Gone was the nostalgic period sensibility of the city in the likes of *Chinatown* (1974), *True Confessions* (1981) or *L.A. Confidential* (1997), with their sense of a dusty, fledgling town founded on the fringe of a desert, or the shimmering, hallucinogenic insanity of *Lethal Weapon* (1987), *Predator 2* (1990) or *Falling Down* (1993), where L.A. played the role of a tropical hell-hole indicative of Laos or Vietnam.[2]

According to Mann, Los Angeles was now the locus for strange or new technologies (precious metals depositories, sulphur mines, cell phone communication towers, signal interception capabilities and bank alarm bypass systems), architecture, both corporate (Van Zant's office space, the downtown towers, Far East National Bank) and post-modern (Hanna's "dead-tech" cubist 2 up/2 down, Neil's strictly minimalist Malibu beach abode, Trejo's perilous house on stilts) and a very specific look that went a long way towards exemplifying our 21st Century expectations of what the city should look like.

To achieve this, Spinotti and director Michael Mann brought to Los Angeles a cool, crepuscular palette of grays and pale blues, colours that leached the familiar, almost clichéd, hyperactivity from the city and replaced it with an airy and detached sensibility. Merging with its modernistic colour scheme, the lighting of *Heat* saw a deliberate attempt by the director and cinematographer to assiduously avoid the high key and flat, even tone of traditional L.A. dramas and bring instead an aspect of dimensionality to its spaces, via a concerted use of shadow. Given that the majority of the L.A. basin is a flat plain with relatively few high-rise buildings, bringing a significant amount of shadow to the multitude of daytime locations *Heat* explores would have been no easy feat.

And yet, just as *Thief* did with night-time Chicago, *Heat* invests Los Angeles with a wonderful sense of depth and scope through its very deliberate lighting choices. The film recaptures Los Angeles' three-dimensional geometry (an element of the city that has so often been ignored in recent cinema) and, in emancipating the city in this way, allocates it an undeniably important role in the Herculean crime saga that plays out in its spaces.

Two very specific ideologues

Heat begins as it ends. It's night in Los Angeles in February and we're in a place of confluence and transit. People come and go on public transportation, Angelinos all, ably providing the *mise en scène* for our approaching antagonist, Neil McCauley.

Exiting from the Blue Line of the Los Angeles MTA, a tonal shift in Elliot Goldenthal's soundtrack underlines the dubious emergence of the recidivistic McCauley from the train out into the world. Mann's camera then tracks him from behind as he walks towards the escalator, a particular breed of shot that aligns the consciousness of both the audience and the character onscreen by directing attention towards the back of McCauley's head. While this element of film grammar does not necessarily render a judgement on the psychology of the character's activities (something that Mann tends to assiduously avoid in his work) it, at the very least, encourages the audience to engage with McCauley's activities while concurrently establishing his primacy.[3]

The subsequent shot of McCauley descending on the escalator employs such a shallow depth of field that it appears as if he is being lowered straight down a metal tube, such is Mann's desire to delineate the three dimensional geometry of L.A.. Length, breadth and depth is Mann's project here. An overhead shot looking down sees McCauley then bisect a narrow street marking as he heads off in the

opposite direction – a visual metaphor that would be repeated in both *Ali* (2001) and *Collateral* (2004) – towards his objective at the St. Mary's Medical Centre in Long Beach. McCauley strides through the E.R, past injured citizens and flickering computer monitors, and exits at the back where he steals an ambulance.

There's a wonderful economy here to the introduction of Neil McCauley. These opening minutes recall the power of silent cinema and its ability to communicate the inner workings of character and the spatial environment around him, without recourse to dialogue. Via Mann's choice to begin *Heat* with McCauley's introduction, the audience (perhaps unwittingly) forms an identification with this criminal character, an identification that will endure until the closing credits. When looked at analytically, this is not an easy accomplishment in cinema; indeed, by the film's end such is the power of our identification with McCauley that we arguably side with him and perhaps secretly wish that it were he who survived and not Vincent Hanna. What we take from this opening scene is that McCauley visibly shuns normal society. He is aggressively averse to the direction that the rest of the world is taking and actively inhabits a state of aloneness as a means to, and result of, his revolutionary project.

It's the next day now and the film turns towards Hanna, a Robbery Homicide detective with the LAPD. He makes love with his wife Justine in a well-rehearsed way that Nick James, in his BFI treatment of the film, aptly terms "perfunctory".[4] Here is a man, a career police, shoe-horning into his morning some intimacy with his wife before the real adventures of his day begin. Hanna is shown to be encumbered here, buttressed against a smart wife, a needy daughter and a claustrophobic "dead-tech, post-modernistic bullshit house", as he later puts it. Of course, as was later exemplified with great gusto by those 1999 cinematic entries – *The Matrix*, *Fight Club* and *American Beauty* – these trappings of 90s life in Hanna's world are only there to then be rallied against later in the text of the film. So just as Neo rejects the corporate fantasy of Nokia cell phones and FedEx deliveries, just as Tyler Durden says no to designer underwear and maternal love, just as Lester Burnham repudiates asparagus and Lawrence Welk, so Vincent Hanna will ultimately reconfigure his own life in a manner that excludes domesticity and embraces a new form of self-determination.

The manner of Hanna's introduction in *Heat* and the shot choices made by Mann to convey this allude to the idea of the character's initial entrapment. A series of tight close up shots of him making love with Justine; a tight close up pan shot of him in the shower; a shot of Justine smoking in bed with Hanna in silhouette to the left of frame; a shot of Justine talking to her daughter with Hanna marginalised by a door frame to the right of shot; a mid shot of Hanna again marginalised within a door frame – the intimation here is that of an attenuated marriage and a man corralled and reduced by the domestic arena.[5] At the end of the scene Hanna rejects his wife's offer of a breakfast out and makes his escape downstairs. By a mere 4 minutes in to the film, the central dialectic of *Heat*, the antithetical pairing of cop and robber, has been established. Each man is distinct and different in his initial portrayal and yet both are governed by a unique self-determination, a common need to subvert the American Dream and breach the edge of the construct.[6]

The scene that follows provides us with the first example of both Neil's and Hanna's strident desire to breach the construct and exist outwith that societal normalcy. The ambulance that Neil was seen stealing in the opening minutes is now being put to use in the robbery of an armoured truck carrying a set of bearer bonds that Neil and his team wants. Cheritto and Waingro t-bone the armoured truck with a green recovery vehicle. The team then set explosive charges on the wall of the truck and explode an entry hole. As Chris enters to search for the bearer bonds, Neil keeps a watchful eye on the street. Mann's camera charts McCauley's primacy here by tracking past him at a low angle underneath his M16, as if stepping aside from this intimidating presence before it.[7] Chris re-emerges with the bonds and, as the crew begins to retreat from the scene, Waingro shoots dead one of the guards for eyeballing him. As a result of this, and much to McCauley's chagrin, the other two guards are killed in the crew's efforts to contain the situation.

The robbery represents the first physical, dynamic manifestation of Neil's split with conventional life. In its dramatic presentation, the robbery exemplifies Neil's creed that he should operate outside of normal society and distance himself from connections with not just people but all the other presumed indicators of success that predominated at the end of the 1990s. During the robbery itself the

streets surrounding the crime are eerily empty, absent of any pedestrians or cars. An obvious remark given that an armed robbery is taking place, but perhaps also a commentary on Neil's solipsistic worldview? The perception of the world that Neil has enforced upon himself is one of emptiness and isolation. He chooses to see his environment in this manner because of his wish to stand apart from convention, from the facile confection of "barbeques and ball games" that he so derides later on in the film. Throughout the film, Neil is frequently viewed standing amidst vacant and desolate locales, as if the populous of L.A. have become *desaparecidos*, forced to relegate to the liminal zones of the city by the dinosaur drama of these men.

When Hanna arrives at the scene of the robbery it is dark. He pulls up in his black, hearse-like, police issue vehicle. Mann films him driving from behind with very tight framing that reduces the interior space of the vehicle to almost zero. Because Hanna is not yet free to roam in the night-time terrain of the city, he remains constrained in the environment of his car, very similar to his depiction in the domestic arena several scenes earlier. Just as the robbery itself was emblematic of McCauley's split from societal convention, so the aftermath and crime scene promulgate Hanna's revolutionary ideas about life. Hanna emerges from his car with a physical swagger that, to the audience, immediately demarks confidence, professionalism and bombast. He is now, finally, in his domain, free to navigate this riot of death and destruction wrought by McCauley and intuit who this criminal is and what he wants. Hanna prides this nocturnal environment over the domestic or the emotional and only truly exists here, amongst the cadavers of the dead.

Pacino's portrayal of Hanna here is particularly fine and illustrates the power of the minimalist Reactionary Acting so favoured by the Meisner Technique. When Bosko informs Hanna that the homeless TV man was hiding and mostly heard the robbery, Pacino reacts with the subtlest, subtlest expression – a tiny bob of the head coupled with a near imperceptible movement of the mouth – that nevertheless conveys pure dismay at the failure of a lead to materialise. As this physical demonstration shows, professionalism of the high order that Hanna trades in and extols does not react well to pedestrian disappointments and the errors of laymen. Pacino plays Hanna with the same degree of what Robert Kolker

termed "ideological certitude"[8] when he discussed the function of the Indiana Jones character in Spielberg's quadrilogy of matinee adventures. Like Jones, Hanna physically embodies a waspish sensibility while around others, a myopic viewpoint that is largely inadequate in dealing with the trivialities and incompetence of others. Hanna is largely insensitive to the emotional needs of both his wife and step-daughter, the latter only really coming to his attention after she nearly kills herself. In a subsequent scene to this post-robbery analysis, Hanna fails to acknowledge the importance of a chicken dinner his wife makes for him. His defence for having been out late? The three bodies that lie before him in this sequence.

Returning to McCauley, we now find ourselves in a late night diner as he sits down with a book on titanium and a coffee. Eady, a bookstore clerk, initiates contact with him in the hope of a romantic encounter. McCauley initially rebuffs Eady's advance – this is, after all, the kind of convention that he is rallying against in his pursuit of an alternative truth to societal norms – but then allows her to indulge herself by apologising for his rudeness and re-establishing contact. He announces that he's a metals salesman and holds out his hand for her to shake. Mirroring the near-imperceptible reactionary gesture of Pacino in the post-robbery scene, where Hanna is told that the homeless guy only heard the crime taking place, De Niro deploys a similar device here that, too, bespeaks of a character always in command and unforgiving of the hesitancy of others.

As Eady vacillates over whether to shake his hand or not McCauley quickly tires of having his courtesy unacknowledged and looks down at his hand and then back at her. In a millisecond McCauley has almost subliminally communicated to Eady that you will shake my hand . . . there it is . . . take it. Eady relents and the two exchange pleasantries. They end up back at Eady's and in bed together. Neil then waits until Eady is asleep before rising, getting dressed and bringing her a glass of water wrapped in a rigid origami-style napkin. Control of any situation, professional, domestic or romantic, is of vital importance to both of these men as they pursue their very specific agenda of escaping the constraints of conventional culture. For McCauley, this romantic encounter is simply a facile form of diversion, a flirtation with the normal life he despises en route to realising his countercultural ambition. Ultimately



Hanna (Al Pacino) "is viewed as an unwelcome intruder in his own home".

McCauley will reject Eady in favour of attaining the truth he uniquely perceives.

In this tour of *Heat's* very specific exemplification of two uniquely self-determining characters, we arrive at a revealing moment. Hanna has been called away from a social event, which he was attending with his wife and police colleagues, to the scene of a murder. A prostitute has been beaten and killed by Waingro – the recently escaped "contagion", as Mann puts it in the film's director's commentary – and the body dumped at a trashy motel. As Hanna arrives, the craning camera picks out a dead crow in the residents' pool before sweeping past the neon motel sign in a manner redolent of *Citizen Kane* (1941) and Susan Alexander's trashy nightclub sequence.

Hanna kneels to inspect the body, the *mise en scène* of the downtown towers and an LAPD helicopter circumscribing the moment and providing an enormous sense of pathos to the foreground event. Hanna's reaction to the body is one of disillusionment and ennui, rather than anger or passion. When the murdered girl's mother breaches the police line and runs in hysterics towards her dead daughter, Hanna staves her off and embraces her in an apparent gesture of consolation. And yet, his expression remains a distant and almost indifferent one. Has this man, McCauley's simpatico, moved so far away from the prevalent convention of his time that he is now immune to the pain and suffering he so ardently strives to prevent? Later in the film Hanna speaks of his need to effectively bottle up his angst as a means of keeping himself sensitive and attuned to the demands of his job. He's against any kind of cathartic dialogue with Justine and instead prefers to retain the emotional poison of the crimes he witnesses in order to gain a deeper insight into the truth of his vocation. In this scene it seems quite apparent that this retention of his negative

experiences has caused in Hanna a split from the society he thinks he serves. As Mann notes in the director's commentary, the primary motivation for Hanna is the pursuit of an antagonist, not in an attempt to serve social justice or preserve the moral imperative, but rather because it provides him with a truth and an experiential reality that conventional society denies him. Upholding the law is a fortunate adjunct to Hanna's true motivation as a detective.

Heat's narrative continues to cast a wide net. Having initiated an experiment in social and romantic conformity with Eady, the next key scene sees McCauley back at her hillside home asking her to come away with him to New Zealand. McCauley talks of giving Eady all the money she wants so that she can set up a studio there. Eady is eventually convinced and agrees to go with him. But in the way that De Niro plays the role here, we know that neither McCauley nor the audience is convinced of his wish to flee with Eady in the pursuit of a 'normal life'. McCauley, having asked Eady to leave with him, looks to the ground, despondency writ large on his face, his inner voice berating him for having betrayed his own ideals. He knows it won't happen and deludes himself of its possibility for only a second. What we are witnessing here is the wrestling apart of two separate worldviews, the death throws of societal normalcy for a man who sees beyond the constructed confection. This is the falling away of what was expected at the end of the 20th Century, replaced with a purer form of existentialism, the ability to determine one's own life and strive for a new reality.

The meeting of minds

The simpatico relationship between Hanna and McCauley forges ahead. Hanna returns home late to find a pyramid of dirty dishes in the sink, an absent daughter and a wife making plans for a night out alone. Once again Hanna is viewed as an unwelcome intruder in his own home, an alien presence whose life force is visibly

drained once he crosses the domestic threshold. He remains trapped by the doorframes, wall partitions and worktops of this environment. He's downstairs now having given up attempting to placate Justine. He moves to start washing up but slams the tap shut, as if realising the ludicrousness of this domestic gesture. Hanna is through with the repetitive banality of his marriage. McCauley is out there, somewhere, driving on the Moby-inflected freeways of Los Angeles. The pull of this elevated experience is like an opiate to Hanna and so he flees now, up in to the crystalline night skies of the city in pursuit of his quarry.

The aerial photography of this next extended sequence is quite stunning. It's often rather incongruous that, in the cinema of Mann and some of the films clearly inspired by *Heat's* use of the urban environment (*Crash* [2004], *The Kingdom* [2007], *The Dark Knight* [2008], *Drive* [2011]) the pristine and ethereal presentation of the city at night is clearly at odds with the destructive crime stories that take place there. Unlike classic *noir* where the city was seen as an analogue to the calamitous tales of murder, corruption and sleaze, the cityscapes of this brand of neo noir appear antithetical to the narrative immorality of the principal characters. In *Heat* the city is clearly intended to be viewed as something inspiring, limitless and beautiful in its neutrality, an indicator of modernity, opportunity and existentialism that is the locus for any activity one can conceive of, in this instance crime. Hanna takes up his privileged position in a police helicopter above the streets of L.A. He navigates the downtown towers like a master of his kingdom. The metaphor here, of a self-determined man rising high above the quotidian city that he serves, is an apt one. Hanna has now, to all intents and purposes, broken free from the conventional life and is charting a new path alongside McCauley's.

These two paths converge finally on the freeway heading towards the airport. As Hanna, now in his police vehicle, speeds to catch up with McCauley he passes under the LAX sign in a moment that prefigures the ending to come. Hanna pulls McCauley over and convinces him to go for a coffee and a chat. At well over an hour into the film *Heat's* pivotal scene and its unique selling point arrives. McCauley and Hanna sit at a table. Mann cuts from one man to the other [use of two cameras?] using very tightly positioned over-the-shoulder shots.

The background of the café, the other patrons and waiters, are lost in a soft focus. Their lives are indeed background noise and wholly irrelevant to these two men and their revolutionary projects. Mann's use of shallow focus begins to increase now as the film's narrative starts to hurtle towards its apex. As we shall see later during the airport finale, Mann is by now employing such a shallow focus and depth of field that, in the words of Mark Cousins, the distant city lights become 'dreamy blobs'[9], utterly abstract and unknowable to both the viewer and these two men. As Hanna and McCauley verge closer to achieving their respective goals, the city around them begins to dematerialise and retreat, both psychologically and literally.

For now, the two men have coffee and outline their respective dictums, both of which are almost perfectly aligned:

McCauley: This regular-type life, that your life?

Hanna: My life, no. My life . . . no my life's a disaster zone. I gotta stepdaughter who's so fucked up 'cause her real father's this large-type asshole. I gotta wife, we're passing each other on the down slope of a marriage, my third, cause I spend all my time chasing guys like you around the block . . . that's my life.

McCauley: Guy told me one time, don't let yourself get attached to anything you are not willing to walk out on in 30 seconds flat if you feel the heat around the corner. Now, if you're on me and you've gotta move when I move, how do you expect to keep a rela . . . a marriage?

Hanna: That's an interesting point. What are you, a monk?

McCauley: I have a woman.

Hanna: What do you tell her?

McCauley: I tell her I'm a salesman.

Hanna: So then if you spot me coming round that corner, you just gonna walk out on this woman, without saying goodbye?

McCauley: That's the discipline.

McCauley's attempts to convince Hanna that he can both maintain his life of crime and forge a romantic relationship with Eady seem to fall flat. These men are authors of their own lives and McCauley is fooling no one, especially himself, that Eady is representative of anything else other than a kind of social experiment. In the context of an extraordinary man leading an extraordinary life, Eady is a marginal figure that cannot have a place in McCauley's revolutionary project. Despite it being his attempt to assure Hanna of his validity as a foe, McCauley's line "I have a

woman" sounds hopelessly trite and almost anachronistic, like a phrase he heard one time in Folsom. It bespeaks of a certain chauvinism and rings hollow the moment it's uttered. Hanna knows it's all smoke and mirrors but, at the same time, he recognises the simpatico sitting opposite him. Both men will, in time, reject their romantic commitments and embrace the new reality they have been seeking.

The bank robbery that soon follows Hanna and McCauley's coffee shop confab provides audiences with a distillation of that discussion's themes, threats, aphorisms and axioms. It's an audacious and exciting sequence that reveals both Mann's consummate technical skill and the influences of his forebears, from Sam Fuller to Michelangelo Antonioni. For our purposes here the scene will not be dwelled upon except to highlight that it offers audiences another physical exemplification of both McCauley and Hanna's strident desires to exist outside of normal society. The level of aggression and self-serving behaviour that both men exhibit in the robbery sequence demarks the extent to which they have now both excised themselves from the normative expectations of the time. The fallout from the bank robbery is enormous. Michael Cheritto, McCauley's friend, is shot and killed by Hanna. Chris sustains a gunshot to the shoulder and suffers from a broken clavicle. Trejo is found by McCauley tortured and dying in his home, having been beaten near to death by Waingro in an attempt to elicit the target of the crew's planned robbery. Breedan, McCauley's backup driver for the bank robbery, is also dead, having been shot in the back as the crew fled the scene. As is made clear by these individual instances, even McCauley's crew are now falling away from him, one by one, being removed from the equation so that all that remains is the central dialectic of Hanna and McCauley.

Hanna returns home from the bank robbery all dishevelled and weary to find Justine making dinner for another man, Ralph, played by Xander Berkeley. Though ostensibly this scene is played for laughs, with Ralph characterised as the object of amusement and the subject of Hanna's misplaced rage, it also illustrates the paroxysm and physical separation that we've been waiting for in the steadily deteriorating marriage between Hanna and Justine.[10] Once we've had our first few laughs at Ralph's expense, Mann cuts away from him to a medium close up of just Hanna and Justine. A support pillar in the

kitchen bisects the scene and keeps Hanna and Justine symbolically separate from one another as they quarrel and blame one another for their respective failures. Justine may have cheated on Hanna but, ultimately, the situation is of Hanna's own making and he knows it. He has willed into action this state of being because of his adherence to the dictum previously espoused to McCauley in the coffee shop scene. Hanna stands with his TV in his hands, the marker of his only diversion or source of escape in the domestic environment (remember, after berating Justine for showing irritation at his lateness home following the bearer bonds robbery, Hanna turns to the TV as a means of registering his difficulty in reconciling the domestic arena with the professional), and expounds the central tenet of his belief system

Hanna: I say what I mean and I do what I say.

Justine: How admirable . . . except that none of it's about us.

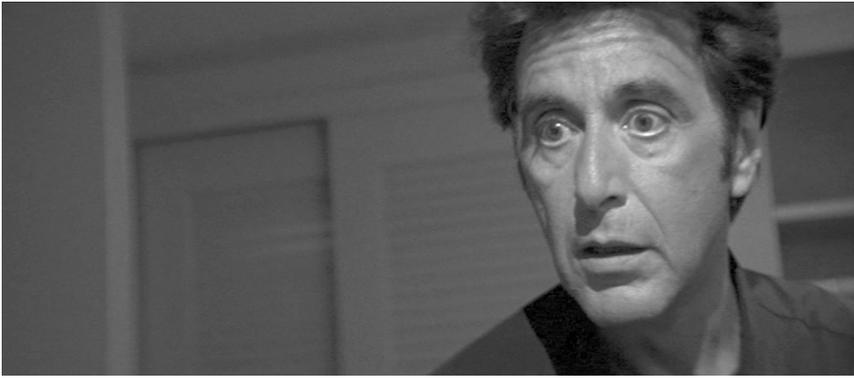
Hanna: No.

Justine: I may be stoned on grass and Prozac but you've been walking through our life dead. And now I have to demean myself with Ralph just to get closure with you.[11]

Hanna holds true to his creed and leaves Justine's house for the last time, TV still in hand.

Down the rabbit hole

Hanna frantically checks in with his two subordinates at the Airport Marquee Hotel in the hope that McCauley might still make a move against Waingro who is holed up there in protective custody. They have nothing to report. Hanna slams the phone down in frustration and leaves the police control room for the temporary refuge of his own hotel room. On the balcony of his hotel room Hanna gazes out at an L.A. cloverleaf and resigns himself to how far he's come in his search for a more truthful existence. The process has taken its toll but Hanna is now in a freer, more unencumbered state than he has been for the entirety of the preceding story. He notices a damp patch of carpet by the bathroom door and goes in to investigate. The way Pacino registers the shock on his face of what Hanna now sees before him is truly remarkable. Lauren is lying in the bath in a dilution of warm water and her own blood. She's cut her arteries and appears dead. Hanna pulls her out and falls back onto the toilet seat as he desperately



“ . . . Pacino registers the shock on his face of what Hanna now sees before him . . . ”

attempts to control her bleeding with torn strips of hand towel.

The blocking of the moment, with Hanna cradling Lauren as she lies prone across his lap, is far more redolent of the statue of Michelangelo's *Pieta* observed at the very start of *Heat* than the death of McCauley at the closing credits, as some critics have noted. The proportions of the *pieta* are more accurately conceived here in this scene, with Lauren assuming the feeble and child-like presentation of Christ in the sculpture, as is the thematic reasoning behind the statue – that of a vision of abandonment and an image of serenity in the face of the dying. By this point in the film Lauren has most certainly been abandoned, by Hanna and, to a lesser degree, her mother. Her suicide bid is Lauren's last clamouring attempt to gain the attention of Hanna and Justine, as they busy themselves with affairs and work respectively.

Hanna applies tourniquets and speeds Lauren off to the emergency room. As doctors work on their daughter, Hanna and Justine sit in the waiting room and begin to discuss the core of their problems:

Justine: Is there any way things could work out between us?

Hanna: I wish I could say yes, you know but . . . it's like you said. All I am is what I'm goin' after . . . I'm not what you want Justine.

Justine: (after a lengthy pause) Well, go on if you have to.

I doubt there's a more significant justification for not returning to your work and abandoning your wife in her hour of need than the attempted suicide of your daughter; and yet, this is exactly what Hanna does now. Justine puts on a brave face and, with great difficulty, encourages Hanna to go off and complete his revolutionary journey, out there in the dark of the L.A. night, amidst the landing lights

and taxiing planes of LAX. Hanna offers his wife one last consoling smile before disappearing down the stairs and out of her life forever. From the base of the flight of stairs Mann's camera captures Hanna as he paces down each step, almost breaking into a run near the bottom as the urgency of the chase takes hold of him. Hanna cannot escape the gravity of the domestic life quickly enough. We then glimpse one last shot of the long-suffering Justine as she bows her head, lost in the grief and regret and horror of her situation.

Hanna's back in the police helicopter reestablishing his disassociation from the general populous, high up in the rarefied air of a February night in L.A. He lands at the Airport Marquee Hotel where Neil, having broken off from his escape to New Zealand with Eady, has assassinated Waingro in his suite. The hotel is chaotically evacuating due to the fire alarm that McCauley has tripped to exact his escape. Hundreds of people mill around outside as police officers and firemen arrive to attend to the emergency. Mann blocks this sequence in such a way that Hanna seems to float between all the hotel residents and workers, completely oblivious to and unencumbered by their presence, like a phantasm existing on a different plane. He has indeed left behind the world of conventional careers, materialistic lifestyle obsessions, domestic arenas, social conformity, marital intimacy and gender mediation to arrive . . . here. Hanna preternaturally intuits that the abandoned car in the distance, with a woman in the passenger seat, belongs to McCauley. Hanna moves towards the car as McCauley exits via the hotel service entrance, discarding his hotel porter's tie – to him, the ultimate symbol of degenerate conformity – with a palpable relish. He strides towards the car and Eady, a kind of forced smile on his face. McCauley knows this is not what he should be doing. The pull of his revolutionary plan is strengthening. He looks to his right, a

reflex action almost, taken by the noise of chaos, and sees Hanna moving swiftly through the crowds towards him, gun drawn, with but one intention. The keening strings of Goldenthal's cue 'Of Separation' rise on the soundtrack as McCauley rapidly processes what now needs to happen. He must abandon Eady, as he always really planned to, and disappear into the night to complete his search for the ultimate truth to his existence.

The ending of *Heat* satisfies a number of criteria. Pertaining to the genre tropes we expect of a crime story, the film's ending reduces the epic quality of *Heat's* narrative, with its multifarious strands, characters and events, to a very simple, singular action befitting of all worthy police procedurals: the criminal runs and the cop pursues him. In this regard, the ending sequence of *Heat* is wonderfully effective, a beautifully edited series of running shots and reciprocal gunfire between the two men, culminating in the death of McCauley. The closing image of the film, McCauley dead on a junction box and Hanna by his side, codifies our expectations for how a typical crime genre story should end – the restoration of the moral order – and leaves us with that ambiguous emotional mixture of satisfaction and pathos. Of course, in the context of this article's contention – that both Hanna and McCauley are ambassadors for the pursuit of an alternate reality to the one supplied by Western culture at the end of the 20th Century and that *Heat* is the precursor to films like *The Matrix*, *Fight Club* and *American Beauty* – the ending serves an altogether different function entirely.

McCauley scrambles over a large hedge and breaks into the charter terminals and taxiways of Los Angeles International Airport. Hanna intuits McCauley's likely direction of flight and pursues him with a shotgun taken from a patrol officer outside the hotel. This environment of airport runways, cartage storage fields and landing lights is an extremely apt one, given that we have arrived, in a narrative and literal sense, at these two characters' ultimate realisations of their revolutionary projects. Both Hanna and McCauley have now come so far in extracting themselves from normality, from the *mise en scene* of the everyday, that both their mental states and their very lives are expressed through this barren locale of desolation and emptiness but also beguiling beauty. These men have attained greatness in their own ways and are now the sole occupants of a strange new world, completely detached from

all the things this cinematic micro genre would go on to attack so bluntly in *The Matrix* et al. For this writer, the location used at the ending of *Heat* possesses that same other-worldly, hostile, beautiful underworld quality that can also be found at the end of David Fincher's *Se7en*, also from 1995. Though one uses night and one uses day, both these films utilise extreme locations in their endings as a means of commenting on the mental and physical departure from everyday life that their characters have undertaken.



"Hanna cradling Lauren as she lies prone across his lap."

Hanna has chased McCauley to a collection of checkered junction boxes at the foot of one of the airport's main landing runways. Periodically, massively bright landing lights illuminate the two men as Hanna stealthily stalks McCauley. The two characters are now in their purest state of being since the film began. Unburdened by societal expectation or external cultural forces, the two men exact the quintessential expression of their rebelliousness, their unorthodoxy, and their insurrection against the manufactured reality of their time. As Hanna closes in on his quarry, Mann deploys the very long lenses discussed earlier. At the time of *Heat's* production, these lenses were brand new and quite unique in the shallow depth of field that they offered filmmakers. They are put to a very specific use now to reduce the drama even further, right down to Hanna's facial expression as he shoots Neil several times in the chest, his presence given away by the landing lights and contrails and roar of a landing plane. Hanna's face fills the frame and is distinct from the background only via the "dreamy blobs" of the distant city lights. The lighting on Hanna's face is strong, stark even, suggesting that all that exists in the world now is the unfolding drama of these two men right here. The reduction of the conventional environment, which Hanna and McCauley have rallied against since the outset, to these blobs of coloured light suggests that the two men have indeed left the old world for the new. Los Angeles and, by extension, the world is now an unknowable entity, opaque and hazy in form and content.

McCauley says to both Hanna and the audience "told you I'm never going back", ostensibly in reference to prison but really to the world of the conventional, from which he has spent the lifetime of the film trying to escape. As Neil dies Hanna looks searchingly towards the new frontier that both he and McCauley have created together. The look on Hanna's face is one of anguish but also steely determination.

In death Neil has achieved what he always wanted – true existential freedom – while Hanna stands before uncharted territory, a unique opportunity to begin again in this desert of the real.[12]

Notes

1. *Heat*, The Premiere Review, Ryan Gilbey, *Premiere*, February 1996.
2. This is no more obvious than in *Falling Down*, a film which reconfigures L.A. into an analogue of the Vietnam conflict, complete with crazed veterans, a critique of the white, Western stereotype of the 'oriental', and a chopper sound effect lifted straight from the Saigon hotel sequence in *Apocalypse Now* (1979).
3. A similar use of this shot can be found in Alan J. Pakula's *Klute* (1971).
4. James, Nick, *Heat*: BFI Film Classics, BFI Publishing, 2002.
5. As Nick James notes, in this scene Hanna is "a pathetic, almost ghostly figure", *Heat*, op cit.
6. Joshua Clover's term from his BFI treatment of *The Matrix*, BFI Publishing, 2004.
7. This particular camera shot is repeated a number of times in *Heat*: as Cheritto thunders towards the armoured car in his green recovery vehicle, the camera passes quickly in front of him; when Chris flees from his dysfunctional encounter with Charlene, the camera passes quickly in front of his speeding car; as Hanna makes his way through the Pit-bull arena to harass Torena, the camera passes quickly in front of him before he blasts through a corrugated door; as Hanna leaves the MCU in a fit of rage, the camera sweeps out of the way of his speeding vehicle. These characters seem to be hectoring the very mechanisms of cinema out of their way and, in doing so, draw attention to the existence of the camera in these moments through their command of its movements.
8. Kolker, Robert, *A Cinema of Loneliness: Penn, Stone, Kubrick, Scorsese, Spielberg, Altman*, 3rd ed, OUP, 2000.
9. Cousins, Mark, *The Story of Film – an*

Odyssey, Channel 4 Productions.

10. Even the very naming of Berkeley's character as Ralph indicates quite obviously that he will be both the subject of Hanna's scorn and derision and an object of amusement for the audience. Mann would use the same ploy in *The Insider* (1999) by including Bergman's assistant, Norman, in the film. In both cases, these very minor roles, with geeky, everyman names, largely exist to elevate the role Pacino plays into something more exotic, professional and commandeering.

11. I've always thought "poor Ralph" when Justine says this line, in his earshot as well! This again reinforces Ralph's function as a diminutive object of derision for both Hanna and Justine.

12. With regards to its usage in *The Matrix*, rather than that which Baudrillard originally intended.

Appendix: Exam question applicable to *Heat*

2009 Higher English Exam (Section D – Film and TV Drama)

16. Choose a film or TV drama in which two characters are involved in a psychological conflict that dominates the text. Show how the film or programme makers reveal the nature of the conflict and explain why it is so significant to the text as a whole.

Responses to this question could examine *Heat*, the central dialectic of Hanna and McCauley and their respective psychological struggles against the world of conformity. As Mann views Hanna and McCauley as the only two men like this in the universe, answers here may draw upon the central thesis of this article in an attempt to arrive at a conclusion about the significance of their conflict with 'normal life'. An answer should focus on:

- Identifying the exact nature of the psychological conflict that both Hanna and McCauley are involved in. What is it that they're fighting against in the film?

Despite being cop and robber, do they ultimately have similar aims in life?

- Examining some of key portions of the film – opening sequence, Hanna and Justine in bed, the bearer bonds robbery, the post robbery crime scene, McCauley meeting Eady for the first time, Hanna at the motel dealing with the murdered prostitute, Hanna's first helicopter trip, Hanna and McCauley having coffee, Hanna finding Justine and Ralph together, Hanna rescuing the suicidal Lauren, Hanna and Justine separating forever at the hospital, McCauley and Eady separating forever outside the hotel, the ending of the film by the runways of LAX – and how they reveal the conflict of the two characters at work.
- Analysing what the disparate elements are that these two characters are

fighting against in these scenes?

Domesticity, materialism, social conformity etc.

- Accounting for how director Michael Mann uses the language of cinema to highlight these disparate elements and make an overall statement about contemporary life?
- Assessing the success of *Heat* as a critique of Western culture at the end of the 20th Century via the psychological conflict of its main characters. How does the film's treatment of this dynamic, plus its exploration of work, relationships, the urban environment and existentialism, impact on its overall success as a piece of entertainment?

Sample Introductory Paragraph

A film that features two characters engaged in a psychological conflict is

the 1995 crime drama *Heat*, directed by Michael Mann. In this film the two main characters, Vincent Hanna and Neil McCauley, spend the entire film involved in a psychological battle with not only one another but also with the larger world around them. Hanna and McCauley live lives of heightened professionalism so specific and focused that they are conflict with everything else that society considered 'normal' or 'expected' at the end of the 20th Century. The film boasts a series of key moments that help clarify the nature and extent of the conflict between Hanna, the cop, and McCauley, the robber, whilst also highlighting director Michael Mann's technique and the significance of the characters' conflict in relation to the overarching meaning of the film.

Disciplining the Curriculum for Excellence

Rick Instrell

This is an expanded version of a paper delivered at the United Kingdom Literacy Association conference at the University of Chester on 15 July 2011.

Abstract

The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is the current Scottish curricular initiative for 3-18 year-olds. Although most educationists agree with its progressive goals, its documents have been criticised as being vague, anti-intellectual and ignorant of subject disciplines.

This paper will argue that all curriculum designers would benefit from insights from educational linguistics, a hybrid field formed by fusing educational sociology and linguistics. The most potent ideas come by combining Basil Bernstein's analysis of knowledge structures with

ideas from linguistics. Linguistics is a vast discipline but three related fields are of particular relevance: systemic functional linguistics (SFL), critical discourse analysis (CDA) and multimodal social semiotics (MMSS). Each comes with a formidable battery of methodologies and jargon. Despite this their key concepts and applications can be translated into a teacher – and learner – friendly form (Instrell 2008, 2010).

The paper will apply educational linguistics ideas to the teaching of high-level intellectual processes such as abstraction and metacognition and then extend the ideas into an analysis of subject English.

Critics have labelled the CfE as anti-intellectual but few have actually

suggested how to repair its obvious shortcomings. This paper is a constructive attempt to put academic disciplines and the pursuit of excellence back into the Scottish curriculum.

Context: Curriculum for Excellence

The ideas explored in this paper have been developed within the context of the Scottish Government's curriculum development for 3-18 year-olds, grandly titled the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). It is claimed that the CfE focuses on learners' needs by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum which will lead to better quality learning and teaching and therefore increased attainment. The CfE was designed to give freedom and responsibility to establishments as well as autonomy to teachers.

Examples of texts

novels, short stories, plays, poems
reference texts
the spoken word
charts, maps, graphs and timetables
advertisements, promotional leaflets
comics, newspapers and magazines
CVs, letters and emails
films, games and TV programmes
labels, signs and posters
recipes, manuals and instructions
reports and reviews
text messages, blogs and
social networking sites
web pages, catalogues and directories

Table 1: Example of texts in 'Literacy Across Learning'

Mark Priestley and Walter Humes (2010) identify CfE as being typical of recent international trends in national curriculum development in that it involves both top-down prescription and bottom-up curriculum development. Such developments seek to maintain standards whilst giving teachers a degree of flexibility and autonomy.

Implementation of CfE

The CfE initiative started in 2004 and its first year of implementation was 2010. It was a Scottish Labour project which was picked up by the Scottish National Party (SNP) when they came into power in 2007. Although conceived in time of plenty it has had a prolonged and painful labour in a time of scarcity. CfE demands substantial teacher input but many teachers have become demotivated through the deterioration of conditions of service, limited promotion prospects and attacks on pension rights. Despite this, the CfE has been enthusiastically taken up in the primary sector. The response has been much more variable in the secondary sector with some schools and departments very keen. Many subject departments however repeat the practices applied to other 'innovations': simply ticking the boxes in audit checklists and maintaining the status quo. The CfE has a commitment to literacy and numeracy across learning but much of this is hampered in the secondary sector by 'departmental silo' thinking and separate departmental bases in schools. There is also a lack of interdisciplinary thinking within many of the subject-based committees of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

For media educationists, however, there are more hopeful signs. They have

welcomed the CfE document *Literacy Across Learning* (Scottish Government 2009) as it recognises the centrality of both monomodal and multimodal texts in the learning experience.

Literacy Across Learning includes a table of 35 text types which teachers might use in CfE implementation (Table 1).

And there the document ends! There is no advice on how such a policy might be implemented. There is no sense that there could be a set of disciplinary principles to guide such a process. There is no recognition of the complexity of creating and interpreting many of these text types, nor of the fact that teachers need training in this area.

In February 2011, The Association for Media Education in Scotland (AMES) AMES published a position paper *Breaking Barriers* (AMES, 2011) which tries to address some of the arising issues in the light of developments in the media (multimodality: Jewitt 2009; online participatory culture: Jenkins et al. 2006) and in thinking on literacy (New London Group 1996).

Multimodality should be a common concern for every curriculum area as all involve communication in multiple modes. Increasingly pupils are being asked to use and produce complex multimodal products as part of the learning experience. Consequently all teachers need to have an idea of how to interpret and create such texts. As a corollary, assessment needs to shift from purely monomodal written responses to allowing learners, outside the examination hall at least, to be able to respond multimodally in a medium of their own choosing e.g. illustrated hyperlinked essay, multimedia presentation, video/ audio podcast.

I believe that multimodal principles derived from linguistics allow a principled approach to multimodal teaching and assessment. Drawing inspiration from MMSS (Jewitt 2009), CDA (Fairclough 1995) and SFL (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004, Eggins 2007), the multimodal approach views all communication as involving the orchestration of modes in rhetorical structures to construct meaning in cohesive and engaging texts. I have already given a (hopefully) teacher-friendly account of these ideas (Instrell 2008, 2010) and it convinces me that it should be possible to develop common criteria for multimodal communicative

performance in any curriculum area. An advantage of such a common approach is that it would help both teachers and learners bridge subject barriers.

SNP education minister Michael Russell is an advocate of media education, having worked in television and the media prior to establishing his own media company. Following discussions with the minister AMES has had very productive discussions with Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS now incorporated into Education Scotland) and SQA. Also, with the assistance of Scottish Screen (now incorporated into Creative Scotland), SQA has piloted a Scottish Survey of Literacy (primary 4, primary 7 and secondary 2) which will feature multimodal texts such as moving image as well as traditional monomodal texts. Scottish Screen's Moving Image Education project has been successful in a number of schools and local authorities (Scottish Screen 2009). The Dundee-based Consolarium has implemented games-based learning in many schools (Miller and Robertson 2010). And recent CPD events for primary, secondary and teacher educators on games-based learning and 21st Century Literacy involved over 300 educators from all sectors of Scottish education. Also Creative Scotland has commissioned a study on how to implement a programme of 21st Century Literacy which should report by the end of 2011. However the doubts remain . . .

CfE Critique

One correspondent to *The Herald* newspaper summed up many teachers' feelings by describing the CfE as "the most ill-conceived, ill-thought out, ill-described ragbag of empty verbiage and feel-good platitudes that I have encountered in 27 years of teaching".

Academic critique has been thin on the ground apart from contributions from the Royal Society of Edinburgh (2008), Lindsay Paterson (2010), Walter Humes and Mark Priestley (2010). Paterson has described CfE as 'anti-intellectual' and 'anti-knowledge' in that its Outcomes are not grounded in the progressive structure of disciplines.

Humes and Priestley (2010) have based their critique on archetypal curriculum models as outlined in AV Kelly's *The Curriculum: Theory and Practice* (Kelly 1999). Kelly outlines 3 canonical models:

- **Content model:** curriculum as content and education as transmission

- **Objectives model:** curriculum as product and education as instrument
- **Process model:** curriculum as process and education as development.

Kelly details the benefits and shortcomings of each model and his account will be familiar to teachers who have experienced all three. The archetypes are useful in that they provide a framework for analysing and critiquing curriculum developments.

The analysis also has a degree of sophistication in that particular developments can be viewed as hybrids of the canonical three. For example the content and objectives models can be combined to produce the mastery model and the objectives and process models can be combined to produce the outcomes model.

Despite the availability of such academic studies of the curriculum there is no acknowledgement in the official discourse of CfE documents of the historical and contested context of curriculum developments. Such dishonest anti-intellectualism has alienated many teachers who favour its progressive aims.

One would have thought that it would be essential that all involved in developing CfE should be aware of the conceptual and ideological differences between the content, objectives and process models. As Kelly (2009: 114) says:

"The [content model] sees the role of content as central and finds the criteria of selection in the content itself – either its presumed intrinsic value or its usefulness. The objectives model places its aims and objectives first and offers these as the criteria for selecting content, suggesting that we select content which seems most likely to help us achieve our aims. The process model requires us to select that content which will promote the processes or forms of development which are its concern and to make such selections in the light of procedural principles derived from these."

I wish to argue that, as the ideas of the CfE are implemented within the new SQA National Qualifications, an engagement with disciplinary thinking requires us to devise assessment practices which promote high level "forms of development" such as metacognition – or thinking about thinking. This is an

intellectual skill which, once learned, enables the lifelong development of higher order processing which can be applied in any field from quantum mechanics to car mechanics. As it is about the processing of disciplinary content, it seems natural to see metacognition as a hybrid of Kelly's content and process models.

Kelly's models (plus the notion of metacognition) can be represented as a Venn diagram (Figure 1).

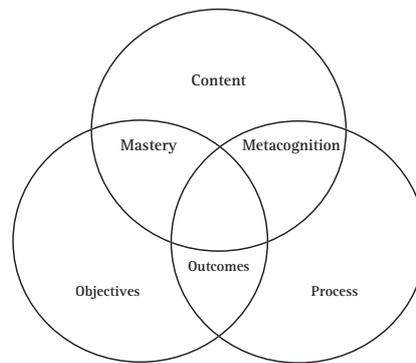


Fig 1: Venn diagram of curriculum models and assessment

If we now map some Scottish educational developments and qualifications on to the Venn diagram it would seem that assessment practices are generally moving in an anticlockwise direction round the diagram. As we enter school session 2011–2012, SQA is developing new qualifications for all curriculum areas which embody the developmental aims of CfE as well as engage with disciplinary and craft content. In my view this would be best achieved by aiming for metacognitive assessment. The previous Venn diagram could now be amended to that in Figure 2.

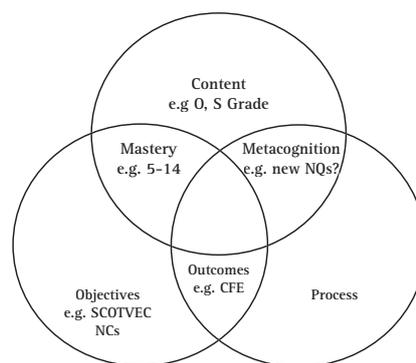


Fig 2: Venn diagram of Scottish curriculum development and assessment models

I have no idea what the area in the middle of the Venn diagram represents other than the Holy Grail of the assessment methodology that pleases everyone!

A feature of Scottish secondary schooling is that teaching is assessment-led and national qualification assessment often determines teaching practices to their detriment. In my view this inescapable fact could be used to good effect and actually improve teaching and learning.

Let us examine metacognition further. It can be seen as having two related components: metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive regulation (Lei 2011). Metacognitive knowledge can be encouraged by asking questions such as:

- "Do I understand this?"
- "How do I know I understand this?"
- "Can I communicate my understanding to myself and others in words, images and/or symbols?"
- "What is special (e.g. mathematical, scientific, aesthetic, social scientific, ethical, practical) about the way I am thinking?"

Metacognitive regulation can be encouraged by asking questions such as:

- "Do I understand this?"
- "If not what can I do about it?"
- "Can I communicate my current lack of understanding to myself and others in words, images and/or symbols?"
- "What actions or ways of thinking do I know (from this or other subjects) which might be helpful?"

Metacognition is evidently related to critical thinking as both involve evaluating whether ideas make sense. Metacognition essentially relates to one's own thinking whereas critical thinking links to the thinking of others. Hence if the learners are capable of thinking about their own thinking they should equally be able to critique the thinking of others. Metacognitive assessment is often rejected because of its complexity and the fact that it is not directly observable. However the link between metacognition and critical thinking suggests that we should be able to measure it by utilising test instruments which require critical thinking. One way to do this in any domain is to present examinees with examples of flawed communication, methodology, argument or conclusion and ask them to give a reasoned critique.

Of course, traditional performance testing will still be necessary. But what I am calling for critical thinking to be

given greater emphasis in teaching and assessment.

Powerful Knowledge

Schooling is the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next. Most subject teachers have theories about how to transmit that knowledge – for example, constructivism – but have no theory of knowledge and so no way real way to carry out a metacognitive review of their specialism. Therefore a pessimistic prediction for the new SQA qualifications is that any changes will be cosmetic.

What is needed is a theory of knowledge which allows us to consider what kind of knowledge should be in the curriculum. The CfE's 'outcomes and experiences' give one account. What is needed though is an alternative account that allows us to critique the CfE and ensures that learners are exposed to critical disciplinary thinking which both motivates and fosters their intellectual development.

So, what is knowledge? One approach to analysing knowledge structures is to use Basil Bernstein's ideas. First Bernstein identifies two knowledge discourses:

1. **Horizontal discourse** which leads to practical mastery of common-sense knowledge e.g. everyday skills such as how to tie one's shoe laces, how to use Facebook. Horizontal discourse is segmentally organised in that the knowledge is localised and activity-specific.

2. **Vertical discourse** which is essentially a written form and leads to symbolic mastery of school knowledge such as the sciences, social sciences and the humanities. Vertical discourse is not segmentally organised but hierarchically organised as in the sciences or as a series of paradigms as in the social sciences and humanities. It is uncommon-sense (think of modern physics!) which goes beyond everyday experience. Its acquisition generally requires schools and universities to construct appropriate content and pedagogy (Bernstein 1999).

Michael Young has called such vertical discourse 'powerful knowledge' and says:

"For children from disadvantaged homes, active participation in school may be the only opportunity that they have to acquire powerful knowledge and be able to move, intellectually at least, beyond

their local and the particular circumstances. It does them no service to construct a curriculum around their experience (context-dependent knowledge) on the grounds that everyone's experience is equally valid, at least for them; if schools do no more than validate the experience of the pupils, it can only leave them there." (Young 2008: 15)

We as teachers all know that powerful knowledge resides in disciplines and crafts. However most of us realise that, in implementing SQA courses and meeting examination pass targets, our ideals degenerate into an inferior caricature of genuine learning. Assessment practices and over-assessment often reduce true understanding of subjects to rote memory of facts and routines quickly forgotten after pupils sit final examinations. Rather than subject learning having any intrinsic value to the individual it becomes a chore or at best a way of picking up university entrance tokens.

So what is required is an analysis of knowledge which lets us identify the qualities of powerful knowledge as well as an analysis of assessment practices which encourages deep rather than surface teaching and learning.

Knowledge structures

Bernstein (1999) says that vertical discourse has two principal variants of knowledge structure: the horizontal and the hierarchical. A discipline with

a horizontal knowledge structure can be viewed as comprising a range of different 'languages' which may well be incommensurable or contradictory. Bernstein represents this as a list i.e. L₁, L₂, L₃, . . . A good example of this is the subject English which in the school setting is struggling to cope with the claims of basic skills, cultural heritage, personal growth, functional language studies, media/cultural studies and new literary studies.

A discipline with a vertical knowledge structure (e.g. physics) is able to create general theories which explain a large range of phenomena at lower levels. Such a structure can be visualised as in Fig 3.

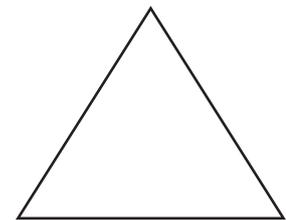


Fig 3: Bernstein's visual metaphor for vertical knowledge structure

The development of such a discipline can be viewed as a process of "sharpening the tip and broadening the base" (Maton and Muller 2007: 24). In the educational context one can also see that many topics covered have a common pedagogical goal: to sharpen learners' understandings of specific concepts and to see how they apply (or fail to apply) to different contexts.



Fig 4: Bernstein's visual metaphor for horizontal discourses

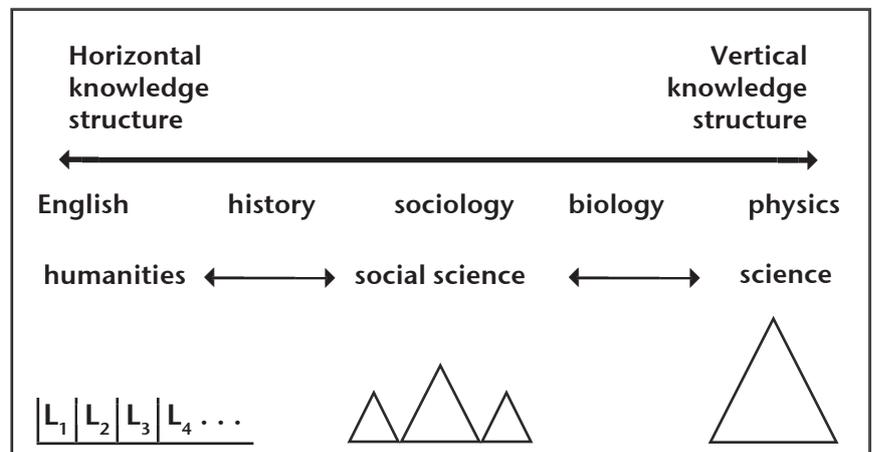


Fig 5: Comparative map of disciplinary knowledge structures (based on Martin 2011)

The social sciences can be seen as aspiring to the hierarchical and best represented as a series of competing triangles. Different sizes of triangle might represent the relative richness or dominance of particular paradigms (Fig 4).

Development in a horizontal knowledge structure can be seen as adding to the range of perspectives available.

We could now view disciplines as ranging between two extremes as in Fig 5.

Progress in Knowledge Structures

Knowledge structures are dynamic. So a question which arises is: why do disciplines progress and develop in different ways? Bernstein suggests two mechanisms. One is verticality – the development of ever more integrative general propositions – and this is best exemplified by subjects like astrophysics. But why has astrophysics developed a vertical structure whereas sociology has a horizontal structure?

One answer to this is the complexity of the object of study. A star may be massive but has a low degree of complexity. This means that it is relatively straightforward to refer to the empirical world to gain unambiguous evidence for or against astrophysical conjectures. Society has a high degree of complexity and so the empirical evidence for conjectures is likely to be partial and ambiguous. Bernstein calls this feature grammaticality which, to those unfamiliar with SFL, is likely to prove a confusing rather than illuminating term. Consequently I will use a more semantically congruent term corroborability to refer to the capacity of a discipline to generate objective correlates.

Thus verticality and corroborability can be seen to be the motors of disciplinary progress. In the case of physics the ability to receive external corroboration for theories results in greater vertical integration. In the case of sociology the lack of, or partiality of, corroborative evidence leads to the discipline developing horizontally. Mathematics is interesting because, at academic level, its corroboration is internal rather than empirical. The history of mathematics has many examples where a piece of abstract theory is developed and internally corroborated before, many decades later, being used in science where it finds external corroboration (O'Halloran, 2007).

Applying Linguistics to Knowledge Acquisition

What are the processes which produce verticality in both hierarchical and vertical discourses? One that has been identified is Michael Halliday's notion of grammatical metaphor (Halliday 1993).

In everyday language there is generally a match (or congruence) between grammar and semantics as shown in Table 2.

Semantic referent	Part of speech
Participant	Noun
Process	Verb
Quality	Adjective
Logical relation	Conjunction

Table 2: Congruent grammar

In grammatical metaphor there is a mismatch between the part of speech and its semantic referent. One type of grammatical metaphor is nominalisation in which we find not only participants, but also processes, qualities and logical relations expressed as nouns (Table 3). The process of nominalisation is a key process in abstract discourse and is often achieved in language by the use of common suffixes. For example the verb 'measure' is nominalised as measuring or measurement or mensuration.

Semantic referent	Part of speech
Participant	Noun
Process	
Quality	
Logical relation	

Table 3: Nominalisation as incongruent grammar

Nominalisation has the effect of being able to simplify grammatical expression by reducing the number of clauses whilst at the same time packing meaning into lexically dense groups.

For example, a pupil might describe an action in a science lesson as follows: "I heated the gas and its volume expanded by 10 ml". In scientific discourse this might be written as "Heating led to a gas volume expansion of 10 ml". Note the reduction in number of clauses and conjunctions and the use of lexically dense noun phrases such as "a gas volume expansion of 10ml". As befits the alleged objectivity of scientific observation, human agency has been removed in the scientific version.

For many pupils, such nominalisation is a major barrier to understanding. Ask any teacher who tries to get an S2 class to understand the verbal statement of

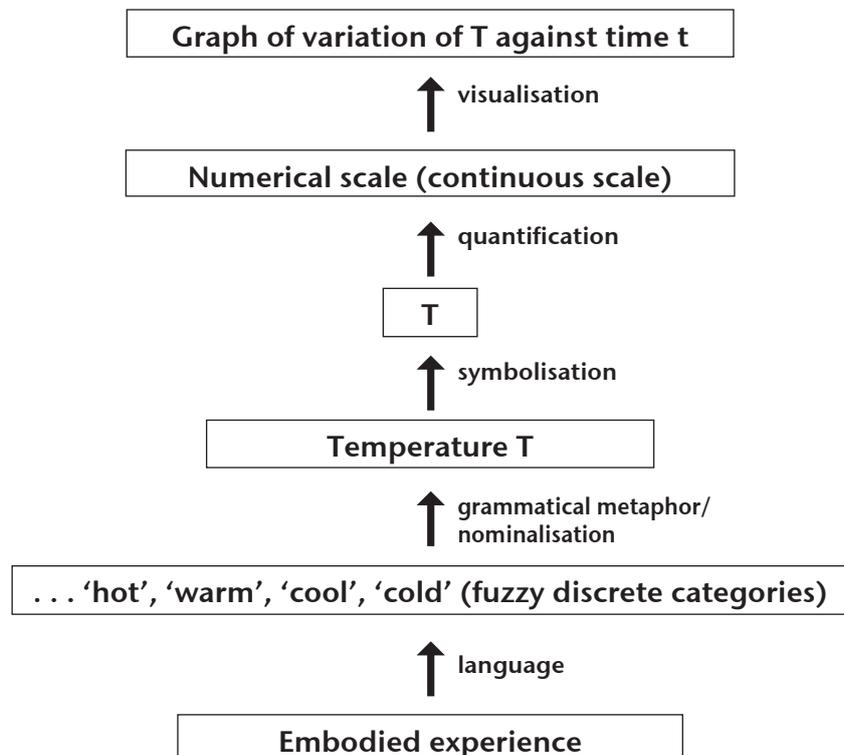


Fig 6: Scientific chain of abstraction

Pythagoras' theorem: "The square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the other two sides." Pupils of this age are much more likely to understand Pythagoras by instructions like "In all right-angled triangles (longest side) \times (longest side) = (side 1) \times (side 1) + (side 2) \times (side 2)" with an accompanying diagram.

In science and mathematics, everyday experience is mapped on to a grammatical metaphor which is then symbolised. For example the related adjectives 'cold', 'warm', 'hot' are nominalised as 'temperature', symbolised as T and then mapped on to a linear scale. The concept has moved vertically from the fuzzy categorical imprecision of language to becoming quantifiable continuous quantity capable of precise experimental measurement and of combination with other abstractions such as time 't' (see Figure 6).

Temperature can be combined with other abstractions such as pressure (P) and volume (V). These multiple abstractions can then be combined and magically condensed in mathematical formulae such as Charles' Law ($V/T = k$, where k is a constant).

Note the multimodal nature of this process: it moves from embodied experience through to language, symbolic and visual modes. Also note how the vertical trajectory of abstraction gives a concept a dynamism which then allows us to think deeply, dynamically and relationally. It is abstraction that allows thought to take flight.

If the abstraction involves an upwards trajectory from embodied experience through different modes towards symbolisation, then metacognition involves thinking in a downwards direction. Thus to form a deep understanding of a formula such as Charles' Law means not just verifying by experiment, but understanding it in different modes and at different levels of abstraction:

- **Symbolically:** inspecting the formula and seeing that it implies that an increase of temperature will lead to an increase in volume.
- **Visually:** in one's mind's eye visualising the kinetic model of gas molecules gaining energy by heating, causing the molecules to spread out,

thus increasing volume and decreasing density.

- **Linguistically:** explaining it to yourself in words.
- **Embodied experience:** realising that this explains everyday knowledge, for example, how hot air balloons work.

Thus, in science, metacognition, whose goal is internal intellectual corroboration, works hand-in-hand with external experimental corroboration.

Explicit metacognitive teaching should be a standard part of any teacher's repertoire at all stages of education. As an example imagine asking primary pupils to show why $5 \times 3 = 15$. A pupil with metacognitive understanding can arrange blocks into 5 rows of 3, show that it is the same as 3 rows of 5, then split off ten leaving five singles which we write as 15 because that means 1 bundle of ten and 5 units. This simple exercise shows an understanding of the commutative nature of multiplication as well as of place value. This is way beyond mere rote memorising of 'five times three is fifteen'.

Martin and Halliday (1999) have analysed scientific language and identified seven difficulties which block learners' progress in both science and mathematics:

1. **interlocking definitions** (e.g. the relationship between terms like circle, centre, radius, diameter, circumference)
2. **technical taxonomies** (e.g. being able to distinguish between two types of relationship: member-class ('a is a kind of b') and part-whole ('a is a part of b'))
3. **special expressions** (e.g. 'A function f is defined on the set of real numbers by $f(x) = 4x+3$ ')
4. **lexical density** (e.g. 'the atomic nucleus absorbs and emits energy in quanta')
5. **syntactic ambiguity** (e.g. words such as 'associated' could be causal or correlational)
6. **grammatical metaphor** (e.g. nominalisation as previously discussed)
7. **semantic discontinuity** (i.e. leaps in reasoning).

Note how a little bit of linguistic and multimodal theory has the power to illuminate how we humans think and reason. It has rendered what is generally implicit, explicit. It has enabled us to go well beyond the CfE *Literacy Across Learning* document (Scottish Government

2009) and shows what could be done if we injected a few basic linguistics concepts into our teaching.

As an aside, nominalisation is a key concept in understanding how language can be used ideologically to conceal full meaning. Thus, in politics, a noun phrase such as 'efficiency savings in education' actually means cuts in financial resources and job losses for educators. Nominalising this process as 'efficiency savings' also allows one to form sentences where the agent of the process becomes 'efficiency savings' rather than actual politicians and managers. A recent example of a politician trying to obscure agency occurred when disgraced Defence Secretary Liam Fox said "Serious mistakes were made". This example of the rhetorical device of non-apology apology suggests that an understanding of grammatical metaphor is also a key skill for critical citizenship.

Subject Structures

Curriculum designers recontextualise discipline knowledge structures as subject structures. Discipline knowledge structures range from the vertical to the horizontal. But if subject structures are to encourage cumulative and critical metacognitive learning rather than segmented rote learning (alas most learners' preferred mode) they require to be structured vertically rather than horizontally.

One way of introducing verticality into curriculum structures is to identify abstract principles or themes which are common to separate topics within one subject (subject themes) or across several or all subjects in the curriculum (interdisciplinary themes). We can use Bernstein's triangle to picture this. For example we might use energy as a concept which unites the traditional sciences (Fig 7).

An example of the use of themes can be found in the current SQA Arrangements for Higher Media Studies (2004) where key aspects (Categories, Language, Narrative, Representation, Institution, Audience) are used to link the analytical and production units. Learners are expected to use the key aspects to critically analyse texts as well as review and refine their own production work. In assessment the highest marks are awarded to pupils whose analysis or production shows integration of several or all of the key aspects. This is a prime example of verticality in a subject based on a social science discipline with a horizontal structure.

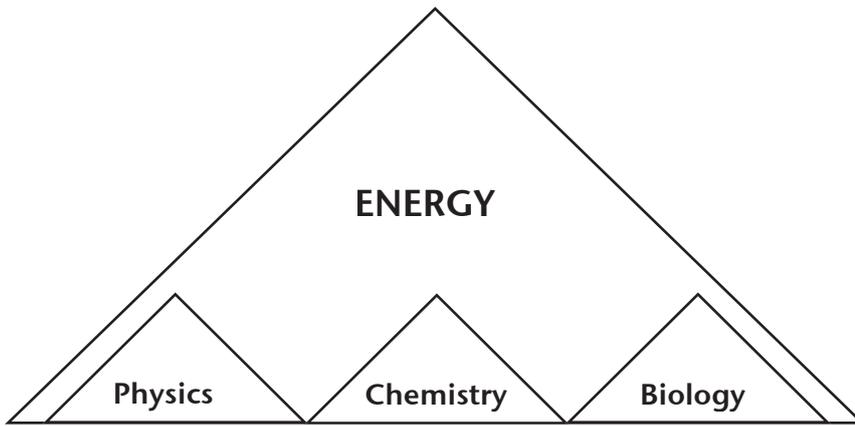


Fig 7: Energy as an example of an interdisciplinary theme

- interdisciplinary themes which are common to many or all subjects e.g. multimodal literacy, abstraction
- a congruent hierarchical assessment taxonomy which promotes both skills and metacognition/critical thinking.

Such an analysis would produce powerful knowledge. Let us now consider how to apply it to subject English.

Subject English

As subject English is primarily concerned with language development it should be based on the discipline of linguistics. Linguistics is of course a highly contested field of competing paradigms. My belief is that multimodal social semiotics based on SFL and provides the most comprehensive theoretical base for subject English because it models both monomodal and multimodal communication. However the current Arrangements for Higher English (SQA 2010) seem not to have advanced beyond the linguistics of the 1970s. Thus we have mention of register and genre but none of powerful concepts developed by

The notion of themes is of course related to Bruner’s notion of the spiral curriculum (Bruner 1960). Such themes form a spiral backbone to courses in that they will be constantly revisited and deepened as learners cover diverse course topics. The themes become the ‘glue’ which holds the whole course together and enables teachers and learners to adopt a deep approach.

To sum up, if we wish to reconnect the CfE to subject disciplines we need to consider the following:

- the knowledge structures of disciplines
- appropriate subject structures which have built-in verticality
- subject themes which are common to all or most topics within a subject

Perspective (19C-21C)	Basic Skills	Cultural Heritage	Personal Expression	Functional Literacy	Multimodal Literacy	21stC Literacy
Object of study.	Language as spelling, phonics, grammar.	Language as art.	Language as a means of personal expression.	Language as a system; dialects & registers; ideational, interpersonal & textual functions of communication; genre.	Languages as a systems which enable orchestration of modal elements (words, images, audio, . . .) into cohesive wholes to fulfil communication functions.	Languages as a set of diverse systems of communication with meaning spread across texts & in constant flux.
Reading /writing practices.	Reading & writing as accuracy.	Reading as personal or more abstract response to canonical texts. Writing as emulation of canonical texts.	Writing as self-discovery; Reading as sensitive personal response to texts.	Writing as the selection of appropriate register & genre for the context; writing as orchestration of elements into a cohesive whole which engages reader & achieves purpose; Reading as critical evaluation of effectiveness of text in achieving its purposes.	As left but applied to multimodal texts and monomodal texts. Design as a key element of in the planning of digital texts. Reading as critical evaluation of effectiveness of text in achieving its purposes.	Reading & writing for personal expression, socialising, connecting to interpretive communities, social activism, creativity, . . .

Table 4: Six perspectives on subject English

Subject: Higher English

Interdisciplinary Themes	Critical thinking Abstraction Multimodal communication		
Subject themes	Rhetoric Communication functions Language structures		
Perspective	English language development	Multimodal language development	Contexts
Concepts/Content/Activities	Critical literacy (critique of form and content). Writing and talking as design and rhetoric. Grammar of coherent, sustained written argument. Abstraction (e.g. Conceptual and non-congruent grammatical metaphor) 3 Functions of communication (ideational, interpersonal, textual). Textual features (register, dialect, genre, structure, coherence, flow, function, breaking conventions).	Critical literacy (critique of form and content). Digital production as design, rhetoric and critical evaluation of form and content. Digital production as fulfilling 3 functions of communication. Interaction of language mode with other modes.	Engagement with age-appropriate canonical and self-selected literary, media, multimodal and 21stC texts.
Initial knowledge base	Using and creating a range of monomodal texts for personal expression and other purposes. Congruent grammar (e.g. Nouns for objects, verbs for actions). Basic skills of writing, grammar and spelling.	Using and creating a range of multimodal texts for personal expression and other purposes. Reading, writing, listening, talking about multimodal texts.	Reading, writing, listening, talking, interacting and creating using a range of age-appropriate and self-selected monomodal and multimodal texts.

Table 5: Possible subject structure diagram for subject English

Halliday (1993), Gunter Kress (2010) and Theo van Leeuwen (2005) since then. Another ground-breaking study is Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980, 2002) which shows that metaphor is not just a literary device but an all-pervasive feature of human language and thought. Thus the conceptual metaphor 'Politics is War' is repeated endlessly in the media, even embedding itself in the very structure of the House of Commons debating chamber. Alas the Higher English Arrangements document (SQA 2010) does not mention the term metaphor!

Another key term missing from the Higher English Arrangements is discourse. There is a mention of 'ideological' but none of 'ideology' or 'discourse'. As Catherine Belsey (2002: 4) says, "Ideology is inscribed in discourse in that it is literally written or spoken in it" so it is difficult to see how one can critically analyse or reflexively construct a communication without using such concepts.

In Fig 5, the discipline of English was depicted as a series of incommensurable

'languages' $L_1, L_2, L_3, L_4, \dots$. This suggests that there is no connection between them which of course is far from the truth. The different languages are in fact different perspectives on what constitutes subject English and they exist in a dialogic relation to one another. Each perspective has partial corroborability with what it means to communicate in the English language.

Christie and Macken-Horarik (2007) identify six perspectives. They are (in historical order) basic skills, cultural heritage, personal growth, functional language studies, cultural analysis/multiliteracies, new literacy studies. In Table 4, to make their analysis more congruent with Scottish terminology, I have renamed the last three 'functional literacy', 'multimodal literacy' and 21st century literacy.

If we look at Table 4 it seems that basic skills, personal growth and functional literacy are the stages that we need to go through to be able to use language for individual and cultural expression.

Cultural heritage texts, multimodal texts and 21st century texts are the contexts through which we can develop personal and cultural communication skills. At the same time, subject English needs to develop the language skills which foster pupils' intellectual development and ease their understanding of the abstractions in other disciplines.

Developing monomodal and multimodal literacy is an iterative (or spiral) process of revisiting pupils' textual knowledge bases and expanding these resources via the encounter with an ever wider range of increasingly complex texts.

A useful heuristic device for the discussing and planning course structures is a subject structure diagram. With the linear text arrangement of SQA arrangements documents it is often difficult to discern subject or teaching structures. Subject structure diagrams are designed to represent a holistic view of a subject in a compact form so that the 'gist' of a subject and its cognitive demands are

Assessment Models & English				
Quality Assessment Criteria	Practicability Reliability Validity Critical thinking/metacognition Performance authenticity			
Perspective	Bloom (nouns)	Revised Bloom (verbs)	SOLO	Subject English from multimodal perspective
	1. Evaluation 2. Synthesis 3. Analysis 4. Application 5. Comprehension 6. Knowledge	1. Create 2. Evaluate 3. Analyse 4. Apply 5. Understand 6. Remember	1. Extended abstract (generalisation of knowledge into new domain) 2. Relational (Aspects of knowledge integrated into a structure) 3. Multi-structural (Several relevant aspects known) 4. Uni-structural (One relevant aspect known) 5. Pre-structural (Incompetent)	Creation of an extended critical analysis <i>or</i> evaluated and refined design & production which shows emergent control of modal and intermodal interactions used to fulfil rhetorical purposes (ideational, interpersonal, textual). (N.B. These are realised via 1. Rhetorical structure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourse (i.e. reflecting personal &/or identifiable ideological perspectives) • Generic structure & conventions (& appropriate deviations from these e.g. breaking 'rules'; generic hybrids) • Design 2. Rhetorical devices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of modes & intermodal interaction • Use of abstraction and metaphor • Register & dialect • Appropriate range of sections/links (phases and transitions e.g. clauses & conjunctions in language, scenes & transitions in film) • Basic grammars of English language and media)

Table 6: Possible assessment models

<p>Category 1 (25 marks)</p> <p>A sophisticated and stylish piece of writing in which the content is particularly well selected and shows qualities of insight/imagination/sophisticated thought. The structure is highly appropriate and there is skilful organisation which significantly enhances the overall impact of the writing. Expression is concise and effective. Word choice is consistently apposite, and sentence structures are skilfully varied to achieve effects. Techniques associated with the genre are used very effectively.</p> <p>Imaginative writing in this category will be characterised by a strong sense that the writer has command of and insight into the genre and is skilfully introducing and developing thematic concerns; the writing has flair and individuality which permeates the ideas and use of language.</p> <p>Personal/Reflective writing in this category will be characterised by a strong sense of mature reflection; the writer's personality and individuality permeate the ideas and use of language.</p> <p>Discursive writing in this category will, as appropriate to the specific genre and purpose, be characterised by a strong sense of engagement with the ideas/issues and a sophisticated understanding of them; the line of thought is subtle and sustained; as appropriate, the writer's stance permeates the ideas and use of language.</p>

quickly conveyed to both teacher and learner.

Table 5 is a subject structure diagram whose purpose is to stimulate and share ideas about the revision of Higher English. The table has the following sections:

- interdisciplinary themes which could be shared with, for example, mathematics, the sciences, history, geography and media
- subject themes: e.g. rhetoric, communication functions, language structures
- perspectives: English language development, multimodal language development, contexts
- course content outlined under each perspective
- the learner's initial knowledge base.

Assessment in Subject English

Just as the social sciences can be seen as having a horizontal set of competing perspectives, so assessment can be viewed in the same way. Most of the perspectives

Fig 8: Extract from 2011 SQA Higher English folio marking instructions.

have a vertical structure to model skills and intellectual development. There will be differing views on the corroborability of the model according to one's own subject and role (teacher, examiner, SQA officer). The dominant paradigm within SQA seems to be Bloom's taxonomy (Bloom, 1956) but I believe it is important that SQA qualification design teams consider other models. For example, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) have revised Bloom's taxonomy and placed creativity at the top – very attractive to teachers of English, media and expressive arts! I have added the SOLO taxonomy (Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes: Biggs and Collis 1982) as it is often used in academic assessment and has some similarities with SQA Media Studies assessment criteria.

A major development in assessment is the move from purely monomodal assessment to a mixture of monomodal and multimodal assessment. If we are to integrate assessment across both classes of text, as well as give pupils explicit guidance on the analysis and production of the texts, we need a common set of principles to guide us. In my opinion the discipline of SFL provides a set of such principles (Christie and Macken-Horarik 2011).

It seems to me that we need therefore to consider the following perspectives on assessment:

- Bloom's taxonomy
- Anderson and Krathwohl's revision of Bloom's taxonomy
- The SOLO taxonomy
- A multimodal/SFL perspective on assessment
- The latest SQA assessment criteria for subject English (SQA 2011).

Again I find it useful to construct a table which might allow us to critically review assessment in subject English.

Now compare the entries in Table 6 with Fig 8 which shows the marking criteria for the highest level of performance in the Higher English folio (SQA 2011).

In Table 7 I have matched descriptions in Fig 8 with the right-hand column of Table 6. Some of the descriptions could of course be placed in more than one category. Unsurprisingly there is a match between the two as they are just different perspectives on the same empirical phenomena.

Metacognition/ critical thinking	“a strong sense of engagement with the ideas/issues” “shows qualities of insight/imagination/sophisticated thought” “sophisticated understanding of [ideas/issues]”
Abstraction	“Expression is concise and effective” “Techniques associated with the genre are used very effectively” “developing thematic concerns” “line of thought is subtle”
Textual function (i.e. composition and textual cohesion)	“the writer's personality and individuality permeate the ideas and use of language” “The structure is highly appropriate and there is skilful organisation” “Word choice is consistently apposite” “the writing has flair and individuality which permeate the ideas and use of language” “the writer's stance permeates the ideas and use of language” “the writer's stance permeates the ideas (interpersonal) and use of language”
Interpersonal function (i.e. personal stance and impact)	“[structure/organisation] significantly enhances the overall impact of the writing” “sentence structures are skilfully varied to achieve effects” “the writing has flair” “the writer's stance permeates the ideas”
Ideational function (i.e. information, ideas, experience)	“content is particularly well selected” “the line of thought is [...] sustained”

Table 7: Matching SQA marking criteria with multimodal criteria

However what is powerful about the more systematic multimodal approach to English assessment is that it covers both monomodal and multimodal texts. This should have a positive backwash effect on teaching. Because as teacher and pupil spiral through contexts (for example: critical analysis of *Macbeth*, Irn-Bru ads or opinion blogs; scripting and creating audio podcasts and video ads; writing movie blogs) it will be necessary to demonstrate that effective and impactful communication has the same underlying principles whatever the genre and medium.

Conclusion

It seems evident to me that one way to save the CfE from its surface approach is to infuse the new SQA qualifications with some disciplinary rigour and depth. Such an approach may help to restore credibility in the CfE for many secondary teachers. I believe I have shown how linguistics can be useful within and across subjects, and have focused on subject English. The same analysis can be applied to any subject, but teachers need help in this area. A positive development for Scottish education

would be to set up a university-based educational linguistics department to work alongside Education Scotland, SQA and teachers/lecturers.

In conclusion, here are ten questions which qualification design teams and departments could usefully pose about their subject:

1. What are the current problems in this delivery and reception of the subject?
2. What is the knowledge structure of the discipline?
3. How does knowledge develop in the discipline?
4. Which parts of the knowledge structure are appropriate for the learner in the 21st century?
5. What is the knowledge base for the subject?
6. What skills and abstractions are required to progress from that knowledge base?
7. What subject themes would cohere the subject?
8. What interdisciplinary themes would cohere the subject?

9. What is an appropriate subject structure?
10. What assessment practices will support both skills development and powerful metacognitive learning in the subject?

I wish to acknowledge the continual stimulation and insight of Gordon Liddell during the writing of this paper.

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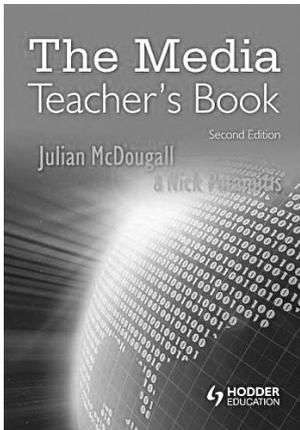
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reviews



***The Media Teacher's Book (2nd edition),* Julian McDougall and Nick Potamitis, Hodder Education 2010, £29.99, 240pp, ISBN 9781444115567.**

***After the Media: Culture and Identity in the 21st Century,* Peter Bennett, Alex Kendall and Julian McDougall, Routledge 2011, £27.99, 272pp, ISBN 9780415586832.**

Many of you reading this review will be familiar with (and indebted to) the first edition of *The Media Teacher's Book*, published in 2006, itself a worthy successor to Len Masterman's *Teaching the Media* (1985), a well-thumbed copy of which I still possess, as it was my *vade mecum* when I set out as a keen but uninitiated teacher of media in the 1980s. It equipped me with both teaching approaches and arguments to justify teaching media in the conservative environment of an FE college. I recall being asked by a sceptical head of department if students could really benefit from studying media texts as opposed to Gray's 'Elegy'! I hadn't then met McDougall's term "discourse of derision" but I knew it when I heard it.

Referring to his first edition of *The Media Teacher's Book*, McDougall explains that its main objective was "to offer an update to and also a shift in approach" from Masterman's book, taking into account the changes in culture and technology in the intervening twenty-one years. Only five years later, McDougall and his co-author Nick Potamitis acknowledge the staggering acceleration of change since 2006, which has outdated a fair amount of what was written then, citing the development of You Tube, social networking and Google, which enable students to engage in "literary practices" all but unheard of five years before. As a result, they claim, "we need new ways of exploring technology, creativity, politics and culture."

They also stress that this is still very much a teacher's book, a direct aid for those teaching the subject within the constraints of whatever qualifications framework they operate in. It is heartening to have such recognition of the external stressors, be they curriculum, timetable or target driven, that can inhibit innovation and effective teaching. Equally reassuring is their assertion that debating the status and future of media studies in a rapidly changing world may be stimulating but needs to be accompanied by down to earth "advice on how to take all this into the classroom on a Monday morning." Every teacher knows that sinking feeling which occurs sometime on Sunday afternoon at the thought of the week ahead, and a book that sets out to

lighten the load is doubly welcome.

Accordingly, *The Media Teacher's Book* is accompanied by a website containing appropriate material to download, in the form of one hundred ideas and plans for lessons linked to the areas under discussion. There are six of these: Media Practice, Media Literacy, Concepts, Debates, Coursework and Assessing Media Learning. Significantly, in line with the rethinking of the subject, we begin with Media Practice, the area that was traditionally left to the end as a kind of reward for having acquired an initial understanding through analysis and deconstruction. The move away from "teacher talk and student listen" to hands on creativity shifts the emphasis towards "learning by making", from the critical to the creative. But lest the sceptic fears that such creativity may be undisciplined, there is recognition that research and planning and meticulous organisation need to be foregrounded, and there are no fewer than eight lesson plans to download for this area alone.

McDougall and Potamitis are understandably reluctant to separate creative from analytical Media Literacy, but for the sake of structure they do so, devoting the next section to analysis, again with a variety of lesson plans to download – everything from an initial icebreaker on, preferring a range of strategies over prescribed content. Particularly helpful here is their "unofficial" canon for the novice media teacher who wants to know

"where we've been" in terms of the emergence of theories of narrative, genre, ideology et al.

There is a direct segue to consideration of the "Big Concepts" that form the core of most media frameworks, and here the authors stress their belief in a reflexive approach, based on active reading rather than "passive and mundane acceptance". So, for representation, *Shameless* can be explored in terms of class, gender and family, compared with British soap opera. If *Shameless* is subjected to creative analysis then it is possible to connect micro analysis to macro critique. How? In terms of micro analysis, the students consider the role of non-diegetic music in distancing the programme from serious realist drama, while a macro focus could debate shades of realism: *Shameless* compared to *Coronation Street* – why don't they look and sound the same? Yes, there is teaching here, in that the learning environment is set up and controlled, but what is so impressive is the spirit and informed energy of their approach, their belief that, given the right stimulus, students "must go beyond simplistic ideas about the relationship between reality and the text and insert the reality of other texts into the equation." It need not be *Shameless* and *Coronation Street*, of course, but the idea of introducing the more complex text first, here from realist drama to soap opera, may turn the world upside down – but why not? No theory, they contend, however elevated, need be considered beyond the reach of students.

When the authors turn their attention to narrative, it's a kind of Balloon Game: out go Propp and Todorov, not as being wrong but as presenting a fixed model. Why not, they suggest, look at the post-modern, the complex, first before reinstituting Propp and all? The same spirit infuses their approach to genre, as "ways of helping students test and challenge its value" by introducing complexity and variance at the start, involving students' own experience. How might *their* lives be represented in sit com format?

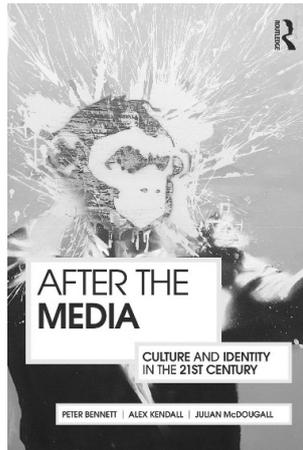
As teachers, we may cherish certainties – about methodology, practice, curricular content – but it's good to have these questioned. In the authors' view, "ideas about boundaries (between genres, producers and audiences, between narrative, space and time and between media and 'the real') are always constraining and limited . . . media theory ought to be about the space where attempts to 'pin down' meaning fail – our '*jouissance*'."

So, it's not just texts that can go from the status of current to historical context!

There is much more to stimulate and motivate in this book, culminating in the final chapter on assessment, which also reflects the authors' student-centred philosophy: "the more we can involve our students . . . the more control we can give them over the judgements made about their work, the more they will achieve." And if that, in turn, allows students to assess and give feedback on our practice, so what?

This is a book that is much more than merely useful: it is inspiring, challenging in its dismissal of the well-worn, well-trodden approaches to a subject that refuses to stand still. It foregrounds

the students, values their input and potential, and is genuinely motivating and empowering. If its head can be said to be in the clouds, in terms of idealism, then its feet are firmly on the ground (or in the classroom), providing sound practical advice to absorb and turn into teaching. For all of these reasons, if you feel the need to reignite your passion for the subject, get yourself a copy of this book and share it with colleagues,



doubtless deprived like you of professional development.

After the Media is much more than a companion piece to *The Media Teacher's Book*. Here McDougall and his co-authors are involved in media education at university level and make their intention clear at the outset: "Our agenda is to raise a set of important and challenging questions for everyone concerned with media education and its current and deeply problematic variant – 'media literacy.'" Lest you may be deterred by the fear that this is a book concerned wholly with theory and debate, however stimulating, be assured that there is much here that is also concerned with practicalities: how do we reframe "the classic conceptual framework" of media studies – narrative, genre, audience etc in an era of rapid cultural and technological change?

No teacher of Media Studies can be unaware that ours is a rapidly evolving discipline where the old certainties may no longer be valid, and the authors argue, convincingly, that an essential rethink is required. This is necessitated in part by the emergence of new media and technology, but also by a related need to question the orthodoxy of a traditional approach, with its primary focus on the media rather than the people, the consumers. "After the media" the old boundaries between the media and the audiences as consumers have blurred; new technology has permitted an audience to emerge who can create and interact, requiring a shift in focus from the media to people.

Challenges, however unsettling, bring opportunities, and what happens when you take the traditional idea of the media away forms the substance of the rest of the book. The authors are no iconoclasts, however: their mission is not to attack but to rethink, to see the subject afresh, not as foregrounded by THE TEXT (my capitals) but as "culture created through how producers and consumers do different things with texts." This is more a re-imagining than a demolition. What happens to the status of power, genre and representation after the media? Where does current theorising about identity and performance, politics and history stand? And how do we address questions of narrative, audience and technology, linked to culture and identity after the media?

I won't try to encapsulate the complexity and erudition of the resulting debate by an attempt at synopsis, but here are a couple of tasters!

With *genre* under scrutiny, *Glee* (the television hit show of 2009/10) can be taken out of the crude "Comedy/Dance/

Music" category, and any sum of its constituent parts, and viewed as something more complex – in other words, what it means "to the various constituencies that *Glee* might impact", how it involves issues of scheduling, of socio-historical contexts like the post-modern musical. So we can leave pre-categorised texts behind in favour of "They are what you think they are", with singularity replaced by multiplicity. If we remove the media from genre, we can "situate *bricolage* as a starting point", a remix of the old to create something new.

Likewise *representation* ceases to be "something that is done by one group of (elite) producers with an impact on the rest of us" and becomes part of lived experience "through sustained attention to networks of discourses and of events in which the act of 'reading' is seen as an act of playing."

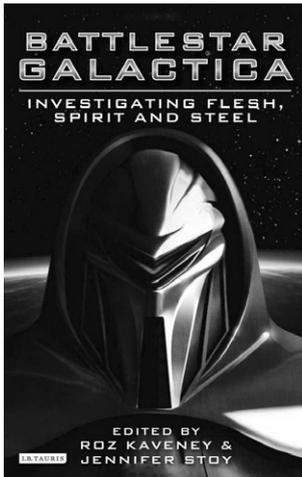
In the light of their thesis I found myself reading the reproduced GCSE specification for media studies with new eyes, and felt equally critical of its "join the dots" approach in which each question requires an appropriate media text to be analysed and then basically imitated. Where are the people here, other than an anticipated target audience? Pedagogic orthodoxy, however well established, needs to be rethought.

Lest I may have created the impression that this book is all too serious in tone, let me reassure readers that the content may be weighty and the arguments academic but it is also very readable, being enlivened with apt and entertaining quotations from both poets and theorists. One could sprinkle words like provocative and challenging throughout this review, but what is most impressive is

the mix of erudition and enthusiasm, the view of change as opportunity, as liberation not threat, the focus on people and students. That is what makes *After the Media* an inspirational book.

Combine the two books and you have a small library of resource and stimulus to enhance and enrich your experience as educator and consumer.

Liz Roberts



Battlestar Galactica: Investigating Flesh, Spirit and Steel, Roz Kaveney and Jennifer Stoy (eds) | B Tauris, 2010 £14.99, 288 pp, ISBN: 9781848853737

The ending of the *Battlestar Galactica* television series proved controversial for many. The series that had challenged the relevance of the genre, made critics sit up and take notice and plumbed the depths of the human condition seemed to throw it all away with an ill-judged, moralising and frankly bizarre ending. Or, at least, that's what *Battlestar Galactica: Investigating Flesh, Spirit and Steel* would have you believe.

This is the first book published that takes account of the entire series, rather than being published part way through its run and as such is the first to take account of the whole story. It is quite an uncomfortable read, focused on pointing out the many wrongs the series commits, from the fact that

its much vaunted gender and racial equality was not quite as equal as it appeared on a first analysis to criticising its lack of scientific reality in the space aspects of the show. I kept questioning whether the need to keep the articles to a specific word count had led to the book's rather hectoring, antagonistic tone. There's so much focus on the negative – how the science doesn't work, how the military ranks don't make sense, how the Cylons really aren't sexy – that there seems to be no account taken of the manner in which *Battlestar Galactica* did succeed.

It's not all negative. There's an interesting discussion of how abortion and workers' rights are woven into the series as well as an interview with Jane Espenson, co-executive producer and writer. I would have enjoyed a little more focus on Espenson's answers and a little less chit chat but that's a personal thing. The interview was probably the best element of the book, being as it focused very much on the show's production and ideology rather than the various authors' personal axes to grind. The complete episode guide took up space that could have been dedicated to another, more balanced, article. I don't know why these quasi-academic analysis books seem eager to include information that everybody else knows can be found on IMDB or Wikipedia without breaking a sweat, often in more depth and detail.

Alongside these ups and downs, the academic level of interest also varies widely. Some of the chapters are focused on the general reader, such as that entitled "Butch Girls, Brittle Boys And Sexy, Sexless Cylons" whereas "Disco Galactica: Futures Past and Present" is aimed at a much more academic audience. The

language level of that particular article borders on incomprehensible, unable to step away from the position that academic writing must rely on jargon-ridden rhetoric rather than clear explanation. In many ways, I felt it was a tactic to hide the fact that the writer didn't actually have that much to say beyond "old series bad, new series good".

One article that I found to be fair, interesting and truly insightful was Sergio Dias Branco's "Sci-Fi Ghettos: *Battlestar Galactica* and Genre Aesthetics". It examines the production design aspects of the show, and of Science Fiction television in genre, and discusses how far *Battlestar Galactica* meets and challenges these conventions. I found that it took account of the aims of the show from a limited perspective and dealt with how well it had achieved these aims to step away from irrelevant, plot driven, cheesy TV Science Fiction and aim for something that is character driven and complex. I think his assessment of how the show didn't go far enough is well-argued and evidenced effectively, unlike the personal whinging of some other chapters.

And ultimately I feel that the blame for this lies firmly on the shoulders of the book's editors. When the introduction admits that the editor lost interest in the show and thought that the series ruined all its potential in the last season it becomes difficult to take this book seriously. Too much time was spent complaining about what went wrong that makes the editors seem like petty spoiled fans. And perhaps this is where fan-led publications are going off the rails. Return the criticism to the academics and the media analysts and leave the entitled attitude out of it.

It should be clear by this point that I do not believe this book accurately portrays the breadth of *Battlestar Galactica's* achievements. I have my own problems with the ending and agree to some extent with the points laid forth by the writers that suggest a fear of technology is no reason to condemn your descendants to years without literacy, medicine and indoor plumbing. However, to let this negativity poison an entire book of supposedly objective criticism leads to this being a book I would not recommend. Watch the series and make up your own mind. Wendy Elrick

The Emerging Media Toddlers, Souza, Maria Dolores and Cabello, Patricio (eds), Gothenburg: International Clearing House on Children, Youth and Media, Nordicom, University of Gothenburg 2010, 53pp, €12 plus postage from www.nordicom.gu.se/clearinghouse.php, ISBN 9789189471955

Given the worldwide dearth of research on young children and the media, any publication that redresses the balance is welcome. Media teachers of any age group need to recognise that some that 40% of their students will have been watching TV since the age of 3 months, and to be interested in finding out more about this early learning.

True, Souza and Cabello do not add a tremendous amount to what we already know from key research such as Jackie Marsh and others' *Digital Beginnings* (University of Sheffield, 2005) and the 2006 study by Victoria Rideout and others for the Kaiser Foundation, *The Media Family*. At only 53 pages, this collection of four reports and three interviews can only offer brief surveys, but it does remind us that the dominance of Anglophone

and particularly US-originated research needs to be counterbalanced by information from other cultures. For many years the International Clearinghouse has played a valuable role in making a diverse range of research on children and media available to Anglophone readers, and it deserves to be more widely known.

Souza and Cabello's own summary of two Chilean research projects is the only one in the collection that includes a specific focus on children living in "extreme poverty households" – defined as those living in one-room wooden houses. They reveal that even in these households, nearly half of the children aged between 2 and 5 have a media device – usually a TV set – that is designated "theirs", and that, in contrast to earlier studies, a majority of pre-schoolers now make their own decisions about what they watch, as opposed to just watching what their siblings or parents want to see. While Souza and Cabello regard this as positive evidence of self-confidence amongst pre-schoolers, they also accept as received wisdom the idea that there are only two key issues for debate about pre-school TV viewing and that both concern potential harm: firstly, the amount that is watched and secondly, the amount of violence that pre-schoolers see.

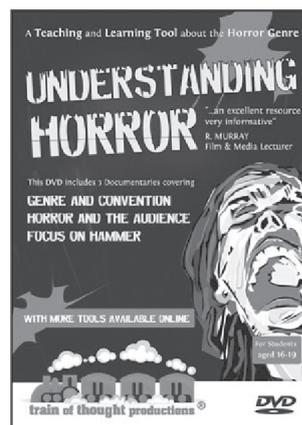
These ideas are both challenged, in different ways, by Mary Jane Shuker and Geoff Lealand's account of pre-school TV in New Zealand and Juan-Henrique Huerta's discussion of France's 2008 ban on TV shows for children under 3. While New Zealand accepts that children under 3 are going to be watching TV, and takes steps to ensure its quality and diversity, the French Government accepted as read the idea (propagated

also by the American Academy of Pediatrics) that children under 3 should not watch any TV at all. Huerta deftly turns this argument around to show that the ban has merely ensured that under-3s in France now don't get to see any TV made especially for them, but they are undoubtedly doing much more "background viewing" of adult TV which is actually what researchers allege to be the type of viewing most likely to damage children's development. An interesting, if inadvertent contrast appears between these two articles, with Shuker and Lealand characterising *Teletubbies* (Ragdoll Productions for CBeebies) as "specialist" and "prestigious" while Huerta dismisses it as "a program with poor language models and little elicitation of participation or communication". Huerta's analysis may be exemplary but it doesn't sound like he's watched much TV with toddlers.

Frustratingly, Olle Findahl's interesting if brief overview of internet use by Swedish pre-schoolers makes little reference to their TV viewing. Ofcom's most recent analysis of UK children's media use (<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/media-lit11/childrens.pdf>) shows that TV is still the medium that young children vastly prefer – and their study doesn't even include pre-schoolers. As *Digital Beginnings* demonstrates, it's important to understand pre-schooler's overall media use, given the increased intertextuality of the stories, characters and settings that children encounter every day. Findahl does map, like Ofcom, the decreasing age-levels at which children start using the internet, which not surprisingly reflects the increasing take-up of internet services by families.

Emerging Media Toddlers thus provides us with some tantalising glimpses of children and media in different countries, but perhaps even more tantalising indicators of what we don't know about pre-schoolers' understanding and interpretation of TV and games. The interviews with Daniel Anderson (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Victor Fuenmayor (University of Zulia, Venezuela) and Angharad Valdivia (University of Illinois) serve mainly to illustrate this field's over-reliance on opinion and hearsay: Valdivia even asserts that "In some places like England, media literacy is introduced very early on . . . in elementary school"! It would be nice to think that there may be an emerging field of international media toddler research, but the evidence here suggests that it remains marginal and under-funded. Given that toddlers, and indeed babies, around the world, are "studying" TV and other media from their first months of life, one would think that this phenomenon deserves rather more attention.

Cary Bazalgette



Understanding Horror – A Teaching and Learning Tool about the Horror Genre, Train of Thought Productions 2010, DVD, £25 plus £1.69 p&p from: <http://www.trainofthoughtproductions.co.uk>

I eagerly looked forward to

watching this DVD with great hopes of using it with a class. The content consists of three documentaries that would each be the focus of an entire period. The format is that of interviews cutting between different lecturers/researchers in media and while each chapter is interesting in its own right, I suspect from observing my own classes, pupils will find it difficult to sustain their attention. Having said that, the chapters on 'Genre and Convention' and 'Horror and Audience' are filled with a wealth of information as the history and development of Horror in film is explored. The final chapter on the rise and fall of the house of Hammer is also very interesting.

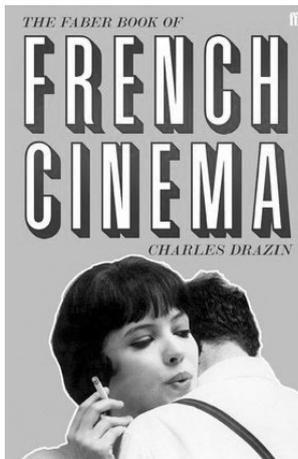
I enjoyed the documentaries and in particular the section discussing Audience was actually very useful. All of the contributors have an extensive media teaching background and have been published. I found Mark Jancovich of East Anglia and Peter Hutchins of Northumbria particularly interesting during this section on why audiences continue to submit themselves to being terrified and how this reveals social change within audiences and economic changes in the film industry. Neatly integrating Institutions and Audience, their presentations were engaging and each was interesting to listen to and clearly knew their subject thoroughly. Other contributors included Andy Willis of the University of Salford and Sue Harper and Emma Dyson, both of the University of Portsmouth.

However, the box tantalises with the promise of downloadable materials and MP3 study guides and resources. In reality this is problematic. There are only two worksheets, in PDF and Word formats. There are sound clips that students can

transfer to their own iPods and mobile phones, however not an easy task on a school network. Sound effects are provided for students to download and use in their own productions along with a video trailer showing the group organising this DVD. Again, difficult to achieve in school. This is the stumbling block. It is not enough to give out the link to the website and hope that the students will look for themselves. (Not all the links work though.) The same problem arises with the trailer video for the DVD, the link is to YouTube, unavailable in most schools.

All in all, it could be a useful tool if studying Horror or simply for further insight into the teaching and application of Audience theory. It was just disappointing in terms of the promised resources.

Ishbel Oates



The Faber Book of French Cinema, Charles Drazin. Faber and Faber 2011, £25.00 (Hardback), 448pp. ISBN 9780571218493

There is certainly a need for an up-to-date one-volume history of French Cinema but those hoping this is it will be disappointed. This really isn't Drazin's fault. I suspect the publishers are trying to boost sales by making it appear to be a book it isn't. Although it covers the history it is doing so from the author's personal conviction that French cinema needs to be

assessed in light of what he sees as its eternal battle with American film, and specifically Hollywood. Hence the book is written through its own prism and comes out as strangely uneven. Some periods, pre-1914 for instance, are treated with great dexterity and Drazin offers some excellent insights into the period with reference to material I had great pleasure discovering for the first time. Other periods receive very short shrift; the last twenty years only meriting 26 pages! Surely an error especially given Drazin's driving theme?

Having said that, I enjoyed his clear writing style and the personal enthusiasm the book contains. Drazin loves his subject and offers some fresh ideas. His comparison of Duvivier's *Poil de Carotte* (*Ginger head*) with *Quatre Cents Coups* (*The 400 Blows*) is brilliant as his discussion of how Malle's *Les amants* (*The Lovers*) reworked themes from Renoir's *La Règle du Jeu* (*The Rules of the Game*)

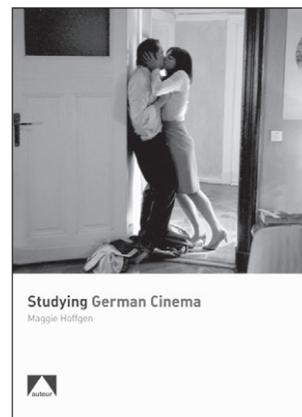
Some of his research really hits the spot, one example being the careless – almost gratuitously negligent translation of Clair's opus by a 1930s US distributor crediting 'Claire' with such French classics as *Sou les Toils de Paris*, and *A Mouse la Liberté!*

But the core arguments are about the rough deal French Cinema has received from America: trade barriers, philistine American critics, audiences and distributors; the overwhelming power of the big studios and the treachery of the French intellectuals using *Cahiers du Cinéma* as a Trojan horse for American auteurs to pop out of. The only period that French filmmakers were genuinely free to develop their own national cinema was during the Nazi occupation. A bit of a high price to pay really.

There is much justice in his arguments that French Cinema deserves better protection. He makes convincing arguments that French film directors benefit from not being dominated by studios or producers but he does have a tendency to cherry-pick films to make his case for example citing Melville and *Le silence de la mer* (*The Silence of the Sea*) as a glowing example of French independence whilst ignoring the fact that Melville's career was, positively most would say, heavily influenced by Hollywood; and asserting that in Britain and America the cinema of personal expression was always against the grain, is surely an exaggeration!

So overall a well-written book with some original research and real passion – a pity the title couldn't have reflected the contents better.

Jon Davies



Studying German Cinema, Maggie Hoffgen, Auteur 2009, £18.99, 256pp, ISBN: 9781906733001

Lecturer and writer Maggie Hoffgen has set herself a pretty formidable task in this well researched and carefully structured book. Potential readers may well ask how one could study German cinema, which has produced such significant and diverse works as *Metropolis*, *Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes* (*Aguirre, the Wrath of God*), *Der Untergang* (*Downfall*) and *Lola rennt* (*Run Lola Run*). Or why on

earth would a study omit the glorious *Good Bye Lenin* (2003), one of the most successful German films of the last decade?

However, questions aside, they should certainly not deter students of German language, culture, cinema or history from using this book as a very helpful guide through German film from the early classics to propaganda, to DDR films to New German Cinema and post-Wall narratives. Hoffgen's approach is simple and consistent throughout. A key film is chosen at the start of each chapter, framed within a particular concept and this film is then used to discuss the wider social, cultural, industrial or historical context at the time of its production. She offers detailed analysis of scenes, referring to technical aspects such as sound in *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*) or editing in *Lola rennt* where it is relevant to the overall discussion. Hoffgen's interest is principally in what the film itself can illuminate about Germany and its film industry during a particular period rather than a more theoretical study of film itself. In this way, therefore, the book can serve a broad audience and quickly inform the historian, the film or the language student about this hugely important element of German culture.

A critique nevertheless would be about the way in which she makes the films of her choice serve a broader socio-political argument. For example, *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*), grouped with *Nosferatu* and *Metropolis* under the concept of Master Narratives, is considered within the theory that the upheaval that had led to the formation of the Weimar Republic directly underpinned the Expressionist movement of which *Caligari* was a prime

example. Thus the film is used to prove a theory, without necessarily being allowed to be examined for its own sake.

In *Lola rennt*, Hoffgen's approach is to view the film within the context of Berlin post-reunification. She draws the comparison with the Berlin of Wenders' *Himmel über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire*, 1986) which she asserts that Tykwer 'must have seen'. There follows a fairly detailed analysis of the film, with attention to camera and the edit and how they contribute to the symbolic aspects of this whirlwind narrative. Hoffgen suggests that the sheer confidence manifest in Tykwer's film was indicative of a new self-confidence in German cinema. The film, therefore, is being extrapolated for what it might say in a broader sense about Berlin, Germany or the German industry itself.

The main concern for this approach is that the reader needs to keep their own critical eye on the text and be prepared to ask 'why' or even 'how do you know?' However, that criticism aside, for the reader who wants an overview of German cinema, this book certainly does the trick and her choice of films is great. All the films are easily available and very accessible. But a critical awareness won't go amiss as you read. And the film student may wish to continue their own reading into German cinema through the writings of Siegfried Kracauer, Sabine Hake or more recently Nick Hodgin on DDR cinema. What Hoffgen does is give a broad audience a very readable overview and the stimulus to want to know more, which in itself is hardly a bad thing.

Alicia McGivern



Cinema Italiano: The Complete Guide from Classics to Cult, Howard Hughes, I B Tauris 2011, £14.99, 312 pp, ISBN: 978184885 6080.

The book's title and subject refers, not to a history of Italian cinema, but to its heyday – "beginning in the 1950s and lasting over 20 years – [when] Italy was second only to Hollywood as a popular film factory". So the book opens with films from the 1950s, like *Quo Vadis* (1951) and *Helen of Troy* (1955). These particular examples were mythological epics, also known as 'sword and sandal epics' or according to French critics 'peplum'. This very successful genre, along with such popular fare as spaghetti westerns, Italian horror and 'gialli' or thrillers is the main interest and focus of the book. They were frequently produced at the massive and well-equipped Cinecittà studio complex in Rome. Partly because of the stream of Hollywood filmmakers and stars who visited and worked there it became known for a period as 'Hollywood on the Tiber'. Even in the new century its facilities attracted Martin Scorsese for his epic *Gangs of New York* (2002).

Hughes does provide some of the context for this development in terms of industry and audiences. However, his prime interest is the films. He works through the various genres

of the period, myth, history, imperial, gothic, science fiction, western, crime, war, thrillers and comedy. He offers a voluminous and often-detailed discussion of both the successes and the lesser-known cult films. Given the book covers 400 films the treatment is generally brief. There is a certain amount of information on plots and production detail, especially on the star performers and the directors. Intriguingly he also frequently discusses the music of the films; an aspect often overlooked in other writings. And he also has researched information on the settings and locations found in many of the films. This sort of factual approach is reinforced by the illustrations, which are mainly posters, which advertised the films. There is not a lot of discussion of detailed style. And his comments on the values offered in films presents the overt rather than any sub-texts identified by other critics. So under 'political films' we get 'political westerns'. But it is a very brief, with just a mention of one of my favourites: *A Fistful of Dynamite* (*Duck You Sucker*, 1971) which, with its pairing of a Mexican bandit and an IRA explosives expert has a suggestive discourse on revolutions.

The overall coverage is fairly comprehensive, so there are discussions of what we would call the art films of this period. However, I think that the author is probably less interested in these films; certainly the comments are less well informed. Just to take one example, *The Conformist* (1970). The treatment of the plot misses out completely the psychoanalytical aspect of the film, which is central to the characterisation and the resolution of the story. However, once again Hughes has identified the

actual locations that appear in the film. There is an equivalent limited treatment when he discusses films about the 'Risorgimento', such as Luchino Visconti's *The Leopard* (1963). It is worth adding that he uses English-language titles throughout and only in particular cases provides the original Italian titles. A more serious omission is Roberto Rossellini, who does not figure in the book at all. Apart from his masterpieces filmed in this period, notably *Voyage to Italy* (1953), the later *Vanina Vanini* (1961) is a key film in the historical genre.

This is clearly a source book for English-language film buffs, and it is a very useful guide for checking out the myriad and varied films of this 'golden age' of Italian cinema. As suggested above it works best as a resource for popular film rather than for art cinema. I also think it is a book for reference or for dipping into – I read it in short snatches, and frequently wanted more development of the filmic qualities and of the connotations that audiences might engage with.

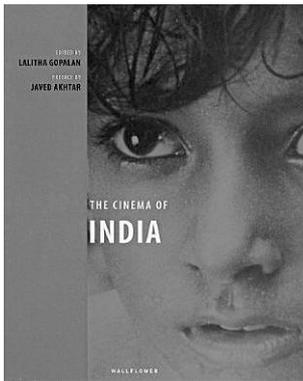
A plus is that he does distinguish between the versions that appeared in cinema and the often somewhat different version available on DVD.

Keith Withall

The Cinema of India, Lalitha Gopalan (ed), Wallflower Press 2009, £20.50, 280 pp, ISBN 9781905674923.

This is in Wallflower's '24 Frames' series. There are now 16 volumes, which provide an introduction and overview to a national or regional cinema by studying a series of key films. This approach produces variable results. I think it is likely that many readers have only seen some of the films treated, so it takes an accessible treatment to use individual

films to illuminate a larger unit. This volume on India seems to be one of the most successful. This is mainly because in most of the treatments of 24 films the emphasis is on their context and the degree to which they representing larger tendency. The presentation and layout is clear. There are extensive references and a fairly comprehensive index. The weakest element is the reproduction of the stills, some of which lack clarity and are rather murky.



The book's introduction gives a misleading impression of the whole. It focuses on critical responses to Indian cinema. For me it failed to place the films in the larger context. Moreover, the discussion of critical responses to individual films is only a minor point in the studies.

The selection of films ranges from early sound features to relatively recent releases. It also includes successes from mainstream Indian cinema, (often referred to as Bollywood), from independent and alternative features, and from India's large and successful regional cinemas. The surprising omission is anything from the silent era. Whilst only a few of these films survive these include features by D. K. Phalke, the major pioneer on the subcontinent and a huge influence in the subsequent cinemas.

The opening study is *Miss Frontier Mail*, 1936: made at the Wadia Movietone Studio in Bombay. This was one of

the great successes of the early sound period. It was a star vehicle for 'fearless Nadia'. I have not seen this film but I have seen others of her vehicles. A blonde actress of Australian origin, Nadia could be romantic, sensuous, acrobatic and daredevil, all in the same film. Rosie Thomas goes into the production base, the star's persona and development, the generic elements and their place in the larger industry. This is an instructive start to the volume and the films.

Shejari (Padosi) 1941, deals with the problem known as communalism: the conflicts between religious /ethnic groups, notably between Hindus and Moslems. Ira Bhaskar offers both a clear sense of the film and its treatment of the subject and the 1930s context from which it emerges. The subject remains central to cinema in India, notably in Mani Ratnam's powerful 1993 drama *Bombay*.

A rather different treatment is offered on *Pather Panchali (The Song of the Road)* by Richard Allen. His is a close study of the film's style, partly in relation to the original novel. Given that this film is probably more widely seen in the West than many other films that are discussed in the volume, this seems a reasonable approach.

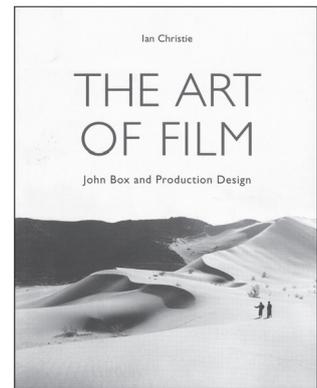
Shree 420 (Mr 420), 1955, dir. Raj Kapoor) discusses both one of India's most famous stars and film directors and also the function in the film of music and the technique of playback singing (dubbing the singers onto the actors). David Desser also comments on the influence on the film of Italian neo-realism, a movement whose influence can be seen in both mainstream and alternative films in this period.

Other famous films included are *Meghe Dhake Tara (The Cloud-Capped Star)* (1960, dir. Ritwik Ghatak), *Sholay (Flames)*, 1975, Ramesh Sippy) and *Iruvar (The Duo)*, 1997, Mani Ratnam). The last is one of the Tamil Cinema films studied in the book, one that throws light on the intricate relationship between film stardom and politics. The several case studies offer a welcome attention to the large and important regional cinemas of India. There are also films directed by well-known names like Mrinal Sen, Shyam Benegal and Mani Kaul (who sadly died in July 2011).

Another film is *Ghatashraddha (The Ritual)*, 1977, Girish Kasaravalli), a low-budget feature from the Kannada 'new wave'. M. Madhava Prasad's discussion brings in the region of Karnataka: the role of the National Film Development Corporation, a central institution across decades: and the relationship of a series of films to a parallel literacy awakening. More recent, from 1998, *Satya* is a low-budget box office success in the gangster genre. Ranjani Azumbar dwells extensively on the plot but relates this both to the representations in the film and the world of the audience which feeds into these.

So I found this an interesting and useful book. There are a couple of articles where the focus was, as in the Introduction, on critical responses to particular films. I found this less useful: but the majority of studies in the book gave me a sense of the cinematic and social context and a feeling that I would understand the films better when I come to see them or review them. The drawback may be that you will want to seek out the fascinating and varied films described within. I have to tell you that so far I have not found that easy. But

experienced users of the Web may do better.
Keith Withall



The Art of Film: John Box and Production Design, Ian Christie, Wallflower Press, 2009, (with generous assistance from The David Lean Foundation), £27.50, 186 pp, ISBN 9781905674977. Illustrated in b & w and colour.

This is in many ways a labour of love: for an artist and craftsman who graced British and International film from the 1940s till his death in 2005. Ian Christie interviewed John Box on a number of occasions and this provides the main basis for the book. It is supplemented by interviews with his former colleagues and the impeccable research which is the hallmark of Christie's work. It is especially welcome (in this time dominated by talk of auteurs) for the detailed description of the work of an important element in the filmmaking team – Art and Production Design. Being Ian Christie, the descriptions are carefully placed in a larger historical and contextual canvas.

John Box worked on a number of British productions in the late 1940s, on both Set Design and Art Design. The most notable early title is Anthony Asquith's 1950 adaptation of *The Browning Version*: with John working as assistant to the veteran Art Designer Carmen Dillon. He also worked with her on the 1952 masterpiece, *The Importance*

of *Being Ernest*: around this time he also worked with the other notable designer in the British film industry, Vetchinsky.

His first film as full Art Director was another Asquith, *The Young Lovers* (1954). However, the film that made his name in this area was *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* (1958). This film was notable for the effective way that it used Welsh locations to stand-in for period China. His most famous work was to be with the renowned English director David Lean. John worked as Production Designer on *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), and years later on *A Passage to India* (1984). The distinction between Production and Art Designer or Art Direction seems rather fluid: and the common use of the former in film credits belongs to recent decades. Production Designers are responsible of the overall look of the film: Art Directors are responsible for translating a design vision into the production.

Lean's and Bolt's *Lawrence of Arabia* in particular is one of the visual masterworks of International cinema. It is rightly famed for Lean's direction and Freddie Young's camera work. However these both depend on the Production Design department, and also on Set Design and Costumes. One of the real interests in Christie's work is how it explains just how large was the contribution of John Box to these films: scouting settings, supervising set building, controlling the overall design, and (on occasions) providing suggestions on staging and filming. So Christie explains how on *Doctor Zhivago* Box had to scout for locations, and at the same time he built up a portfolio of photographs that appear to have influenced the framing devices that provide a visual commentary in the

film. The noticeable ones are the frequent shots 'through glass': an example of the creativity of collaboration in films.

The most obvious pleasure in this volume is the design and the illustrations: praise to Tom Cabot for this. The quality is presumably due in part to the support of the David Lean Foundation. They appear on almost every page of the book – stills, including sets for comparative purposes: publicity shots: on-set photographs: and production pictures and designs. The quality of these is very high, and one is able to get a real sense of the distinctive qualities in Box's visual design and work.

Interleaved with the biography are a series of Close-up studies where Ian Christie examines a particular production in greater detail. He is concerned to draw out the way that John Box and his colleagues work: the visual qualities that design brings to a particular film: and the contribution this makes to the total canvas enjoyed by audiences. It is worth listing these major films in Box's career: *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *A Man for All Seasons* (1966), *Oliver!* (1968), *The Great Gatsby* (1974), *The Keep* (1983), *Passage to India*. Not all of these are great movies, though there are a fair number in there. But they are all visually interesting. And again Christie brings out just how varied and important was Box' contribution to the films.

Ian Christie also provides some comments on the historical and theoretical context for design. As he points out there is a fairly limited literature on Art and Production Design in films, though it is a growing field. Design does not just make the film look good (or 'bad' if needed). It contributes to

our sense of the narrative, of character and too less obvious aspects, which are often referred to as 'subtext'. One example that Christie describes is how Box contributed to one of the memorable shots in *Lawrence of Arabia*: the long take where Sherif Ali (Omar Sharif) approaches Lawrence (Peter O'Toole) by a desert well. Box used black tar and an alternate camel track to help maintain perspective as the rider comes nearer and nearer. The scene sets up the relationship that develops between Ali and Lawrence and also wonderfully evokes the great desolation of the desert.

So this is a really worthwhile purchase. Hopefully it will encourage similar studies of other craft people: I would like to see a study of Carmen Dillon, whose name I remember on the credits of many fine British films.

Keith Withall



More Bad News From Israel, Greg Philo and Mike Berry, Pluto Press 2011, £16.99, 486pp, ISBN: 9780745329789

Public opinion depends on the public availability of information; if we believe that collective public opposition can, at times, block a government's position, then this is not a minor issue. The overall dilemma with regards to the media is: can mainstream,

particularly non-corporate, media simply be trusted or must audiences always be sceptical?

Communication is an increasingly crucial aspect of politics and news production is one of the main sources of knowledge communicated in the public sphere. One of the most debated contemporary cases where public opinion is crucial relates to Palestine. Despite some far-fetched interpretations of lobby-politics, it is not true that Israel can do as it pleases. In fact, to continue its occupation and crackdown of resistance it needs its key allies, predominantly those in the West. Israel's dependence on the West is all the greater with the recent shift in Arab politics (especially in Egypt) as a consequence of the 2011 revolutions, a dependence which has deepened since Israel antagonised its crucial regional partner Turkey by its actions during the Gaza Flotilla.

In the 2004 *Bad News from Israel* Greg Philo and Mike Berry (from the highly respected Glasgow University Media Group) deconstructed how British media create a particular framework that systematically disadvantaged Palestinians. This important study of the Second Intifada offers a detailed account of the coverage itself as well as its impact on public opinion. This is the only study I am aware of that applies a multi-method approach and succeeds – through watching hours of BBC TV and ITV prime-time bulletins, painstaking textual analysis and follow-up interviews about the Arab-Israeli conflict with both viewers and the editors involved. They demonstrate how viewers are led to believe that the 'normal' world is 'disrupted' by Palestinian violence to which Israel is often obliged to 'retaliate'. Their publication caused uproar at the BBC; in fact,

an independent (though BBC-appointed) panel investigated the alleged impartiality and confirmed much of the authors' findings.

This authoritative study is now followed by the updated edition *More Bad News from Israel*. In it we find meticulously outlined how audiences are presented with day-to-day events that are not contextualised (failing to conveying an understanding that Palestinian responses are essentially about anti-colonial liberation) and how eventually this is the most important reason for misjudgement by news audiences. At best the news has tended to swing between this clearly unequal view and the view that 'both sides' perpetrate violence in a 'cycle' of killing of what is lazily termed, and hence appears as, 'the conflict'. Perhaps most astonishing is the result derived from audience interviews: many were not even aware of the occupation or assumed that Palestinians are the occupiers. These were not typical tabloid readers: the respondents were all in higher education. The study does not only display the different manner of representation but also what could be the rationale for portraying both sides in such different ways.

Through its broad approach the book manages to bridge several academic disciplines. The first quarter of the book offers a birds-eye view of the political history of the Palestinians, explaining the context of the first mass revolt in 1936, the ethnic cleansing of three-quarters of the indigenous Palestinian population in 1948 (al-Nakba or "the catastrophe"), the 1967 war during which the remaining parts of Palestine were occupied, up until the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000. With these historical sections of the book the authors provide

crucial context and detail that usually gets lost amid overwhelmingly intense debates about the media and Palestine-Israel. However, the central section and most unique part of the book is its empirical data gathered through a meticulous analysis of hours of television material as well as by studying audience reception through interviews. This is an important intervention in contrast to the tidal wave of empirically-weak critiques about 'the media'. It is, to my knowledge, the largest study ever undertaken on this specific nexus.

The politics of the media are often the core of the activist *raison d'être*. It is often assumed that a biased media in combination with (the threat of) negative labelling (anti-Semitism) of critics of Israel is an important cause for fragile international solidarity. But is this still the case? In this update the impact of news on public opinion is studied based on two important cases: the military assault on Gaza in December 2008 (operation Cast Lead) and the attack on the Gaza Flotilla in May 2010 designed to break the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip. By scrutinizing the news outlets they attest that the core issues - the Israeli violation of a five-month ceasefire as well as the social crisis caused by the blockade - were hardly mentioned (pp341-348). And again, the ramifications are diverse. The negative impact is not only caused by biased news portraits. It is also visible in the uneven representation of spokespersons. Israeli spokespersons are structurally given more opportunities to frame the events, both in terms of time-allocation and in terms of interviewer behaviour (friendly and understanding vs. snappy and impatient) during the interview. The authors

expose the falsehood of the commonly-held view that there are not enough articulate Palestinians available to counter Israeli officials and that Palestinians basically have a very weak lobby and PR strategy; a view which is also assumed by many sympathetic to the Palestinians. In the cases studied they were available but not called upon or not handled impartially. Perhaps this was because "the Israeli ambassador was practically camped at the TV centre" as one BBC editor explains in an interview (pp. 352-358). The claim to objectivity and autonomy notwithstanding, the dynamic of being subject to Israeli pressure is therefore a valid concern. While the context of the situation in Gaza (e.g. the international blockade causing poverty and desperation) is absent, the Flotilla events produced important changes. This was most probably caused by the fact that nine unarmed activists from Turkey - until then a key ally of Israel - were killed. (p391)

What the authors don't consider is that a growing section of society follows the news via the Internet, and that a strong counter-narrative is constructed by media activists exactly in that sphere of knowledge production. This has been shown by video footage disclaiming Israeli statements put online by activists aboard the Mavi Marmara of the Flotilla convoy. Thus traditional news outlets can (if willing) have access to these sources through the internet. Hence the question related to the book's own focus raised by the impact of the internet is: how do editors engage with online sources, and: are online news audiences better informed than television audiences?

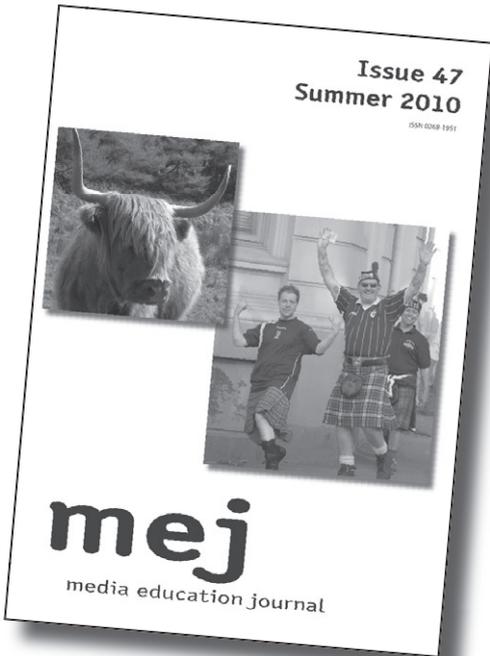
As its popularity reaches a historic low, Israel depends on its reliance on its allies ever more and therefore

desperately needs to win the hearts and minds of international public opinion, especially the citizens of its allies. This desperation explains why they will use everything in its power to gain that, as happened during the 'Flotilla II' events of this year. Solidarity activists embarked from four different European ports with people from all corners of the world. Israel then applied a more overt campaign of sabotaging several ships (such as damaging propeller shafts) but it also increased its covert propaganda. One of the most egregious examples was its use of Web 2.0 tools like YouTube to spread misinformation with the release of video just as the activists were about to sail off. In a passionate video message on YouTube 'Max Pax' describes how he was prevented from taking part in the Flotilla because he was gay. Other activist bloggers soon discovered that the video was an orchestrated hoax to discredit the Freedom Flotilla campaign and originated from Netanyahu's office. (See <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/27/israeli-video-blog-exposed-as-a-hoax/>).

More Bad News from Israel adds another layer mostly left untouched: news media not only channels a war of words but through its selective choices and language makes possible that very war. In this sense this book certainly belongs on the same shelves as the classics *Manufacturing Consent* (Herman and Chomsky) and *Covering Islam* (Edward Said). In contrast to much research it also provides a socially relevant yet empirically proven critique. Given the very contentious nature of the topic, this is a brave and welcome contribution for those in academia and activism alike.

Miriyam Aouragh

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Extra copies of the current journal and issue 49 are available at £8.00 per copy. We also have back copies of earlier issues at £2.00 per copy. The complete set covers more than 20 years of debate, theory and practice. See page 2 for contact address.

